



Did U Know?

Shivnarine Chanderpaul of the West Indies scored 116 not out in the second innings of the third Test against England at Old Trafford on Monday. It was his fifteenth century, third against England.



David Moore
(West Indies cricket coach)
"Chanderpaul is under-estimated and under-rated. He's a world-class cricketer."

Kenya to host last Afro-Asia

AFP, Nairobi

Kenya will host the third and final Afro-Asia Cup series in June 2008, local cricket officials said on Tuesday.

The country was picked to stage the tournament during the just-concluded second edition of the Afro-Asia Cup in India.

"We are honoured and privileged to host the third and last edition in the first and second week of June 2008," Cricket Kenya chairman Samir Inamdar told AFP on arrival from India.

"This is one method of raising the profile of the game in the country."

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Mashrafe focuses on SL



SPORTS REPORTER

The Tigers had another rain-interrupted day in training yesterday but there was no shortage of exuberance, especially in presence of the energetic Mashrafe Bin Mortaza at the Mirpur Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium.

The inspirational paceman, also the Bangladesh vice-captain now, joined the camp yesterday after taking part in the Afro-Asia Cup in India.

Mashrafe had injury worries before the tournament and many were skeptic about the trip but his return home without any damage seems to be a blessing because when fully fit, he means something special to the whole team.

With another Sri Lanka tour around the corner, it is hard to forget that the 23-year-old's last visit to the island two years back ended in a nightmare as he had to return home due to a back pain after just bowling one over in a limited-overs practice match at Moratuwa.

"It's always nice for me to feel

hundred per cent fit. I am really looking forward to this tour after a frustrating visit two years back," responded the 'Narail Express', who has enjoyed almost injury-free times for the last one and half years.

Mashrafe had a little success in the inter-continental cricket tournament but everybody knows how relaxed cricket Asia and Africa played although all the matches had full one-day international status.

"It was a different feeling to play along side players from different countries. I enjoyed everything there, especially the presence of Mohammad Yousuf (Pakistani batsman) was fantastic. Yousuf made fun with everything like splitting Dilhara's (Fernando) name with humour. I always love the easy-going people," informed Mashrafe, who, however, was a bit frustrated for being used as a change bowler.

The fun part over, all the Tigers are focused on a difficult task in Sri Lanka but Mashrafe was not ready to be extra-cautious about the 40-day tour where they play three Tests and as many one-day matches.

"We lost all the matches in Sri

Lanka very badly but I don't want to focus on the previous record. True, it is a tough tour but it is not wise to always think it beforehand. We have to play our natural game. I have no special plan, rather it is just another series for me," said a confident Mashrafe.

"My personal expectation is to take the Test matches to five days. We have the ability to do anything in the one-day game but we are still far behind to think about results in Test cricket," he said adding that 'bowlers can win a Test but the batsmen have to save the match'.

He also believes that the Tigers have improved a lot since their last visit to Sri Lanka.

"But we have to prove it by our performance," he observed.

The Narail quick, however, was least bothered with his new role as deputy to Mohammed Ashraful.

"I believe that only performance is accountable in the end. I have full faith on Ashraful but I am ready to support him if needed," he assured.

Mohammad Rafique also returned home with Mashrafe on Monday but the ace left-arm spinner rested for a day.

BCCI goes to Borde



AFP, Mumbai

India's cricket chiefs on Tuesday appointed former player Chandu Borde the manager-cum coach of the national team for the upcoming tours of Ireland, Scotland and England.

The veteran, who turns 73 next month, was given charge of Rahul Dravid's side a day after South African Graham Ford turned down India's offer to coach the team.

Borde, a top order batsman and widely respected as a shrewd thinker of the game, played the last of his 55 Tests in 1969 and captained India in one match.

He later served as chief selector from 1999-2002, but was currently leading a retired life at his home in the western city of Pune.

Borde will manage the Indian team for the five one-dayers against Ireland, South Africa and Pakistan in Belfast and Glasgow between June 23 and July 3 and the subsequent

full tour of England.

Bowling coach Venkatesh Prasad and fielding coach Robin Singh during the three-month tour will assist him.

The Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) will continue their search for a full time coach after Ford's refusal to take up the 300,000-dollar a year job.

"Borde will manage the team in England as we look for a coach," said BCCI secretary Niranjan Shah after a board meeting here.

Ford, a former South African coach, said on Monday he preferred to continue as director of cricket with English county Kent after being offered the India job on Saturday.

India are seeking a permanent coach to succeed former Australian captain Greg Chappell, who quit in April after India's first round exit from the World Cup.

Former captain-turned-commentator Ravi Shastri, who served as interim coach for last month's tour of Bangladesh, declined to continue citing media commitments.

Ford's snub has shaken the BCCI, a rich and powerful player on the world stage with ambitions of making its current president Sharad Pawar the International Cricket Council chief in 2008.

Former captain Sunil Gavaskar, who was on the seven-member coach selection panel that picked Ford, admitted: "We are back to square one and that is a fact of life."

The BCCI are unlikely to go back to former England spinner and current Middlesex director John Emburey, who was also interviewed on Saturday and rejected.

The panel, headed by Pawar and also including Shastri and another ex-captain Srinivas Venkataraghavan, had earlier spurned former Sri Lanka and Bangladesh coach Dav Whatmore, who was keen to take up the job.

The BCCI's apparently ham-fisted search for a coach has drawn flak from the sport's leading website Cricinfo.

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Bangladesh vice-captain Mashrafe Bin Mortaza (R) waits for his turn to bat as Habibul Bashar and Mohammad Sharif (L) take a break during practice at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium yesterday.

'Woolmer died of natural causes'

AFP, Montego Bay

Former Pakistani cricket coach Bob Woolmer was not murdered but died of natural causes, Jamaican police said Tuesday.

Jamaica Constabulary Force commissioner Lucius Thomas also ruled out match-fixing in relation to Woolmer's death during the World Cup tournament in the Caribbean.

Foreign pathologists "concur with the view that Mr Woolmer died of natural causes" while in further toxicology tests, "no substance was found to indicate that Bob Woolmer was poisoned," he said.

"The JCF accepts these findings and has now closed its investigation into the death of Mr Bob Woolmer," Thomas told a news conference.

Commenting on allegations of match-fixing, he added that "neither the ICC (International Cricket Council) nor the JCF have found any evidence of any impropriety by players, match officials nor management during the investigation of Mr Bob Woolmer's death."

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LOCAL SNIPPETS

SPORTS REPORTER

Chief Adviser Dr Fakhruddin Ahmed will distribute the National Sports Award-2006 among 10 sports personalities and organisers at a function at the Osmani Memorial Auditorium here on June 21.

The nominees are Mohammad Hasanuzzaman Bablu and Khandaker Wasim Iqbal (football), Mohammad Rafique (cricket), Begum Sharmin Akhter (shooting), Mohammad Ehetesham Sultan (hockey), Fouzia Huda (athletics), Mahmuda Sharif (swimming), Azad Abul Kalam (body-building and weightlifting), Nayana Chowdhury (Judo) and Lt Col MA Hamid (organiser).

The National Sports Award that carries medal, cash and citation was introduced in 1976. So far 158 personalities have received the award since 1976 to 2005.

RATING CHESS

Three players joined International Masters Abdullah Al Rakib and Enamul Hossain Rajib atop the table in the premier group of Destiny International Rating chess tournament yesterday after three rounds.

Previous round's joint leaders Rakib and Rajib drew their board at the Bangladesh Chess Federation hall room to finish on 2.5 points.

Also on 2.5 points are Grand Master Ziaur Rahman, FIDE Master Nasir Ahmed and Minhazuddin Ahmed Sagar.

Zia beat Delwar Hossain; Nasir defeated Debaraj Chatterjee while Sagar outplayed Enayet Hossain.

In the primary group, 12 players shared the lead with maximum three points.

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Sehwag left out



CRICINFO, undated

Virender Sehwag, Harbhajan Singh and Munaf Patel have been left out of both India's Test and one-day teams for the tour to Ireland and England, starting later this month.

Irfan Pathan also misses out, with inexperienced faces like Ishant Sharma and Ranadeb Bose bolstering a pace attack that will be spearheaded by Zaheer Khan and Sreesanth.

Sachin Tendulkar, named David's deputy for the series in England, and Sourav Ganguly have returned to the one-day side while

retaining their spot in Tests, while Bose is the only new face in both the squads. Gautam Gambhir also makes both teams, and will most likely be back-up to the current opening pair of Wasim Jaffer and Dinesh Karthik in the Tests.

Mahendra Singh Dhoni was picked as the one-day vice-captain, and the need for one-day revitalisation sees the inclusion of Mumbai's Rohit Sharma and Piyush Chawla, so impressive on the recent tour of Bangladesh.

With Ramesh Powar having acquitted himself well in the same series, there's no way back for Harbhajan Singh, while Munaf Patel's lack of fitness has gone against him. And despite the remedial

work that he put in at the bowlers' camp in Mysore, Pathan too remains on the sidelines.

The big omission though is undoubtedly Sehwag, who had show signs of returning to form during the recently concluded Afro-Asia Cup. It was in England in 2002 that Sehwag was asked to move up the order and open, and the move paid rich dividends with scores of 84 at Lord's and 106 at Trent Bridge. For a man who was vice-captain at the start of the South Africa tour late last year, this is a huge setback.

Neither Bose nor Sharma are especially quick, but Bose's ability to move the ball and Sharma's

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Pace the new game



AFP, New Delhi

India has always been considered cricket's land of slow bowlers, men with supple wrists dedicated to the beguiling and mysterious art of spin.

But there's a change in the air and it's coming at express pace as more and more youngsters are turning to fast bowling to make their names.

Recent years have witnessed a pace boom in India, with Zaheer Khan, Munaf Patel, Irfan Pathan, Rudra Pratap Singh, Vikram Rajiv Singh, Ishant Sharma, Ashish Nehra and Laxmipathy Balaji all playing key roles.

Indian fast bowling coaches believe the number is bound to increase with each year.

"We have 8-10 fast bowlers who can fight for four places in the Indian

side, which was not the case a couple of years ago," TA Sekhar, a coach at Australian speed bowling legend Dennis Lillee's MRF pace academy in Chennai, told AFP.

"Talent is there in the country. We will have to be patient to get the desired results."

Time was when India relied on spinners to win matches at home and away, with the famous quartet of Bhagwat Chandrasekhar, Bishan Bedi, Erapalli Prasanna and Srinivas Venkataraghavan calling the shots in the 1960s and 70s.

Those were the days when an India captain threw the new ball to his opening bowlers only to take the shine off it so that he could press his match-winning spinners into the attack.

The emergence of Kapil Dev changed it all in the late 1970s as he proved that India were capable of producing quality pacemen. He was a trendsetter in that he inspired

many youngsters to take to fast bowling.

Kapil quit international cricket in 1994 with a then Test record of 434 wickets and was regarded as one of the greatest all-rounders in history.

He also bagged 253 one-day wickets, as well as scoring 5,248 Test runs and 3,783 runs in the shorter version of the game.

The fast bowling trend continued even after Kapil quit as Manoj Prabhakar, Javagal Srinath and Venkatesh Prasad all served India with distinction in the 1990s before the latest crop of fast bowlers took over.

The phenomenon is nothing short of a surprise because unhelpful Indian conditions have always discouraged pacemen who have to struggle on low, slow pitches.

"Cricket is a batsman's game."

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PHOTO: STAR

Australian batting coach Tooth Brien (L) imparts some tips yesterday to the participants in the Level Two coaching course at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium.

Wright wants NZ place

CRICINFO, undated

John Wright has confirmed he would like to work with New Zealand Cricket but he expects John Bracewell to keep his job as the national coach. Wright said he would not rule out another overseas posting in future but his immediate plans were in New Zealand.

"I'd like to get involved in New Zealand cricket because it's sort of a bit like unfinished business," Wright told the Herald on Sunday. "I played for New Zealand for a long period of time and I'm pretty passionate about cricket in New Zealand. Cricket is what I've done for my working life really so I'd like to find a role here at some stage and I wouldn't necessarily rule out working overseas again."

The paper reported that Bracewell was likely to be offered a contract extension, possibly for two

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'Harmy deserved success'



AFP, Manchester

England captain Michael Vaughan believes fast bowler Stephen Harmison is on his way to once again becoming a major force in cricket.

The Durham quick, three years ago rated the world's best bowler, endured a poor series during the 5-0 Ashes series debacle in Australia where his first ball wide in the opening Test set the tone for England's largely lacklustre performance in a depressing campaign.

Even more concerning was his waywardness for the first two Tests of the ongoing home series against the West Indies who, unlike Australia, only have one world class batsman in Shivnarine Chanderpaul.

But the 28-year-old appeared a bowler transformed in the second innings of England's 60-run second

Test win at Old Trafford, concluded on Monday, which gave the hosts an unbeatable 2-0 lead in the series ahead of the fourth and final Test at Harmison's Riverside home ground starting Friday.

The sight of consecutive deliveries whistling past off-stump started to become routine rather than remarkable and something of the old venom, which makes Harmison so difficult to face, was evident after lunch on the final day.

West Indies resumed on 379 for seven, just 76 runs short of what would have been a Test record fourth innings victory total of 455.

But two Harmison wickets in four balls scuppered their hopes of a historic win. A sharply rearing delivery off a good length saw Jerome Taylor fend to Alastair Cook in the gully, Harmison's 200th wicket in his 53rd Test.

Harmison, who had a chance this match to work with England's new

bowling advisor Allan Donald, the former South Africa quick, followed that up when Fidel Edwards deflected another rising ball to Ian Bell in the slip cordon.

England's spearhead finished with four for 95 from 33 overs.

"He showed more character than any of us," said Vaughan, for whom victory saw him become England's most successful Test captain with 21 wins in 35 matches compared to Peter May's 20 in 41.

"I've never been a bowler so I can only imagine how hard it must be when you know you are not at your best, you know you are struggling and you are having to continue to bowl in front of many people watching," the England captain also told reporters.

"He looked at himself, answered a few questions and came back in the second innings. He really worked hard. I don't like to say he's

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PHOTO: AFP

India superstar Sachin Tendulkar meets physically challenged children from a private foundation during a break at the batsmen's camp at the M Chinnaswamy Stadium in Chennai yesterday.