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AFC CHAMPIONSHIP U-16s play Palestine today

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh under-16 football team will open their campaign in the AFC Youth Football Championship qualifiers today.

Drawn in Group D, Bangladesh face Palestine on the opening day of the six-team qualifiers in Abu Dhabi.

The team, which prepared for 80 days in Dhaka under coach Jubair Nipu, left for the United Arab Emirates with a target of winning two games including their opener against Palestine.

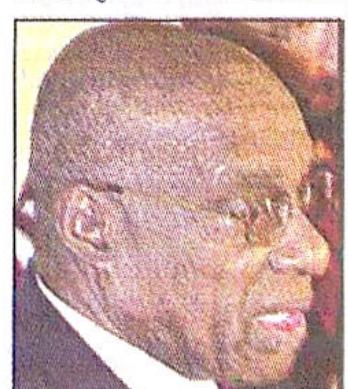
"We hope to beat at least Palestine and Turkmenistan," Nipu had said before the team's departure.

Bangladesh meet hosts UAE on October 20, followed by matches against Turkmenistan and other Central Asian opponents Uzbekistan and Tajikistan on October 22, 25 and 28 respectively.



Did U Know?

The first mention of chess in America occurred in the year of 1641 in Esther Singleton's history of Dutch settlers. The first American tournament was held in New York in 1843.



Wesley Hall
(West Indies cricket legend)
"I am hippopotamus happy and elephanfantasticly proud."
On being honoured on his 70th birthday, September 12.

What to WATCH

DD National
India v Australia
Seventh ODI
Live from 3:00pm
ESPN
Sportscenter India
Sports News
Live at 8:30pm
STAR Sports
Madrid Masters Tennis
Second Round
Live from 12:30am (Thursday)

Dilhara sinks England

AFP, Colombo

Paceman Dilhara Fernando bagged a career-best haul of 6-27 to help Sri Lanka post a consolation 107-run win over England in the fifth and final one-day international here on Saturday.

Man-of-the-match Fernando's maiden bag of five or more wickets in an innings came in eight sharp overs as England crashed to 104 chasing a modest 212-run target on a slowpitch in the day-night match.

But England had already clinched the series going into the last match by winning the second, third and fourth one-dayers.

Fernando, 28, was superbly backed by veteran left-arm seamer Chaminda Vaas who finished with two wickets, including that of Kevin Pietersen for 28, to help their side win the battle of pacemen.

Alastair Cook (26), Ravi Bopara (out) and Ian Bell (11) were sent in to reach double-figure scores, including that he struck fellow fast bowler Mohammad Asif

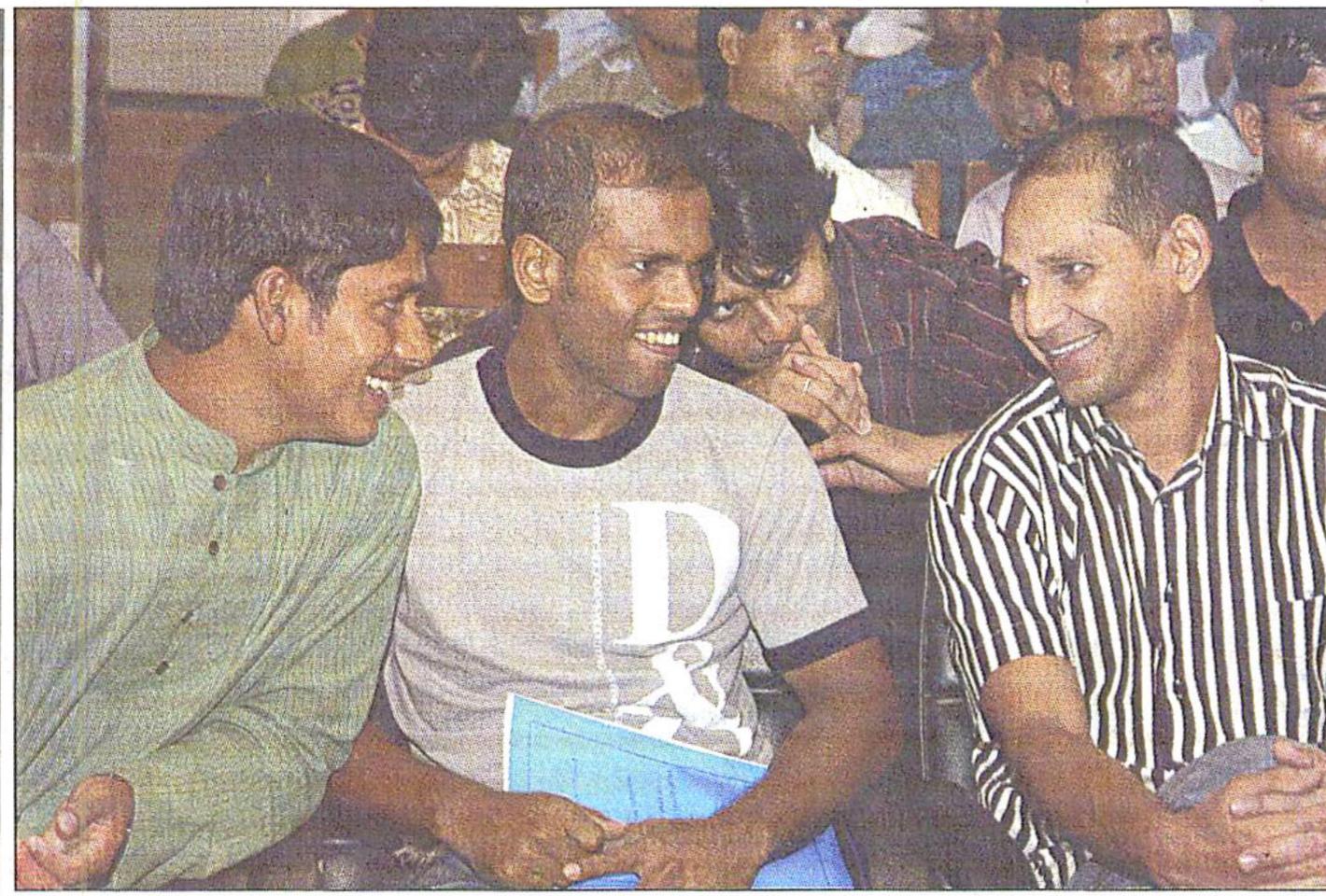


PHOTO: STAR

Bangladesh national cricketers (from L-R) Mohammad Ashraful, Rajin Saleh, Shahriar Nafees and Habibul Bashar chat during a meeting concerning the 9th National Cricket League at the National Sports Council yesterday.

India to play for pride Final ODI against Australia today

Cricket

AGENCIES, Mumbai

After conceding the seven-match series weekly, India will play for pride and seek a consolation win when they take on Australia in the seventh and final cricket one-dayer here tomorrow.

The series so far has been fought both on and off the playing arena and the formidable Australians, well known for their aggressive approach, will be keen to maintain their stranglehold on the hosts in the last game to be played under lights at the Wankhede stadium.

The visitors have already taken an invincible 4-1 lead and the home team can at best reduce the margin and gain some confidence ahead of the forthcoming series against archrivals Pakistan.

The Indians, who were accorded a tumultuous welcome in this city three weeks ago on their return as Twenty20 World Champions, have

to put in a far more inspired performance to stop the Aussies from increasing the victory margin.

The home team has to sort out quite a few chinks in their armoury as it has failed to click as a unit in all departments of the game at the same time except at Chandigarh where we did so and won," captain Mahendra Singh Dhoni said.

He said the Indian bowling at the death and batting between the 20th and 40th overs needed improvement to counter the mighty Australians.

Ricky Ponting does not expect Australia to make many changes for the final match of the seven-game series with India in Mumbai on Wednesday.

Australia sealed the contest with the 18-run win on Sunday and Ponting is concerned any unnecessary fiddling could have a negative effect on the team.

"If we make any changes there might only be a change, we feel that

we have built some really good momentum in this series," Ponting told AAP. "With the way that we rested players during the Australian summer last season, with the World Cup in mind, we think it had a little bit of a negative impact on a few and we are very conscious of that now." Australia lost both the CB Series and the Chappell-Hadlee Trophy after toying with the squad, but they recovered to proceed through the World Cup undefeated.

However, Ponting said the rotation policy, which usually creates controversy in Australia's home season, would not be dumped. "It doesn't mean an end to it," he said, "it won't in Australia either."

"It is slightly different now because guys have come off such a long break and guys are still physically very good and very sound." Australia will wait to make a decision on Matthew Hayden, who injured his hip in the fifth match and was replaced at opener by Twenty20 World Champion, Michael Hussey.

"I am glad we were able to play good cricket throughout."

The Indians started off their chase confidently, with Tendulkar and Ganguly combining for their 26th century stand together and the best start in the series for either side.

SEE PAGE 13 COL 5

Symonds smashes India Australia win series

Cricket

AFP, Nagpur

Andrew Symonds hit a blistering unbeaten century to set up Australia's thrilling 18-run win over India in the sixth one-day international here on Sunday.

The victory helped Australia clinch the seven-match series 4-1, with one more game to go in Mumbai on Wednesday. The opener was abandoned due to rain.

The 32-year-old Symonds smashed an unbeaten 88-ball 107 to prop up Australia to an imposing 317-8 before left-arm spinner Brad Hogg picked a haul of 4-49 to restrict India to 299-7.

The Indians put up a valiant fight, riding on blazing knocks by Sourav Ganguly (86), Sachin Tendulkar (72) and Robin Uthappa

(44), but ultimately ran out of steam.

Needling 56 runs off the last five overs, Mahendra Singh Dhoni (26) and Uthappa unleashed a flurry of shots but Mitchell Johnson (239) dismissed them both in the 49th over to douse the Indian challenge.

"A total of around 300 was a par score in these conditions. I have always maintained that spinners need to do well in such conditions and they did that today (Sunday)," Australian skipper Ricky Ponting said.

"One-day cricket is all about applying and committing yourself to 100 overs. You can't take your foot off the accelerator at any point. I am glad we were able to play good cricket throughout."

The Indians started off their chase confidently, with Tendulkar and Ganguly combining for their 26th century stand together and the best start in the series for either side.

SEE PAGE 13 COL 2

Akhtar signs with IPL

Cricket

AFP, Karachi

Suspended Pakistan paceman Shoaib Akhtar has signed a lucrative deal with an Indian cricket league, saying Pakistan officials have agreed to let him play.

"After I received permission from the Pakistan Cricket Board, I have signed a contract to play for the Indian Premier League and it will be an honour to play in India," Akhtar told AFP.

The paceman was last week banned for 13 international matches and fined 3.4 million rupees (56,000 dollars) primarily for hitting a teammate with a bat.

Akhtar was offered a contract to play for the ICL, which he declined after Pakistan officials warned that any player signing with the rebel

league would be ineligible to represent the national team.

Akhtar will complete his ban later this month and be available to play for Pakistan in the last one-dayer against South Africa in Karachi on October 29.

The 'Rawalpindi Express' will also be available for selection for Pakistan's tour to India next month.

Akhtar said he looked forward to playing in India where cricket officials have set up the IPL to rival the breakaway Indian Cricket League (ICL), which is being bankrolled by India's largest media group.

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league would be ineligible to represent the national team.

The Pakistan Cricket Board has backed the IPL and Friday announced they have allowed six players to take part if they wanted.

Meanwhile, PCB cricket chief hit out at Shoaib Akhtar on Friday, saying the controversial paceman damaged the nation's cricket image and needed psychiatric counselling.

Akhtar was banned Thursday for 13 international matches and fined 3.4 million rupees (56,000 dollars) primarily for hitting a teammate with a bat.

Akhtar hurt Pakistan's image and got the maximum punishment. Some form of counselling from a psychiatrist is compulsory for him," Pakistan Cricket Board chairman Nasim Ashraf told reporters.

SEE PAGE 13 COL 5

SCORES IN BRIEF

SOUTH AFRICA: 328-4 in 45 overs (M. Boucher 103, AB de Villiers 113 not out)

PATRON'S XI: 152 in 31.3 overs (Mansoor Amjad 42; A. Morkel 3-22, C. Langeveldt 3-29)

Result: South Africa won by 176 runs.

SA seal series

AFP, Lahore

South Africa sealed their first Test series on the subcontinent since 2000 on Friday after being held to a draw by battling Pakistan in the second and final match.

Pakistan, set a mammoth 457 to win, finished the final day on 316-4 with Younis Khan scoring a brilliant 130 while Mohammad Yousuf marked his return to the team with a stylish 63.

Former captain Inzamamul Haq smashed his bat in frustration after falling agonizingly short of Javed Miandad's Pakistan Test runs record in his final international appearance.

The Proteas last won a major South Asian series seven years ago when they beat India. They won the first Test by 160 runs in Karachi last week.

Inzamam, who quit one-day cricket and resigned the captaincy after Pakistan's first-round exit from the World Cup in March, lasted just two deliveries.

He took three off the first ball but in the next over he jumped out of his crease and missed left-arm spinner Paul Harris's delivery to be stumped by Mark Boucher.

Inzamam shrugged in disgust before trudging back to the pavilion for the last time amidst applause by 5,000 home fans and a guard of honour.

The master batsman, who finished with 8,830 runs including 25 hundreds in 120 Tests, later broke his bat in the dressing room in a fit of anger.

SEE PAGE 13 COL 5

Tons propel Proteas

AFP, Lahore

Mark Boucher and A.B. de Villiers hit quick-fire hundreds as South Africa tuned up for the one-day international series with a crushing 176-run win against Pakistan's Patron's XI on Tuesday.

Boucher scored a 106-ball 103 while de Villiers raced to an unbeaten 113 off 95 balls as the tourists compiled 328-4 in just 45 overs at Bagh-e-Jinnah Stadium.

South Africa then bowled out the Patron's XI for a paltry 152 in 31.3 overs in their only tour game ahead of the five-match series against Pakistan starting here on Thursday.

Boucher, who opened the innings in the absence of rested captain Graeme Smith, hit 14 boundaries and a six and added 165 runs for the third wicket with de Villiers after the home team won the toss and opted to field.

Patron's XI paceman Abdul Rauf removed Herschelle Gibbs (18) and Jean-Paul Duminy for a duck to restrict the tourists to 36-2 but the home bowlers then struggled against Boucher and de Villiers.

Rauf also suffered badly at the hands of Shaun Pollock who hit him for four consecutive sixes off the last four balls of the innings. Pollock, playing his first match of the tour, finished with an unbeaten 11-ball 33.

SCORES IN BRIEF

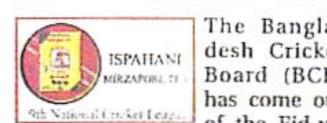
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BCB revamps NCL

SPORTS REPORTER



The Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) has come out of the Eid-fit fervour as soon as the public holiday was over yesterday when they sat to discuss changes in the 9th National Cricket League (NCL) to make the competition more attractive.

Persistent rain has threatened the scheduled start (October 19) of the first-class competition across the country but the organisers did not want to waste any time to complete preparations.

The BCB tournament committee arranged sessions for the divisional captains, managers, coaches and other concerned officials to explain the changed playing conditions. Rajshahi captain Khaled Mashud did not attend the meeting which was held at the National Sports Council conference room.

"We have thoroughly discussed the playing conditions to avoid any kind of misunderstanding and this time, there have been some changes. But we are really worried with the weather condition because it would be tough to start the league in time if rain continues for another day," said Gazi Ashraf.

Teams can now achieve a maximum of sixteen points from a four-day game as there are eight points for an outright victory instead of six and there are a maximum of four points each as batting and bowling bonuses, all applicable for first innings. And a team can secure four points for a first-innings lead where the losing side gets two.

There is one bonus point for 200-250 runs, two points for 251-300, three for 301-350 runs and four for any score above 350.

On the other hand, the fielding side will get one point for taking five wickets, two for 6 to 7 wickets and three for 8 to 9 wickets and a

maximum four points for bowling out the oppositions.

"I think the changed points system will make it more competitive, especially the bowling bonus will make a huge impact in our batting in the longer-version of the game, announcing batting and bowling bonus points to make the meet more competitive."

"We brought the changes in line with English county cricket to make the competition more attractive and competitive. The matches sometimes became dull because of the erstwhile point system but we believe that it will not happen this time," said Roquibul Hasan, who explained the playing condition as a match referee in the meeting.

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