

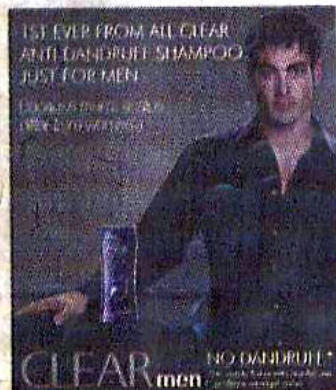
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Did U Know?

A computer program named Deep Thought beat an international Grand Master for the first time in November 1988 in Long Beach, California.



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.



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, updated

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. Shoaib Malik, captain in his first Test, had a flight to catch, so Lawson took his place amid much derision. Immediately he was fending off queries 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 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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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.

"As a team, Barisal have improved a lot in the last two seasons and I am hopeful that we can continue the progress despite a lack of superstars in our team, like the other divisional sides," he informed.

"Besides me, there are only two other players (Hannan Sarker and Talha Jubair) in the squad who have international exposure. But we have some very good upcoming players who can make difference this time," he added.

Among the upcoming players are batsman Rokibul Hasan. It will be an acid test for the youngster to see if he can continue his run-scoring form this season. Rokibul not only aggregated a handsome batting average of 83 after scoring

498 runs in seven innings but also became the first Bangladeshi batsman to score a triple hundred (313 not out) in first-class cricket.

"The inclusion of Talha 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 Biplab.

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

defeat on way to lift the inaugural AFC Challenge Cup in Dhaka in April 2006, are expected to bring more or less the same side but Bangladesh have a young side under a new coach.

Since Argentine coach Diego Cruciatti's departure, Bangladesh went through the wilderness of experiments before Nayeemuddin was appointed a couple of months earlier and the Indian coach has injected young blood for the game.

The 20-member team announced last night ensured a few seasoned players' comeback to the national side including Moni, Hassan Al Mamun and Mahmudul Hasan who all played for the country's second string side in the Merdeka Cup in August when Nayeem took the stronger team to the Nehru Cup in India.

The former Indian coach and international also decided to give Amit Khan Shuvra, Jumratul Islam Mithu, Arup Baidya, Enamul Haque Sharif and Nasirul Islam the chance to wear the national shirt for the first time. Apart from Nasir, the other four served in the Merdeka Cup side.

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SQUAD

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



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.

Yuvraj 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 abandoned due to rain.

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

India's hopes receded sharply

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."

Lee grabbed two early wickets

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 95-run stand for the fourth wicket. Tendulkar faced 71 balls for his 43 before being bowled by spinner Brad Hogg.

Yuvraj, 25, reached his half-century with a pulled six off Hogg (3-46) before being the eighth man out, bowled by Johnson in the 44th over. He cracked three sixes and 12 fours.

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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.

Marion admits doping

AFP, 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, citing a letter Jones had sent to "close family and friends," said the 31-year-old athlete admitted using a steroid in the build-up to the Sydney Games, where her five medals included three gold.

The Post reported that in the letter, Jones said she took the steroid produced by the Bay Area Laboratory Cooperative (BALCO) known as "the clear" for two years beginning in 1999.

Jones, once hailed as the greatest woman athlete in the world, was one of many high-profile athletes who testified before the federal grand jury investigating BALCO, a probe that has resulted in five convictions.

Federal authorities fingered BALCO, supposedly a nutritional

SEE PAGE 18 COL 5

Mahela rues poor start

BBC ONLINE, undated

Captain Mahela Jayawardene said Sri Lanka's poor start batting under lights cost them in their defeat by England in the second one-day match in Dambulla.

The hosts were 38-4 before being bowled out for 169, chasing 235 for victory.

"The first 10 overs are crucial, the ball tends to do a bit more than in the afternoon," Jayawardene explained.

"It's all about being patient, playing proper shots and trying to keep wickets in hand. If you do that it's easy to bat once the ball comes on to the bat."

He added: "I thought 230 was a good score to chase for us on this wicket but losing too many wickets up front didn't help the cause."

"I thought the English bowlers bowled really well, in good areas and picked up wickets and created opportunities, so hats off to them."

England were heading for a much lower total than their 234-8 when they limped to 61-4 and 142-6 on a slowish surface.

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Steyn seals SA win

Cricket

AFP, Karachi

Paceman Dale Steyn took five wickets to inspire South Africa to a hard-fought 160-run win over Pakistan in the first Test here on Friday, giving the tourists a 1-0 lead in the two-match series.

Steyn captured the prized wicket of Younis Khan, who made 126, before wrapping up the tail to dismiss the home team for 263 as they chased a mammoth 424 runs on the fifth and final day at the National Stadium.

Once Younis was dismissed before lunch the home team's chances of winning or saving the match were effectively over.

Steyn, who finished with 5-56, ended Younis's four hours of aggression with a sharp delivery that kept low and hit the off-stump.

While Younis was at the crease the home team had a chance of forcing an unlikely victory.

Shoaib Malik (30) and Misbah-ul Haq (23) tried to put up a fight but were undone by the second new ball after lunch.

Malik was the last man out,

caught off Makhaya Ntini for his only wicket in the match as South Africa captured the last six wickets for just 66 runs to complete their first victory in Pakistan since they won at Faisalabad in 1997.

The defeat is only Pakistan's second at the National Stadium in 40 Tests. They lost to England here in 2000.

Resuming Friday at 146-3, still needing 278 for victory, Pakistan lost nightwatchman Mohammad Asif, caught by Hashim Amla off Andre Nel for six.

Younis was the key for Pakistan after counter-attacking against the South African bowlers on Thursday during an unbeaten innings of 93.

He flicked paceman Nel over mid-wicket for his 15th boundary to reach his 13th Test hundred off just 108 balls. It was his first hundred against the Proteas and his first in the second innings of a Test.

Younis hit 18 boundaries and a six during his 160-ball knock and caused jitters in the opposition's ranks.

South Africa could have removed Malik for one had AB de Villiers held on to a sharp chance off left-arm spinner Paul Harris, who did produce some sharp turn but failed to add to his one wicket

taken on Thursday.

Pakistan were precariously placed on 230-5 at lunch, with Malik and Haq at the crease. They lost Haq in the first over after the break when Nel trapped him in front of the wicket.

Kamran Akmal, who had a poor match behind the stumps, was caught behind off Harris, who finished with 2-58 to follow up his five wickets in the first innings.

South Africa took the second new ball and were rewarded as Steyn trapped Abdul Rehman in front of the wicket to bring the tourists closer to victory.

In his next over, Steyn had Umar Gul (eight) caught at mid-off by Nel before Ntini wrapped up the match with Malik's wicket.

Jacques Kallis was declared man-of-the-match for his feat of scoring centuries in both innings.

The second Test starts in Lahore on Monday.

SCOREBOARD
Scoreboard on the fifth and final day of the first Test between Pakistan and South Africa at the National Stadium in Karachi on Friday:

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Inzamam's last hurrah

To play his last Test in Lahore

Cricket

AFP, Karachi

Former Pakistan captain Inzamam-ul Haq Friday officially announced his retirement from Test cricket, saying next week's Lahore Test against South Africa will be his last.

The 37-year-old batsman revealed his decision at a press conference with Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) chairman Nasim Ashraf at the National Stadium in Karachi, where Pakistan were playing South Africa.

"I have told the selectors of my availability for the Lahore Test, which will be my last. I feel this is the right time as the youngsters have played well and (are) ready to take seniors' place," Inzamam said in the press conference.

The second Test starts in Lahore from Monday -- dubbed "Inzamam's Test" by the PCB.

"It is a tough decision but it is the best for me and my country," said Inzamam, who made himself unavailable for the first Test here, won Friday by South Africa.

"I wanted to play for another year and a half but I realised that there will be a gap between me and the youngsters and they may feel pressure of playing with me so I felt that this is the

right time to retire," he said.

"You can't play for your whole life and such a time comes in every player's life. I am thankful to PCB

for providing me a chance to retire before my home fans, which would be ideal and one of my wishes."

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THANK YOU INZY: Pakistan great Inzamam-ul Haq announces his retirement from Test cricket at a press conference in Karachi on Friday.

PHOTO: AFP