



An action from yesterday's 27th National Hockey Championship match between Dhaka and Chittagong at the Maulana Bhasani National Stadium.

PHOTO: STAR

'Shoaib vital to success'

AFP, Sydney

Coaching hopeful Geoff Lawson believes Pakistan can produce the best cricket team in the world if express paceman Shoaib Akhtar stays fit for extended periods.

After being interviewed in Pakistan this week for the position of national coach, the former Australia paceman had a long conversation with Shoaib at a training camp and watched him bowl.

"He's a vital cog to them being top of the tree," Lawson told Friday's The Australian newspaper. "At 32, he's still got two or three very good years left in him."

A Pakistan Cricket Board panel interviewed former Bangladesh coach Dav Whatmore on Thursday as one of three possible replacements, along with Whatmore's compatriots Richard Done and Lawson, for Bob Woolmer, who died of natural causes at the World Cup in March.

International Cricket Council high performance manager Done, a former New South Wales fast bowler now based in Dubai, met the panel last Sunday.

Lawson said he was impressed with what he saw of Shoaib.

"I had a good chat to him and saw him bowl a bit in a practice game," Lawson said.

"He looks pretty good. He bowled four or five overs and bowled sharply. He looks fit and by all accounts has been training hard."

Lawson believes that Shoaib's future will be determined by how well his body copes with recent operations.

Vandort

FROM PAGE 17
debut in the absence of veterans Sanath Jayasuriya and Marvan Atapattu.

Jayasuriya is currently in England playing county cricket, while Atapattu opted out of the squad for personal reasons.

Sri Lanka will play three Tests against Bangladesh and are looking to maintain a 100 per cent record, having beaten them in all seven previous meetings.

Hamlet pilots

FROM PAGE 17
defeated Mahbub 3-1 and Pappu beat veteran Kachi 3-0 to swing the match Biman's way.

But the battle was far from over at the Woodenfloor Gymnasium as Mahbub led the scores 2-2 beating Manash 3-0.

Hamlet was facing Mostafa in the final set and the Biman player wrapped up the show 3-0 to secure his side's eighth win in as many matches.

Russel have won seven games to reach the Super League along-side Ajax, Armanitola and Wari. The Super League is expected to start within a couple of days.

In the day's earlier matches, Wari blanked Mariners 3-0, Ajax recorded an identical win over Engineers Club while Armanitola defeated Mohammadpur Boys 3-1.



Did U Know?

May Sutton of the United States was the first non-European to win the Wimbledon women's singles title in 1905.

Army puts players to task



AFP, Abbotabad

They were scared at first, but Pakistan's cricketers have emerged from 15 gruelling days of army training in peak condition, instructors say.

The 20-member squad has been confined to a spartan military base in the northwestern city of Abbotabad in a bid to improve fitness and discipline.

Shoaib Malik's men will need to be in good shape for the coming season, which starts next week with a trip to Scotland to play one-day internationals against the hosts and bitter rivals India.

Pakistan -- still reeling from the death of their coach Bob Woolmer the day after their World Cup exit in March -- are also due to host world number two South Africa and number one side Australia.

Fitness has been Pakistan's weakness in recent years, with Shoaib Akhtar, Mohammad Asif and Abdul Razzaq's absence from the World Cup considered the main reason for a humiliating first-round exit.

It prompted the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) to ask the army for help. And it just so happens that the PCB's patron is none other than the country's military ruler, President

General Pervez Musharraf.

"The players were initially frightened about the concept but once they started enjoying exercises they did extra work," instructor Major Mohammad Arif told AFP after a trekking session this week.

"They are now demanding similar camps in future," he added.

Arif said the course, which ends Friday, would leave them ready to face Australia.

"Sports mean fitness and if the players continue to train in army ways, I am sure they can compete with Australia in fitness," Arif said. The Wallabies conducted a similar camp in Queensland last year intended to sharpen fitness and mental strength ahead of the Ashes against England. They thrashed their rivals 5-0.

"Australia have won three World Cups in a row, simply because their mental and physical strength are exemplary," Arif added.

The army trainer described mercurial allrounder Shahid Afridi as the fittest player in the Pakistan squad, and said injury-prone paceman Akhtar would benefit most from the course.

"Akhtar has strength but he needs to increase his stamina and flexibility. His lower body is heavy but I am impressed with his determination and will to do extra work," said Arif.

Akhtar is convinced the experi-

ence will work wonders.

"We trained the best way and I am sure these exercises will help me in the long run," said the so-called "Rawalpindi Express", who has played just one Test in the last 16 months.

During the course players rose early and trained in two groups. Half would do physical exercises while the rest worked-out in the gym.

"The theme of this training was to make players strong and through training and lectures we told them how they can prevent injuries," said Arif.

The players lived in the army mess and also followed strict dress codes and timings, something manager Talat Ali said would improve their discipline.

"It's nice to see players turn up on time for meals," said Ali, a former Test opener.

And Pakistan's young captain Malik, appointed after Inzamamul Haq stood down following the World Cup, said the players had the time of their lives.

"It was wonderful and there were no distractions for the players as in the camps held previously. We had a wonderful time and hope such camps are held regularly," he said.

Dhaka ride on Jimmy treble

SPORTS REPORTER

Russell Mahmud Jimmy slammed a hatrick as title aspirants Dhaka brushed aside Chittagong 8-0 in yesterday's 27th National Hockey Championship match at the Maulana Bhasani National Hockey Stadium.

Dhaka were 3-0 up by the eighth minute with Iqbal, Rubel and Sohel slotting one goal apiece. Jimmy then began his campaign in the 13th minute and the national striker sealed the treble with goals in 15 and 19 minutes.

Leading 6-0 at the break, Dhaka added two more with Dinar and Babar finding the mark.

In other matches, Bangladesh Navy blanked Narayanganj 3-0 and Mymensingh defeated Patuakhali 4-1.

Bracewell place to be reviewed

CRICINFO, undated

New Zealand Cricket has formed a subcommittee to determine whether John Bracewell should be retained as the national coach. Bracewell's contract expires next month and John Wright, the former India coach, has expressed interest in being involved in the country's cricket.

Wright withdrew his application for the head of Australia's Centre of Excellence in Brisbane and is likely to feature highly in discussions for the role in his home country. The subcommittee formed by Justin Vaughan, the new NZC chief executive, met on Tuesday to review the position and outline a process to appoint the coach.

Stephen Fleming and Craig McMillan have publicly supported a contract extension for Bracewell and Wright believes his former teammate will keep the job.

Bleach at your peril

AFP, Colombo

A man who tried to bleach his hair to look like Sri Lanka's "sexiest" cricket player, Lasith Malinga, has ended up in hospital with severe burns, the Daily Mirror said here Friday.

The 20-year-old man in the central town of Kandy was hospitalised after he used two types of acid to try to dye his hair, the report said.

The 23-year-old Malinga was named the sexiest cricketer of the World Cup by the Barbados Sunday Sun newspaper because of his "eye-catching, blonde-streaked curly hairdo, eyebrow ring and tattooed biceps."

Many Sri Lankan men have been trying to copy Malinga's unkempt style, although the stylist behind the hair said he took two days to create the distinctive bleached-blond corkscrews.

SA to play in Karachi

AFP, Karachi

South Africa will play a Test and a warm-up match in the southwestern Pakistani city of Karachi, a venue where they refused to play over security fears four years ago.

The itinerary for their tour announced by the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) on Thursday includes two Tests, a three-day match and five one-day internationals.

Foreign teams have refused to play in Karachi, which has been troubled by violence, in the aftermath of the September 11 attacks and over fears about security in the region.

"The South Africans showed no reservations in playing in Karachi and approved the city as the venue for a warm-up match and for a Test," PCB chief operating officer Shafqat Naghmi said.

More than 40 people were killed in Karachi last month in some of Pakistan's worst political violence.

The Proteas are also scheduled to play a one-day international at the border city of Peshawar, where teams have refused to play due to its close proximity to Afghanistan.

Pakistan had to play their home series against Australia and the West Indies at neutral venues in 2001 and 2002 as both teams refused to tour the country over security fears.

New Zealand agreed to tour in 2002 but were forced to cut it short after a bomb blast near their hotel killed 14 people, including French naval staff. South Africa then refused play any match in Karachi on their tour in 2003.

The Proteas will arrive in the last week of September and open the Test series with the first Test in Karachi on October 1.

TOUR ITINERARY
Oct 1-5: 1st Test in Karachi
Oct 8-12: 2nd Test in Lahore
Oct 18: 1st one-day international in Lahore

Oct 21: 2nd one-day international in Peshawar
Oct 23: 3rd one-day international in Rawalpindi
Oct 26: 4th one-day international in Multan

Oct 29: 5th one-day international in Faisalabad

Difficult draw for Nadal

AFP, London



Rafael Nadal's bid to dethrone Roger Federer at Wimbledon faces a tough early test after the Spanish second seed

was drawn with experienced American Mardy Fish in the first round of the men's singles.

Fish has a good track record on grass and is a former finalist at the Nottingham Open, one of the Wimbledon warm-up tournaments played on the surface.

Friday's draw pitted Federer, bidding for a fifth straight title at the All England club, with Russia's Teimuraz Gabashvili of Russia.

Third seed Andy Roddick opens his campaign with an all-American meeting with Justin Gimelstob while hopes of British success on home soil were dampened by tough draws for Andy Murray and Tim Henman.

Murray, who remains doubtful for the tournament because of a wrist injury, faces tricky Ecuadorian Nicolas Lapentti while Henman,

with only two wins under his belt this year, must take on former French Open champion Carlos Moya.

In the women's singles, defending champion Amelie Mauresmo of France has a testing start to the defence of her title with a match against American Jamea Jackson, who can count a victory over Maria Sharapova as part of her record in grass.

Jackson beat the 2004 Wimbledon champion on her way to the final at Birmingham last year.

Top seed Justine Henin of Belgium will not expect to be unduly delayed by Argentinian qualifier Jorgelina Cravero in her opening match while Sharapova opens up against Taiwan's Chan Yung-Jan.

Two-time champion Serena Williams plays Lourdes Dominguez-Lino of Spain while her sister Venus faces Alla Kudryavtseva of Russia.

Fast-rising Serb Jelena Jankovic, the third seed, opens up against British wild card Anne Keothavong.

Maria dreams of glory

AFP, London



Maria Sharapova has set her sights on going for an Olympic gold medal at Wimbledon.

Sharapova, 20, knows exactly what it feels like to be a champion on centre court at the All-England Club after winning the singles title there in 2004.

The Russian starts her bid to land another Wimbledon crown next week, but even that pales in comparison to the prospect of successfully representing her country when the Olympics go to London in 2012.

Wimbledon is scheduled to host the Olympic tennis tournament and that suits Sharapova perfectly because, as well as her win three years ago, she has also reached two semifinals on the famous grass courts of south-west London.

The US Open champion, who didn't play in Athens in 2004, would consider playing at the Beijing Olympics next year, but it is the chance to compete for gold at Wimbledon that has captured her imagination.

"I would love to compete in 2012 because that will be played on Centre Court at Wimbledon, which would be amazing," she said. "It is five years from now, but you never know."

"2012 will be a wonderful opportunity, because there is so much excitement around it. You could see how

much pride Britain gained from winning their bid." With few British players capable of making it into the top 100 in the women's world rankings, there is little chance of Sharapova being challenged by a home player for either an Olympic medal or the Wimbledon title.

In stark contrast, tennis in eastern Europe is stronger than ever. Several of Sharapova's Russian compatriots, as well as Serbian duo Jelena Jankovic and Ana Ivanovic, are all capable of taking Amelie Mauresmo's Wimbledon title.

Sharapova, seeded second at Wimbledon, believes British players must toughen up mentally if they are to become serious challengers.

"People often ask me why do I think suddenly Russian women have been so successful in tennis and it is really hard to say," she said.

"It is not like you can put 10 people in one factory and they are all going to be successful. We all developed our game and our own talent in different ways."

"A lot of it has to do as well with the love of the sport. For example, in America, kids have a lot of opportunities - they can play tennis, they can play baseball or basketball."

"In Russia, for someone to be a tennis player, they probably have to drive around an hour each way to get to a training facility, so their dedication is towards just one sport."

"If they are not passionate about it and just have someone forcing them



PHOTO: AFP

Russian tennis star Maria Sharapova is all smiles during a photocall in London to promote Sochi's 2014 bid to host the Olympic and Paralympic Games on Thursday.

Ramdin, Morton give WI win



CRICINFO, undated

Despite having barely half their full side, the West Indians completed a confidence-boosting seven-wicket win against the England Lions at New Road.

The match was reduced to 24 overs a side after heavy overnight rain and further morning showers, but the West Indians reached the target of 175 with five balls to spare to complete their first success on tour.

Denesh Ramdin and Runako Morton were the main run-scorers, each striking rapid half-centuries as the English bowlers failed to make an impression. The pair added 130, with Ramdin hitting 73 off 52 balls after Chris Gayle had fallen early to James Anderson.

Ramdin fell to Stuart Broad with the target in sight and, although Marlon Samuels was run out for a second-ball duck, Morton finished unbeaten on 72 from 61 balls to see the chase through with Sylvester Joseph, retained for this match

because of the injury problems. Anderson was the only bowler to escape major punishment, as Broad went at eight-an-over and Alex Gidman conceded 24 off two overs. The spinners, Michael Yardy and Gareth Batty, pulled the rate back marginally but the West Indians were always in control.

The English innings also had a lightning start with Will Jefferson and Vikram Solanki adding 75 for the first wicket. Using their Twenty20 experience, they exploited a weak West Indian attack after the tourists had drafted in five emergency replacements.

However, once Jefferson fell, the innings stuttered as Samuels's claimed three wickets with his offspin during an economical five-over spell. Ed Joyce and Owais Shah, hoping to fill one of the vacant batting slots in the main squad, both failed to score at a run-a-ball. Gidman offered some improvement with a 32-ball 34, but the eventual total didn't stretch the West Indians.

Their next warm-up match is against Derbyshire on Sunday

Joseph turns down captaincy

CRICINFO, undated

Sylvester Joseph, who was named by the West Indies Cricket Board as the captain of the A-team tour of Zimbabwe, has turned down the offer, according to a report in The Nation newspaper.

The news adds to the growing sense of chaos surrounding the trip, with WIPA, the players' association, insisting that it will not happen while the board continue to insist that it remains viable.

The Nation reported that the board has now offered the job to Daren Ganga, who captained the senior side in the last two Test in England. But Ganga is a representative of WIPA and it seems inconceivable that he would accept the role.

Tony Doyal, the board corporate services manager, continued to insist that unless WIPA passed over their documentary evidence that it would be unsafe to travel to Zimbabwe, then the tour would go ahead.

"We want WIPA to send us what they have so we can make the best decision in the circumstances and that both parties can agree to it," he said. "WIPA never sent us anything. We are anxious to get information. We have sought information from a variety of sources."

to do it, then I do not think that is the way to develop talent."

In a desperate attempt to improve the quality of British players, the Lawn Tennis Association has invested over 40 million pounds in a state of the art training centre in London for the country's young talents.

Sharapova would love to see Russian youngsters benefit from similar facilities and that is one reason why she hopes Sochi, the Russian Black Sea resort where she spent her early childhood, wins its bid for the 2014 Winter Olympics.

The former world number one, who is an ambassador the Sochi bid, had to leave Russia aged nine because there were not enough high-quality training facilities to develop her game.

But if Sochi beats Austria's Salzburg and South Korea's Pyeong Chang in the IOC vote, to be held in Guatemala on July 4, she is convinced the legacy would be priceless.

She said: "One of the greatest things we could achieve by bringing the Winter Olympics to Sochi would be giving the young kids the facilities and opportunity to stay in their own country, and be around their own family, to develop their dreams."

when they will have their full squad available, with the arrival of Dwayne Smith, Lendl Simmons and Austin Richards Jr. England name their one-day squad, and new captain, on Friday morning.

BRIEF SCORES
West Indians 178 for 3 (Ramdin 73, Morton 72*) beat England Lions 174 for 6 (Solanki 38, Samuels 3-16) by seven wickets.

Rain ruins tour

FROM PAGE 17 Mubarak b Sharif	11				
Jayawardene not out	31				
Kandamby not out	1				
Extras: (nb-6)	6				
Total: (For 4 wkts in 36.3 overs) 170					
Did not bat: Perera, Lokuarachchi, Herath, Gangamaya, Welegedara, Prasad.					
Fall of wickets: 1-61, 2-118, 3-126, 4-161.					
Bowler	O	M	R	W	
Rasel	8	0	48	1	
Shahadat	9	0	48	0	
Sharif	7.3	3	25	1	
Razzak	4	1	15	1	
Shakib	8	1	34	1	
Result: Match drawn.					