



Did U Know?

Taekwondo made its debut as an official Olympic sport in the 2000 Sydney Games.



Rahul Dravid

(India cricket captain)
"It is probably unlikely that I will play another World Cup. I am already 34 and by next World Cup, I would be 38. The game is getting younger and people are coming on. You never know what future has in store, but you have to be realistic."



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Gibson spoils Warne dream

AFP, London

Veteran seamer Ottis Gibson was named man-of-the-match as Durham wrapped up victory over Hampshire in the Friends Provident Trophy final on Sunday leaving Shane Warne's dreams of a domestic title shattered.

Durham needed just 38 minutes to clinch a 125-run victory at an almost-empty Lord's after the conclusion of the final had been held over from Saturday because of rain.

Hampshire were already facing an uphill task when they resumed on 158 for five in reply to 312 for five and were eventually all out for 187 at the end of the 41st over.

Former West Indies paceman Gibson, 38, who began the Hampshire reply with wickets off the first two balls and then dismissed dangerous Kevin Pietersen as well, was the star performer.

"Unbelievable," said Gibson who took 10 wickets in an innings against Hampshire in a county championship match earlier in the summer.

"But we've got four games left and if I'm going to get through them I'm going to have to cut down on the celebrations a little bit."

Durham's Paul Collingwood, England's one-day skipper, was delighted to finally see his county clinch a first major domestic title.

"We've had lots of ups and downs at the club -- just after I joined in 1996 I think we won one game all season -- but we learned a lot and it pulled us together as a

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BDR, Army in kabaddi final

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Army set a final clash against Bangladesh Rifles in the Services Kabaddi League.

The final between the top two teams of the six-team league will be held today at 4 pm at the Shaheed Suhrawardy Indoor Stadium.

In the final league matches, Army defeated Bangladesh Jails 64-35 while BDR edged Bangladesh Police 18-14. In another match, Fire Service won 27-24 against Bangladesh Air Force.

Booters escape big defeat



Football

SPORTS REPORTER

An early goal by captain Baichung Bhutia gave India a 1-0 win over their regional rivals Bangladesh in the Nehru Cup yesterday.

The defeat, Bangladesh's second after a 2-0 loss to Syria, all but dashed Syed Nayeemuddin's side's hopes to reach the final of the five-team meet.

India, coached by Bob Houghton, now top the table with maximum six points after a 6-0 rout of Cambodia, who lost 3-4 to Kyrgyzstan on Sunday. Ex-Indian coach Nayeemuddin, however, made the same mistake of sticking to the starting line-up against Syria as he chose Ariful as the makeshift rightback.

And the hosts, who piled on the pressure from the word go at the Ambedkar Stadium in New Delhi, did not take much time to spot the weakness in the rival defence and went ahead after five minutes.

Star striker Baichung, unmarked at the left side of the Bangladesh box, controlled Steven Dias's diagonal shot and clinically pushed the ball from an acute angle that ran through Biplab's legs and hit the far post before rolling over the goal line. Baichung, then under

Nayeemuddin, had also scored India's last goal against Bangladesh in a 2-0 win in the final of the SAFF Championship in Karachi in December 2005.

Bangladesh settled soon but the attackers hardly got the support from the midfield, which kept more on the defensive side.

Abul, however, tested Indian goalkeeper Subrata Paul with a 20-yard drive in the 19th minute before Emily came close to scoring eight minutes later. But the Bangladesh striker's back-header on a long throw by Rajani was spectacularly tipped over by Subrata, who was later adjudged man-of-the-match ahead of his Bangladesh counterpart.

Biplab was undoubtedly the best performer for Bangladesh and apart from the early goal he thwarted at least six Indian beefy attempts.

Zahid Hossain almost caught Subrata napping on the half hour but his 50-yard drive went over as Bangladesh built more pressure.

India's only other chance of the half came when Baichung intercepted a pass from Waly but the low drive from the Indian ace was handled well by Biplab, who was brilliant throughout the game after failing to stop the lone goal.

Bangladesh maintained their fightback after the interval and Titu,

the right fullback playing in the left side of the midfield, unpicked the Indian defence on the break in the 48th minute. However, his placing shot was blocked by Subrata.

Titu forced another fine save by the Indian shotstopper while Emily's chip sailed over as Bangladesh's partial domination fizzled out.

What happened next was Biplab's heroics against a relentless assault by the Indians which began just after the hour-mark.

The Bangladeshi players ran out of steam to cope with Sunil Chetri's dazzling display at the left and Dias's teasing crosses from the right but Biplab made a series of saves to deny Chetri three times and efforts by Mehraj, Dias, Lawrence and Clifford, who also rattled the crossbar from 30 yards.

Nayeem finally made the changes but Ujjal and Alfaz made no impact. Ariful, however, came close to save the day when let fly a right-footer from 25 yards but failed to keep the ball under the bar.

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PHOTO: STAR

Players of the Twenty20 ICC World Championship-bound team warm up before their main practice session at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.

Razzaq quits in protest



Cricket

AFP, London

All-rounder Abdul Razzaq announced his retirement from international cricket Monday, saying he had taken his decision in protest at his omission from the Pakistan national team.

"I have taken this decision under protest because I am mentally disturbed over the treatment meted out by the selectors who dropped me like a new player," Razzaq told a private television channel from London.

"I will see the response of the selectors and the Pakistan Cricket Board before reviewing my decision because this is taken under protest."

Razzaq, who was in England to sign a short contract with Worcestershire county on Monday, was dropped from Pakistan's 15-man squad for next month's inaugural Twenty20 World Cup in South Africa.

The selectors said Razzaq and senior batsman Mohammad Yousuf would be rested -- a reason Razzaq said he believed was a pretext for him being dropped from the side.

"I was hurt when they dropped me, and on form and fitness and on my record as an international player, I deserved the benefit" of being treated as a senior player, said Razzaq.

Razzaq missed the World Cup in the Caribbean earlier this year because of a knee injury.

He has scored 1,146 runs and took 100 wickets in 46 Tests. He made 4,465 runs and took 240 wickets in 231 one-day internationals in a career which began in 1995.

Razzaq's lacklustre performance in his last 15 one-day internationals -- scoring just 173 at 10.73 with 12 wickets at 39 runs each -- led to his axing from the team.

Chief selector Salahuddin Ahmed dismissed suggestions that

Razzaq had been elbowed out of international cricket.

"There was no victimisation. The team for the Twenty20 World Cup

was picked purely on merit and the best players were selected," said Ahmed.

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PHOTO: INTERNET

A file photo of Pakistan all-rounder Abdul Razzaq who announced his retirement from international cricket yesterday.

Relegation play-offs on

SPORTS REPORTER

The ad-hoc committee of Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) has decided to hold the relegation play-offs of the last season's Dhaka Premier Division Cricket League by September 30.

The decision was taken in the first working committee meeting on Sunday.

The previous board had suspended the relegation league following the participating clubs' protest, which had triggered huge criticism as many found the influence came from the club bigwigs who represented those clubs.

City Club, Brothers Union and Indira Road will now play the play-offs from where two will be demoted to the First Division.

The question was then raised about why it would not be possible to arrange the relegation league in bad weather conditions if it had been possible to hold the Super League itself.

There was huge interest with the first working committee meeting as there has been a number of pressing issues like finalising the team's sponsor for the Twenty20 World Championship, appointing a new national team coach and taking a decision about the new selection committee.

But BCB's media committee chairman Ahmed Sajjadul Alam Bobby was not interested to say anything about what was discussed in the marathon meeting.

"Except the relegation play-off we didn't take any decision, so I can't say more than that outcome," said Bobby.

First Aussie, then else

AFP, Sydney

Shane Warne is an iconic Australian sportsman and will never renounce his Australian citizenship as a means of prolonging his cricketing career in England, his manager said here Monday.

Warne has been checking the possibility of taking German citizenship -- his mother Brigitte was born in Germany -- so he can become a home player and allow his county side Hampshire to sign another overseas player.

But not if it means he has to give up his Australian passport.

"It's not going to happen," Warne's manager James Erskine said. "Under no circumstances would Shane Warne renounce his Australian citizenship or have another nationality in preference to being Australian."

"He's an iconic Australian sportsman. He's very proud to be Australian," Erskine said.

"If it was possible for him to have a German passport as well as an Australian passport, that would be fine."

"He's not necessarily said 'I'm definitely going to do it', but I'm sure he would consider it."

"It just depends on whether or not he wants to go on playing county cricket anyway."

The 37-year-old leg-spinning great first played for Hampshire seven years ago and has been with the English county since 2004 in his current spell.

He is contracted to the county

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Hit it & hit it hard

SPORTS REPORTER



With the mantra 'hit hard as much as you can', Tigers started their training for the upcoming ICC Twenty20 World Championship at the Mirpur Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium yesterday.

A bad habit of playing excessive shots can appear as a blessing in disguise for the Bangladesh batsmen in the latest version of the game and captain Mohammad Ashraful was also buoyant about this negative tendency, backing themselves for making a second round berth in the competition starting from September 11 in South Africa.

"Most of our batsmen are stroke-makers. In one-day or Test cricket sometimes we suffered for playing

too many shots. But this is a game of 120 balls where you have to launch attack from the very first ball. We have good attacking batsmen in the squad including some newcomers and that's why I am very much hopeful," said the young skipper adding that they have to at least win one match for the second round berth. Bangladesh has been pitted in Group A along with hosts South Africa and West Indies.

Although this competition is still regarded by many as fun the Bangladeshi players seem happy with the meet as it gives them a chance to redeem their disgraceful performance in the recently concluded Sri Lanka tour.

"The new format will not overtake ODIs. The spectators might enjoy this version but ODI is unique. For our point of view we have a chance to do well in this type of cricket as you cannot win or even make any

impression in a Test match by playing one good session as you have to play good cricket for a long period of time but in a Twenty20 match you do not have to keep up the tempo for long," he explained.

The Bangladesh captain was also excited about his bowlers. "The economy rate of our main bowlers in ODI is below five runs per over. So in the Twenty20 this might be an advantage for us," he added.

Bangladesh have not had enough experience of playing Twenty20 matches as they have so far played only one international game besides some domestic matches last season and that is the

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Yuvraj set for key role

First India-England ODI today



Cricket

AFP, London

Yuvraj Singh may not have featured during India's recent 1-0 Test series win against England but the all-rounder is set for a key role when his side take on their hosts in a seven-match one-day international campaign starting with Tuesday's day-night encounter at Hampshire's Rose Bowl ground.

India endured an even worse World Cup than England and fell at the first hurdle after group defeats against Bangladesh and Sri Lanka. But during their 2-1 series win over South Africa in Belfast last

month there were signs India were starting to find their one-day form.

Vital to that success at Stormont, India's first one-day series triumph outside the sub-continent since 2002 when they beat England in a final at Lord's, was Yuvraj's form.

The 25-year-old, who also bowls left-arm spin, made a dashing 61 not out in the deciding match against South Africa having previously scored an unbeaten 49 as India came from behind to level the series at 1-1.

"He's been a fantastic finisher for us," said India captain Rahul Dravid of Yuvraj. "He's got the power, he's got the skill and he's matching that power and skill with temperament, mental strength and brains."

"That's a deadly combination. He is up there among the best one-day players in the world, without a doubt."

India's batsmen had barely seven overs at the crease before their first warm-up match, against the England Lions, was washed out on Saturday, after the 'A' side had given the tourists' attack something to think about in making 296.

But wicketkeeper Mahendra Singh Dhoni, captain in that warm-up match as he prepares to lead India in next month's inaugural World Twenty20, was confident the team could take their Test form into

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Half-century for Federer

AFP, Cincinnati

Record-setting Roger Federer takes aim at a fourth US Open title after winning the 50th trophy of his career 6-1, 6-4 over James Blake on Sunday at the Cincinnati Masters.

The Swiss heads to New York for the last major of the season starting on August 27 quietly confident of further domination on the hardcourts.

Little more than a month after lifting a record-equaling fifth consecutive Wimbledon, the 26-year-old is in the chase for more runaway success.

"I definitely played my best," said Federer, 45-6 this season with five trophies and a 7-0 record over Blake. "I had to play my best to beat James."

"It was a great week. I was very happy and I'm obviously very excited going into the US Open."

Federer's 11 career Grand Slam titles are three shy of the all-time record of 14 set by Pete Sampras. Federer, who won his first title at Milan in 2001, will be seeking his third Grand Slam crown of the year having won the Australian Open in January and his fifth Wimbledon crown in a row last month.

Federer stands 12-1 in finals played in US venues, including

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PHOTO: AFP

World number one Roger Federer of Switzerland acknowledges the crowd's applause after beating American James Blake in the Cincinnati Masters final on Sunday.