

NATIONAL CRICKET LEAGUE 2007-08 Barisal to rely on youth

SPORTS REPORTER

Barisal failed to take advantage of the warm-up game ahead of their National Cricket League campaign as they suffered a 27-run defeat to Bangladesh Under-19 at the Mirpur Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium yesterday.

But captain Shahriar Nafees was slightly worried with the outcome. Rather the national opener focused on his side's improvement over the past two seasons in the first-class competition as they finished fourth both in the four-day and one-day competitions last year.

"The wicket was not bad but our batsmen struggled to adjust as this was the season's first match and you know, we just started our preparation together three days ago. I think everything will be fine before the tournament starts," said a confident Nafees.

Spinner Mohammad Shakil grabbed four wickets and new-ball bowler Rubel took three to bowl out Barisal for a meagre 95. The under-19s scored 122 runs after deciding to bat first earlier in the day.

For the first few seasons, the 'bottom-side' tag became almost synonymous with the southern region but the board's policy of giving authority to national selectors to distribute players has interestingly made a positive impact in their performance and not to mention the terrible show of a star-studded Khulna side.

"The inclusion of Tafha will strengthen our bowling and I am really looking forward to our young left-arm spinner Tariqul Islam," said Nafees. The lanky right-arm pacer played only four games last season for Dhaka to capture 12 wickets and he is expected to play more matches this season to get into rhythm.

Left-handed opener Nafees is also looking forward to make maximum use of this competition before the selection of the national team for the upcoming New Zealand tour in December-January.

"I could not bat in the last few international matches to my ability. My target would be to play as many long innings as possible. I think this time the national league would be more competitive than the previous occasions because national players will be able to play a number of matches," said Nafees, who played only one four-day game last season.

Dhaka hold nat'l team

Five new faces for Tajik match

Football

SPORTS REPORTER

Although the national football team failed to put on an impressive display during their 1-1 draw in yesterday's warm-up match against Dhaka XI, Syed Nayeemuddin's boys proved they have become harder on fitness ground.

Lack of combination -- a result of almost no match practice in the last four weeks -- was evident but the team, who will take on Tajikistan in their first leg match of the 2010 World Cup pre-qualifier in Dhaka on Monday, showed signs of superior fitness level at the Bangabandhu National Stadium.

Saifur Rahman Moni celebrated his return to the full national side with a spectacular volleyed goal after meeting a centre by Zahid Hossain after five minutes.

Led by experienced Abdullah Parvez, the Dhaka XI featuring the new generation of local football and two foreigners, equalised through Khokon Das on the half hour after a defensive lapse.

The whole national backbone was waiting for the referee's whistle, which never came, after leftback Waly Faisal was felled by a rival attacker and midfielder Khokon made no mistake to put the ball past lone custodian Biplob.

The 16-day trip to Cox's Bazar for special physical training seemed to have taken good care of the booters but how they make up for lack of match practice would matter most in two days' time, especially against a team that won 6-1 in their last meeting.

Tajikistan, who had handed Bangladesh their biggest home

SQUAD

Goalkeepers: Biplob Bhattacharya, Mazharul Islam Himes; **defenders:** Hassan Al Mamun, Nazrul Islam, Rajani Kanta Barman, Amit Khan Shuvra, Waly Faisal, Mahmudul Hassan, Arup Baidya; **midfielders:** Abul Hossain, Arman Aziz, Ariful Islam, Zahid Hossain, Zahid Parvez, Enamul Haque Sharif, Junmatul Islam Mithu, Nasirul Islam; **forwards:** Saifur Rahman Moni, Zahid Hasan Emili and Mohammed Robin.

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Dilip Vengsarkar

(India's chief selector)

"He is extremely focused, down to earth and very disciplined. He is modest about his achievements and possesses good management skills. He has all the qualities of a good captain."

On Mahendra Singh Dhoni.

What to WATCH

ESPN
English Premier League
Man United v Wigan
Live from 5:40pm
Aston Villa v West Ham
Live from 7:55pm

STAR Sports

Primera Liga
Valencia v Espanyol
Live from 1:55am (Sunday)

Geoff faces angry press

CRICINFO, undated

Pakistan does not often lose in Karachi. This was only their second loss in 40 Test matches and if Geoff Lawson wanted to know what sort of reaction a Karachi loss generates, he got a taster at a tense, fractious post-match press conference.

For a start, he shouldn't have been there. Shaob Malik, captain in his first Test, had a flight to catch, so Lawson took his place amid much derision. Immediately he was fending off quibbles as to Malik's whereabouts. Eventually he was asked whether Malik, "didn't turn up because he was embarrassed at such a loss?"

"I didn't ask him if he was too embarrassed to come," Lawson shot back. "That is an extremely offensive question. Show a little respect to the captain of Pakistan." Welcome to Pakistan.

The story of this Test match was scripted in Pakistan's team selection and strategy that shunned traditional wisdom, sidelined their strength in pace and opted instead to spin South Africa out. Dale Steyn and Andre Nel, in their wildly contrasting styles, showed that pace still has a place here, but Lawson insisted the strategy was correct.

"We had three fast bowlers in our squad and we looked at the pitch and decided on the combination. It was the right combination. The pitch was slow, but ultimately it provided a good Test. It was almost a fantastic Test."

But there seems an eternal optimism to Lawson, if a spiky one and that will be a handy trait to fall back on. He was essentially correct

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with the dismissal of Dhoni, who shared a brisk 65-run stand for the fifth wicket with Yuvraj. They were virtually out of the match at that stage as the asking-rate kept climbing.

Australia displayed their batting prowess after winning the toss, with man-of-the-match Andrew Symonds (89), Matthew Hayden (60) and Michael Clarke (59) dominating the Indian attack with rich strokeplay.

"Things worked beautifully for us. Our batting was very good and we struck the ball from the word 'go' to reach up to a good total," said Australian captain Ricky Ponting.

"Our openers were terrific and set the platform for the later batsmen. Things are coming together for us, but there's still scope for improvement."

India's hopes receded sharply

and Mitchell Johnson one to reduce India to 13-3 in the opening five overs before Yuvraj steadied the innings with a commendable knock under pressure.

Lee struck in his second over when he trapped Gautam Gambhir leg-before and then had Rahul Dravid caught by Hayden, who latched on to a low catch despite wicket-keeper Adam Gilchrist diving in front of the first slip.

Australia then ran into Yuvraj, who outscored even the world's leading run-getter Sachin Tendulkar in a 55-run stand for the fourth wicket. Tendulkar faced 71 balls for his 43 before being bowled by spinner Brad Hogg.

"Our openers were terrific and set the platform for the later batsmen. Things are coming together for us, but there's still scope for improvement."

Lee grabbed two early wickets

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Yuvraj Singh smacks the ball through extra-cover during India's chase against Australia in the third one-day international at the Rajiv Gandhi International Stadium in Hyderabad on Friday.

PHOTO: AFP

Yuvraj Singh ton in vain

Cricket

AFP, Hyderabad

Yuvraj Singh hammered a superb century but failed to stop Australia from posting a 47-run win over India in the third one-day international here on Friday.

The stylish left-hander scored a 115-ball 121 for his eighth hundred as India were bowled out for 243 chasing a 291-run target to concede a 2-0 lead in the seven-match series. The opening match was dominated due to rain.

Brett Lee (3-37) was Australia's bowling hero as he rocked India's top-order with two quickwickets in his sharp opening spell before removing skipper Mahendra Singh Dhoni in his second to end the hosts' recovery.

India's hopes receded sharply

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India's hopes receded sharply



THERE GOES THE CHASE: Pakistan's centurion Younis Khan (L) is removed by an ecstatic South African fast bowler Dale Steyn during the final day's play of the first Test at the Karachi National Stadium on Friday.

Tajikistan due today

SPORTS REPORTER

Tajikistan will arrive in Dhaka this morning to play the first leg of the 2010 World Cup pre-qualifier against Bangladesh.

The match, which kicks off at 3pm at the Bangabandhu National Stadium on Monday, will be telecast live by ATN Bangla.

The return-leg will be played on October 28 in Tajik capital Dushanbe.

SPECIAL OLYMPICS Dipu bags gold for Bangladesh

SPORTS REPORTER

Swimmer Al Mahmud Bin Dipu won Bangladesh's first gold medal at the Special Olympics World Summer Games in Shanghai yesterday, according to a message received from China.

Dipu, a student of Sena Sahayak School, won the 50m freestyle event at the Shanghai Pudong Natatorium in 59.30s, beating Azerbaijan's Shahriyar Abulluya and Guatemala's Erick V. Gonzalez.

Masududdin added a swimming silver for the country.

Meanwhile, the Bangladeshi cricketers beat China A team by 155 runs in their first match. In reply to Bangladesh's 254 runs in 20 overs, the hosts made only 95. Bangladesh face China B tomorrow and India on October 9.

In table tennis, Mushfiq Sultan won against Chinese and Israeli competitors by identical margins of 2-0. She got walkover from a Serbian opponent.

In badminton, Shammi and Moinul beat Singapore to advance to the second round of the mixed doubles.

Marion admits doping

APP, Washington

Sprint superstar Marion Jones, who has dodged doping allegations for years, has admitted using steroids before her triumphant 2000 Olympics campaign, the Washington Post reported on Thursday.

The Post, in a story posted on its website, said Jones had written to family and friends to tell them she would plead guilty on Friday to lying to federal agents about her drug use.

The New York Daily News, citing law enforcement sources, said Jones would appear in federal court in White Plains, New York, on Friday and plead guilty to two counts of lying to a federal agent.

The Post reported that in the letter, Jones said she took the steroid produced by the Bay Area Laboratory Cooperative (BALCO) before the Sydney Games, where her five medals included three gold.

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