



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

## '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 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.

"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

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defeated Mahbub 3-1 and Pappu beat veteran Kachi 3-0 to swing the match Hamlet's way.

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

Hamlet was facing Mostafa in the final set and the Birman 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 alongside 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

### Cricket

AFP, Abbottabad

They were scared at first, but Pakistan's cricketers have emerged from 15 grueling 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 Abbottabad in a bid to improve training 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.

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## India embark on rocky road

### Cricket

CRICINFO, undated

Just 15 months ago, Indian one-day cricket was riding a wave the size of big Pipe in Hawaii, having brushed aside the challenge of Pakistan (4-1 away from home) and a feeble England (5-1). The batsmen were piling on the runs; the bowling was both penetrative and tidy, while the fielding had been injected with a shot or two of youthful vigour. Almost everyone was talking of them as challengers to Australia's continued World Cup domination.

The sky, it appeared, was the limit. But as soon as the team left the subcontinent, the hot air started to leak out of the balloon. With the stand-and-deliver methods that worked so well in familiar climes no longer an option, the batting frailties began to show. Intelligent medium-pace bowling from the likes of Dwayne Bravo routed them in the Caribbean, and there were no answers to the conundrum on the Malaysian adventure either. On seam-friendly pitches, the Indian bowlers didn't do too badly, but the batsmen were cruelly exposed by Mitchell Johnson and his ilk.

The Champions Trophy on home soil should have provided some much-needed succour, but unseasonal weather conditions resulted in some pitches that wouldn't have been out of place in the early part of the English summer. Confronted by extravagant seam movement, some swing and occasional steeping bounce, the Indian challenge petered out in a winner-take-all encounter against Australia. No Asian team reached the last four, once again highlighting why most of them struggle when the pendulum swings towards the quick bowlers.

The truth was soon revealed, as a ramshackle outfit low on spirit, energy, skill and inventiveness were taken apart by both Bangladesh and Sri Lanka in the World Cup. After two years of preparation, Vision 2007 had ended with a rude poke in the eye and a first-round exit. Defeat is not often well-digested in the subcontinent, but this was defeat with a quick bowler.

But it wasn't conditions alone that ruined India's campaign. There was a collective meltdown, with the matchwinners of the previous season hapless bunnies in front of high-powered floodlights. Yuvraj Singh, so pivotal in a sequence

ence will work wonders.

"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.

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## Dhaka ride on Jimmy treble

SPORTS REPORTER

Russell Mahmud Jimmy slammed a hattrick 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 hair, 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 Shafiqat 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 to 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 from 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

Oct 30: 6th one-day international in Lahore

Oct 31: 7th one-day international in Lahore

Nov 1: 8th one-day international in Lahore

Nov 2: 9th one-day international in Lahore

Nov 3: 10th one-day international in Lahore

Nov 4: 11th one-day international in Lahore

Nov 5: 12th one-day international in Lahore

Nov 6: 13th one-day international in Lahore

Nov 7: 14th one-day international in Lahore

Nov 8: 15th one