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Comic with Javed

Cricket

SPORTS REPORTER

For the past one year Javed Omar Belim made the headlines for some-thing convincing the selectors that he still fits in the one-day side of the Tigers albeit the general sentiment was that his style rather suited the longer version of the game most.

The selectors however took a dramatic U-turn on Monday when they decided to bring Javed back home from New Zealand along with three other players before the start of the two-match Test series. The whimsical decision of the selectors took everyone by surprise, firstly because of his exclusion from Test side and secondly for his inclusion in the just concluded one-day team where he played no part.

There was always controversy over one-day selection of the right-hand and it was no exception when he was included in the 15-member one-day squad for the three-match series that the Tigers lost 3-0. But nobody questioned about his place in the Test side.

If the selectors have a policy to try with new guys to find out a permanent opening pair then why

they picked Javed for the one-day team and then brought him back without giving him any chance to prove himself during the tour? Isn't it funny?

Chief selector Rafiqul Alam could have been the right man to explain the reason behind this comical decision but he is now



JAVED OMAR BELIM

touring with the Bangladesh Under-19 team in South Africa.

Selector Akram Khan however was available to comment on the issue over telephone and he said that they have just honoured the decision of new Australian coach Jamie Siddons.

"You have every right to raise the

question about whether the decision was logical or not. But what I can say that we simply accepted it to honour our new coach who actually expressed his desire to try with the new pair on this tour," explained Akram.

"But it is also true that we have to take a harsh decision if we want to find a permanent solution for the opening spot. We have taken a risky decision by keeping two uncapped openers for the Test series, but I think the batting of Tamim Iqbal and Zunaed Siddiqui in the one-day series have prompted our coach to take this challenging decision," he added.

Asked if the coach has become bigger than the selection panel itself, Akram defended Siddons.

"You know each and every coach always picks up one or two players at the beginning of their tenure and I think Jamie wanted to rely on Zunaed. And there is nothing wrong to respect the decision of a coach. But what we must ensure that we don't show impatience to the new guys rather we have to keep faith in them," he opined.

The former national skipper also defended their decision of selecting Javed Omar for the one-day squad.

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Indian players Wasim Jaffer (L) and Rahul Dravid (C) look on as VVS Laxman (R) is about to take a catch during a training session at the Sydney Cricket Ground on Tuesday ahead of today's second Test match against Australia.

Can Windies continue?

Second SA-WI Test starts today

Cricket

CRICINFO, undated

Without putting too fine a point on it, West Indies' 128-run victory in Port Elizabeth was one of the major surprises of 2007. They hadn't won a Test for 19 months and, more significantly, had beaten major opposition away from home only once since the turn of the millennium. Now the question is whether they can continue to turn the tables on South Africa in the New Year Test in Cape Town and complete a series triumph no one really thought was possible.

The key to their success last week was a determined effort from the batsmen, which set up a total of 408 for the five-pronged pace attack to bowl at. An undercooked

South Africa batting line-up slumped twice, although West Indies still showed their ability to conjure a collapse as they lost 6 for 22 late on the third day. It didn't cost them dearly -- and meant the possibility of a safety-first declaration was taken out of Chris Gayle's hands -- but they will need more of their stick ability to keep the home side at bay for a second time.

Shivnarine Chanderpaul led the batting with a fine 104, but his limpet-like qualities are already well-known. The eye-catching performance came from Marlon Samuels, named Man of the Match after his innings of 94 and 40, as he showed previously unseen powers of concentration and responsibility.

"Test cricket is very difficult and I would love to get a chance to play more Test matches back-to-back

instead of being in and then out of the side so often," Samuels told the Jamaica Gleaner. "It will give me the chance of getting better scores more regularly and being more consistent. I was very disappointed that I didn't get the century, but if I could score 94 and the West Indies go on to win every time, I'll be satisfied."

South Africa have tried to avoid appearing in panic mode and they have recent form in bouncing back from an early loss. Last year they slipped up against India in Johannesburg before coming back to taking the series 2-1. Mickey Arthur, the coach, said: "We've won four Test series in a row. We intend to win this one too. The bowling attack has led us to victory in the last four Tests we've played, and don't forget they bowled the West

SEE PAGE 18 COL 2

Bright start for U-19 cricketers

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh under-19 cricketers made a bright start in the triangular one-day series when they handed a two-wicket defeat to their South African counterparts at the Sinovitch Park in Pretoria yesterday.

Mahmudul Hasan and Nasir Hossain steered the youth team to 159 for eight in reply to the home team's 158.

Mahmudul scored an unbeaten 47 and Nasir chipped in with 41 runs.

Earlier KM Shakil, captured three wickets and Nasir and Mohammad Rubel took two each as South Africa were bundled out for 158 after deciding to bat.

They play their next match against India on Thursday at the same venue.

BRIEF SCORES

SOUTH AFRICA U-19s: 158 all out in 40.5 overs (Vallie 24, Pienaar 22, Swanepoel 20; Shakil 3 wks, Nasir 2 wks, Rubel 2 wks, Mahmudul 1 wkt, Shuvashish 1 wkt)

BANGLADESH UNDER-19s: 159 for 8 in 47.3 overs (Mahmudul 47 not out, Nasir 41, Roni 20; Vallie 3 wks)

BFF EGM soon

SPORTS REPORTER

An emergency general meeting will be called soon to solve the current crisis in the Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF).

The decision was taken after BFF's acting general secretary Monir Ahmed along with some other organisers including former general secretary Harunur Rashid and Badal Roy met Sports Adviser Tapan Chowdhury yesterday.

"We met the adviser today (Tuesday) and we have decided to call an EGM within seven to 10 days because without that we may face legal challenge," said Monir.

"The sports adviser asked us to do everything for the greater interest of the game and refrain from doing anything irresponsible which would tarnish the image of the government," Badal Roy informed.

He also said that they would request AFC and FIFA to send their representatives to attend the EGM.

"After the EGM, we will get a roadmap for the election," he added.

Club Cup soccer delayed again

SPORTS REPORTER

The Protiti Pharmaceutical Club Cup Football Tournament has been deferred by another week due to the ongoing renovation work of the turf of the Bangabandhu National Stadium.

The tournament, organised by Mohammedan Sporting Club, was scheduled to begin on January 11.

"We have taken the decision considering the ongoing renovation work at the venue and we will receive an official letter from NSC in a day or two," informed Mostaqur Rahman, additional general secretary of Mohammedan Sporting Club.

He also informed that Walton officially assured them to be the co-sponsors of the tournament.

Eight metropolitan clubs -- Dhaka Mohammedan, Dhaka Abahani, Mukti Juddha Sangsad, Arambagh, Victoria and Youngmen's Club Fakirerpool, Dhaka Wanderers Club and Badda Jagarani Sangsad -- will take part in the competition which is split into two groups.

Sydney comes alive

Second Australia-India Test from today

Cricket

CRICINFO, undated

Sydney, by all accounts a city bubbling with life, has recently been associated with the dead Test. Visiting teams usually come here for the final Test, with the series gone. Don Bradman has a stand named after him in the Sydney Cricket Ground (SCG), as do other legends like Bill O'Reilly and Monty Noble, but there is reason enough to build a new one named Pride. Normally that's the only thing left to play for once the teams land here.

A large section of the bucket-seats are painted green but white would be more appropriate, considering how often Australia have applied the whitewash at this venue. England were left pale last

year (5-0), Pakistan in 2005 (3-0), Zimbabwe in 2003 (2-0), South Africa in 2002 (3-0), West Indies in 2001 (5-0) and India in 2000 (3-0). It's 13 years since Australia lost a 'live' Test here. This is the theatre where dead horses are flogged.

Things are different this time. India are down but far from out and couldn't have chosen a better ground to begin their fightback. Their eight previous Tests at the SCG have included four draws and a win and the surface is usually one that assists spin. There's talk of this being a more lively pitch but the curator, Tom Parker, said it would be a sporting track that "changes as the game goes along". Rain, which is forecast, could play a part too.

India thrived on the pitch that was laid out in 2004. They amassed 705, built on a towering 241 not out from Sachin Tendulkar and a magi-

cal 178 from VVS Laxman. Tendulkar will also have fond memories of his 148 back in 1991-92, an innings which Richie Benaud called the best he had seen in Australia. There was a bit to cheer in 2000 too, when the then prime minister John Howard thanked Laxman for making his day.

"When you come to foreign venues and do well, it has a bearing on what happens later," Ricky Ponting said of India's previous heroics here. "They scored 700-something last time but it's a fresh game. They are capable of doing that but our plans and execution need to ensure they don't. Take the truckload of runs against Pakistan. Everyone has a bad Test. They're an ultra-talented batting line-up."

It's that ultra-talented bunch who may be currently giving Anil

SEE PAGE 18 COL 2

Drop Jaffer: Chappell

Cricket

CRICINFO, undated

Wasim Jaffer, whose technique has been found wanting in Australian conditions, needs to sit out in the Sydney Test.

India's devastating loss at the Melbourne Cricket Ground (MCG) was not so much an open and shut case but more one caused by a slow opening. From the moment Rahul Dravid and Wasim Jaffer dawdled like a pair of ageing tortoises on the second morning, India's fate was sealed.

Not only did they sacrifice all the momentum that had been hard won by the bowlers they also made it difficult for their middle-order batsmen to regain the initiative with a counter-attack.

For this sorry state of affairs Dravid must take the bulk of the blame. A player of his calibre

shouldn't labour for 66 deliveries over five runs and for him to not unearth some singles with his experience is a crime. However, his punishment shouldn't be omission from the next Test, as that fate falls to Jaffer who must make way for Virender Sehwag.

Jaffer was chosen because of his technique and ability to see off the new ball. However, he was twice out to shots that displayed poor technique for Australian conditions and India now finds itself in a desperate position where they need to take a chance. If the Sehwag gamble comes off it would take a lot of pressure off Dravid and his main job early on would be to keep rotating the strike. If Sehwag succeeds, the flow-on affect will be tremendous not only for Dravid and the batsmen who follow but it would also give the Australian bowlers and captain something to think about.

In the field the Australians

were allowed to attack with impunity at the MCG, knowing there was little likelihood of being severely punished. It was difficult to play shots on the MCG pitch but that is why Test batsmen are chosen.

Australia scored at nearly one and a half runs per over quicker than India; not all of that can be put down to the locals more athletic fielding, some of it was the result of their batsmen's intent. To describe the loss as devastating is not overstating the case. The bowlers played their part and kept Australia to manageable scores; to be on level terms after day one and out of the match by tea time on Day Two is a hard psychological blow to handle.

India's toughest task at the SCG will be to regain the initiative quickly. The best way to do that would be a fast start from Sehwag; it's far from elementary but it is India's best chance.

Kumble talks of Sehwag

Cricket

AFP, Sydney

Indian captain Anil Kumble has talked up Virender Sehwag's chances of a Test return but did not say whether the explosive opener will play against Australia in Sydney on Wednesday.

India sorely missed the attacking intent of Sehwag at the top of their innings in the ignominious 337-run loss to Ricky Ponting's team in the opening Melbourne Test.

The shot-making right-hander averages 49.46 in 52 Tests but has been left out of the Indian team for a year after a lacklustre series in South Africa, where he averaged just 14.83 in six innings.

Sehwag was one of the standouts on India's last tour to Australia in 2003-04 with an aggregate of 464 runs at 58, including a top score of 195 in the third Test in Melbourne.

There have been calls for his return to open the Indian innings

after the inert batting displays of Rahul Dravid and Wasim Jaffer, which handed the initiative to the Australian bowlers in the Boxing Day Test.

Opener Rahul Dravid's painstaking innings of 5 and 16 from a total of 180 balls were a key factor in India's failure, with the tourists making just 196 and 161 to go down inside four days.

Sehwag's return to partner Dravid would allow Dravid to revert to his customary No.3 slot with the out-of-form Yuvraj Singh (0 and 5) likely to give way if selectors make a change to the batting line-up.

Kumble spoke admiringly of Sehwag's credentials in his match-eve press conference on Tuesday but stopped short of saying whether the 29-year-old big-hitter would play in the New Year Test, the second of the four-Test series.

Australia can hold onto the Border-Gavaskar Trophy with a record-equaling 16th consecutive Test victory in the SCG match.

"We'll still think about it, we have time until tomorrow morning," Kumble said.

"There are a few things in the mind but I don't like to share it now."

"He (Sehwag) looked good from whatever we've seen in the nets."

"In terms of his form, we're not concerned too much. He's hitting the ball well and he's in the scheme of things."

"We'll assess the conditions. He brings in that attacking, positive approach."

Kumble said he had advised Dravid, the 34-year-old veteran of 116 Tests with 24 centuries and an average of 55.45, to relax more during his innings.

And the Indian skipper is demanding his teammates lift their intensity after some embarrassing batting and fielding efforts last week.

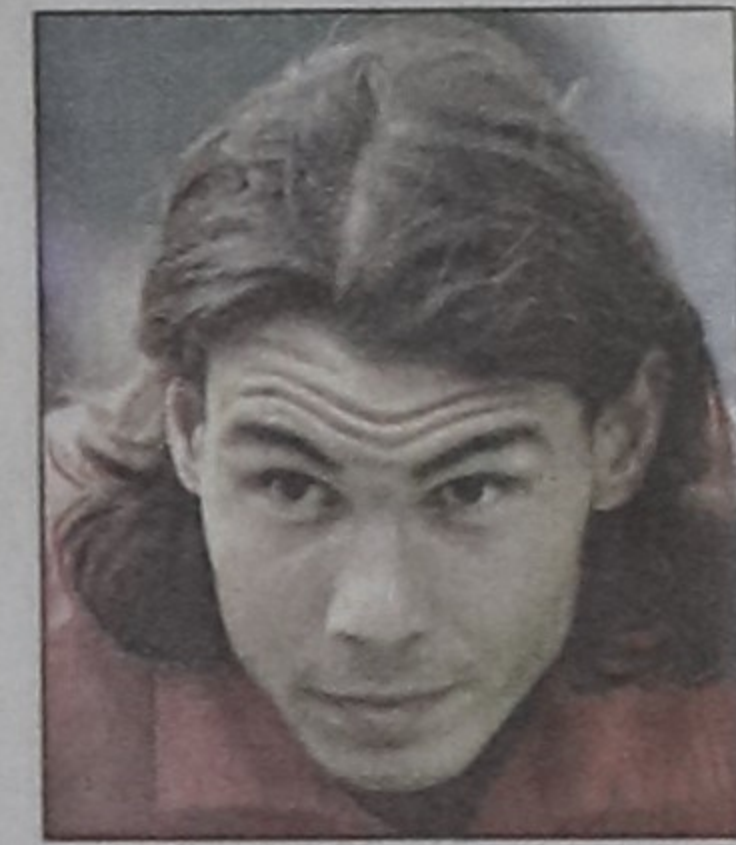
"It all boils down to going there and fighting. We didn't show a bit of that in the last game, but we're looking to do that," he said.

"It was more to do with relaxation. I thought all the batters who played in the last game were a bit uptight. We got together for the New Year's Eve and spoke about it."



Did U Know?

The world's highest golf course is the Tachu Golf Club in Morococha, Peru, which sits 14,335 feet above sea level at its lowest point.



Rafael Nadal

(World No. 2 tennis player) "I'm not worried about Roger (Federer), he is better than the other guys at the moment. But a lot of young guys are coming from behind at the present time."

While comparing himself with the Swiss world number 1.



What to Watch

STAR Cricket
Australia v India
Second Test, Day Two
Live from 5:30am (Thursday)

TEN Sports
South Africa v West Indies
Second Test, Day One
Live from 2:30pm

ESPN
Sportscentre India
Sports News
Live at 8:30pm

English Premier League
Newcastle v Man City
Live from 1:30am (Thursday)

STAR Sports
English Premier League
Liverpool v Wigan
Live from 1:55am (Thursday)

TT camp

UNB, Dhaka

Bangladesh Table Tennis Federation is going to hold a three-week national training camp from January 13 to raise the standard and efficiency of the players.

Some 32 promising boys, girls and women will take part in the camp which will be conducted by international coach Kamalesh Mehta of India.

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Australia captain Ricky Ponting wrestles in fun with teammate Michael Clarke (below) during a training session at the Sydney Cricket Ground yesterday.