



England all-rounder Paul Collingwood and South Africa captain Graeme Smith shared the record for the most catches (8) during the 2007 Cricket World Cup in the West Indies.



Gianluca Zambrotta
(Barcelona's Italian defender)
"It would be better to stay in Barcelona to prepare for next season. It is not easy to prepare in such a distant place."
Criticizing their Asian tour.



Glos stun Lancs

BBC ONLINE, undated

Underdogs Gloucestershire recorded a shock eight-wicket win over Lancashire in the opening Twenty20 semifinal.

Big guns Stuart Law and Andrew Flintoff failed to fire after Lancs were put in, neither reaching double figures.

Brad Hodge hit six fours in 32 but the total of 148-6 always looked short, particularly when the Glos openers took 23 from James Anderson's second over.

Craig Spearman took them within 12 with four sixes in his 86 and the target was reached with 19 deliveries remaining.

Lancashire's problems began in the nets when key opener Mal Loye suffered a back spasm. Dominic Cork was hit in a painful spot but recovered his composure sufficiently to take his place in the starting line-up.

Law might have gone second ball when he slipped at the non-striker's end, but in the third over he advanced down the pitch and skewed to slip where Craig Spearman took an outstanding catch.

Flintoff had been dropped

PCB happy with ICL snub

AFP, Karachi

Pakistan's cricket chief Saturday said he was happy that players had turned down lucrative offers to join a break-away Indian league, saying it showed their patriotism.

"We had faith on our players that they will not join the Indian league," Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) chairman Nasim Ashraf told reporters.

Top Pakistani cricketers were linked to the multi-million-dollar breakaway Indian Cricket League (ICL), which is being bankrolled by Zee Telefilms, India's largest listed media company.

Seven current players -- captain Shoaib Malik, Shoaib Akhtar, Mohammad Asif, Shahid Afridi, Younis Khan, Mohammad Yousuf and Abdul Razzaq -- were offered lucrative contracts to play the Twenty20 tournament.

Any defections could have hit Pakistan cricket hard as league matches coincide with the important home series against South Africa in October and with their tour of India a month later.

Not fun time for Tigers



BISHWAJIT ROY

The ICC Twent20 World Championship is the next international assignment for the Bangladesh national cricket team. We will, of course, have to take part in the new event in South Africa but what we should understand is that it does not mean more than any other international commitment.

The reality is that it would be unwise to focus too much on next month's event, the latest version of the game, especially for a team like Bangladesh when there is a much bigger challenge ahead for them. The shortest version of the game is still considered as more of a fun competition and the fact is that there is hardly any scope for Bangladesh to make 'fun' in international stage when they are under serious scrutiny in the five-day competition after their miserable performance in the recently concluded tour of Sri Lanka.

In true sense the Bangladesh team's next assignment, undoubtedly another demanding one after Sri Lanka, is their tour to New Zealand in December and everybody is well aware about how big a task it is to play against the Black Caps in their own den.

The new cricket authority has to decide immediately whether they would like to see the national team's humiliation in international stage for another occasion and if not, then the

ad-hoc committee should straight away look back at the happenings in Sri Lanka last month to find out the 'course of action' for the next trip.

What Bangladesh desperately missed in the tour was a high-quality coach in charge after the departure of Dav Whatmore. It was evident that Mohammed Ashraf's men were demotivated and extra relaxed even after their continued humiliations in the island.

It's good to think positive but sometimes a coach has to give his charges a dressing down as it has proved that one can't motivate the Tigers by pouring only the positive words. Each and every player heaped high praise on their interim coach (Shaun Williams) during the series. The reason was very lucid -- they hardly came under fire despite their irresponsible performances.

Williams appeared very 'soft' for the job and the most important thing is that he has another demanding job as a national game development manager, so we just neglected a very important area. Almost all the senior Sri Lankan players opined that Bangladesh needed a 'hard task master' like Tom Moody, who completely changed the work ethics of the Sri Lankan side.

Actually the whole tour management was terrible in the trip that was one of the big reasons behind the disgraceful performance and that's why there is desperately a need for accountability in this regard.

We can look at one example about

why we need the much-needed accountability in the team management. Because of our below par batting performance, we simply overlooked another important area as the fielding was also horrible in the tour.

We have a specialist fielding coach in the team and apparently he has been working hard with the boys but what has been the ultimate result? What does all the hard work count for if a team drops 12 catches in three one-day matches. So, the authority should ask the question about where the problem lies.

There were also questions raised about the commitment of the players from the team management members, albeit in off-the-record discussions, but the question is then-- what is the use of the team management?

True, the new authority didn't get enough time to make the assessment on the tour but still it was not clear on why they changed only the team operation manager for the Twenty20 tour.

There was uproar in the media when the previous board handpicked Ali Asif Khan as team's tour operations manager. We have no campaign against any individuals rather what we believe is that there should be policy and proper process about any appointment for job that is highly technical.

However the most important task ahead for the new board is to improve the first-class standard. Otherwise it would be impossible

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Shoaib, Asif in the clear



AFP, Karachi

Pacemen Shoaib Akhtar and Mohammad Asif, who returned positive dope tests last year, were among a batch of Pakistani cricketers to clear their latest screens, an official said Saturday.

"Akhtar and Asif are among 26 players who have cleared these tests for which we asked urgent reports from the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) accredited laboratory in Malaysia," PCB director of communications Ahsan Malik told AFP.

The tests were conducted Monday and Tuesday.

Akhtar and Asif were the focus of attention when the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) decided to conduct these tests ahead of the Twenty20 World Cup

to be held in September in South Africa.

The new-ball partners tested positive for the banned steroid nandrolone in tests conducted internally in Pakistan before the ICC Champions Trophy last year. They were withdrawn from the Pakistan team for the tournament.

A PCB doping tribunal banned Akhtar for two years and Asif for one year, but the bans were controversially overturned by an internal tribunal on appeal.

Pakistan also conducted pre-World Cup tests in February in which Akhtar and Asif did not appear. The duo was then pulled out of the World Cup due to injuries on the day the team left for the West Indies.

Pakistan suffered a humiliating exit from the World Cup after a three-wicket loss to first-timers Ireland.

Malik said the PCB expected all tests to be negative in accordance with its zero tolerance policy on doping.

Three of the players -- Younis Khan, Danish Kaneria and Yasir Arafat -- are currently in England playing county cricket and have been tested abroad, Malik said.

Pakistan is due to announce its squad for the Twenty20 World Cup next week.

Pakistan probabilities are attending a tune-up camp which concludes here on Monday. The team's new coach, Australian Geoff Lawson, is due to join them on August 20.

Lawson replaces Bob Woolmer who died during the World Cup in March.

Pakistan will open the Twenty20 World Cup against Scotland on September 12 before meeting archrivals India two days later.



Babita Khatun of Bangladesh Ansar displays her numerous medals in the final day of the 23rd National Age Group Swimming Competition at the National Swimming Complex yesterday.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

No foreigners in Senior Div football

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) has decided not to allow any foreign players in the Senior Division Football League.

The BFF executive committee took the decision in its meeting yesterday. "But a local player who played less than three games in the just concluded B. League would be eligible to play the senior league," said BFF general secretary Anwarul Haque Helal after the meeting.

He also informed that within a short time they will meet with the thirteen club officials to fix the schedule of the single league competition. Arambagh Krira Sangha is the lone B. League team who will

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A Kushtia success story



Swimming

SPORTS REPORTER

Riding the wave of Babita Khatun's magnificent success, Bangladesh Ansar finished top in the Keya Cosmetics 23rd National Age Group Swimming Competition that concluded yesterday at the National Swimming Complex in Mirpur.

Babita won a stunning eleven gold medals to be adjudged best swimmer in the girls' group while Mohammad Al Amin of BKSP secured nine gold medals to become best performer in the boy's section and both received cash awards of Tk 50,000 each from the meet's sponsor Keya Cosmetics Ltd.

Bangladesh Ansar grabbed 46 gold, 28 silver and 26 bronze medals to finish top while BKSP finished a distant second securing 27 gold, 40 silver and 17 bronze medals. Alamgir Swimming

Club of Rajshahi placed third with 25 gold, 9 silver and 16 bronze medals.

Interestingly all the Ansar swimmers who bagged gold medals came from the one village of Amla in the Kushtia district.

"We are excited especially because we clinched the top slot after 1995. We picked up the swimmers from Kushtia under our talent hunt programme. Babita is very talented and she would need proper nursing to make her mark in the senior and international levels," said coach Imdadul Haque.

Babita however was excited by the cash award. "My family is not well-off that's why the money will help us lot," she said.

Six national records featured in the three-day competition and two were seen on the closing day in the girls' 10-year-age groups. Nazma Khatun of Bangladesh Ansar alone made four national records out of the six.

Nazma created the both records on the day in the 50-meter butterfly clocking 39.51 seconds to better the previous mark of 41.47 seconds while in the 100-meter freestyle she finished with a timing of 1:24.06 minutes improving on the old mark of 1:24.79 minutes.

A total of 100 events were decided on the three-day national age group meet.

President of Bangladesh Swimming Federation and Navy Chief Vice Admiral Sarwar Jamal Nizam was the chief guest in the day's closing function of the three-day meet and distributed the prizes while director of the sponsor company Akkas Ali Pathan was present as special guest.

Keya Cosmetics also awarded Tk 10,000 each to all the national record holders in addition to a special award of Tk 10,000 given to the Alamgir Swimming Club of Rajshahi.

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