

## Moody mulls his options

AFP, Colombo

Sri Lanka's coach Tom Moody will decide his future with the World Cup runners-up later this month, a Sri Lankan Cricket official said Friday.

"Tom departed for Britain on a holiday," K. Mathivanan, secretary of the Sri Lanka Cricket board, told AFP.

He said Moody, an Australian national, was expected to return to Colombo on May 12 and will then discuss his future with the team and the governing body.

"We will be announcing a decision on Tom's future on May 14," Mathivanan said.

Moody's contract ends on May 31 and he is due to tour Abu Dhabi with the Sri Lanka team for a One Day International series with Pakistan before then.

The former Australia and Worcestershire all-rounder was appointed Sri Lanka's national coach in 2005 succeeding compatriot John Dyson.

His name has been linked with Western Australia, the Australian state side, after his contract with the Sri Lankans expires.

Moody has been reticent about his plans, repeatedly saying that he would discuss them with the Sri Lankan authorities after the World Cup.

Under Moody's tutelage Sri Lankans have had a remarkable run overseas.

They swiped out England 5-0 in a one-day series while drawing the Test series 1-1 in the summer of 2006, and early this year drew 1-1 in Test matches in New Zealand.

## Dogfight

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League, but they failed to reach the competition proper after losing a two-legged tie against Levski Sofia.

Basement boys Ascoli, who visit fellow strugglers Torino, could be relegated this weekend, while second from bottom Messina host champions Inter Milan.

AC Milan, who clinched a place in the Champions League final after defeating Manchester United 3-0 on Wednesday, host Fiorentina at the San Siro.

Milan will meet Liverpool in the Athens showpiece in a repeat of the 2005 final, which the Merseysiders won on penalties.

Docked eight points for their role in the match-fixing scandal, Milan are currently in third place and almost certain of qualifying for the third qualifying round of next season's Champions League.

Lazio host Livorno hoping to claim another three points in their pursuit of fourth place.

## Cup injured?

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"At the moment, it just feels like another day," he said. "I'm sure it will hit me later."

Just how the cheering of the Martin Place throng sat with the delicate heads of the cricketers is uncertain, but both parties seemed appreciative. The players proudly displayed the trophy, while the crowd offered a resounding three cheers for McGrath as he alighted the stage.

Eventually, the crowd dispersed and the players made their way home. But the World Cup trophy was far from its destination. After receiving a few dents during the celebrations, Cricket Australia will take the trophy to the silversmiths Flynn Brothers of Kyneton, in Victoria.

"The players and the cup were both a bit the worse for wear," a Cricket Australia official said.

## Australia

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that in this way we can embarrass and put pressure on this immoral government of Mugabe and his cronies."

Howard made clear his desire to send a protest message to Zimbabwe by cancelling the tour, criticising South African President Thabo Mbeki and other African leaders for failing to stand up to Mugabe.

"No pressure will be applied on Mugabe by the people who should apply the pressure -- people like the South African president and others," he said.

"They're the people, they are his colleagues ... they're his fraternal colleagues and they are people who should be applying the pressure, but it's not coming out."

## Gerrard close

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"They have some quality players like (Gennaro) Gattuso who work really hard for the team but we'll be ready for them on the night. I'm confident we can beat them."

"Obviously I'm very excited. I don't think it's sunk in yet and probably won't until we set off for Athens, and we have got a couple of domestic games first before we start our preparations for the big final."

"But we've got nothing to fear from Milan, we've been there and done it before. We've got a fantastic team spirit, the team is playing really well in Europe and we've got one of the best managers in the world so we have every confidence that we can do it."



Players of Kalabagan Cricket Academy and Paramount School inaugurate the Boost Power under-13 cricket competition at the Kalabagan Club ground yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

# LOCAL SNIPPETS

### SPORTS REPORTER

Rajshahi booked the last final round berth of the Western Union National Youth Football Championship when they emerged Jaipurhat zone champions. In the final at the Jaipurhat Stadium, Samad's hatrick enabled them to a crushing 5-0 win over Naogon.

Rajshahi will join hosts Sathkira and qualifiers Noakhali, BKSP, Narayanganj, Jhenaidah, Khulna, Tangail, Narshingdi and Gaibandha in the finals.

### TITLE LEAGUE

The AB Bank Metropolis Table Tennis League will begin at the Wooden Floor Gymnasium today. Ten teams will compete in the Premier League and 25 in the First Division for men's and apart from the women's league.

The First Division matches will be held from May 5-25 while the Premier and Women's leagues from June 14-July 7. Sponsors AB Bank will provide Tk 2,000,000 out of the total budget of Tk 2,57,000.

### DANONECUP

The qualifying competition for

Danone Nations Cup (under-12) will begin on May 15 in six zones. A total of 36 teams will compete in Chittagong, Manikganj, Sherpur, Jhenaidah, Chapainawabganj and Barguna.

The six zonal champions will play in the final round in Dhaka with the winners booking a ticket for the tournament proper to be held in France this June.

### UNDER-13 CRICKET

Hosts Kalabagan Cricket Academy beat Paramount High School by eight runs in the Boost Power under-13 cricket competition yesterday.

Batting first, Kalabagan scored 191-8 in 25 overs and then held off a stiff challenge from Paramount who were stopped at 184-7 in their stipulated 25 overs.

Extras were the order of the day as the Paramount bowlers delivered 75. Opener Faisal was the second highest-scorer with 26 runs off 51 balls.

For Paramount, Arif took three wickets

But Dipu's valiant 45 off 25 balls was not enough but his was the highest score in Paramount's

innings.

### AFC FESTIVAL

Bangladesh won two matches and lost one in the AFC Football Festival (Under-13) which began at the BKSP.

The hosts recorded identical 2-1 wins over Uzbekistan and Sri Lanka before crashing 3-0 to Tajikistan.

The results of other opening day's matches of the two-day regular event of the Asian Football Confederation:

Turkmenistan 1 Bhutan 0

Tajikistan 3 India 0

Sri Lanka 0 Iran 6

Pakistan 0 Kyrgyzstan 0

Nepal 7 Maldives 0

Sri Lanka 0 Turkmenistan 3

Pakistan 1 Uzbekistan 2

Nepal 2 Bhutan 0

Maldives 0 India 2

Kyrgyzstan 0 Iran 2

Pakistan 0 Tajikistan 2

Nepal 5 Turkmenistan 0

Maldives 0 Uzbekistan 4

Kyrgyzstan 1 Bhutan 0

Iran 3 India 0

# Lee, Tait gearing up



CRICINFO, undated

Shaun Tait and Brett Lee could form an intimidating new-ball partnership after Ricky Ponting said they could both fit into the same side.

Lee's ankle injury forced him out of the World Cup and allowed Tait the chance to come in and collect 23 wickets at 20.3.

The prospect of the pair working together excites Ponting. "You can absolutely have both those guys in the one team, and if you put a couple of other steadier guys around him you'd have a pretty awesome attack," Ponting told the Australian. "Tait can do a great job for you with the new ball in Test cricket as well as one-day cricket, which is how we used him in the World Cup."

Glenn McGrath, who celebrated his retirement during a public reception in Sydney on Thursday, agreed with Ponting. "Binga' (Lee)

"He knocks batsmen over. If he gets that new ball swinging and he gets it right, there aren't many batsmen in the world who are going to be able to keep him out."

Tait said opening with Lee "would be awesome." "If I can work towards that and Brett can come back stronger from his injury it would be a good thing for the country to watch, I reckon," he said.

Ponting said Tait had taken over the team's role as the "out and out strike bowler" in the World Cup. "Brett was that a few years ago, but I think he's been able to change his whole game around and become economical." He called Tait "Mr Unpredictable." "You could bowl him for just two or three overs up front in Test cricket, too, and then bring on someone steady like Steve Clark."

Adam Gilchrist said it would be a challenge to maintain the results. "But we're too well set up," he said. "We've got such a good infrastructure. We're the world leaders big-time in that area alone, let alone every other area that we dominate the world in."

# Buchanan rejects India job



CRICINFO, undated

John Buchanan will pursue a career as a "mentor coach" after turning down an indirect offer to replace Greg Chappell in India. After almost eight years in charge Buchanan has left the Australian set-up and will be succeeded by Tim Nielsen, whose first duty is taking the team to the Twenty20 World Cup in South Africa in September.

"There was some indirect contact from India," Buchanan said in the Sydney Morning Herald. "But at the

moment I am looking for new challenges as a mentor coach, and speaking to Cricket Australia and the Australian Sports Commission about that, as well as a move into corporate coaching."

Buchanan said he still had some interest in working with international teams, but was looking forward to spending time with his family. "I really want to be around for that period of (my children's) schooling," he said. "But that probably takes me to my late-50s, and if I would like to specifically be involved in the game, maybe I'll have passed my usefulness by then. We'll see."

## BCCI softens

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match fees for ODIs and Tests.

Meanwhile, Shah ignored a reported indirect approach made by BCCI to Australia's World Cup winning coach John Buchanan to take over the reins of the Indian squad prior to the latter's departure for the Caribbean.

"I don't know anything about any such approach having been made. This is the first time I am hearing about it," Shah said.

He was reacting to a report in an Australian newspaper quoting Buchanan that Indian officials who were keen to gauge his interest in succeeding Greg Chappell as their coach after the mega event "indirectly" approached him before leaving for the Caribbean World Cup.

## BFF picks irregular players

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) yesterday named seven players who have been irregular in their teams in the 20-member under-23 squad for this month's exhibition match against Oldham Athletic U-20s.

The visiting English club from greater Manchester, who arrive in Dhaka on Monday, will play three friendlies against Mohammedan (May 8, Dhaka), the national youth team (May 10, Sylhet) and Abahani (May 12, Dhaka).

It was surprising to see at least one third of the squad not playing regularly this season. Among the three goalkeepers, Tariq has yet to play a single minute for Abahani, Himel has lost his first-team place at Mohammedan while Shakil is also out of the starting eleven for Sheikh Russel.

The most horrible choice was Arafat Rony, who is not even registered for any of the 11 B. League clubs, although they belong to Dhaka Mohammedan. The others who have only come out as substitutes for small periods are Jahir, Sharif and Maruf, picked for the reputation as they had represented the U-23s earlier this year.

The 20 footballers have been requested to report to coach Hasanuzzaman Babloo on May 8 at the BFF Bhaban at 7pm.

### SQUAD

**Goalkeepers:** Shakil (Russel), Tariq (Abahani), Himel (Mohammedan); **defenders:** Arif (Mohammedan), Sony (Rahmatganj), Jahir, Aminul (Russel), Saikat (Chittagong Mohammedan), Wali (Abahani), Arafat Rony (no team); **midfielders:** Zahed (Abahani), Sharif, Zahid (Mohammedan), Maruf (Muktijoddha), Arup (Farashganj), Mamun (Brothers); **forwards:** Emily, Ujjal (Abahani), Robin (Farashganj).

## Rahmatganj

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part of the league holding on to the top spot when they take on third-placed Sheikh Russel today.

It will be Muktijoddha's last match of the first-leg but Russel have a match in hand, against other title contenders Abahani in the final round of the first leg.

Although Russel maintained lead till seven rounds, they slipped after their maiden defeat, to Arambagh, in their previous match. Russel, who had a welcome break having not been a part of the last-week fixtures, are on 15 points -- three behind the Reds.

## SL Academy

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### SCORES IN BRIEF

Bangladesh Academy first innings: 260 all out in 96 overs (Kayes 34, Nazim 66, Rokibul 55, Nadif 24, Riyad 13, Sahagir 32, Enamul 10, extras 10, Kulasekera 2-55, Mathew 1-53, Mohamed 3-39, Komarasu 3-50).

Sri Lanka Academy: 190-2 in 73 overs (Paranawithana 55, Daniel 76 batting, Wijesinghe 37, Nawala 11 batting, extras 11, Nazmul 1-29, Enamul 1-66).

## Banana skin

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ning La Liga) now doesn't depend on us but we are going to try to keep up the pressure on our rivals."

However, Ramos has mixed emotions about the clash with Sevilla. He was born-and-bred in the Andalusian city and has been a supporter of the club since childhood.

Sevilla successfully nurtured Ramos, to the point where he won a European under-19 title with Spain in 2004, before selling him very profitably to Real at the start of last season.

Controversially, former England captain David Beckham is expected to start for Real after the Spanish football association decided on Thursday to cancel the yellow card he picked up during the 4-1 win at Athletic Bilbao last Sunday.

The booking, which would have been Beckham's 10th this season, for not retreating fast enough at a free kick should have led to a one match suspension.

"The yellow card was clear enough. The rules are there for everybody and there shouldn't be differences between one player and another and one team and another," said an incensed Sevilla coach Juande Ramos on Thursday.

## Gunners sight

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at home, while keeping their fingers crossed that the likes of Wigan, who are at home to Middlesbrough, and Fulham, who entertain Liverpool, continue to fall.

Five wins out of seven have given Alan Curbishley's men hope but they know they still rely on other teams slipping up.

"People talk about our momentum -- and I'd much rather have the points on the board already -- but we still go into the Bolton match with a chance of getting out of this," Curbishley said.

"When I first took over and we had that terrible run of results, I'd have taken this position with two games remaining."

# Life, death and pace



CRICINFO, undated

Whatever else is true of Shaoh Akhtar, this much cannot be denied that he has a way. It is the global way of celebrities; the look at you which isn't really at you, sunglasses indoors, looking tired and refreshed, the slow, deliberate, tilted walk; the conversation littered with arbitrary pauses, sentences that often droop away. Animals are devouring one another on the box before he switches to the 37th President of the US. "Nixon," he breathes, randomly.

His jeans hug him, as does the T-shirt, and he just looks more than you or I. Only a photograph of him felling Brian Lara in the 2004 Champions Trophy ("greatest regret, it was the only time I played him") gives away his occupation. That he is neither film nor rock star needs reminding.

Even in the afternoon curtailed dimness of his Lahore home, Shaoh has a new glow about him. He's leaner, there is less baggage under the eyes, around the face. If there is a paunch, it is shy of public appearances. More hair volume and it could be 1999. He has played a grand total of five days of international cricket in the past year, which might explain something. But he is fresh in body, and it emerges over the course of lunch, a TV interview with an Indian channel and general chatter, and in mind as well. Just as well, because around him there is darkness.

Doping, death, a World Cup disaster and the general introspection of the thirties have made for a curious philosophical slant in him. The talk begins with Indian and Pakistani calamity. "You can't sow sugarcane and expect to reap rice," he begins, Sidhu-esque. He ends Camus-esque. "We have a knowledge of everything but knowledge is not wisdom. Wisdom is doing."

Being practical takes a lot of emotion.

In between whiles, he's many things. First, a blaxploitation star, stickin' it to the man, the system: "Here, people are trying to save jobs. They look for scapegoats for everything." Then, a fast bowling svengali: "Fitness, pace doesn't come from 20-day camps. You have to build something then refine it. Refine it, don't scratch it."

He argues passionately that individuals win matches. "Every-one says 11 men make a winning team. They don't. Fast bowlers win matches and it's time Pakistan made seaming, grassy wickets." He has previously argued, equally passionately, precisely the opposite, that cricket is not won by individuals. Such a game it is that he isn't wrong on either occasion.

Bob Woolmer crops up, not unreasonably despite his protestations that he hates talking about it. His last public interaction with Woolmer -- an argument in South Africa -- was, for spectacle, unfortunate, but his last private one, he assures, was more conciliatory. "I said to him, sorry I can't go to the World Cup. My knee is just not there. He said please look after yourself. Those were his last words to me." The media is blamed for hyperbole, the defence being if you live in one house, "brothers will fight." Earlier, he repeats how Woolmer referred to him as son. "He made a big contribution to Pakistan and was a wonderful man."

On to the future of Pakistan cricket and he laughs a laugh observers would swear is sarcastic, though his answer negates that. Maybe. "I can guarantee that Pakistan will beat Australia 3-0 in Pakistan. The only condition is how we invest in the next five months."

He is, at least, planning to "invest time in myself" in that period. He is fit but pulled out of the Abu

Dhabi series because he wants to get fitter; as ever, he doesn't say what he means sometimes and doesn't mean what he says other times. The captaincy was not for him, he volunteers, as a matter of honour almost, and he spices it by pointing at the others who craved it. "Captaincy does not matter to me. You have seen that a lot of other people are interested in leading but they blame me for it. I never said I wanted to be captain." His namesake Malik is assured of full, brotherly support.

Away from camera and Dictaphone, he is still celebrity. Discourse is broad, his hospitality warm. His two great loves, bikes and Bollywood, get ample airtime. Unsurprisingly, he raves about MS Dhoni, a batsman with the instincts of a fast bowler and not out of place on bike or in Bollywood. An attempt to discuss pace, specifically Shaun Tait, ends as quickly as it begins. "Pace is pace, mate" he shoots without flinching, answering, explaining everything. The Beatles, it turns out, are wrong, because all you need is pace.

The trials of fame, actually, are not trials. As we speak about it, he offers to walk with us through his neighbourhood. Nobody will mob me here, he suspects. Accurately, I think, though that may have more to do with the oven-heat and the poshness of surrounding residents more than anything else. In India, says the TV journalist, it would be different. I forget to ask him which he would prefer.

He joshes the young cameraman as we leave, for nearly destroying his curtains (he did) and distributes warm hugs all round. He looks good, feels better. Shame Pakistan cricket does not. When both have been good at the same time, in the 1999 World Cup and 2005 against England, it's all been good. He's back, he repeats, in September. Fun times ahead.

# Stuttgart join title race

AFP, Berlin



CRICINFO, undated

Stuttgart VfB coach Armin Veh insists his side will not let last weekend's win go to their collective heads after they entered the Bundesliga title-race with a vengeance.

While league-leaders Schalke 04 were shocked 2-1 at VfL Bochum and Werder Bremen were humbled 3-2 by Arminia Bielefeld, Stuttgart made a late charge into the title race thanks to a 1-0 win at relegated Borussia Monchengladbach.

The win leaves them second, just a point behind Schalke with three games left to go. Stuttgart face relegation-threatened Mainz 05 on Saturday, but have a tricky run-in against battlers VfL Bochum and Energie Cottbus.

"I remember reading a survey at Christmas, asking about the favourites to take the league title.

We weren't named then and I'm not going to allow us to be forced into that role now," said Veh ahead of Saturday's sell-out home clash at the Gottlieb-Daimler-Stadium.

"Schalke have the title in their hands and Bremen have won numerous titles in recent years. They know the situation very well, we just want to win the game against Mainz."

"I am delighted we are in second place with just three games to go, but we have to focus."

Veh has a full squad to choose from apart from suspended defender Arthur Boka and injured

Mario Gomez, who is back in training after a knee injury.

Stuttgart's rivals Werder Bremen have a tough trip to Hertha Berlin on Sunday and must quickly brush off the effects of Thursday night's UEFA Cup semifinal game against Espanyol.

Hertha hammered Alemannia Aachen 4-0 at Berlin's Olympic Stadium last weekend and having stopped their slide down the table, they will test Bremen.

After defeats in their last two games, Bayern Munich must make sure of the three points when they travel to relegated Borussia Monchengladbach.

"Gladbach have picked up just one win in 10 games, but a defeat for Bayern would sum up their indifferent season with Munich boss Ottmar Hitzfeld promising sweeping changes next season."

Having survived the mother of all wake-up calls with last weekend's defeat to VfL Bochum, Bundesliga leaders Schalke 04 still cling to top spot.

But they need three points at home to Nuremberg, who are pushing for a top five finish and a UEFA Cup place next season, and can ill-afford another shock defeat.

With some teams now playing for survival with just three games left, the Bundesliga is entering the silly season for results, as struggling sides desperately look to poach wins from teams hunting European places.

On Friday night, Hannover entertain Energie Cottbus and on Saturday VfL Wolfsburg host Borussia Dortmund, who look to have halted their slide towards the relegation zone.

Hamburg are at home to Bochum, while Eintracht Frankfurt host Alemannia Aachen in what promises to be a desperate fight for points between two sides at the wrong end of the table.

On Sunday, sixth-placed Bayer Leverkusen are at home to Arminia Bielefeld, who dragged themselves clear of the relegation fight with last week's win over Bremen.

# Pigeon's great finish

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and (only) eight of our batsmen had averages.

"So to go through a whole tournament where you haven't used numbers nine, 10 and 11 batsmen is a pretty awesome effort."

With such a core of experience leaving the team, the intellectual property that McGrath carries from 944 international wickets is a prize asset for those who aspire to take his place. Having been there and done it on innumerable occasions, McGrath pledged that wisdom would not be lost.

"I'll still talk to the guys all the time," he said. "The first thing I'll do is get away from the game myself, sit back for maybe six to 12 months and see what the options are, get my thoughts together so