

Borde not going to camp

PTI, Bangalore

Chandu Borde, the newly appointed manager of the Indian cricket team bound for Ireland and England, will not join the four-day camp that starts here this afternoon at the National Cricket Academy.

"No, he (Borde) will not be at the camp. It will be overseen by bowling coach Venkatesh Prasad and fielding coach Robin Singh," informed Cricket Board's Chief Administrative Officer Prof Ratnakar Shetty from Mumbai.

Team trainer Gregory King and physio John Gloster are expected to be present at the camp.

Prior to the full-fledged camp for the team, the BCCI conducted a bowlers' camp at Mysore from June 4-8 and a batsmen's camp at the NCA from June 9 which concluded on Tuesday.

Rajib, Nasir stay atop

SPORTS REPORTER

Grand Master Ziaur Rahman, International Master Abdullah Al Rakib and Minhazuddin Ahmed Sagar hit the casualty list in the premier group of Destiny International Rating chess tournament yesterday to crash out of the lead after the fourth round.

IM Enamul Hossain Rajib and FIDE Master Nasir Ahmed, however, stayed atop with three points after winning their respective matches at the Bangladesh Chess Federation hall-room.

Rajib beat Sagar while Nasir defeated Arman Monir while Ziua shared points with Rakib in the Swiss League competition.

In the primary group, five players -- Jamal Ahmed, Taherul Islam, Aminul Islam Palash, Shamima Akhter Liza and Hafizul Islam Chapal -- shared lead with maximum four points.

Senior Div TT from today

SPORTS REPORTER

Defending champions Sheikh Russel Kriha Chakra will not play on the opening day of the AB Bank Senior Division Table Tennis League, which kicks off at the Woodenfloor Gymnasium today.

Nine teams will take part in the competition with four matches scheduled for the inaugural day: Biman v Mohammedpur Boys, Brothers v Engineers Club, Armanitola v Mariners and Ajax v Wari.

SLC acquires Dambulla

CRICINFO, undated

Sri Lanka Cricket (SLC) following the intervention of Gamini Lokuge, The Sports Minister, has finally acquired the controversial Rangiri Dambulla International Cricket Stadium.

Last December, SLC was to have signed a 30-year lease agreement with the authorities of the Dambulla temple, to which the land belonged. But for some reasons, the agreement failed to materialise with the temple authorities disputing the annual payment.

However on June 12, Lokuge along with SLC officials went to Dambulla to meet the high priest of the temple, Venerable Inamaluwe Sri Sumangala Thero and an agreement was finally decided. K Mathivanan, SLC's secretary, said the two parties giving SLC full access to the stadium from June 13 signed an initial draft.

"The final legal documents will be signed within a couple of weeks after the commission for Buddha Sasana has decided on the valuation of the land and arrived at a figure which SLC will have to pay the temple authorities," said Mathivanan. "This figure will be reviewed every five years and SLC will have to pay the lease on current land values."

The board was reluctant to pump in any money to uplift or make any improvements to the stadium because there was no proper agreement binding the two parties in the past.

Robinho misses

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The CBF have taken the same position on Daniel Alves' arrival in Brazil.

However, because Sevilla have not tried to resist the CBF's attempts, there is supposedly an agreement that the wing-back could return for the Copa del Rey final on June the 23rd.

Dunga has left Lucio, Kaka, Edmilson and Ronaldinho out of his Copa America squad, with Julio Cesar missing out due to injury, and is not in the mood to let his preparations be compromised.



PHOTO: INTERNET

The kids are thrilled at the prospect of having a net session with Ricky Ponting at an event organised in Bangalore on Wednesday.

'Time to move on'

Cricket

AFP, Karachi

Pakistan's cricket chief said Wednesday it was time for the national team to move on after Jamaican police revealed that coach Bob Woolmer was not murdered after all, but died of natural causes.

Nasim Ashraf, chairman of the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB), said he was glad to see the end of a "traumatic" three months that began when Woolmer's body was found in his hotel during the World Cup in the Caribbean.

"The chapter of Woolmer's death is closed and we feel it's time to move on," Ashraf told AFP in his first comments since the announcement by Jamaican police late Tuesday.

Former England Test batsman Woolmer, 58, died on March 18, the day after 1992 world champions Pakistan were ousted from the 2007 tournament by rank outsiders Ireland.

Days later police announced they were treating the case as murder, saying an autopsy report showed Woolmer had been strangled. Speculation swirled about links to a "match-fixing mafia".

Pakistan's World Cup squad went through extensive interrogations, players were fingerprinted and DNA-tested, with then-captain Inzamamul Haq and bowling coach Mushtaq Ahmed questioned twice.

Cricket legend-turned-politician Imran Khan and some current players have called for the PCB to sue the Caribbean investigators because of the way the Pakistani team and the country were cast in a bad light by the affair.

But Ashraf -- who resigned after the World Cup debacle but was asked to stay on by President Pervez

Musharraf -- appeared to rule out taking any legal action.

"I have given you Pakistan's stance and I don't want to comment on what individuals say," Ashraf said when asked if the PCB would take the Jamaican police to court.

The cricket board chairman said the case was made more difficult by "hurtful" speculation in the media, which threw allegations about gambling, poisoned champagne and even Al-Qaeda into the mix.

"There was a lot of unhealthy speculation about the cause of his death over the last few months, none of which eased the pressure," said Ashraf.

"We fully co-operated with the authorities so that the truth comes out in the case, (we) sent our diplomats and investigators to help them and we are now glad that the true findings have come out."

The PCB head said that Pakistan would name the training facilities at its national cricket academy after Woolmer to honour his memory.

"Woolmer was literally a family member to us and we will always remember his services to Pakistan cricket," said Ashraf.

"I personally went to Cape Town to his funeral and consoled with his widow Gill and will continue to remember Woolmer as a great friend of Pakistan cricket."

Looking to the future, Ashraf said Pakistan was rebuilding its side, which has also been hit by a series of crises over the past year including the Oval Test fiasco and a doping scandal.

The Test match last year at the Oval against England was declared forfeit by the umpires after the Pakistan players stayed in their dressing room following the tea interval in protest at a five-run penalty for alleged ball tampering.

Shoaib Malik has replaced Inzamam as captain to give the team

a fresh start. The PCB is also nearing the end of an international hunt for a new coach.

Former Pakistan captain and coach Intikhab Alam said Pakistan should seek an apology from the Jamaican police but added that it was "too late" for any legal action.

He said Pakistan also had to learn from the debacle.

"Pakistan cricket should draw lessons from it, that it should never leave players in the lurch when they are in a difficult situation," he told AFP.

"And discipline the team so that they appear as a coherent unit and not a bunch of undisciplined people."

Shut up

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Former Pakistan paceman Sarfraz Nawaz alleged that Woolmer's death was connected with the "match-fixing mafia" and that the Pakistan World Cup games were fixed.

It triggered a variety of accusations that Woolmer was about to spill the beans about match-fixing in his forthcoming books, claims denied by his co-author Ivo Tennant.

Condon said he spent several days in Kingston, Jamaica, when he spoke to senior investigators, who said at the time that pathology tests showed Woolmer was likely strangled.

"The death and the location had none of the obvious hallmarks of a murder and it remains a concern that the murder theory was so readily embraced," Condon said.

BCCI to wait

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He also dismissed the speculation in some television news channels that former Test cricketers Gundappa Vishwanath and S Venkataraghavan were prospective candidates for the position. "We have the utmost respect for Vishwanath, Venkataraghavan and others, whose names have been discussed in certain sections of the media to coach India. But, frankly, we have never discussed their names and they are rumours only."

On whether the new coach would be an Indian, Shah said, "Whether an Indian or a foreigner will be appointed coach of India will be decided later on. Let me reiterate, we really want to be very, very careful now when it comes to appointing the coach of India."

Shah's statements also suggested that the position was not going to be offered to Emburey. "We don't want to appoint anyone, whether he is an Indian or a foreigner. Not even Emburey for that matter. Let the squad return from the twin tour (of Ireland and England). Only then, the BCCI will take up the issue of the new coach. We have full confidence in Chandu Borde, Venkatesh Prasad, Robin Singh and, of course, Rahul Dravid and his team."

Pathologist defends theory

CRICINFO, undated

A day after Jamaican police confirmed that Bob Woolmer died of natural causes, Dr Ere Sessaiah, the pathologist who conducted the post mortem, defended his findings that Woolmer was murdered.

"I am sticking to my findings," Sessaiah told the Jamaica Observer. "He was murdered. Woolmer is not a first for me, I have been doing autopsies here [in Jamaica] since 1995."

However, his insistence that Woolmer was murdered is likely to result in the issue being settled in a coroner's court. The results of the investigation will now be handed over to the coroner of the corporate Area, Patrick Murphy. All the files detailing the four pathologists' findings, as well as the results of tests carried out on fluid and tissue samples taken from Woolmer's body, will also be handed over to him.

Woolmer was found unconscious in his hotel room in Kingston a day after Pakistan's exit from the World Cup. The autopsy, conducted by Sessaiah, claimed that Woolmer was murdered by manual strangulation. The investigation was treated as a homicide until early this month when three independent pathologists all concluded that Woolmer died from a heart attack caused by a combination of illnesses.

'T20 overkills cricket'

CRICINFO, undated

With the Twenty20 World Cup round the corner, Ricky Ponting offered a tempered endorsement on Wednesday of cricket's newest format, saying while the money generated from this format is beneficial to the game, there is a danger of overkill affecting the players.

"I've never been a big fan of Twenty20 cricket, but I gather that there's a lot of interest and money in this version of the game," Ponting said, "and we need money for the growth and development of the game. That said, the international calendar is packed these days and on top of that Twenty20 cricket won't do much for the players." He was in Bangalore as part of a sponsored event for school children.

The Twenty20 World Cup will be held in September in South Africa, and Ponting's Australia will be heavily favoured to add to the one-day championship they retained in March. This format of the game has gained popularity since its international debut in 2005-05, when Australia hosted New Zealand. That win included, Australia have won three of the five Twenty20s they've played.

With a fairly lukewarm reaction to the recent Afro-Asia Cup, critics have been quick to say that there's little to separate such games and the hundreds of charity, exhibition and benefit games that are played around the world. Ponting didn't pick sides to the debate but agreed that perhaps the scheduling of such events should be revisited.

"They have all got their place, I suppose. I was having a chat with Rahul Dravid recently and he told me that this probably wasn't the best time to organise such a series. It's the off season for some teams and the weather's pretty hot. Even the scheduling of India's tour to Bangladesh wasn't the best; you had a Test match washed out there. We in Australia are following the policy of rotation and resting the players to save them from fatigue and burnout."

Mallorca digs

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appeared to assume they would win at the Santiago Bernabeu.

"They have underestimated Mallorca," Argentine midfielder Guillermo Pereyra told Marca. "And not just the players, also the assumptions of local press and the celebrations of the president [calderon]."

"I really believe that they have failed to respect Mallorca."

Barcelona forward Leo Messi has defended his club's to pay Mallorca bonuses should they beat Real Madrid.

Inter stake

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He is now on international duty at the Copa America, and has been targeted along with Cagliari skipper David Suazo to spruce up the Serie A champions' forward line.

"It's true that we are interested in him, he is a player that we like a lot. He has quality and character, something we need," said Moratti.

"We are quite advanced in our negotiations to acquire Suazo, but until the deal is completed we cannot take anything for granted."

Premiership rivals Manchester United and Liverpool have also been linked with a move for Tevez. Moratti also revealed the club will make a concerted effort for long-time defensive target Cristian Chivu of Roma.

Police creates mess

Cricket

INTERNET, undated

The handling of the inquiry into the death of Pakistan cricket coach Bob Woolmer has been a farce from day one. Surely heads will roll, perhaps as early as this week.

If ever there was an example of how not to handle a murder investigation, surely this is it.

From the moment Woolmer was found dead in his hotel room on March 18 in Jamaica, the morning after his team's shock World Cup loss to Ireland, there has been so much misinformation it's hard not to think police just wanted to be seen to be doing something, as opposed to actually making progress into finding the killer.

Oops, sorry, make that confirming whether he was murdered or died of natural causes.

Three months after the incident, there is still no answer to this essential question.

That's right, three months. What on earth is going on?

There have been umpteen theories bandied about, yet still nothing concrete has emerged.

How embarrassing, and humiliating for the local authorities, and cricket in general.

The immediate suspicion was that the alleged fatal strangling of Woolmer had links to match-fixing and Ireland's stunning win that all but ensured Pakistan had an early

exit from the World Cup.

There were reports he had argued with some players on the team bus on the way back from Sabina Park, and that this had continued at the Pegasus hotel.

Then there was the bombshell a couple of days later dropped by the second in charge of Jamaican police, Mark Shields, a man who appeared to fancy himself as a real-life James Bond.

Shields, a former Scotland Yard detective, was extremely friendly and always available for a quote, even at 1am one day when false reports claimed a suspect had been taken into custody.

But he seemed to spend too much time conducting media interviews and lapping up the limelight.

Questions were asked: Who was running the show?

Finally, with pressure mounting, Shields declared there were "suspicious" circumstances, which all but confirmed Woolmer had been murdered.

This theory gathered strength, and senior Pakistan players were soon thought to be suspects.

Three Pakistan team members were fingerprinted and swabbed for DNA as part of the investigation, but already there were inconsistencies.

Government pathologist Ere Sessaiah at first called Woolmer's death inconclusive but four days later ruled he had been strangled.

His key piece of evidence was

that the hyoid bone in Woolmer's neck was broken, generally a clear sign of strangulation.

Or so we thought.

A prominent former West Indian cricketer, with close links to Jamaican police, said privately that the investigation had been botched.

Then Shields called for help from London's Metropolitan Police team.

The cracks were opening.

Last week, three internationally renowned pathologists said that Woolmer, a diabetic who reportedly slept with an oxygen mask, was not strangled, but had died after a heart attack. Woolmer's wife, Gill, and their sons, Dale and Russell, have also been told this.

Police chief Lucius Thomas -- Shields has been silent in recent times -- would confirm only that Woolmer had not been poisoned, but said a final verdict would be given this week.

In a sad way, the confusion around Woolmer's death is almost a representation of what's wrong with West Indies cricket at the moment.

While the Test team finally showed some heart in the third Test against England this week, recent scorecards have been abysmal.

Clearly, when it comes to all matters cricket, there is much work the West Indies must do on and off the field to repair their reputation.

Gill relieved at finding

Cricket

AFP, Cape Town

The widow of former Pakistan cricket coach Bob Woolmer expressed relief Tuesday after Jamaican police finally declared that he was not murdered but died of natural causes.

"We are relieved that it has been officially announced that Bob died of natural causes," Gill Woolmer told AFP from her home in Pinelands, Cape Town, adopted by the English-born Woolmer as his hometown.

"It is now over".

She would not say whether the finding by the police, adding, surprised her. "I didn't expect anything. It was an official police investigation."

Jamaica Constabulary Force commissioner Lucius Thomas earlier Tuesday announced that

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."

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

Woolmer, 58, died soon after being found unconscious in his hotel room in Jamaica on March 18, the day after Pakistan was knocked out of the cricket World Cup by the minnows Ireland.

An initial autopsy report proved inconclusive, but a pathology report later indicated the former South African coach died of asphyxia as a result of "manual strangulation," which led the police to treat the death as murder.

The claims rocked the world of cricket amid speculation about links to an alleged gambling mafia,

claims for which Thomas said were without foundation.

"The Jamaica Constabulary Force adopted a thoroughly professional investigation where nothing was left to chance. Every effort has been made by the Jamaica Constabulary Force to seek the truth surrounding Bob Woolmer's death," he said.

"My hope is that despite the trauma of the last two and half months, Mrs Woolmer and her sons will be confident that the JCF has done all it can to establish the truth surrounding the death of her husband."

Woolmer, a former England Test batsman who made his home in South Africa, was cremated at a private family ceremony in Cape Town on May 4.

Much to ponder

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April represented another blow. While few top footballers leave a leading club because of the departure of a director, Dein's importance cannot be overstated, and not merely because of the close relationship epitomised by the fact that his son, Darren, was Henry's best man and acts as his representative in setting up commercial deals.

Wenger was equally disturbed by the former vice-chairman's departure, which created a vacuum that has yet to be filled and raised further questions over the manager's future. There were whispers over the weekend that, as he did with Vieira, Wenger is ready to cash in on Henry and will allow him to leave, although a more plausible reading of the situation is that the manager is unwilling to make promises he cannot keep. As a man of integrity, he will not break his contract, but with such uncertainty surrounding the club's ownership, he is in no position to commit himself in the long term.

With his 30th birthday approaching

in August, Henry is seeking reassurances that his ambitions can be fulfilled at Arsenal, which would require renewed investment and Wenger staying at the club beyond next season. Having rejected a move to Barcelona last summer, Henry is aware that this opportunity will not come again, so it is now or never.

All of which explains Barcelona's confidence, if not their habit of overstating their case. The club were claiming privately yesterday that Henry has agreed a three-year contract worth £6.7 million a year and will be presented as their player in the city next week.

In reality, nothing will be resolved until later in the summer because Barcelona have yet to table a bid and tend to start low in any case. The most crucial development will come when Henry meets Wenger for talks at the club's training ground next month because they are the only individuals with any inking as to how this saga will end.

Mittal eyeing

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have become a more attractive commodity after their return to the Premiership. City are already the subject of interest from an unknown Far East businessman, who is planning to make a formal bid later in the week if auditors are satisfied after completing due diligence. But the 56-year-old Mittal, who last year bought Arcelor, the world's second-biggest steelmaker for £17.8bn, is maintaining a watching brief.

Mittal has twice the fortune of the Russian Chelsea owner, Roman Abramovich, and more than the American Glazers can boast at Manchester United, and Sullivan and the Golds, who would sell for around £50m, would be keen on a quick sale if their time at the club is to end after 14 years.

Steve Bruce, the manager, has had a joint bid of £5m for West Bromwich Albion's Diomansy Kamara and Jason Koumas rejected. Fulham made an undisclosed, bid for the pair but that was also turned down.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS
1 Upper limit
4 Little demons
8 Be in charge of
12 Coloration
13 Appearance
14 Shrek, for one
15 Refugee
16 Erich Segal
18 Hymn of praise
20 Bankroll
21 Nuisance
24 Veranda
28 Furniture for two
32 Mediterranean strip
33 -- out a living
34 Dieter's entree
36 Forefront
37 Broadcasts
39 Small parrot

41 Skewered meal
43 Pleasant
46 To and --
48 Jockey's handoff
50 Tomato
55 Siesta
56 Satan's field
57 Genealogy chart
58 Book-keeper (Abbr.)
59 On the novel side
60 Fax
61 Fix a cuff

2 Emanation
3 Lap dog, for short
4 Doctor's concern
5 Cattle call?
6 Angle (Abbr.)
7 Distort
8 Frank
9 Id
10 Counterpart
11 Susan of "L.A. Law"
17 Easy mark
19 Mimic
22 Caulk
23 Claw

25 Sitarist
26 Autocrat
27 Full house, e.g.
28 Secrecy thwarteur
29 Tom Joad type
30 Hit or miss?
31 "Rikki-Tikki- --"
35 Issued a fiat
38 Without risk
40 Spell-down
42 Support system?
45 Makes a decision
47 Part of the foot?
48 Scruff
49 Unwanted e-mail segment
51 Eggs
52 Energy
53 Antelope
54 Writer Deighton

Solution time: 21 mins.

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AREA OXIDE
MEZZANINE ZEN
ACTS RAZED
PADRE RONI
ARID FLOUNGED
WIZARDROSS ABA
NIAZARETH AOM
FIRE FLOUNDED
GENE BUZZWORDS
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59												

CRYPTOQUIP

C K G B X Z J M R A Z W G C A N U

W N B X M Q E M W Y M Q L R T A M

J N Z Q E G F - J Z D W B Z Y T N D A N Y :

" A E N K G F Z Y U M C L Z Q L . "

Yesterday's Cryptoquip: IF THE KING OF HUMPPACKS HAD A MALE OFFSPRING, WOULD HE BE CALLED THE PRINCE OF WHALES?

Today's Cryptoquip Clue: Q equals W