

Good start for Dhaka

UNB, Panchagarh

The first-ever Women's Invitational Handball tournament began at the local Pilot High School ground yesterday.

Dhaka were off to a flying start as they dumped Rajshahi 20-11 in the opening match.

Earlier, Deputy Commissioner of Panchagarh Mohammad Hafizuddin formally inaugurated the meet. General secretary of Bangladesh Handball Federation Asaduzzaman Kholinorwas present.

A total of seven teams are taking part in the meet.

ACC, Uttara & Badda win

SPORTS REPORTER

ACC Green snuck home by two wickets in their Third Division Qualifying match against Dhamondri Cricket Academy at the Uttara Friends Club ground yesterday.

Batting first, DCA were bundled out for 128 runs in the 41st over, with opener Ratnak top-scoring with 30 and all-rounder Ibrahim smashing 25. ACC reached their target in only 21.4 overs. Raimul took four wickets for DCA.

Uttara Cricket Foundation, Badda Jagarani Sangsad, Muktioddha Projanmo Command Cricket Academy and Predator Cricket Club won their respective matches on the day.

Yousuf surprised with success

PTI, Multan

Prolific Pakistani batsman Mohammad Yousuf has expressed surprise at his recent run of impressive scores against South Africa as he had been away from cricket for a long time.

Yousuf was omitted from the team for the World Twenty20 Championship in South Africa and returned to the side in the second Test against the Proteas in Lahore.

After scores of 25 and 63 not out in that match, he has had knocks of 53, 117 and 58 not out in the first three one-day internationals which helped Pakistan take a 2-1 lead in the five-match series.

"I never expected this type of success, on making my comeback because I was not able to train properly for this series having been out of action for the last two months," Yousuf said.

U-16 booters

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The lead was short lived as joint table toppers Uzbekistan equalised two minutes later through Gapparov. A lapse by the Bangladesh goalkeeper gifted the lead to the Central Asians as Shatusurov made it 2-1 in the 73rd minute.

Bangladesh were unfortunate to concede the third goal as Abdullaev made most of a wrong call to score from a seemingly offside position three minutes later.

Sohel then set a goal for substitute Saifuddin who reduced the arrears three minutes from time.

Bangladesh, on three points from four matches, meet Tajikistan on Sunday in their last match.

Megson new

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Gartside insisted that the players would be committed to the new manager.

He said: "We have made decisive decisions over the past few weeks and this is one of them."

"It is not about me, Gary Megson or any other individual. It is all about Bolton surviving in the Premier League."

"We have to be fully focussed on the task ahead to make sure we achieve immediate success."

"I have spoken to the staff and the players and we are all committed to getting behind Gary and turning our fortunes around."

Bolton currently lie bottom of the Premiership, with just five points from 10 games played so far this season.

D'Alessandro

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With the rest of the squad while the club decided on an appropriate sanction.

Zaragoza would not comment on where they would decide on what action to take against D'Alessandro and what form the punishment might be.

D'Alessandro returned to the club on Wednesday evening to train alone.

The incident has led to Spanish media speculation that D'Alessandro, who joined the club in the summer of 2006, would be sold during the winter transfer window after falling foul of Fernandez.

The player also had a highly publicised clash in training last week with his compatriot and fellow Argentine international, Pablo Aimar.



IN HOSTILE LAND: Sri Lankan off-spinner Muttiah Muralidaran in his delivery stride during a practice session at the Adelaide Oval yesterday.

Fernando fired up

Cricket

CRICINFO, Adelaide

Dilhara Fernando has promised that he and his fellow Sri Lankan pace bowlers will give the Australian batsmen "something special" in the two-Test series this November. The side's pace attack, traditionally a weakness, is at its strongest ever and Fernando believes Sri Lanka have their best chance yet to win a Test in Australia.

"I think we have a good pace attack, especially (Lasith) Malinga, myself and Vaas (Chaminda Vaas)," he said after a practice session in Adelaide ahead of the first warm-up on Saturday. "We've got a good balanced attack so we can give them something special."

"I think we've got good variation -- swing, pace, bounce. We've got everything. This is our best chance to beat Australia, so I think we can beat them."

Kumar Sangakkara, the vice-captain, has an interesting take on how Sri Lanka's fast bowlers have improved: courtesy of a one-day innovation. "The PowerPlay rule coming into one-day cricket has helped us quite a lot in developing a pace attack."

"Earlier we used to [only] play a couple of pacers. I've been in Test matches when we've played one fast bowler when we play at home but now we've got three or four really great bowlers and really good

support bowlers as well to come in. That's where we've been going right in the past two years."

Fernando is looking forward to the pace tracks, and explains that the team has a simple strategy for winning. "Everyone wants to hit the deck hard so I think we can get good pace and bounce and get the wickets. We all know Australians are very good at pulling short balls, so we want to just do the basics, put



DILHARA FERNANDO

the ball in the right area."

When asked if there was anyone in particular he would be targeting, he broke into a broad beam and said: "I just want to target everyone!"

Nevertheless, he says "it's a dream come true" to play in Australia. "I've waited seven long years to play against Australia. It's a great opportunity for me. I think we can give them a good battle. I am

used to playing against big teams. I think we can do it. With Murali there's a big confidence. I think we can beat them."

Miss Inzy

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November 1 for five one-day internationals and three Test matches.

"Pakistan are no lightweight," he said. "We cannot take them lightly. Pakistan still have several good players like Shahid Afridi, Mohammad Yousuf and Shoaib Malik."

Harbhajan said India's win over Pakistan in the final of the World Twenty20 Championship in South Africa last month will give the hosts the psychological edge.

"We beat Pakistan in the T20 final and we will definitely have an edge over them," the 27-year-old said.

When Pakistan last toured India in 2005, Inzamam's men won the final Test in Bangalore to draw the series 1-1 and beat the hosts 4-2 in the one-dayers.

Ballack confident

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"It is not like a cruciate knee ligament injury when a player knows he will be back in six months."

"My injury is complicated, but I can reassure you I will do all I can to return as fast as I can."

Ballack injured his ankle in April's Premier League clash with Newcastle and required two operations.

The midfielder has missed seven German internationals as his country became the first side to qualify for next summer's Euro 2008 tournament.

Testy times

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We did could not make up for missing so many chances.

"But if we keep playing like we did here, we will win matches because we will certainly score more next time around if we play like that."

"I still think Liverpool can progress to the next stage. We know now we need to win all three of our final games, there is no more margin for error."

Liverpool will be confident they can beat Besiktas and FC Porto at home but securing three points from a trip to group leaders Marseille in their final match in December represents a daunting task.

Benitez said: "We have to wait to see now what we must do, how the numbers add up. The fact that Porto drew with Marseille in the other group game tonight was a help for us, it certainly improves our options."

Besiktas coach Ertugrul Saglam admitted he was surprised to see Liverpool in their current plight. "We all expected them to be top of the group, not bottom. But they are certainly good enough to win all three games they have left."

Inzamam to play in first ICL T20 Championship

PTI, New Delhi

Former Pakistan captain Inzamamul Haq on Thursday said he would participate in Indian Cricket League's inaugural Twenty20 Championship, starting in Panchkula on November 30.

Inzamam, who will lead one of the six sides in the tournament, said he looked forward to play alongside some great cricketers as well as youngsters.

"It gives me great pleasure to play in the inaugural edition of ICL. I also look forward to playing with promising youngsters from India and elsewhere along with some of the illustrious international players with whom I have shared many exciting moments on the field," he was quoted as saying in a media release from Lahore.

"I look forward to captain one of the ICL teams and hope to use my experience in taking that team to title victory," Inzamam said.

The ICL tournament will be played from November 30 to December 16.

Indian camp at Eden

PTI, Kolkata

Indian team's two-day conditioning camp beginning November 2, ahead of the series against Pakistan was on Thursday shifted to the Eden Gardens with the Board of Control for Cricket in India agreeing to defer a Ranji Trophy match that was clashing with the camp.

The camp was earlier scheduled to be staged at the Calcutta Cricket and Football Club, with the Eden slated to host the Bengal-Hyderabad Ranji Trophy elite division outing from November 3-6.

"Eden has superb world class facilities including floodlights and indoor practice arrangements which were not there at the CC&FC. We were earlier forced to opt for the CC&FC as Eden was not available."

"But I managed to convince the BCCI that the camp should be held at the Eden so as to give the Indian players the very best of infrastructural support before such an important series," Cricket Association of Bengal president Prasun Mukherjee told PTI.

BCCI admits it

PTI, Kanpur

The Board of Control for Cricket in India Thursday admitted that excessive cricket was causing players' burn-out but said the BCCI was only following the International Cricket Council's calendar.

BCCI vice-president Rajiv Shukla said although burn-out was an issue with cricketers of all countries, Board did not want the Indian players to be exhausted before important matches and was taking steps for the same.

"That is why we have increased our pool of players to 35 from 20 and introduced an additional category 'D' after A, B and C. With the new category, there will be an option for players if they are injured or needed to be rested," Shukla said.

"We are trying to have options for all kind of players in the new pool," he told reporters after inspecting the Green Park stadium which will host the India v Pakistan match on November 11.

Jibes don't

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The Spanish keeper is determined not to let Lehmann get to him as he enjoys the chance to play with the Premier League leaders.

"If I read the papers and listen to what other people say about me and all these things I will turn crazy. I don't want that," Almunia said.

"When I'm playing well, I honestly don't mind other things. Maybe if I will be playing badly or not too good I would be more worried, but for me life is fantastic and I want to take my chance."

"The goalkeeping position is a difficult one. I will stay positive. I've been here almost three years without playing in the league. It's normal for people to assess the situation."

"But I forget the past and now I'm playing so it's not a problem."

Milan ease woes

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and in the 51st minute they were rewarded by the quick thinking of striker Cristiano Lucarelli, back in Italy for the first time since leaving Serie A side Livorno in the summer.

Kalac, proving an able replacement to Dida, was up to saving Brandao's shot after a fluffed clearance from Milan defender Massimo Oddo but the ball was deflected into the path of Lucarelli who volleyed into an empty net.

But Seedorf then extinguished Shakhtar's hopes of drawing level when killing off the tie with his own double in the 63rd and 69th minutes.

His first goal, a pinpoint left-footed volley, came off a corner. From Pirlo and the second, a fine 45-metre volley after a spineless Kalac punch.

WI underachieved: Dyson

Cricket

BBC ONLINE, undated

New West Indies coach John Dyson says the team have underachieved given the talent of their young players.

The Windies have not won a single Test since May 2005, although they beat England 2-1 in a recent one-day series.

"The squad has tremendous potential and I don't think they are achieving it," the Australian told BBC World Service.

"They're quite capable of moving up the ICC tables and from my point of view it's important they have the ability to do that so it's an area I can work on."

One of Dyson's first tasks will be to convince the West Indian public that he is the right man for the job.

Many fans and observers wanted a native islander to take

charge and former Australia batsman Dyson, 53, said: "You're going to get that anywhere in the world."

"I hope the people will give me a chance to show what I'm all about."

"I'm a manager more than a traditional cricket coach, I try to help each guy achieve their full potential and find out what makes each one of them tick."

Dyson had been in talks with Bangladesh about becoming their new coach and said: "There are only a handful of jobs at that level in the world so it's obvious that if there are vacancies you might talk to them."

Regarding the composition of his support staff he said: "I'm quite happy to look at having some West Indian background staff on board, the bottom line is that they are capable of doing the jobs we feel need to be done."

One post that will not be up for negotiation is that of physio, with Dyson determined to bring in his own man.

"Fitness of the squad is very important, trying to get any advantage you can adds to the performance of the team," he said.

Asked about the similarities between the current Windies team and the Sri Lanka squad he inherited when he became coach in 2003, he said: "The Sri Lankans at that time did have some experienced players, the West Indies are more in transition."

"Brian Lara has just retired, but they are both teams not performing to their full potential with exciting players who can lead to better things."

Some believe Lara became a disruptive influence on the young players towards the end of his career but Dyson said: "There wouldn't be too many squads who wouldn't want him to play if he wanted to."

"But now there are opportunities for younger players to make their mark."

Atapattu's quick return

Cricket

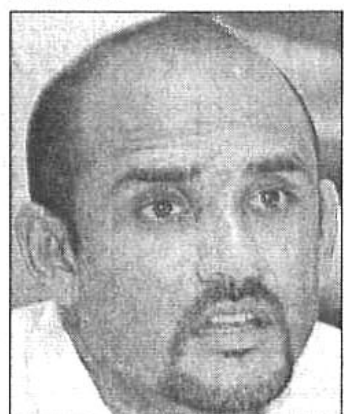
CRICINFO, Adelaide

Marvan Atapattu is set to complete a remarkable return for Sri Lanka after an eight-month absence by playing against a Chairman's XI in Adelaide on Saturday. Atapattu initially ruled himself out of the Australia tour following selection disputes which have rumbled since the World Cup in March, but he was finally persuaded to join the party a week before the team flew out.

Government intervention also helped Atapattu's inclusion and the new coach Trevor Bayliss was bemused by the turn of events. "One minute he was in, the next he wasn't and now he is, so ... that's about all I know," he said. "The system is a little different to what I'm used to, that's for sure."

"What we've said all along is whatever we get dealt with, whatever barriers are put up, we will put up with that and play the game as

best as we possibly can. He's been with the squad for the last week or so and he's fitted in very well. We're looking forward to a good tour from him, as well."



MARVAN ATAPATTU

As Atapattu hasn't played a Test since 2005, he is likely to feature in both warm-up matches as Sri Lanka assess him ahead of the first Test in Brisbane from November 8.

His return has been welcomed by his captain Mahela Jayawardene.

"He is experienced and has done so well for Sri Lanka that you always welcome a guy like that," he said. "It all depends on how keen and committed he is to the team."

Problems arose during the World Cup when he was overlooked for every match and he was then left out of the one-day side for the series against Pakistan. Atapattu made himself unavailable for the Bangladesh Tests in July, saying he was not mentally prepared for Test cricket. Instead he played for the English side Lashings.

He was not expected to go to Australia until the sports minister Gamini Lokuge and Sri Lanka's chief executive Duleep Mendis intervened at the 11th hour. If he wasn't mentally ready for Tests against Bangladesh, then he has a stiff challenge ahead: Australia in Australia is never an easy proposition.

Dwyer keeps Pakistan fit

Cricket

PTI, Multan

David Dwyer, a former Australian rugby coach, has brought about discernible improvement in the fitness of the Pakistan cricket team, a fact acknowledged by two key members of the side.

Batsman Yousuf Khan and wicketkeeper Kamran Akmal have complimented the Aussie for their good recent performances and Yousuf has even devised a special 'bench press' style of celebrating hundreds with his bat to acknowledge Dwyer.

Yousuf, who scored two hundreds in the recent Test series against South Africa, left everyone puzzled by celebrating his milestones by lifting his bat in 'bench press' several times in the air.

"It is nothing but a signal to our new trainer David Dwyer who has been very strict with our weight training programme," Yousuf said.

"David has put lot of emphasis on our weight training, especially the bench press exercises. So when I score hundreds I basically tell him with my actions his training is helping us," he said.

Dwyer has warned the Pakistan players that he intends to put them through a tough off-season fitness

programme.

"He is doing a good job with us and he is making a difference. Fitness is so important these days in cricket, especially with the hectic international programme we face," the top order batsman said.

Akmal also credited Dwyer for his fitness standards and felt the training would be very helpful during the upcoming tour of India.

"He has come and raised our training and fitness levels and it has helped me a lot in absorbing the pressures of keeping for long periods and also batting in the top order."

Fourth SA-Pak ODI today

FROM PAGE 21

perhaps the only time Pakistan can afford to not worry so much about it. In fact, Abdur Rehman's little groin niggle is probably, in the current context, a bigger concern.

He has played his role admirably during the middle overs in this series and Malik will hope he overcomes an early morning fitness test, more so as the only other replacements in the squad are discarded openers. While he's at it, Malik might also hope that Yousuf Khan adds runs to the considerable sum of his presence on the field; he hasn't struggled like Kallis, but has only 54 runs to show.

But really, the ball is in South Africa's court. Andre Nel will play tomorrow and Charl Langeveldt could make way. Do South Africa

wish they had another spinning option, given the way the series has panned out? "Two spinners is debatable," insisted Arthur.

"Pitches in Pakistan before have been good, with bounce and a little bit of pace. After the first match Pakistan were under pressure, they realised their strengths were in spin. They've prepared wickets according to that. Whether those wickets are good in the long-run is debatable but we have to counter it."

They must do it tomorrow if they are to maintain their record of never having lost a bilateral ODI series against Pakistan. "We're hugely focused to pull it back," said Arthur. "We've set our team big goals on this trip and we've ticked

the box in terms of the Tests. We want to go home with the ODI series as well so we're really focused. It's a final for us, a do-or-die game."

TEAMS

PAKISTAN (probable): Yasir Hameed, Shahid Afridi, Yousuf Khan, Mohammad Yousuf, Shoaib Malik (captain), Misbahul Haq, Kamran Akmal, Abdur Rehman, Sohail Tanvir, Rao Iftikhar Anjum, Umar Gul.

SOUTH AFRICA (probable): Graeme Smith (captain), Herschelle Gibbs, Jacques Kallis, AB de Villiers, Jean-Paul Duminy, Mark Boucher, Shaun Pollock, Albie Morkel, Johan Botha, Andre Nel, Makhaya Ntini.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS	35 "See ya"	54 Former times	16 Duck down
1 Swiss canton	36 Waste time	55 Albanian coin	20 Choose
4 Opening course	37 Suppressed		23 First victim
8 Throw in the towel	38 Society	1 C/S	24 Ledger
12 Scale member	39 Novelle	10 predecessor	25 Sacred
13 — Romeo	40 Princess	2 Lasso	26 — on first?
14 Fairy-tale prepositional	41 East	3 Troubles	27 Jalousy
15 Pomp	42 Break into	4 Flip-flop	28 My Name
17 — It	43 Prunes	5 "In — days, ..."	29 Is —
18 Dwell	44 Break into	6 Faraway craft	30 "Gosh!"
19 "You've got mail"	45 Fragments	7 Sunshade	31 TV's
20 1944 film	46 Mark's	8 Porcupine	32 Carriage-ton saga
21 Hawk	47 Social	9 Boom	33 Poll vaccine
22 1984 film	48 Break into	10 Fermi's	34 Akeelah's event
23 Hank's movie	49 Gossip column	11 Slick	35 Riddle
24 Sajak's prop	50 Gossip column	12 Slick	36 Riddle
25 Understood	51 Walked (on)	13 Slick	37 — salts
26 Resume	52 "Hail"	14 Slick	38 Sorrow
27 Get	53 Gossip column	15 Slick	39 Sorrow
28 First st.	54 Gossip column	16 Slick	40 Sorrow
29 Hawk	55 Gossip column	17 Slick	41 Sorrow
30 Crew tool	56 Gossip column	18 Slick	42 Sorrow

Solution time: 25 mins.

ACROSS	35 "See ya"	54 Former times	16 Duck down
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