

Inzamam not welcome?

PTI, Karachi

Even as Pakistan Cricket Board chief Nasim Ashraf meets Inzamamul Haq to discuss his future, skipper Shoaib Malik reportedly does not want him back in the team which may become a crucial factor in deciding the former captain's fate.

The selection committee is facing a dilemma as they feel, Inzamam with an experience of 119 Test matches should prolong his Test career for the coming Indian tour and the home series against Australia.

They want Inzamam to put any retirement plans on a back-burner for a few months but Malik is reluctant to have his former captain back as he thinks that he could have a negative influence in the dressing room.

"Inzamam will be coming down to Karachi today and will meet with the Chairman of the Pakistan Cricket Board and selectors to take a decision on his immediate future," one source said.

"Originally the idea remains that Inzamam should announce his retirement before playing in the second Test at Lahore against South Africa, but now the selectors are having a second thought," he said.

Dhoni's got

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that he was undaunted by the task. "I have been selecting teams for a decade and a half. It is nothing new."

Vengsarkar also said the selectors' decision to bring back Sourav Ganguly and Zaheer Khan was vindicated by their performances. "There has to be a good blend of youth and experience in the team. In the Tests, temperament plays a major role," he said. "Though Sourav and Zaheer were not in the best of forms when selected, as selectors, it was important for us to back our gut feeling."

On Munaf Patel, Vengsarkar said he could be recalled if his regains both form and fitness. "Munaf has the potential to become the frontline bowler for India. However, he must realize that to bowl consistently fast match after match, he must be extremely fit. He just cannot be a line-and-length bowler, not in Test cricket."

Booters' lone

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"Our target is to draw against Tajikistan. Our fitness level is high this time but we lack match practice," told fullback Hassan.

Centre-back Nazrul said they never underestimate or overestimate our oppositions.

"Be it a school team or a big name, we go to the ground with similar attitude. This time, we will forget that we lost 6-1 to Tajik the last time we played. Rather, we will remember the 2-0 losses we suffered to them in 2003 for the 2006 World Cup pre-qualifiers," said Nazrul.

"We have had special trainings for the match and if we can implement it, I am hopeful of at least a draw."

Recalling Bangladesh's biggest ever home loss in April 2006, Nazrul said that then coach Diego Cruciani of Argentina had tried a new strategy in that match which backfired.

"I have always said that we need to play against big teams before a competition. If we go abroad, our players can learn more," said Nayeemuddin during the team's training session.

"Even if we lose, it helps to gradually get better and learn how to draw and win."

"If you compare India's long preparation in Portugal ahead of the Nehru Cup and our short-term camp, I would say we played better."

"This team have better mental and physical strength and also very, very disciplined and committed. We will fight against the Tajiks but no one can predict a result beforehand," added the former India international and coach who will take back the side to the Savar sports institute after the pre-qualifier.

Night of upsets

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late strike, curling a 25-yard shot into the top corner of the net as the Liverpool back four stood off him with a quarter of an hour left.

Real Madrid were twice pegged back by Lazio in their Group C clash which ended 2-2 at the Stadio Olimpico.

It was a case of doubles all round with Ruud van Nistelrooy responsible for Real's goals and Goran Pandev starring for Lazio in a match billed rather unkindly given Lazio's performance as "David and Goliath" clash by one of the Italian sports papers.

In other matches, there were a number of away victories.

Porto won 1-0 at Besiktas in Group A, Schalke 04 won 2-0 at Rosenborg in Group B, while Olympiakos shocked Werder Bremen 3-1 in Germany in Group C and Shakhtar Donetsk of Ukraine triumphed 1-0 at Benfica in Group D.



MORE THAN AN APPEAL: England fast bowler Ryan Sidebottom appeals vociferously for an lbw decision against Sanath Jayasuriya during the third one-day international at the Rangiri International Stadium in Dambulla on Thursday.

'Let Indians talk'



CRICINFO, undated

The tone had been set before the first ball of the series was bowled. Andrew Symonds said he was spurred by India's elaborate Twenty20 victory celebrations. Robin Uthappa said India would challenge Australia and fight "fire with fire".

They did not turn out to be empty words. Temps and emotions were freely expressed during the second one-day in Kochi and though Chris Broad, the match referee, did not dock anyone's match fees, he did speak to the two captains, Mahendra Singh Dhoni and Adam Gilchrist, about the standard of on-field behaviour.

That was two days ago. Since then the action of the field has kept everyone entertained. Andrew Symonds said that he was "disappointed" with Sreesanth's behaviour and Harbhajan Singh said he was subjected to "personal and vulgar" words which was what he was responding to after he was stumped in Kochi. Ricky Ponting, who is due to

make a return in the third ODI, made an effort to downplay the whole issue but did not refrain from taking on Harbhajan who had said that there was "nothing gentlemanly about the way they (Australia) play".

"I don't really care what he (Harbhajan) has to say, to tell you the truth," Ponting said on the eve of the third ODI. "He has plenty to say on the field and then whenever someone says something back to him, he is the first one to run away from it. We play our cricket in a nice aggressive way and we play within the rules and within the spirit of the game."

"I don't really know what happened the other day but if you look at his (Harbhajan's) record and Sreesanth's record over the last few years and they have been involved in a lot of those altercations."

Ponting also suggested that India's aggression was a facade and not the natural way they play their cricket. While the Indians have matched Australia in verbal duels, they have lagged behind in terms of cricketing skills on display in Bangalore and Kochi.

"Aggression doesn't mean sledging or giving personal barrage, it is

having a presence on the field and playing good, aggressive cricket," Ponting said. "They are the ones who have come out and made all the statements since we've been here, this new India and the new aggressive outlook, the way they are going to play."

"That is not the way they generally play their cricket, so they have put on some sort of a brave face. We will go and play the best aggressive cricket we can and leave all the talking to the Indians. We have played some great cricket. I am looking forward to playing some better cricket."

Despite the altercations involving Sreesanth, Brad Haddin, Symonds and Harbhajan, Ponting said that "nobody stepped out of the line". "I think both teams were right on the limit the other day and the referee made that pretty clear to us after the game. Both sides were right on the edge. As long as cricket is played in the right way and everyone knows where the line is, it is okay. It is up to us as a playing group and the two captains to make sure everyone is playing in the spirit of the game."

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Terry-fic show

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Chelsea, and Grant, a memorable win.

The victory has also rekindled Chelsea's European ambitions after a disappointing 1-1 draw at home to Norwegian minnows Rosenborg in their opening Champions League fixture two weeks ago.

Chelsea now lead their group with four points from two games while Valencia and German side Schalke 04, who beat Rosenborg 2-0 on Wednesday, are one point in arrears.

"The message is that we are back. We showed great team spirit.

Maybe a little has been missing but it was all back tonight. This was just the kick-start we needed," said Terry himself.

Valencia were left to regret the fact that their defence was not up to the task of containing Drogba, who also made the first goal, and that their run of seven consecutive wins in La Liga and Europe came to an end.

"At the end of the day the small details are important and we made two big errors. We should have stopped Drogba but we forgot to do so and that was a mistake," reflected Valencia coach Quique Flores.

However, for many other people the enduring memory of Chelsea's win will still be the courageous play of Drogba's captain John Terry 'The Man in the Mask' to quote many British papers on Thursday.

"The thing that big teams have is that they can win by getting the little things right. We have done it sometimes, but this time it has been done to us," added Flores after the game.

"Valencia didn't know how to stop Drogba," commented the respected Spanish mainstream daily *El País*, and those words provide a fitting summary to the game.

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Celtic surprise for Milan

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Milan have made a stuttering start to the Serie A campaign, winning only one of their first six matches, and that lack of form was evident as the Rossoneri struggled to get going.

But a team including Kaka in their ranks will never be totally subdued, as Celtic knew from bitter experience.

The Brazil midfielder had scored a superb goal to eliminate Strachan's side from the competition last season. So it was inevitable that Kaka's first incisive run sent a ripple of panic through the Celtic defence, although Artur Boruc dealt with his low shot easily enough.

This was the third time these teams had been drawn together since 2004 and that familiarity was

beginning to breed contempt. Milan reacted to Celtic's physical approach with exaggerated tumbles and the temperature reached boiling point when Massimo Donati clashed with Gennaro Gattuso.

It was a complete shock when Celtic took the lead after 62 minutes with a scrappy goal befitting the nature of the contest.

Paul Hartley's corner flashed across goal to the far-post, where McNamee scrambled it home via a deflection of Yoann Gourcuff.

Parkhead went wild, as much in disbelief as triumph, but Celtic's joy was short-lived as Milan drew level moments later.

Carlo Ancelotti's side had offered so little attacking threat that it was no surprise they had to be handed their equaliser on a

plate.

There appeared little wrong with Naylor's challenge in the 68th minute, but Merk saw what no-one else in the 60,000 crowd did and awarded Milan a penalty.

Kaka, playing his 50th Champions League game, wasn't going to refuse the gift and he calmly sent Boruc the wrong way from the spot.

Milan weren't content with that and pushed for a winner, but that adventure was to prove their undoing.

Nakamura set up Gary Caldwell on the edge of the area and the Celtic defender drove in a low shot that Dida weakly parried out to McDonald, who got the benefit of a borderline offside decision to side-foot home the winner.

England draw level

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Jayawardene battled to get settled, but Tillakaratne Dilshan took the aggressive to give Sri Lanka hope.

With the fifth-wicket partnership forming, they were ahead of England in terms of runs and Paul Collingwood knew he needed to continue taking wickets.

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Scoreboard of the second one-day international between Sri Lanka and England at the Rangiri International Stadium in Dambulla on Thursday.

SCOREBOARD

England

Cookb Jayawardene b Vaas 1

Mustard b Mubarakb Maharoof 28

Belllbw Maharoof 18

Pietersen c Jayawardene

b Fernando 12

Collingwood b Fernando 42

Shah c Silva b Maharoof 82

Bopara b Dilshan 1

Swann run out 34

Broad not out 8

Sidebottom not out 1

Extras: (lb-2, w-5) 7

Total: (For 8 wkt in 50 overs) 234

Fall of wickets: 1-9, 2-21, 3-38, 4-

5-90, 6-90, 7-121, 8-126, 9-126

10-126, 11-126, 12-126, 13-126

14-126, 15-126, 16-126, 17-126

18-126, 19-126, 20-126, 21-126

22-126, 23-126, 24-126, 25-126

26-126, 27-126, 28-126, 29-126

30-126, 31-126, 32-126, 33-126

34-126, 35-126, 36-126, 37-126

38-126, 39-126, 40-126, 41-126, 42-126, 43-126, 44-126, 45-126, 46-126

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