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Pakistan to miss Inzy: Harbhajan

AFP, New Delhi

Pakistan will miss retired captain and free-scoring batsman Inzamam-ul-Haq in upcoming clashes with India, Indian off-spinner Harbhajan Singh said on Thursday.

"Inzamam is the Sachin Tendulkar of Pakistan and his decision to retire from international cricket recently will definitely be an advantage for India," Harbhajan told the Hindustan Times.

Inzamam, 37, who scored 8,830 Test runs and 11,739 one-day runs in a glorious 15-year career, retired earlier this month after the two-Test series against South Africa.

Harbhajan said he looked forward to renewing battle with Pakistan, who took India from

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NCL sans stars

SPORTS REPORTER



Dhaka will sorely miss their inspirational and inform captain Mohammad Ashraful when they take on Sylhet in the second round of the 9th National Cricket League at the Shaheed Chandu Stadium today.

Rajshahi face a resurgent Barisal side while Khulna open their home account as they host Chittagong at the Birshreshtha Shaheed Flight Lieutenant Matiur Rahman Stadium.

Ashraful, who scored a match-saving 84 in the opening home game against Khulna, left the capital yesterday afternoon to play in the Hong Kong Sixes along with six others -- Aftab Ahmed, Abdur Razzak, Dolar Mahmud, Mahmudullah Riyad, Nazmul Hossain Milon and Zunaed Siddiqui.

Dhaka are the worst hit among the divisional sides as they are also going to miss all-rounders Riyad

and Milon. Khulna will have to do without the services of bowlers Abdur Razzak and Dolar Mahmud while Aftab and Zunaed will have to be replaced in the Chittagong and Rajshahi line-ups respectively.

Quite surprisingly, Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) decided to send a strong side to the 10-team exhibition tournament when other Test-playing nations did not even bother sending international names. In order to add lustre, the organisers added an All Star team.

Apart from weakening divisional sides, BCB failed maintaining their position of making sure that the likes of Ashraful and Aftab play maximum number of NCL matches, ahead of this winter's tour of New Zealand.

In the first round, Dhaka salvaged four points from their opening round encounter against Khulna, thanks mainly to two gutsy performances from Ashraful and Riyad. While Ashraful's stability helped the defending champions draw on the final day, it was Riyad's crucial 28 in the first innings that got Dhaka past the follow-on mark.

Replacing these two would be a big ask for whoever it is, and it is most likely to see talented right-hander Marshall Ayub batting at the skipper's position while Shamsur Rahman and Uttam Sarkar are also likely to get a look in.

Khulna have drafted in all-rounder Ziaur Rahman and left-arm spinner Murad Khan in place of Dolar and Razzak, who smashed 78 and took four wickets against Dhaka to win the man-of-the-match award. Their opponents would find it easier to swap for Aftab as they have a few to fall back on. But Mahbubul Karim is most likely to get the nod.

Table-toppers Rajshahi are set to replace dashing opener Zunaed Siddiqui with Hasanuzzaman or Shakil Haider against Barisal, who accumulated 14 points from their win against Chittagong in Bogra. Their victory was a refreshing change from previous season performances when they usually failed to beat the big guns. But a spirited effort from youngsters Raisul Islam and Rokibul Hasan took them to victory.



ON HOLIDAY! Bangladesh captain Mohammad Ashraful (L) jokes with hard-hitting batsman Aftab Ahmed (R) at the Zia International Airport prior to their departure for Hong Kong yesterday. The board in a surprise move has decided to send Ashraful along with four national cricketers to represent Bangladesh in the two-day Hong Kong Sixes tournament when the other seven Test nations opted for lesser lights.

Fourth SA-Pak ODI today

Cricket

CRICINFO, undated

A pattern has begun to emerge in this engaging joust. Wickets look as if they'll leak runs except they don't. South Africa, setting or chasing targets, start well only to get bogged down in the face of Pakistan's twin spin stragglers and in that middle period, the game is effectively decided. Pakistan have reduced it to this simple equation and if it comes off tomorrow, then considerable hope will have been salvaged from a series, and era, that stuttered at the start.

There are other themes floating around this pattern of course, which may or may not have a role to play; Shahid Afridi will have a role, in success or failure; South Africa's middle order, including Jacques Kallis, can't surely misfire in another match; Pakistan's fielding, on which so much hinges, has been clownish one day, supreme the next and who knows what

tomorrow; a lonesome Johan Botha's failure to take a wicket or indeed exert any real pressure.

Mickey Arthur believes there is no great mystery why his side are trailing. Forget pitches, forget security distractions. "No excuses, Pakistan have played better than we have over the last two games."

Granted security concerns mightn't have been a distraction -- though people have been quick to note that their losses have come after the Karachi bombings -- but surely the pitches have played their part? Why shouldn't they, asked Arthur? Home advantage is there to be utilised.

"It's the same when we are home and we play on bouncy pitches because that plays into our hands. Pakistan are playing with slow pitches which have turn so they've used home conditions. We have to come up with a plan to counter it."

Central to any counter-attack must be Jacques Kallis who has scored 400 runs less than he did in the Test series: 21 from three

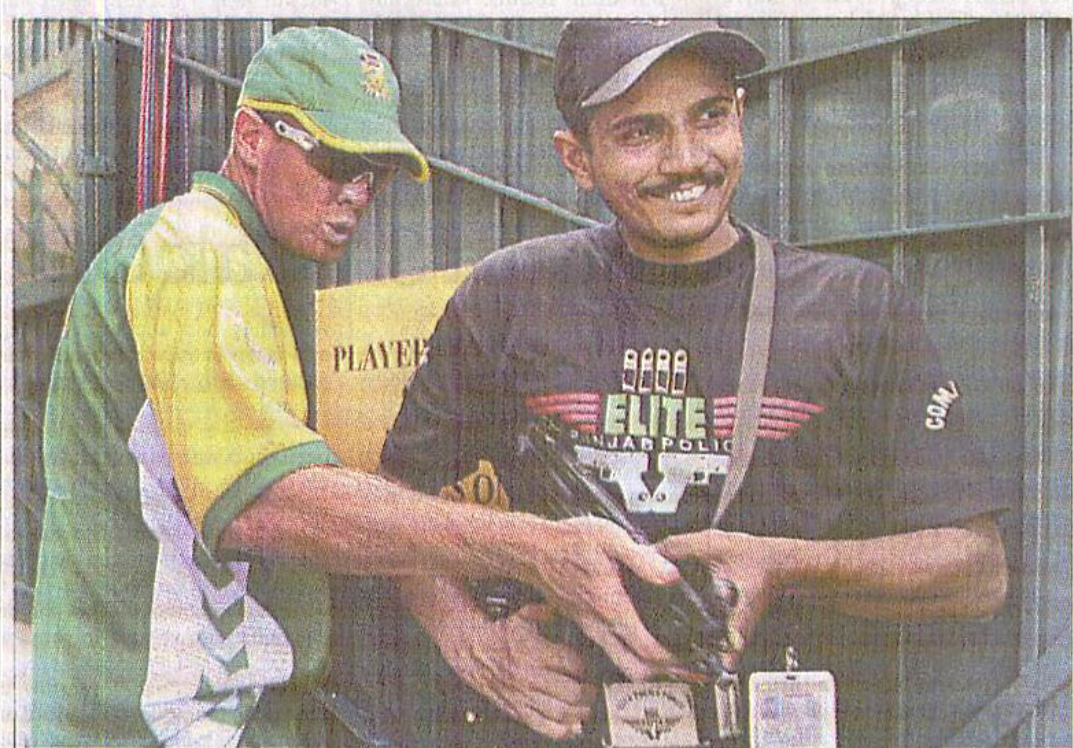
innings. Barring a battling 42 in the last match, Justin Kemp has also struggled. "Our middle order has struggled in those middle overs but hats off to Pakistan. They've bowled really well. We'll come up with a plan to tackle. Jacques is a fantastic player and we are backing him to come out and score tomorrow."

Kemp, as the murmurs go, may not be as lucky in which case JP Duminy may sneak in. If it happens, then the two sides will be playing without their vice-captains -- Kemp and Salman Butt, who has not featured in the series so far.

Record-loving fans will be pleased to know that Shoaib Malik's press conference was perhaps the shortest in the history of such things. But that is to be taken as a positive sign for it suggests that all questions are being asked of South Africa currently, literally and figuratively.

Mohammad Asif is still unlikely to play, though with Umar Gul and Iftikhar Anjum so confident, now is

SEE PAGE 22 COL 6



IT'S NOT A TOY GUN: South African allrounder Shaun Pollock (L) shares a light moment with a commando during a practice session in Multan yesterday.

BOB WOOLMER DEATH INQUEST

Pathologist sticks to poison theory

Cricket

AFP, Kingston

The pathologist who conducted the autopsy of Pakistan cricket coach Bob Woolmer on Thursday told the inquest into Woolmer's death that Woolmer died as the result of poisoning and strangulation.

Ere Sheshiah, whose original finding in March that Woolmer was strangled launched a far-reaching murder inquiry and sparked feverish speculation that it was related to corruption in international cricket, said he stuck by his findings.

"In my opinion, Woolmer died from asphyxia due to manual

strangulation associated with cypermethrin poisoning," said Sheshiah, who said the chemical is used widely in many countries where cotton is grown such as Sri Lanka, India, Bangladesh, and Pakistan.

Woolmer died on March 18, when he was found unconscious in his Jamaican hotel room the day after Pakistan were embarrassed by Ireland in a cricket World Cup upset.

Sheshiah said that cypermethrin can cause symptoms including "salivation, vomiting, diarrhoea and muscular incoordination," which may have accounted for the scene of disarray that medical personnel found at Woolmer's room.

Sheshiah, whose procedures in

the post mortem have been criticized by three other pathologists asked to review the case, said police pressed him to offer conclusion in the case before he received the results of the toxicology report.

The three other pathologists, South African Lorna Martin, Britain's Nathaniel Cary and Canadian Michale Pollanen, have all testified that Woolmer appeared to have died of natural causes, probably related to heart disease.

In June, Jamaican authorities said they were no longer treating Woolmer's death as homicide. Sheshiah, 65, was expected to testify further on Thursday in the inquest presided over by coroner Patrick Murphy and 11 jurors. The proceedings are expected to continue until early November.

Bangladesh safely in Dushanbe

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh national football team landed in Dushanbe last night after a strenuous journey through Central Asia to play their second leg match of the 2010 World Cup pre-qualifiers against hosts Tajikistan.

Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) confirmed that the team arrived at the Tajik capital's international airport around 7pm Bangladesh time.

Syed Nayeemuddin's boys left Dhaka on Wednesday afternoon for Bangkok where they changed flights for Uzbekistan.

After landing in Tashkent in the early hours of Thursday, the team received the hospitality of Mohammed Hasib Aziz, Bangladesh's Ambassador to Uzbekistan.

They stayed overnight at the Ambassador's house and after lunch, the team were taken to the Tajikistan border by bus before boarding a domestic flight.

The second leg match will be held on Sunday with Bangladesh, who drew the home match 1-1, needing at least a 2-2 draw or a win to reach the second stage Asian qualifiers against all odds.

U-16 booters go down fighting

SPORTS REPORTER

A heart winning performance by Bangladesh Under-16 footballers went in vain when they lost 3-2 to Uzbekistan in yesterday's AFC Youth Championship qualifiers in Abu Dhabi.

Bangladesh, who won 9-1 against Palestine but lost 9-1 and 3-1 to hosts UAE and Turkmenistan respectively in their previous matches, dominated the show but failed to convert chances in the first half which ended scoreless at the Al Wahda Stadium.

Prolific scorer Sohel finally broke the deadlock when the Bangladeshi striker scored his sixth goal in the Group D qualifiers after taking a pass from Jamal in the 68th minute.

SEE PAGE 22 COL 1

Abahani start training

SPORTS REPORTER

B. League champions Abahani began their preparation yesterday for taking part in the Barduloi Trophy in Assam next month.

However, less than ten footballers were present on opening day's training at the inaugural professional league winners' club ground in Dhamondia.

With five players with the national team and no foreign players left in the squad, it is expected that the practice sessions will take some time to get momentum.

The prestigious tournament in India will start on November 15.

No Miller for Tigers

Cricket

SPORTS REPORTER

The Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) will have to make a fresh start in a bid to appoint a new foreign coach for the national team after Colin Miller's exit from the scene.

The BCB virtually said no to the former Australian international on Wednesday, informed Gazi Ashraf Hossain Lipu, chairman of BCB cricket operations committee, yesterday.

"We were due to let him know about our decision after the Eid vacation," told Lipu adding that Miller contacted the board to know their opinion as he had received an offer from India.

"He didn't say what level the offer came from but we have given him our reply on Wednesday."

"We have informed him that he

was a bit behind our requirements of a batting oriented coach. We also suggested he consider any other offers at this moment because of this."

"However, if we need him later and he is available, we would go back to him," added the former national cricket captain.

Miller was the last foreign coach under consideration in BCB's three-member short-list. Earlier, fellow Australian John Dyson was roped in by the West Indies while Gordon Greenidge, the West Indian who had coached Bangladesh to ICC Trophy triumph and took the Tigers to the maiden World Cup in England, announced he would not be available for a full time position.

"Greenidge has told us he would be available on short-term basis and could be here for a few weeks. We haven't said yes or rejected his offer," Lipu told.

"It's (finding a coach) an ongoing

process and I hope we would be able to say something new very soon."

Miller, who bowled off-spin and medium pace for Australia during an 18-Test career, seemed to be upset after BCB's reply.

"Two days ago I was told about this (not getting the job)," Miller was quoted by a website.

"I saw the chance of coaching the young Bangladesh team. It would have been a great opportunity to share the knowledge of my 17-year first-class career at a time that the team have begun to establish themselves as a reasonable one-day team, but as yet have not been able to do the same at Test level."

"It would have been my aim to give direction to the team, and using my time with the most successful team in world cricket, to establish the Bangladesh team as one to be reckoned with at Test level."

ICL excites Lara

Cricket

AFP, Hong Kong

Brian Lara, the most successful Test batsman in history, said on Thursday that a controversial rebel series scheduled for later this year would open a new chapter in his career.

Lara, who retired from the international game in April, will join the Indian Cricket League (ICL) for its inaugural season despite major doubts over who else will play in the series and even whether it will get off the ground.

"I'm signed onto the ICL, which will hopefully get going at the end of November or December," he said ahead of this weekend's Hong Kong Sixes.

"It is the Twenty20 version of the game, which of course is more condensed, spectator-friendly cricket and the crowd finds it very exciting."

"I loved the Test matches, but I'm looking forward to playing Twenty20 cricket as well. Internationally, that is all I have on the cards right now."

The Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) is trying to squash the rebel ICL series by setting up its own multi-million-dollar league, backed by the International Cricket Council and supported by boards around the world.

Both set-ups have promised an array of world-class players, with the BCCI's Indian Premier League saying it has signed on Test captains Graeme Smith of South Africa, Daniel Vettori of New Zealand, Shoaib Malik of Pakistan

and the entire Indian team.

In the Hong Kong Sixes, Lara will play in an all-star team captained by Shane Warne and including Glenn McGrath, Craig McMillan, Geraint Jones, Anil Kumble and Heath Streak.

"It will be great to finally play alongside Warne and McGrath rather than against them," he said. "I played sixes in Hong Kong 13 years ago so I'm looking forward to again playing some fun, fast cricket."

Left-hander Lara, 38, announced his West Indies retirement following his country's failure to qualify for the semi-finals at the World Cup in the Caribbean.

"I'm really enjoying my retirement and the last five months have been good, so I have no plans to play for the West Indies again," he said.



BACK FOR FUN: West Indies great Brian Lara signs autographs for young fans at the Hong Kong Cricket Club on Thursday. The retired West Indies captain will feature in the Hong Kong Cricket Sixes tournament on October 27-28.



Did U Know?

The Major League Baseball teams use about 850,000 balls per season.



Mark Taylor

(Former Australia cricket captain)
"He's one of those guys who can be 80 not out at lunch. Back in my day I dreamed about being 80 not out at lunch. If I could be 80 at about tea I thought 'this is good'."

Noticing how opening the batting has changed as he supports Phil Jacques's case for a Test call-up.



What to WATCH
TEN Sports
Pakistan v South Africa
Fourth One-Day International
Live from 2:30 pm
ESPN
Sportscenter India
Sports News
Live at 8:30 pm

DAY'S EVENT
National Cricket League
(Second Round, Day One)
Sylhet v Dhaka
Venue: Shaheed Chandu Stadium
Rajshahi v Barisal
Venue: Rajshahi Divisional Stadium
Khulna v Chittagong
Venue: Khulna divisional Stadium

Tokai kabaddi final today

UNB, Dhaka

Tokai Stadium and Tokai Mirpur reached the final of the Orient Bread Tokai kabaddi tournament beating their respective opponents at the Outer Stadium kabaddi court yesterday.

The final will be held today at 3:30 pm at the same venue. In the afternoon, Tokai Stadium outplayed Tokai Khilgaon team 60-35 with five lonas while Tokai Mirpur defeated Tokai Gulistan 45-30 with three lonas.

Earlier in the morning, Tokai Gulistan beat Tokai Syedabad Terminal 55-24 and Tokai Khilgaon crushed Tokai Paltan 63-30.