

Nat'l women's handball from July 19

UNB, Dhaka

The BASIC Bank 18th National Women's Handball Championship will begin on July 19.

Top eight teams of the national meet will be entitled to participate in the ensuing Bangladesh Games.

The affiliated district and other teams, which are yet to confirm their participation, have been asked to send their entries by July 9.

India on top

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good knock in the opening game of the tour, against Ireland on this ground, and would be vital during the run-chase later on.

South Africa made two changes as well -- Charl Langeveldt and Thandi Tshabalala making way for Dale Steyn and Justin Kemp. Kallis felt it would be a bowler-friendly match but said he expected it to be so throughout the game.

More than five hours were lost to rain and damp weather before the umpires finally decided to get in a 31-over-a-side contest. The team batting second have managed to prevail in tense finishes on both occasions and India will hope that the trend continues in the decider as well. Kallis and Co, though, will have other ideas.

TEAMS

SOUTH AFRICA: Morne van Wyk, AB de Villiers, Jacques Kallis, Herschelle Gibbs, Jean-Paul Duminy, Justin Kemp, Mark Boucher, Andrew Hall, Andre Nel, Dale Steyn, Makhaya Ntini.

INDIA: Sachin Tendulkar, Sourav Ganguly, Gautam Gambhir, Rahul Dravid, Yuvraj Singh, Mahendra Singh Dhoni, Dinesh Karthik, Piyush Chawla, Ajit Agarkar, Zaheer Khan, RP Singh.

Toss: India.

Umpires: Aleem Dar and Mark Benson.

Milan wait

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"We will sign one player, certainly. We think that the entire squad is covered and too much competition would only create problems."

"For example, look at Emerson. Who would he push out of the side? I doubt Gennaro Gattuso and Pirlo, perhaps Massimo Ambrosini or Seedorf, certainly Yoann Gourcuff, who would be sent to the stands. We prefer to defend Gourcuff."

Some sections of the media consider this pared down transfer campaign to be a sign of weakness for the European Champions.

"It is the Press who cannot free themselves of these silly clichés even after 20 years of great success. The fans understand how we operate and responded with 27,000 season ticket sales."

"Our victories and ability to climb back up after a fall are all thanks to the rapport between the Coach, the club and the players. We have an airbag compared to other sides and that is created by our consistency."

This includes keeping hold of Kaka, who has once again been linked with Real Madrid in Spanish newspaper 'As'."

Today's edition insists that the Brazilian held a meeting with President Berlusconi to demand a transfer, having "won everything with the Milan jersey."

As the Rossoneri have already released a couple of statements over the summer slamming 'As' for its continued "harassment" of Kaka, this is bound to create further tension.

Colombo Corner

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teams never complain about it," said Shahadat who claimed four wickets at the P Sara Stadium in the 2005 tour.

NAFEES MEETS NAYEEM
The Taj Samudra hotel seemed to be a home for Bangladesh cricket after the national under-19 squad arrived in the capital yesterday.

The young Bangladeshi cricketers, who came here to play a series against their Sri Lankan counterparts and then a triangular series with India later this month, has also been accommodated in the hotel.

National opener Shahriar Nafees was the most excited with the arrival of the youth team as his younger brother, Iftekhar Nayeem, is in the side.

"It's really thrilling as we hardly have any scope to meet each other as both of us have different schedules. I feel very good that my younger brother is here with me," said a visibly excited Nafees.

Unlike his brother, Nayeem is a right-handed batsman.

The Bangladesh under-19 team however got a bitter travel experience as they had an arduous 16-hour stopover at the Kuala Lumpur airport and a further three hours at the Maldives capital Male before landing at Colombo via a Malaysian Airlines.



PHOTO: AFP

Sri Lankan fast bowler Lasith Malinga goes into his bowling action as coach Trevor Penney keenly watches him during net practice at the R Premadasa Stadium in Colombo on Sunday.

Sinclair grateful for chance

Cricket

INTERNET, undated

Mathew Sinclair feels like a bloke who has fallen off the back of an ocean liner and been thrown a lifebelt.

And if he gets his chance next year, he won't die wondering as he goes about justifying the selectors' choice to give him a belated New Zealand Cricket contract after Hamish Marshall said thanks but no thanks.

Sinclair on Saturday confirmed that he's accepted the contract, and there was a mix of relief, pleasure and resolve as he explained what it meant.

"Motivation is the biggest part of it. I feel like I've been given another lifeline," he said.

"I'm lucky enough to get this contract as it is and now I have to go out, score a heap of runs and be ready at the right time to go into the team and prove I can do it."

He has proved he can do it, just not often enough. Sinclair is 31, and his test career spans seven years, beginning with a remarkable 214 on debut against the West Indies at the Basin Reserve in December 1999.

There are two other big centuries, 150 (out of 298) against South Africa at Port Elizabeth in December 2000, when no one else reached 40, and 204 not out against Pakistan at Christchurch three months later.

In the next 24 innings he managed just three 50s.

And that's the nub of the issue. Those who reckon he doesn't warrant another contract point to the substantial troughs; those in his camp cling to the notion that having achieved the big numbers before he can do so again.

Although Sinclair is technically an incumbent in the Test team, having been recalled after a 13-Test absence for the two internationals against Sri Lanka late last year, it will be a stretch for him to make the New Zealand side to tour South Africa in November.

He will have had no cricket of any note to prove his readiness, whereas his rivals, such as Peter Fulton, Ross Taylor and Lou Vincent, are likely to figure in the world Twenty20 championship squad. Okay, as relevant to Test cricket as sevens rugby to the real thing, but at least it's something.

Sinclair knows it, rating his chances of making the South African trip as "virtually nil", and is eyeing the incoming series against Bangladesh and England, and next year's tour to England as more realistic targets, packed as they are with eight Tests.

The early first-class games for Central Districts are critical. Sinclair estimates he'll get four games in the pre-Christmas programme, which has yet to be released.

Sinclair rates himself a vastly different batsman from the player who tore off three big hundreds against three different opponents in 15 months. He's got rid of the loose shots, tightened his technique.

Even so, it's not going to be easy to break into the Test lineup. First dibs are likely to go to Vincent, captain Stephen Fleming, Fulton, Scott Styris and Jacob Oram.

"I'm not guaranteed anything and I don't want that. I want to work bloody hard for it ... so people can say they've got to pick Mathew Sinclair."

"I need to force them, through consistency of runs and form, to pick me."

Sharapova

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condition to play: "Ice, massage, strength, acupuncture work. You name it, I do it really," she said. "It takes two and a half hours a day."

Sharapova was fortunate to find her match against Sugiyama. At match point, her Japanese opponent made it clear she wanted to go off because of the heavy rain that was falling on Court One.

Play had already been suspended on other courts but American umpire Lynn Welch tested the surface and decided to play on, giving Sharapova the chance to quickly wrap up the tie.

Sugiyama was furious with the decision and Sharapova admitted she was relieved to have won.

"It was really good to finish it because I was starting to get agitated," said the Russian.

"I saw the rain in the middle of the second set and I knew if it keeps going, obviously the grass is going to get wet. I didn't want it to be too dangerous to play out there but it worked out well in the end."

Emeka on song

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handshaking distance.

The Mohammadian tent was finally relieved seconds after the regulation 45 minutes when Emeka leaped high at the far post to head home leftback Kamal's cross.

Rahmatganj escaped narrowly during a corner five minutes after resumption when Paul and Emeka's repeated efforts came off the line but the latter found the net soon.

Kamal had a hand in the second goal too and this time his long centre was sideheaded by Mithu for Emeka, unmarked at the far post, to make it 2-1 with a simple nod.

Rahmatganj created chances but did not show the urge to score level as Igohio and Faisal put the ball wide indifferently while Rahmatganj custodian Anwarul made a superb save on a scorching drive by Mithu from the top of the box.

When all settled for the result, Emeka increased the margin in a spectacular fashion in the first minute of injury time, scoring with a backvolley that went in off Anwarul's palm after substitute Mohammed Ronny cut back the ball from right with his first touch of the game.

It was Emeka's eighth league goal that put him third in the scorers' list behind Junior (14 goals) and teammate Paul (13).

Yellow cards: Emeka (Mohammedan) and Jahanir (Rahmatganj).

TEAMS

MOHAMMEDAN: Himel, Ariful, Odafe, Biplab, Zahid, Divine, Mithu, Sharif, Kamal, Emeka and Paul (Rony).

RAHMATGANJ: Anwarul, Jahangir, Soni, Ronny, Shiron, Rasel, Adeyinka (Mamun), Faisal, Emrul, Igohio and Francis.

Referee: Ramkrishna Ghosh.

Flintoff's time to reflect

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"My stance got very wide and I got a bit flat-footed shuffling across my stumps. The lads (players) were good and we spoke about it a bit, but it was an intense trip and it was hard to correct things."

No reference is made to the coach, Duncan Fletcher, or his batting sidekick Matthew Maynard, even when pressed. It's almost as if they weren't there, backing up the impression that there was no love lost between them and the team's talisman. You sense an extra determination to get back in now that is a more engaging coach in charge.

The Flintoff spirit is willing, but can the body take the toll? The massive impact he places on his physique every time he bowls is bound to necessitate more injections than a GTI turbo and more pit stops. The incessant international schedule doesn't help.

"It's a 12-month job. It's impossible to perform at your optimum level all the time. Then again, I've missed a lot of cricket the past 18 months. At this moment I'd play anything."

It is how he reconciles his inner-turmoil however, that may dictate how successful he is. He rejects the notion that he might be better off batting at No 7 emphasising that he is a batsman who bowls: "I'd sooner go up the order rather than down." But this ambition has complications. It means he will

continue to pay more attention to his batting in practice -- "my bowling looks after itself" -- which in turn amplifies his own run-making expectations. The danger of this is his natural freedom as a batsman can become mislaid.

"The one thing I did for a while was get too wrapped up in technique. I wanted to take my game to a different level, but it was wrong to do through changing my technique. I just needed to find more consistency." With a relatively uncomplicated method, however, thinking about it less may well be the route to achieving more.

Meanwhile he must continue his training programme and his struggle at home to keep the TV remote control away from his kids. "I don't get much say and at the moment I've been watching a lot of Dora the Explorer."

There is excitement on the horizon though, because once he gets the

all clear from the physio he gets to indulge a passion: bikes. "I bought a Harley recently and I passed my test last winter. It's something I always wanted as a kid, but my mum said if I was living at home there would be no motorbikes, tattoos or earrings. Now I've got the job lot."

Does she still let you in? "Aye, she's fine with it." She might not though if he's seen to be obliging to any more Australians.

Rahul, Anil miss out

PTI, Bangalore

Rahul Dravid with the highest batting average (57.46) and Anil Kumble with by far the highest number of Test wickets (552) for India do not figure in the all-time great Indian XI chosen by an elite panel to mark 75 years of Indian Test cricket.

Elegant left-hander Sourav Ganguly, spinners B S Chandrasekhar and Bishen Singh Bedi also do not make it to the team selected by eight former Indian captains and a panel chaired by great off-spinner Erapalli Prasanna.

To mark 75 years since India played its first cricket match against England in 1932, eight former Indian captains -- Gundappa Vishwanath, Dilip Vengsarkar, Srinivas Venkataraghavan, Krishnamachari Srikkanth, Ajit Wadekar, Nari Contractor, Syed Kirmani and Abbas Ali Baig -- were requested to pick their all-time India best Test XI.

From the selections made by the eight ex-captains, a panel consisting of Prasanna, well-known sports journalist Rajan Bala and PTI Editors came up with the all-time great XI.

TEAM

Sunil Gavaskar (captain), Vinoo Mankad, Vijay Hazare (vice-captain), Sachin Tendulkar, Mohammed Azharuddin, Gundappa Vishwanath, Kapil Dev, Syed Kirmani (wk), Jagaval Srinath, Erapalli Prasanna, Subash Gupte. 12th Man: Vijay Manjrekar.

Reserves: Mohammed Nissar, Bhagwat Chandrasekhar, and Rahul Dravid.

Lara wants admin role

BBC ONLINE, undated

Former skipper Brian Lara is interested in an administrative role to help West Indies try to recapture former glories.

"The infrastructure and what's necessary to produce good cricket is not there in the West Indies.

"I'm interested in what are we doing at the grassroots level and I don't see anything in that direction," he said.

"It doesn't matter who is the coach or who is playing -- if the infrastructure isn't there, you're not going to produce the cricket you want to see."

Lara is arguably the greatest batsman ever produced by West Indies, having scored almost 12,000 runs in 131 Tests and over 10,000 in 299 one-day internationals.

Hammers

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had given them his word. Everything he did last week was about moving to Rangers and he wasn't looking to line up a move anywhere else.

"But there is nothing he could do about the transfer fee and you can understand why Bordeaux wanted to accept the offer from West Ham."

Faubert, who had been at Bordeaux since 2004, had refused to train with his teammates after the Rangers bid was turned down.

And now his French club seem to be glad to be soon to see the back of him.

"We've reached agreement with West Ham and his move is going well," Bordeaux chairman Jean-Louis Triaud said.

16 report

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Mazharul informed the federation that he would be unavailable. Veteran custodian Bappi and forward Habul have not been in touch with the BHF.

The selected players have been

asked to join the camp on July 6 at the Maulana Bhasani National Hockey Stadium.

Raikkonen

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went to Britain's Jenson Button, who