

World Cup was fair

AFP, Dubai

No player tested positive for drugs at the recent World Cup, the International Cricket Council (ICC) announced Thursday.

During the Caribbean tournament that spanned March and April, 15 of the tournament's 51 matches, including both semifinals and the final, plus two warm-up matches, plus two warm-up matches were randomly selected for testing.

There was, however, a drugs controversy before the tournament began when Pakistan fast bowlers Shoaib Akhtar and Mohammad Asif were both removed from their country's squad.

Both players tested positive for nandrolone in tests done in Pakistan before the ICC Champions Trophy last year.

They were withdrawn from the Pakistan team for the tournament. Akhtar was suspended for two years and Asif for one but the bans were overturned by an internal tribunal and they played in South Africa.

However, the Pakistan Cricket Board insisted they'd missed the World Cup because of injuries.

At the World Cup, two players from each side were tested in the 17 games under review, giving a total of 68 samples.

Last year, the ICC signed up to the World Anti Doping Agency (WADA) code. In a statement issued from its Dubai headquarters, ICC

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What to
WATCH

BTV & NEO Sports

Bangladesh v India
First Test, Day One
Live at 10:00 am

ESPN

England v West Indies
First Test, Day Two
Live at 4:00 pm



Shoaib Malik

(New Pakistan cricket captain)

"I am not nervous at all. I know the season ahead is difficult but I will live up to the confidence placed in me by the Pakistan Cricket Board and the fans."



Kai-Altech Premier Cricket Super League

Abahani v Biman
Mohammedan v Sonargaon
Victoria v Old DOHS



PHOTO: ZOBAER HOSSAIN SIKDER

Bangladesh's (R-L) Shahriar Nafees, Shakib Al Hasan, Mehrib Hossain line up to do some slip-catching practice yesterday at the Chittagong Divisional Stadium ahead of the first Test against India.

'No special plan for Ashraful'

SPORTS REPORTER from Chittagong



The history, record and strength all speak in favour of his side but India captain Rahul Dravid was not ready to take all those things as guarantee of his team's success in the Test series against Bangladesh.

"Definitely we got a lot of experience in our Test side but it only counts if you perform on the day. We all are going to start the game on zero-zero. You can have all the wealth of experience you want but if you do not perform on the given day or given match, it really counts for nothing," said Dravid in a pre-match press conference at the Chittagong Divisional Stadium yesterday.

"Apart from the experience we also have to put the right perfor-

mances, do our basics well, and do what is important to win a Test match. We really have to put things in place to win a match. We have to go with the methodical manner and do our basics right," he continued.

One of the finest batsmen in the world, Dravid, expressed his satisfaction over the wicket for the first game starting today and said that he was not too bothered with the weather condition.

"It looks like a pretty good wicket. I think it should hold together for the first two and half to three days. It might break up as the game goes on, maybe on the fourth and fifth day. The heat is going to be a factor but it is same for the both teams," he observed.

In reply to a question, the 34-year old Indian skipper said that his side always expect big things from veteran leg-spinner Anil Kumble.

"On any condition, Anil (Kumble) is an important part of

our attack. He played a huge role for the Indian team over the last decade and the half. So I do not see any difference in this series as well," he said.

Dravid also explained the reason behind his team's happy dilemma over the selection of the final eleven.

"We will have a team meeting in the afternoon and announce the final eleven tomorrow (Friday) morning. We would like to keep it a surprise as well."

"It is not easy to drop anyone but sometimes you have to do it. You know this time we have to do that definitely. We are considering all the options. We do have the options of playing five bowlers in this condition considering the weather, considering the wicket and considering what we are trying to achieve from this game," he said.

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Cook steers England

AFP, London

Alastair Cook's unbeaten 82 helped steer England to 158 for two against West Indies when bad light forced an early tea on the first day of the first Test at Lord's here Thursday.

Fast bowler Daren Powell had brought West Indies back into the game with two wickets soon after lunch.

But together with Kevin Pietersen, 26 not out, Cook shared an unbroken stand of 55 in 87 balls to counter Powell who at tea had figures of two wickets for 49 runs in 17 overs.

Left-hander Cook, omitted from England's World Cup squad, was now in sight of a fifth century in his 15th Test before the players were presented to Britain's Queen Elizabeth II and her husband, the Duke of Edinburgh.

England, 85 without loss at the end of the morning session, saw stand-in skipper Andrew Strauss depart in the third over after lunch when he failed to get over the top of a square drive against Powell and was caught by Devon Smith at point for 33, having just added two runs to his interval total.

England were now 88 for one in the 25th over.

New batsman Owais Shah, a Middlesex teammate of Strauss's and playing his first Test in England, made a nervy start.

But at the other end Cook, 47 not out at lunch, completed a 76-ball fifty including five fours.

Shah's mood would not have been helped after he was hit on the back of helmet by a wayward throw from fast bowler Jerome Taylor

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Bashar's game now Tushar out of first Test

BISHWAJIT ROY from Chittagong



There are three things -- hot and humid condition, sudden attack of seasonal fever and last but not least the long absence --

Bangladesh have to overcome when they return to Test cricket after a gap of 13 months in the port city today.

The moments of glory and anguish in one-day cricket over the last year is now over for the Tigers, as they once again enter into the real world of cricket when they meet formidable India in the first of the two-match series at the Chittagong Divisional Stadium.

One man however can claim that he is going to enter into his 'comfort zone' and it was none other than the Bangladesh captain Habibul Bashar, who is undoubtedly the best Bangladeshi Test batsman with a healthy average of 34.60 in 42 Tests -- a stark contrast to his one-day career.

"There lies a big challenge for us with the Test series but personally it gave me some sort of relief. I think it gives me an opportunity to, at least, put aside all the question marks over my one-day career for a while. I feel comfortable in Test but I don't know why," said the 34-year old skipper, who scored three centuries and 24 half-centuries.

Despite the fact that they have

been out of Test cricket for too long, the Tigers' captain kept his faith on the boys by saying that they would be very happy if they can manage a draw.

"It is not going to be easy to play Test cricket after a long time. It would have been very nice for us if we could play some Tests during this period. But we played a lot of ODIs in the last year. Some new boys came into the side and we started to perform as a team during this time. The boys are keen to play Test cricket and as a team we are prepared to take the challenge," said a confident Bashar, under whom his side played 35 one-day matches during that period.

"I want to make them (boys) understand that there is no difference in technicality between two versions of the game these days rather it's more of a mental setting. We just have to play risk-free cricket," he added.

The cold-hit skipper was however little worried with the seasonal viral fever that has hit his side and fear of more casualty as ace batsman Mohammad Ashraful just recovered from illness while inform Tushar Imran left out from the team because of high temperature.

"I am hopeful of making the final eleven as I feel lot better today (Thursday). But Tushar Imran's condition is not so good. He is suffering from fever and definitely is out of the first Test. Actually I must admit that it is going to be very difficult to adjust in this condition. At the same time, it is true that sometimes you can play the match

without being 100 per cent fit. For that you have to have a strong mentality," he explained.

Bangladesh are going to play with four specialists bowlers -- two seamers and two left-arm spinners -- and Bashar said that they will have to battle with the wicket and weather.

The team think-tank picked up Shahadat Hossain in place of Syed Rasel to use his speed but Bangladesh captain was looking forward to his other new ball bowler Mashrafe Bin Mortaza.

"Shahadat can be very effective even in such a batting paradise but what makes me happy is that Mashrafe is in his best form. In his last Test series, he was not in rhythm but fortunately he not only got it back but is bowling at good pace," said an excited Bashar.

The most successful Bangladesh captain said that they have to make a good start to be competitive in the series.

"India better at Tests. Moreover, prior to the Test series they won the ODI series by 2-0. So definitely they have the edge. But when the game starts, both teams start from zero. I think it is important for us to start the match on the right note. That will set the tone," he observed.

Outgoing Bangladesh coach Dav Whatmore hogged the spotlight in other way as an aspirant of the next India coach but Bashar ensured to everybody that the issue hardly effected the team as they are only focussed on their game.

'Dav still our man'



AFP, Chittagong

Bangladesh's outgoing coach Dav Whatmore has no doubt where his loyalties lie ahead of the Test series against potential future employers India, captain Habibul Bashar said on Thursday.

Whatmore, whose four-year tenure with Bangladesh ends after the Indian tour, is regarded a strong contender, if not the frontrunner, to replace another Australian, Greg Chappell, as India's coach.

But any suggestions of divided loyalties were quickly dispelled by Bashar as the two teams geared for the first of two Tests starting at the Ruhul Amin Stadium here on Friday.

"Dav is a thorough professional. He is working hard as usual and is more keen than us that we do well in the series," the Bangladeshi captain said.

Whatmore, 53, confirmed media reports he was a candidate for the Indian job, but stressed no formal offer had been made to him. "I am told some Indian officials are coming to Chittagong to watch the Test," he said. "If anyone wants to speak to me, I will be happy to meet them."

Indian Cricket Board chief Sharad Pawar is among the top officials expected to watch the Test on Saturday and Sunday.

Former captain Ravi Shastri, who is the Indian team's interim coach for the Bangladesh tour, is on the Indian board's seven-man panel that will pick Chappell's long-term successor.

India is expected to have a new

full-time coach before the tour of Ireland and England starts in the last week of June.

Whatmore, a former Australian Test batsman, is regarded as one of the best coaches in the game ever

since he masterminded Sri Lanka's triumphant World Cup campaign in 1996.

He returned from the recent World Cup in the Caribbean with his

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PHOTO: STAR

Master India batsman Sachin Tendulkar (R) draws the attention of a bespectacled groundsman to something while India manager Ravi Shastri (C) looks on at the Chittagong Divisional Stadium yesterday.

A new start for Enamul

BISHWAJIT ROY from Chittagong



He is the only member in the Bangladesh side to be labelled as a Test player and that was the reason left-arm spinner Enamul Haque is going to play international cricket after a thirteen months break like Bangladesh team's return to the longer version.

"I feel like I am going to make

my international debut," was his smiling response while talking about his return to the national side after a long break.

The 20-year old spinner, who hails from Sylhet, has played ten Tests so far with the success of 32 wickets but he is yet to bowl against the much-vaunted Indian batting line-up.

"I'm excited and honestly speaking, a little nervous as for the first time in my career I am going to face players like Sachin Tendulkar, Sourav Ganguly and of course Rahul Dravid. But I am also looking forward to take the challenge," said delighted Enamul.

The young left-arm spinner's bowling is considered effective in the longer-version because of his variation in flight but he has some other weapons to outwit batsmen.

"I am trying to develop a delivery for a long time which will be difficult for the left-handed batsmen. I used it during Bangladesh A team's recent tour in Sri Lanka but I'm not sure whether I will use it during this series because I am still trying to make it natural in my bowling," he disclosed.

He was also confident on his arm-ball, as he believes that it is completely different from the other left-arm spinners.

"I can still remember the dismissal of Michael Clarke in my last Test match at Fatullah last year. The batsman expected a straight armer but it took a little bit of turn which is the specialty of my delivery and I tried hard for last one year to make it perfect," said Enamul, who always analyses his bowling on his personal laptop.

Enamul was however quite aware of his tough task ahead as he has to lend perfect support to his aging but effective left-arm spin partner Mohammad Rafique.

"There is an advantage for me as