

BCB CEO criticises Dav

SPORTS REPORTER from Chittagong

The chief executive officer of Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) Mahmudur Rahman took the spotlight by making comments on outgoing coach Dav Whatmore.

Speculating on Whatmore's move to India as their next coach, Rahman told Indian television channel Times Now that the Aussie lacked a "characteristic essential" in dealing with sub-continental teams.

"From what we've read and seen, the issue for India seems to be that coaches have not been able to get into players' heart and that could be one aspect the Indian board might want to talk about," suggests Rahman while speaking to the channel in Dhaka earlier this week.

"Dav being an Australian is used to the Australian way of doing things," Rahman pointed out. "There (in Australia), you do not have so much of explanation. Here in the sub-continent, we're very emotional people and sometimes a player performs depending upon how he feels when he gets out of bed."

The observations of the top-ranked BCB official came as surprise as the high-profile coach is not only born in the subcontinent (Sri Lanka) but also coached a team in the subcontinent (also Sri Lanka) to World Cup glory in 1996.

As Bangladesh coach he has also made huge contributions in the improvement process of the Tigers during the last four years. Dav Whatmore, who is all set to quit the Bangladesh job after completion of the ongoing home series against India, has declined to comment on the surprisingly stinging comments made by Rahman, who has yet make any mark as the CEO in the country's most prestigious sports body.

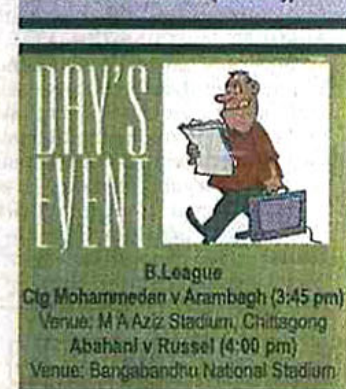


Did U Know?

Badminton made its debut as a full-medal Olympic sport at the 1992 Olympic Games in Barcelona, Spain.



What to WATCH
ZEE Sports
UEFA Cup Final
Sevilla v Espanyol
Live at 12:30 am (Thursday)



DAY'S EVENT
B. League
Cib Mohammodan v Arambagh (3:45 pm)
Venue: M A Aziz Stadium, Chittagong
Abahani v Russel (4:00 pm)
Venue: Bangabandhu National Stadium

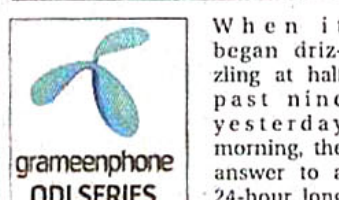


TALK TURKEY
Frank Rijkaard
(Barcelona coach)
"Draw, win or lose, you can't lose your pride. What made the difference was that we failed to find the net and in the end that led to the draw."

After his side were held by Real Betis this weekend that cost them the top spot in the Primera Liga.

Bashar mum on retirement

MOHAMMAD ISAM from Chittagong



When it began drizzling at half past nine yesterday morning, the answer to a 24-hour long speculation was given: a match was not on the cards.

The fate of the third and final one-day international between India and Bangladesh was decided by the weather gods as the morning rain dealt a final blow to the relentless effort of the groundsmen.

The washout meant India clinched the ODI series 2-0.

The game was supposed to be the final one-day international for Bangladesh captain Habibul Bashar. But Bashar was as damp as the weather regarding the announcement of his retirement.

After the match was called off at 1.15pm, he staved off questions from the reporters at the hastily arranged press conference at the Chittagong Divisional Stadium.

"I have already talked about it yesterday (Monday) and I said that I would say it later."

"I would not like to answer any question regarding my decision

and it would be nice of you to refrain yourself from asking," said a straight-faced Bashar.

He was adamant but neither denied nor agreed whether he would continue only as a player in the shorter version of the game.

A newspaper report on Tuesday suggested that he would only step down from one-day captaincy but stay on as player. He may have already reached the decision which is not to retire from the shorter version so soon, according to the report.

Right from the prelude of the one-day series, he insisted that he would announce his decision of whether or not to retire from one-day internationals but till date, he has skirted past this question time and again.

Isn't the series over? Or did he mean the Test series? If the decision is to retire from one-day cricket then it was wiser for him to announce right after the one-day series but he had earlier suggested that it would distract his teammates from preparing for this series.

Well, now it seems his prolonged decision-making could well turn into a distraction or a burden to his team.

But if this was his final one-day appearance for his country, as a

captain or as a player, it will be remembered for him not declaring anything as he said he would, a week ago.

Bashar however remained positive of his team's chances in the upcoming Test series, despite being deprived of playing in one for more than a year.

"The last time we played Test cricket, we pushed Australia so I would like to go into Friday's match with that in mind and now we have more performers in our side," said Bashar.

Like his Indian counterpart Rahul Dravid, he was disappointed, more so, because it would have been another opportunity for the Tigers to give India a fight.

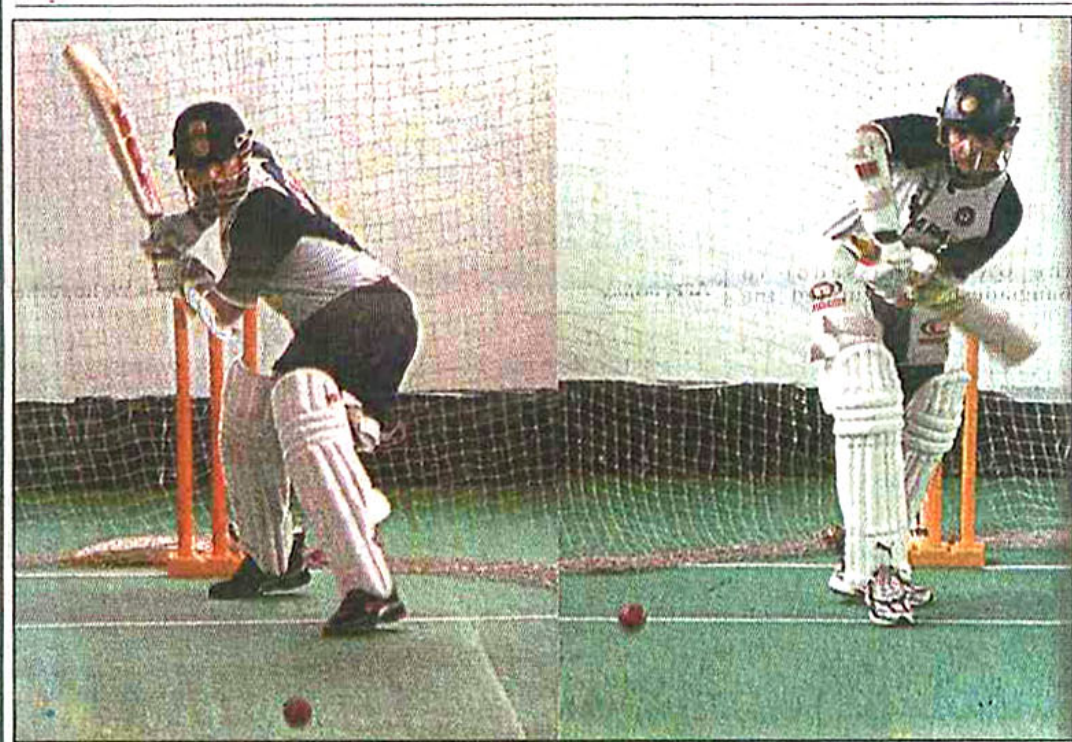
"If we would have won today (Tuesday), it would have given us more confidence going into the Test. We also could have had more information about the Chittagong wicket."

"We had two good games, especially the first match (in Mirpur where Bangladesh lost by five wickets), so we are disappointed that we have missed a chance here."

"We have a chance to do well now because we have done well in the past year even though it was in one-dayers," said Bashar.

When asked of the difference

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Indian stalwarts Sachin Tendulkar (L) and Sourav Ganguly concentrate on their batting at the nets for the upcoming Test series against the hosts.

Dhoni proves a point

SPORTS REPORTER from Chittagong



Long-haired Indian star Mahendra Dhoni was not only relieved to be back among the runs after a tumultuous time at the World Cup, but was also pleased that he started in a country where he made his debut in December 2004.

The 25-year-old wicketkeeper-batsman was adjudged the man of the series for his courageous knock of 91 in the first match when India looked dead and buried at 144 for 5 in pursuit of 250 set by Bangladesh at the Sher-e-Bangla Mirpur Stadium.

"I am happy to have done well here, a place where I made my debut but was run out after facing just one ball. So it is good to have done well here as I wanted to prove something," said the smiling cricketer who

played the one-day series in 2004 when India won 2-1.

His adjustment from a lower-order batsman to number three in the line-up was also something remarkable in the hot and humid conditions, having kept wickets for more than three hours.

"Playing for the country is enough motivation for me. I don't think of anything else other than that. I am here to win for my country and that is enough for me to go out in the middle," said Dhoni.

"The team comes first obviously so I don't mind where I am asked to bat, whether it's down the order or at number three."

"You have to adjust yourself to the demand of the situation, whatever that is. If I am successful in doing it, then you know what the situation is," said the cricketer who hails from Ranchi.

Dhoni was severely criticised back home for his failure in the World Cup but he admitted that he has

moved on.

"That's something that was beyond my control and never really thought of."

His captain Rahul Dravid, in a jovial mood at the post-match briefing with the reporters, mentioned Dhoni's partnership with Dinesh Karthick as one of the positives from this series. He also mentioned the performance of the fast bowlers and Gautam Gambhir's 101 in the second match as good memories.

He however was disappointed at the third game being called for soggy outfield.

"It is quite frustrating that we have to go back without having played a match. But I think being familiar with the ground is what we can take back today (Tuesday)," said Dravid.

He was aware that Bangladesh have not played a Test for thirteen months and said that their lack of experience could well be the difference.

First leg ends today

Russel, Abahani eye top spot



SPORTS REPORTER

Abahani and Sheikh Russel will go into today's B. League match with a view to replace Mohammedan at the top of the table at the end of the first leg.

The inaugural professional league will be exactly halfway

through after today's matches -- Chittagong Mohammedan host Arambagh in the port city in the day's other match -- and go into the mid-session transfers before the second leg starts two weeks later.

Abahani and Russel are level on 18 points after nine matches and the winners will take pole position. But a draw will hand over Mohammedan the top spot with 20 points.

For Abahani, the biggest budgeted team of the season, going into the last match with such uncertainty is a big disappointment.

The sky-blues have already released Argentine coach Diego

Cruciani, just after crashing to Khulna Abahani in a shocking 2-1 home defeat. They lacked the style under long-serving coach Amlesh Sen but had showed more bite in a 2-0 win over Arambagh in the next game.

"After deciding to send Cruciani back, we told the boys that the Arambagh match was like a semi-final. A win will make the Russel game like a final and a defeat (to Arambagh) would mean playing for the third place," told manager Satyajit Das Rupu yesterday.

"We have done the first part of the job, now it's up to the players to

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India captain Rahul Dravid (2nd from R) and coach Ravi Shastri (R) in serious conversation with their Bangladesh counterparts Habibul Bashar (L) and Dav Whatmore about the state of ground at the Chittagong Divisional Stadium on Tuesday.

CCDM to seek BCB's help for domestic crisis

SPORTS REPORTER

Title contenders Abahani and Mohammedan had to remain satisfied with one point each after both their Kai-Altech Premier Cricket Super League openers were washed out yesterday.

Abahani were pitted against Old DOHS and Mohammedan versus Biman on Monday but both the matches entered the reserve day due to inclement weather.

DOHS were 18 without loss after four overs in reply to Abahani's 224 all out while Mohammedan reached 22 for nought in 4.2 overs after Biman ended on 257-8.

Persistent drizzle, however, kept the teams inside the tents as the matches were abandoned at Faullah Stadium and Dhanmondi Cricket Stadium.

Abahani and DOHS, who had lost Tushar Imran and Mehrab Hossain respectively due to national duty, were allowed replacements according to the byelaws.

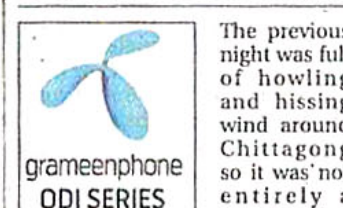
The fate of the Super League, however, fell uncertain after an emergency meeting of the Cricket Committee of Dhaka Metropolis (CCDM) failed to reach a decision on Monday night.

Abahani have appealed to further delay the championship leg due to player crisis through injury and national call, requesting the

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Of soppers & sweepers

MOHAMMAD ISAM from Chittagong



The previous night was full of howling and hissing wind around Chittagong so it was not entirely a surprise that

the large canopy on the roof of the Divisional Stadium was dangling as the crowds formed a one-mile long queue outside the main gate.

That was just the start of a day of gloom for all involved at the ground, be it the players, officials, journalists, the crowd and a sea of policemen.

The contingent was so large on Tuesday that there was a sea of green but of a different kind. Apart from the leak-proof security, what stood out was the resilience and spirit of the crowd, made up mostly of students. They were made to stand in queue for endless hours (nearly four) and once inside, they were being scanned with devices normally used by the paramilitary troops to search land mines.

So was the press box and the rest of the ground -- infield, outfield, left-field. But the timing was quite astounding because if the match was in progress then the batsman

could have taken a welcome drinks break in the middle of the match. But still, the sight was amazing. On one side, the super sopper was at full flow while at the other, the mine detectors were sweeping through. Nothing could have cleared up the water at the stadium, thanks to the hard surface which does not really help to soak up the water.

Meanwhile, the mine detector reached the press box, going through tripods, laptops and the television as well.

The match was called off soon after but the crowd at the northern side of the ground sat in earnest, unaware of the decision. An announcement through the loud speaker, so usefully used the other day on the street to alert the port city people about the cyclone, or the giant screen would have ended their day-long misery.

But things were not all that bad, as this reporter saw the likes of one Sachin Tendulkar. He arrived on Monday along with Sourav Ganguly, Anil Kumble, VVS Laxman, Wasim Jaffer and Rajesh Pawar for the Tests and yesterday, took part in a nets session in the indoor facilities.

He was enthusiastic as ever, batting for almost half an hour and then taking slip catches.

All eyes were on him as he emerged from the indoors. With a

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BFF election deferred to June 23

SPORTS REPORTER

The election of the Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) will be held on June 23 instead of the scheduled June 9, it was decided at the federation's executive committee meeting last night.

A BFF official informed that the chief election commissioner, who will be occupied on June 9, had requested the federation to defer the date.

The BFF meanwhile, has lifted the five-year ban on former national footballer Rezaul Karim Lito.

The Brothers Union midfielder, who has served about two years of his ban, will now be able to play for his club from the second leg of the B. League.

It was also learned that former BFF member Fazlur Rahman Babul has submitted a letter to Sports Adviser Tapan Chowdhury and its copies to the BFF and National Sports Council seeking to know the legality of the BFF executive committee which expired on April 29.

Babul also challenged the fishy movements of the BFF about preparing its councillors' list, alleging that the BFF did not send letters properly to the affiliated bodies. It was also alleged that letters were sent to their chosen organisers, keeping the main body in the dark.



Expectant crowd wait in thousands for the start of play outside the Chittagong Divisional Stadium as the police struggle to maintain discipline on Tuesday.