



Did U Know?

James Butler Hickok, popularly known as Wild Bill Hickok, was killed playing poker, holding two pairs - aces and eights, which has become known as 'Dead Man's Hand.'



Shoaib Akhtar

(Pakistan fast bowler)
"I am excited that he is coming to Pakistan, it's thrilling. He can lift us to that level where we can become the world beaters. I have always loved the Australian mentality. They only play to win and even if they lose they put up their best till the end. I am confident that Lawson will help us beat Australia because he will know their weaknesses and strong points."

After Geoff Lawson's appointment as Pakistan's national team coach.

What to WATCH

ESPN
Sportscenter India
Sports News
Live at 8:30 pm



BCF confirms Zia for Chess World Cup

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Chess Federation (BCF) yesterday confirmed world chess governing body FIDE that it will send Grandmaster Ziaur Rahman for the Chess World Cup 2007 to be held at Khanty-Mansiysk in Russia in November-December.

FIDE president Kirsan Ilyumzhinov had promised he would nominate a Bangladeshi player for the world meet and according to assurance, FIDE vice-president Isreal Gelfer wanted confirmation from the BCF.

Former BCF president Syed Shujauddin Ahmed had requested the FIDE boss to nominate one Bangladeshi player for the World Cup during the FIDE Congress in Turin last year.

A total of 128 players will participate in the World Cup.

117 players will come from Continentals, Zonal's Champion-ship list.

11 players will be nominated from FIDE President and Organisers.

Booters report to Nayeem

SPORTS REPORTER

All the players except defender Saikat and GM Mamun of the 25-member national squad for the Nehru Cup reported to new coach Syed Nayeemuddin yesterday at the BFF Bhaban.

Chittagong Abahani defender Saikat Khulna Abahani forward Mamun could not report due to their commitment in the B. League.

SEE PAGE 18 COL 1

Aftab saves blushes

Cricket

BISHWAJIT ROY from Colombo

Frustration loomed large with yet another top-order flop but Aftab Ahmed salvaged Bangladesh to a three-wicket victory in the build-up limited-overs game against Sri Lanka Invitational XI at the Police Sports Club ground yesterday.

The right-hander slammed an unbeaten run-a-ball 91 and shared 81 runs with wicketkeeper Mushfiqur Rahim for the sixth wicket after dashing opener Tamim Iqbal made 45 as Bangladesh reached their target of 242-7 in 49.3 overs in reply to the home side's 241-5.

It could have been a massive blow for the Tigers after their heart-breaking Test performance if they had lost the game and no doubt, the victory gave them some relief ahead of the three-match one-day series. But there was hardly anything encouraging in their performance except for Aftab's well-composed batting.

It was expected that a full-strength national team would come out with flying colours against an opponent comprising only three internationals -- Upul Chandana, Nuwan Kulasekara and Sujeeewa de Silva -- but the inexperienced side showed good character in the game.

The second string Sri Lankan cricketers are now playing in England and the under-19s are involved in a tournament and that is why the authority relied on some lesser-known academy players who however looked competitive against strong opponents.

The hosts, especially captain Ian Daniel (58) and Tharanga Paranavitaha (64), batted sensibly after the local side decided to bat first.

But Bangladesh's bowling was also not up to the mark with pace spearhead Mashrafe Bin Mortaza continuing his poor showing in the tour by giving away 58 runs in 10 fruitless overs.

Only left-arm spinner Abdur Razzak was impressive although he went wicketless. Syed Rasel took two wickets for 37 and Shakib Al Hasan claimed two for 41.

The repeating of a familiar top-order collapse saw Bangladesh slump to 96 for five after Shahriar Nafees edged an out-swinger from de Silva to be dismissed for a first ball duck.

Tushar Imran (9) was the next man to go when he was bowled by Nuwan Kulasekara's in-swinger while captain Mohammad Ashraful (9) cracked two boundaries before edging one to wicketkeeper Gihan



PHOTO: AFP

JOB IS NOT DONE YET: Bangladesh batsmen Aftab Ahmed, who scored an unbeaten 91, and Mashfiqur Rahim, 27, talk between the overs during the limited-overs practice match against Sri Lanka Cricket Invitation XI at the Police Park Ground in Colombo yesterday.

de Silva off pacer Angelo Mathews.

Left-hander Shahid then joined Tamim but failed to forge a partnership as he swept spinner Lasith Fernando to hole out to Mathews at deep square leg after scoring 16.

An embarrassing defeat was in sight when Tamim charged spinner Fernando only to be out stumped for a 69-ball 45 that contained nine boundaries but wicketkeeper-batsman Mashfiqur revived hopes joined Aftab.

A levelheaded Aftab took his team safely to victory and went for the charge only after consolidating his team's position. The

Chittagonian struck four boundaries and two sixes in the slog overs.

Mashfiqur was trapped lbw by Kulasekara for 27 but next man Forhad Reza relieved the pressure of a high asking run-rate.

Bangladesh required 65 runs from the last ten overs and Reza, who like Aftab joined the tour just before the game, smashed two sixes against left-arm spinner Chanaka Komarasu in the 45th over during a 25-ball 26 innings to stake claim for a place in one-day team as an all-rounder. He had also

SEE PAGE 18 COL 2

Bangladesh lift ACC title

Cricket

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh women's cricket team successfully launched their campaign in international cricket when they emerged champions in the ACC Women's Tournament yesterday.

In the rain-interrupted final at Johor Cricket Academy in Malaysia, the Bangladeshi eyes handed an eight-wicket defeat on Nepal.

Bangladesh restricted Nepal, who opted to bat first, to 26 for eight in the stipulated 18 overs after the Himalayan Kingdom's innings was

disrupted due to rain.

Nepal were 12-3 after 12 overs when the umpires halted play.

Heavy showers kept the two sides in the dressing room for four hours and the 30-overs match was curtailed to 18 overs a-side after resumption.

Nepal lost five wickets in addition of just 14 runs in the remaining of their innings as Champa, Salma and Pinky chipped in with two wickets each for Bangladesh.

Chameli Khatun top-scored with an unbeaten 17 as Bangladesh stormed to 27-2 in 9.4 overs to win the tournament for the non-Test playing nations.

Pacer Panna Ghosh was adjudged player-of-the-tournament

SEE PAGE 18 COL 2



PHOTO: INTERNET

Bangladesh players celebrate with the ACC women's cricket tournament trophy inside their dressing-room after their win over Nepal in the final at the Johor Cricket Academy yesterday.

Ash pleased with 1st win

SPORTS REPORTER from Colombo

Only on the morning of the match, the Bangladesh team management was informed that the venue was changed again. The decision annoyed the visitors but they were desperate to play the match to get back their confidence after a disastrous Test series.

The ground, however, was fit like a number of other venues in the city but what made Bangladesh happy was the win although they had to fight hard against the fifth-ranked Sri Lankan team at the Police Sports Club ground yesterday.

"I want to focus on the win and I must say it's a good one. We needed this victory ahead of the one-day series. It would definitely help us in the three matches," said an excited Ashraful, who won his first match as Bangladesh captain.

The 23-year-old skipper was also not ready to undermine his opponents. "There might not be big names but still they were a very good team. Most of the guys are inexperienced but definitely they have the potential and that's why they were included in the side," he explained.

He also mentioned that the islanders have enough quality cricketers and that is the reason that they are now a big force in world cricket.

Ashraful also defended his bowlers by saying that Sri Lankan batsmen batted sensibly to score a decent total.

"I don't think our bowling performance was too bad but I would say that they batted sensibly. Our batting in the beginning was also not good but I am happy that some of the guys who have just joined the team, performed well. Aftab played brilliantly besides Tamim and Forhad, so it's a good practice match for us," he said with satisfaction in his tone.

Selector Akram Khan also expressed his satisfaction over the outcome.

"We are happy with the boys' performance in the match. The most important thing is that we won the match. I must say that the boys got back their confidence by winning. Now we are very much hopeful with the one-day series," said the former national skipper.

Sides keep faith in pace

First India-England Test starts today

Cricket

AFP, London

Sourav Ganguly believes India's fast bowlers hold the key to their three-Test series against England which gets underway at Lord's here Thursday.

Ganguly, a member of a powerful batting line-up that also includes captain Rahul Dravid and Sachin Tendulkar, reckons the likes of left-arm quicks Zaheer Khan and Rudra Pratap Singh can help India dismiss England twice.

But the former captain has been particularly taken by the impact of 24-year-old fast bowler Shanthakumaran Sreesanth, who since making his debut against England in Nagpur in March last year, has taken 37 wickets

in eight Tests at a respectable average of just over 25 apiece.

"He's got pace, he swings it and he bowls in the right areas. He's a very good bowler. He runs in all the time and I think he will be the dark horse of the tour," said Ganguly.

Khan, a relative veteran at 28 and with 47 Tests behind him, will not be phased by the conditions should, after a season marred by rain, the Lord's pitch offer seam movement in a fashion more associated with the start of an English season than mid-July.

Last season he took 78 English County Championship wickets for Worcestershire, second only to former Pakistan leg-spinner Mushtaq Ahmed at champions Sussex.

"Zaheer is probably bowling his best, he had a great season for

Worcestershire last year and he's taken wickets since he's come back. If RP can do a good job, we will be a handy bowling unit," Ganguly said.

And with experienced leg-spinner Anil Kumble also set to play India's bowlers are sure to provide England's batsmen, who gorged themselves on runs while defeating a moderate West Indies side 3-0 earlier in the season, with a decent examination.

That's all the more true following last year's away series win against the West Indies which saw India end a 20-year run without a Test campaign triumph outside of the sub-continent against a major nation.

England go into this series without key fast bowlers Stephen

SEE PAGE 18 COL 2

High on passion

Cricket

AFP, London

Sachin Tendulkar says it is a passion for cricket rather than a desire to keep adding to his already impressive list of records that provides the reason for him to extend his career.

Tendulkar, the first man to score 50 international hundreds and Test cricket's all-time leading century maker with 37 in 137 matches, has had his motivation called into question recently after a poor World Cup in the Caribbean where India exited at the first round stage.

Former Australia captain Ian Chappell, whose brother Greg opted not to renew his contract as India coach after the World Cup, said that if Tendulkar was motivated solely by statistical mile-

stones he should think hard about whether it was right for him to carry on.

But the 34-year-old Tendulkar, speaking at Lord's ahead of the start of the first Test against England on Thursday, said it was a love of the game and not an obsession with landmarks that kept him wanting to play 18 years after he made his international debut.

"I am absolutely enjoying it. That is the reason for me to walk on the cricket field. The most important thing is my love for the game. If I feel I am not enjoying it as much there is no reason for me to be out there in the middle," he said.

Tendulkar, as if to emphasise the point that team, rather than individual success matters most to him, when asked to recall his first Test hundred -- against England at Old Trafford in 1990 -- said it was the fact his innings saved the game

rather than getting to three figures that pleased him most.

"The first hundred is always a special hundred. It came at a critical moment. It kept us alive in the series. It really meant a lot to me," he said.

"We had lost the first Test and in the second Test we weren't in a comfortable position. At that stage I went in and stayed not out which kept us alive in that series.

"Getting the hundred was terrific but what I actually wanted to do was save the match and the hundred was the icing."

He added: "I have never set targets as such. Vaguely I would know in the back of my mind, this is what I would want to do on this tour. But I never disclose my targets. Not even my family knows about it."

"But I wouldn't let that dominate. You want to keep your mind

SEE PAGE 18 COL 6

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