



Did U Know?

In 1975 Junko Tabei from Japan became the first woman to reach the top of Everest.



Harish Thawani
(Chief of Nimbus Sports International)
"It is not viable because there is very little public interest in the absence of big names."
Explaining his company's decision not to broadcast the Afro-Asia Cup.

Tigers rock at T20

STAR SPORT MONITOR

Mashrafe Bin Mortaza and Abdur Razzak bowled splendidly as Africa XI were restricted to 109 for eight in the only Twenty20 international of the second Afro-Asian Cup at the Chinnaswamy Stadium in Bangalore last evening.

Asia were 55 for three in 9 overs with Bangladesh opener Tamim Iqbal unbeaten on 28 off 20 balls, having struck a huge six three boundaries.

Imran Nazir was the first batsman to fall when he skied Nehemiah Odhiambo to Tawanda Mupariwa at mid-on for eight. Wicketkeeper-batsman Kamran Akmal edged Mome Morkel to make way for Mohammad Ashraful, the newly named Bangladesh captain.

He however failed to make any impression as he fell for only one.

Pace spearhead Mortaza, newly appointed vice-captain of Bangladesh, forced the African batsmen to play false shots and took a wicket off the final ball of his third over when he had Maurice Ouma caught behind by Akmal.

He followed it up with skipper Tanmay Mishra's wicket when the young Kenyan hacked the ball straight to third-man fielder Razzak.

His four-over spell yielded 17 runs as he picked up two wickets.

His brilliant spell was followed up by an exceptional performance from left-armed Razzak, who first helped run out Alex Olanda from a Shoaib Malik throw and then cleaned up Odhiambo as the Africans were down to 65 for six.

Razzak took 1 for 12 from his tight four overs.

Only opener Loots Bosman (52 off 55 balls) batted with responsibility as he hung around for almost all of the innings. He hit three sixes and as many fours. Africa worked hard to score 109 on a tricky wicket where the likes of Shanthakumaran Sreesanth, Ferveez Maharoof and Shahid Afridi all took wickets.



Chittagong Mohammedan's Azim and Abahani fullback Wali (R) watch their teammates fight for possession in an aerial tussle during their yesterday's B. League game at the MA Aziz Stadium in Chittagong.

PHOTO: STAR

Bashar bares his soul

Cricket

BISHWAJIT ROY

It was not easy for Habibul Bashar to accept the fact that he is no longer captain after his successful three-year stint with the Tigers. But what hurt him most was the way he was treated by the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) at a very difficult time for him.

The 34-year-old most successful Bangladesh skipper got the news of his removal and subsequent appointment of Mohammad Ashraful as captain for both versions of the game from a reporter over telephone, while he was in India on a personal visit. This shambolic treatment by the BCB has saddened one of the finest batsmen of the country.

Under his captaincy Bangladesh won 29 out of 69 ODIs and have also experienced their maiden Test victory.

It was meant to be a good trip as he has been nominated for the prestigious Shera Bangali (Best Bangali) award for the year 2007 (by the 24-hour news channel STAR Ananda of Kolkata, India) but understandably he couldn't enjoy it fully in the end.

"No doubt it takes some time to normalise with the change in situation, especially when I had the expectation of continuing as the Test skipper. But what shocked me most was the way I was treated by the authorities. I expected a call from a board official about the decision. Do you think the expectation was too high for me?" said an emotionally-choked Bashar, who returned home yesterday, while talking with this reporter at his Lalmatia house.

It seemed that the experienced campaigner was not only disappointed by the board's last move but he had also been under scrutiny since the World Cup in West Indies, with especially the comment of a

high-up upsetting him the most.

There was a whispering that the board had wanted a one-day retirement announcement from him after the World Cup and his decision to just quit the one-day captaincy after the India series simply displeased most of the board members.

Bashar however was not ready to deal with the matter in a clear-cut way but what he did believe was that there was no scope for anybody to force a player into retire-



HABIBUL BASHAR

ment.

"I think it's not fair for anybody to force a player to take a decision about his career. It surprised me the way people talked against me during the World Cup. True, my performance was not good but as a team we ended on a high note. But everybody simply forgot that before the World Cup my performance was not bad. How can one write off a player just after one tournament," Bashar exclaimed his sorrows.

"All those things put huge pressure on me and affected my performance in the last home series against India. I think the Mirpur Test is my biggest regret as a captain and I simply want to forget it though it is not too easy. It was a huge mistake to put the opponents in to bat first. No doubt I should be

blamed for that but everybody should understand that our coach (Dav Whatmore) was also highly convinced," said a disappointed Bashar.

But the right-hander, who retained his place in the 15-member Test side for the upcoming three-match series in Sri Lanka, was desperately trying to put aside all these negative issues to prolong his career as a batsman.

"My main objective is to concentrate highly on my batting which was a little bit hampered by the captaincy role. I have never been a good fielder but I have improved a lot recently. I know I have to fight with the young players to keep my place in the side that's why I have to contribute as much as I can as a batsman," conceded Bashar.

He heaped praises on newly appointed captain Ashraful by branding his successor as a 'thinker'.

"We played together for the last seven years. Ash (Ashraful) is a very good thinker. He is not only a natural talent but also thinks about the game. He follows the game minutely, which is not so common in his generation. Definitely I will give my best support to him but I hope everybody will have patience on him. He should be given enough time to establish himself as a skipper," hoped Bashar.

"I would request everybody not to cry about the word consistency," he said adding that he had tried not to be a "big boss" in the team -- a fact he termed as his real strength as a captain.

Abul inspires Abahani



SPORTS REPORTER

Two-goal Abul Hossain helped Abahani cross a major hurdle in the B. League and return to the top of the table yesterday with a 2-1 away win over Chittagong Mohammedan.

National midfielder Abul, who came in as a substitute for Moroccan midfielder Mohamed Khoubache -- taken on loan from Sheikh Russel, fired the visitors ahead 11 minutes after a scoreless first half.

Asif Yusuf cancelled the lead within seven minutes but Abul's second goal in the 73rd minute sealed the sky-blues' seventh win in 11 outings to frustrate a 3,000-strong home crowd at the MA Aziz Stadium.

On 22 points, Abahani are just one point ahead of Mohammedan and Muktiyoddha, who clash tomorrow in the Dhaka derby in a bid to regain the pole position.

The black and whites from the port city stuck to 17 points after

consecutive two defeats in the second leg.

In Dhaka, Farashganj defeated Khulna Abahani by an identical margin with Kabir Hossain's 45th minute goal giving the hosts a 1-0 lead at the Bangabandhu National Stadium.

Rezaul Hakim Pikul levelled the scores eight minutes after resumption but the Khulna outfit, who began above the riversiders in the table, were toppled with Rony Islam slotting the Farashganj match winner seven minutes from the final whistle.

Farashganj's third win took their collection to 14 points after 12 rounds while Khulna Abahani, from same number of games, stuck to 11.

Abahani, who rested in the first week of the second leg, survived an early threat when Liberian striker Momolu failed to contact a right-side cross by Asif in the goalmouth after nine minutes.

Although without their inspirational captain Camara, the Guinean midfielder, the hosts enjoyed superior ball possession in a very entertaining first half and Abahani's only attack on rival goal was in the 27th minute when Khoubache unsuccessfully tested goalkeeper Tito from long

range.

Abahani looked like reliving the horror of their goalless draw with Chittagong Mohammedan in the first leg when their Argentine forward Hernan Parodi missed a penalty in Dhaka as Ghanaian striker Ibrahim's angled drive came off the crossbar in the 53rd minute.

But Abul rescued the sky-blues three minutes later when he tapped the ball in from a corner by Zahed Parvez.

The lead was short lived as the hosts equalised with Asif's second goal in as many matches, the tall midfielder nodding home a centre by Dipu from the left.

Abul, who had lost a first team place following poor shows and failed to find the opposition net for a single time in the entire first leg, finally ensured Chittagong Mohammedan's second home defeat when he stabbed the ball into the back of the net again from a Zahed corner.

A visibly tired local side virtually gave up after this and Abahani, who will face Mohammedan in their next match on June 11, failed to increase the

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Arjuna could come to help Tigers

SPORTS REPORTER

Sri Lanka great Arjuna Ranatunga could soon be assigned as a part time batting coach of the Tigers, according to a Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) official.

BCB general secretary Mahub Anam told the reporters, who were present during the prize-giving ceremony of National Cricket League, that they are in talking terms with the former Lankan captain.

BCB are also desperately seeking the service of a specialist bowling coach for the national side.

He also informed that they will finalise the head coach of the national team during this month. But this decision also hinges on the selection of Sri Lanka Cricket (SLC) for their head coach as one of the candidates, Australian Jamie Siddons, is in the list of both SLC and BCB.

BFF keeps mum

SPORTS REPORTER

Having kept more than 30 journalists waiting over a couple of hours, the Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) officials showed the insolence of not telling the media anything about their emergency meeting on a FIFA decision to bar the federation election for one year.

Before the meeting at the BFF Bhaban yesterday, the media wanted the official letter issued by the world football governing body about its guideline for the polls, a demand which proves that the officials of the federation have already lost their credibility to the press.

However, BFF president SA Sultan, who will officially speak at a press conference today, told that they have decided in the meeting to hand over the FIFA letter to the press.

FIFA in a surprising decision has wrested the responsibility on the BFF executive committee, which expired last April, to make amendments to the constitution.

Ganga to lead WI

AFP, Manchester

Opening batsman Daren Ganga will captain the West Indies for the rest of the series against England taking over from the injured Ramnaresh Sarwan.

Sarwan was ruled out of the rest of the series with a shoulder injury incurred in the innings defeat to

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NCL to offer more money from next year

Cricket

SPORTS REPORTER

First-class cricket could get a refreshing boost next season, according to Bangladesh Cricket Board general secretary Mahub Anam.

"We are thinking of introducing match fees for players in the upcoming edition of the competition," said General Secretary Mahub Anam at a local hotel yesterday during the prize-giving ceremony of this season's National Cricket League (NCL).

Apart from the match fees, he also informed that the players' daily remuneration would be almost doubled. The board are also communicating with a few banks to sponsor each divisional side in the competition, he added.

Dhaka were rewarded for their domestic double of clinching both the first-class and one-day competition. The new champions received trophies and Tk 2 lakh in prize money for their four-day crown. They got another one lakh Taka for the one-day success.

Rajshahi, who finished runners-up in the two competitions, received Taka one lakh and 50 thousand

respectively.

Chittagong's dependable batsman Gazi Salahuddin was rewarded for topping the run charts in the NCL while his teammate and off-spinner Sabir Khan topped the bowling table. They were each given a crest and Taka 20 thousand.

There was more individual honour for Chittagong as their wicketkeeper-batsman Dhiman Ghosh was awarded Tk 10 thousand for leading the one-day batsmen. Barisal's Ariful Haq got most wickets in the same competition.

The best all-rounder's prize went to national discard and Sylhet captain Alok Kapali who was richer by Taka 20 thousand.

Talented top-order batsman Rokibul Hasan was the best emerging player. The opener became the first Bangladeshi batsman to hit a triple century in a first-class match. He achieved his feat against Chittagong.

BCB president M Abdul Aziz, BCB vice-president Shah Nurul Kabir, general secretary Mahub Anam and CEO Mahmudur Rahman and chairman of Ispahani Group Ali Behrozuz Ispahani were present on the occasion.

"This should be the most attractive competition in the domestic calendar and there is no substitute

for a good first class infrastructure if we want to develop our cricket. We will ensure better facilities in the next National Cricket League," said Aziz.

- First-Class champions: Dhaka
- First-Class Runners up: Rajshahi
- One-day champions: Dhaka
- One-day Runners up: Rajshahi
- Highest Wicket-taker (First Class): Shabbir Khan, Chittagong (54 wickets)
- Highest Wicket-taker (One-day): Ariful Haq, Barisal (eight wickets)
- Highest Run Scorer (First Class): Gazi Salahuddin, Chittagong (791 runs)
- Highest Run Scorer (One-day): Dhiman Ghosh, Chittagong (324 runs)
- Best All-rounder: Alok Kapali, Sylhet (First Class: 744 runs & 44 wickets; One-day: 294 runs & 7 wickets)
- Best Emerging Player: Rakibul Hasan, Barisal (First Class: 499 runs; One-day: 267 runs).

Sri Lanka offer high security

AFP, Colombo

Sri Lanka assured Bangladesh of high security during their upcoming cricket tour this month even as fighting escalated between troops and Tamil Tiger rebels, Sports Minister Gamini Lokuge said on Tuesday.

Bangladesh arrive here on June 17 for a tour comprising three Test matches and three one-day internationals.

All matches will be played in Colombo, except the third Test which will be held in the hill resort of Kandy.

"My ministry has already got in touch with the ministry of foreign affairs on this," Lokuge told AFP.

The minister was responding to a reported circular issued by the Bangladesh government advising its officials to avoid visiting Sri Lanka, even in transit, following escalation of the conflict on the island.

Lokuge insisted that Colombo was safe and the government would ensure the safety of the visiting team.

South African cricketers abandoned their tour of Sri Lanka last year when suspected Tamil Tiger rebels carried out a car bomb attack near the team hotel that killed four people.

India rule Whatmore out

Ford, Emburey in the fray

Cricket

AFP, New Delhi

England's John Emburey joined Graham Ford of South Africa as the two leading contenders in the race for India's next cricket coach, it was announced on Tuesday.

Emburey, 54, the former England off-spinner and currently director of cricket at Middlesex, was unveiled as the second candidate besides Ford in the fray for the high-profile job.

Both Ford and Emburey are expected to discuss their prospects with the coach selection panel of the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) in Chennai on Saturday.

"The BCCI has invited Graham Ford and John Emburey to come to Chennai and make a presentation after which a final decision on the next coach of Indian team will be made," a media release from the board said.

Ford, a former South African coach who now works with English county Kent, on Monday displaced Australian Dav Whatmore as the frontrunner to replace Greg

Chappell as the Indian coach. BCCI officials had over the last week claimed that Whatmore, the former Sri Lanka and Bangladesh coach, stood a "very good chance" since he was the only person who had shown interest in the Indian job.

But Whatmore was sidelined when the selection panel, headed by BCCI president Sharad Pawar and including three former captains in Sunil Gavaskar, Srinivas Venkatraghavan and Ravi Shastri, met on Monday night.

"We have decided to invite Ford and another coach of foreign origin for discussions," the BCCI's influential treasurer N. Srinivasan had told reporters after the meeting.

The other person turned out to be Emburey even though BCCI officials had hinted on Monday that former Sri Lankan captain Arjuna Ranatunga was the second candidate.

Media reports said that Ford was recommended by captain Rahul Dravid, a former Kent player who had also persuaded the BCCI to sign up New Zealander John Wright in 2000.

Wright served as India's first

foreign coach till 2005 when he was succeeded by Chappell for a two-year term which ended with the World Cup in the Caribbean in April.

Ford, 46, was South Africa's coach between 1999 and 2001 during which the Proteas won nine of their 11 Test and one-day series.

But his term was marred by match-fixing allegations against the then South African captain Hansie Cronje in 2000 which sparked off one of the worst scandals in the sport.

It remains to be seen if Ford will break his existing contracts with Kent and South African domestic side Dolphins to join India in one of the toughest jobs in world cricket.

Emburey played 64 Tests for England between 1978 and 1995, claiming 147 wickets at 38.40. He also took part in 61 one-day internationals where he took 71 wickets.

India hope to have a new coach in place before their tours of Ireland and England starting in the last week of June.



Dhaka players pose with their trophies at a city hotel yesterday during a prize-giving ceremony of the Ispahani Mirzapore Tea 8th National Cricket League.

PHOTO: STAR