



Sania Mirza of India plays a forehand against Alicia Molik of Australia during their match of the Hopman Cup in Perth yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

BCB fines 3 cricketers

SPORTS REPORTER

The disciplinary committee of the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) has fined three players for breaching the code of conduct during Monday's 9th National Cricket League match between Khulna and Rajshahi.

Nahidul Haque and Mohammad Selim of Khulna have been fined 50 per cent of their match fees by match referee Hemayet Ahmed Siddiki during the one-dayer against Rajshahi at the Rajshahi Divisional Stadium.

The match referee also fined Rajshahi batsman Anisur Rahman 25 per cent of his match fees.

PIONEER FOOTBALL LEAGUE

Registration from Jan 10

SPORTS REPORTER

The players registration formalities for the Dhaka City Corporation Pioneer Football League will start on January 10.

The competition begins in the city from February 10. Interested players have been asked to appear before the 'age verifying' committee with three recent passport size photographs.

Subject to approval of the committee, the interested players will have to collect the registration form mentioning the name of their clubs with a fee of Tk30.

Sonali Bank beat Navy

SPORTS REPORTER

Sonali Bank came from behind to beat Bangladesh Navy 2-1 in the Dhaka Bank Victory Day Hockey Tournament at the Maulana Bhasani National Hockey Stadium yesterday.

Mushtaque put Navy ahead in the 40th minute after a barren first-half, but national colour Mamunur Rahman Chayan levelled the margin for the bankers in the 44th minute from a penalty corner.

Captain Shahidullah Titoo scored the deciding goal in the 53rd minute.

Badda Jagarani edge Jatrabari

SPORTS REPORTER

Badda Jagarani Sangsad made a winning start in the Metropolitan Senior Division Football League with a 2-1 victory over Jatrabari Krira Chakra at the Bishreshtha Shaheed Sepoy Mohammad Mostafa Kamal Stadium in Kamalapur yesterday.

The winners led the first-half by a solitary goal.

Milan Kumar Barman scored first for Badda Jagarani in the 25th minute while Delwar Hossain Shamim doubled the margin in the 50th minute.

Sohel netted the lone goal for Jatrabari in the 79th minute.

Victoria Sporting Club play City Club today at the same venues.

Donovan leads

FROM PAGE 20

The camp allows US coach Bob Bradley to study talent that could help the US squad when qualifying for the 2010 South Africa World Cup begins in June.

"This is the beginning of a very important year for the national team and we are looking forward to continuing the work of 2007," said Bradley, who went 12-5 with one drawn in his first year in the job.

The Americans will play host to Mexico on February 6 and play a second-round qualifying series in June against either Barbados or Dominica.

Styris, Taylor dropped

Cricket

AFP, Queenstown

New Zealand's 3-0 clean sweep of the one-day cricket series against Bangladesh held no sway with the selectors when they named a new-look side Monday for the upcoming two Tests.

Scott Styris, Jamie How, Ross Taylor and Jeetan Patel have all been omitted in an expected shake up after New Zealand were soundly thrashed in their recent two Tests against South Africa.

Matthew Bell, who has been the form batsman in domestic cricket, earns a recall after six years in the wilderness and will open the batting with Craig Cumming.

Matthew Sinclair, called in as cover during the South Africa tour, has been retained for the Bangladesh series.

Styris was the notable casualty when the squad was named, paying the penalty for a form slump that has seen him average 19.8 in 11 innings since his last Test hundred against the West Indies in March 2006.

He scored 59 in four innings

against South Africa.

The 30-year-old Bell, who played the last of his 13 Tests in 2001, earned his recall after averaging 103.88 in the state championship.

"Batting has been a concern in recent seasons so we have selected players who we believe can occupy the crease for long periods," selector Glenn Turner said when announcing the team.

It is a requirement that Bell meets in his current form after batting for more than eight hours to score 188 in one match and spending seven hours at the crease for 265 in another.

"He can bat time once he gets in, he can bat for a day and a half. That was obviously an attraction when one looks at the skills for opening the batting. He's obviously in very good nick at the moment," Turner said.

Leading bowlers Shane Bond and James Franklin remain unavailable through injury, as is Mark Gillespie, leaving Michael Mason and Iain O'Brien vying for the third seamer role behind Chris Martin and Kyle Mills.

The first Test starts in Dunedin on January 4.

SQUAD

Daniel Vettori (captain), Brendon McCullum (vice-captain), Craig Cumming, Matthew Bell, Peter Fulton, Stephen Fleming, Mathew Sinclair, Jacob Oram, Kyle Mills, Iain O'Brien, Michael Mason, Chris Martin, Jeetan Patel (second Test only).

Ricky wary

FROM PAGE 17

Harbhajan also has a strong record against Matthew Hayden and Adam Gilchrist, who have been dismissed seven times in eight Tests, but he had less impact in Melbourne, taking three wickets to Kumble's seven. The visiting spinners will have a huge say in whether Australia can equal the world record of 16 consecutive wins, which was set by Steve Waugh and ended by India in 2001.

"The only thing wrong with discussing it is that it takes the focus away from the game," Ponting, who has tried to avoid talk of the achievement, said. "When you're facing a ball, or starting to bowl, you need a nice clear mind. I don't mind a bit of talk about it, but if it gets too much, I would like to put it down."

record for the most Test wins on the trot. They've won eight of the last 10 Tests in Sydney and possess a bowling attack that's growing in confidence with every hour.

Ponting is talking of "600 contests they need to win in a day" and Mitchell Johnson has been practising his wrist position using a ball that's partly white and partly red. The pitch might have something in it for the faster bowlers and both Stuart Clark and Brett Lee are local boys who would know the conditions. India need to pull out something special to inject some life into this series. Otherwise Sydney could be witness to some funeral scenes after all.

SQUADS

AUSTRALIA (from): Phil Jaques, Matthew Hayden, Ricky Ponting (captain), Michael Hussey, Michael Clarke, Andrew Symonds, Adam Gilchrist, Brad Hogg, Brett Lee, Mitchell Johnson, Stuart Clark.

INDIA (likely): Wasim Jaffer, Rahul Dravid, VVS Laxman, Sachin Tendulkar, Sourav Ganguly, Yuvraj Singh, Mahendra Singh Dhoni, Anil Kumble (captain), Harbhajan Singh, Zaheer Khan or Irfan Pathan, RP Singh.

this year. Recent events, though, could force a rethink as this series against West Indies, initially thought to be a formality, has now become a major challenge for South Africa.

SQUADS

SOUTH AFRICA (probable): Graeme Smith (captain), Neil McKenzie, Hashim Amla, Jacques Kallis, Ashwell Prince, AB de Villiers, Mark Boucher, Shaun Pollock, Paul Harris, Dale Steyn, Makhaya Ntini.

WEST INDIES (probable): Chris Gayle (captain), Daren Ganga, Runako Morton, Marlon Samuels, Shivnarine Chanderpaul, Dwayne Bravo, Denesh Ramdin, Darren Sammy, Jerome Taylor, Daren Powell, Fidel Edwards.

Premier, 1st Div club officials to meet BCB boss

SPORTS REPORTER

Senior officials of the Premier and First Division clubs will meet Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) president Major General Sina Ibn Jamali on January 10 to discuss the current crisis over this year's league.

Cricket Committee of Dhaka Metropolis (CCDM) chairman Gazi Ashraf Hossain Lipu said yesterday that the meeting would create an opportunity for the club officials to let the BCB president know about their problems of running the show.

"Presidents and general secretaries of all Premier and First Division clubs will meet the president and it would be an open discussion. I think it will help us find a solution about this year's competition," said Lipu, also chairman of the cricket operations committee of the BCB.

All the activities regarding this year's league have been suspended as the High Court ordered a two-month stay on the upcoming Premier Division Cricket League 2007-08 that was scheduled to begin this month.

A Division Bench comprising Justice Syed Mahmud Hossain and Justice Farid Ahmed issued the stay order following a writ petition filed by Brothers Union Club.

Brothers Union went to court after they were relegated along with Indira Road Krira Chakra after they had failed to turn up for their scheduled Relegation League match at the Sher-e-Bangla Stadium in Mirpur in October last year. City Club were the other team of the league who survived.

Focus on India, urges Ponting

AFP, Sydney

Australia captain Ricky Ponting has urged his players to focus on the home Test series against India and not on any security fears they may have for the March tour of Pakistan.

The assassination last week of Pakistan opposition leader Benazir Bhutto and subsequent unrest that has left at least 58 people dead have placed a question mark over the tour.

Australia are due to play three Tests, five one-day internationals, and a Twenty20 match in Pakistan in March and April.

Ponting said Cricket Australia and the Australian Cricketers' Association (ACA), the players' union, will make an inspection tour of the troubled nation next month.

ACA president Paul Marsh is expected to talk to the Australian players during this week's second Test against India, which gets underway at the Sydney Cricket Ground on Wednesday.

"With the tour being so far away, to the players' credit so far, there hasn't been a great deal of talk about it around the rooms," Ponting told reporters on match-eve here Tuesday.

"No doubt sitting back and watching the events of last week in the change rooms probably did create some grave concerns.

Ponting said the team would follow the advice of officials in Australia and those sent to Pakistan to review security arrangements, but added: "It's out of our control for the time being."

"With the tour being so far away, we really just have to be thinking about what we've got on now. It's a big series, this Test series against India.

"If we can keep these things out of our head for as long as we can, it will give us a better chance of playing well."

Comic

FROM PAGE 17

"We were helpless to pick up Javed because of poor form of Shahriar Nafees. But Nafees returned to form latter and without any doubt he is always our first choice if the left-hander is in form," Akram said.

But whatever the burly former national captain said Javed, who played 40 Tests and 59 one-day internationals, has certainly felt that he was harshly treated this time.

TT camp

FROM PAGE 17

International Table Tennis Federation will bear the airfare, accommodation cost and allowance for the Indian coach during his stay in Dhaka while Asian Table Tennis Union will provide 2,500 dollars to the Bangladesh Table Tennis Federation.

The federation will provide conveyance, accommodation, food cost of the participants.

The federation will also hold the Victory Day Table Tennis Tournament from January 10 in the men, women, boys and girls sections.

To continue the federation's sports activities in a successful way, its general secretary ATM Shamsul Alam has requested National Sports Council (NSC) to release the first two instalments of the government fund for the fiscal 2007-08.

'Forget Melbourne'

Cricket

CRICINFO, undated

India's pace spearhead Zaheer Khan is wishing for a cheerful beginning to the new year as India try to bounce back in the second Test in Sydney, starting on Wednesday. Preferring to brush aside the 337-run thrashing in Melbourne, Zaheer wanted to concentrate on the "15 days of good cricket" ahead.

"That was the first game of the series and it happened in 2007," he said on Monday. "It's happened, it's history. We're eagerly waiting for 2008. We have three more to Tests go."

Having been instrumental in India's series win in England earlier this year, bowling them to a memorable seven-wicket win in Nottingham, Zaheer was eager for a repeat. "There's still a long way to go in the series. Three Test matches is quite a lot. It's going to be a crucial game for the team. We've done well last time so why not this time?"

Zaheer seemed to be mirroring the attitude of the team when he spoke of the relaxed approach they were taking towards the second Test. "We are all looking forward to the cruise this evening (on Darling Harbour)," he said of their plans for New Year's Eve. "I personally would like to keep myself fresh for the Test. You do whatever when you need it the most. I don't see myself going all out in the nets Tuesday. If someone feels he needs to go on batting for an hour or two, so be it. It depends on the individual."

Zaheer echoed Anil Kumble's statements about Rahul Dravid, saying it was only a matter of time before he found form. "We always back our players. That's what is more important at this level. He's a great batsman and that's why he's ready to accept that. He's definitely due and we'll all behind him."

The Melbourne Test was only the third time Zaheer was bowling in a Test in Australia. He figured in

the Brisbane Test last time around, mixed the next game due to a hamstring injury and played the third Test in Melbourne, though it later emerged that he wasn't fully fit for the game. "I think there's something with me and Australia," he joked. "Last time I was injured during the series, this time I was injured before. But it's all behind me now. I'm glad I played in the first Test and am looking ahead now."

Did he need to do much to adjust to Australian conditions? "It's a different approach you need here. The grounds are big, and the outfielders are sand-based. It takes time to acclimatise. But I don't see anything major apart from it."

Meanwhile the Indian team management was hoping for Sourav Ganguly to recover from his illness. Ganguly was suffering from fever Sunday but MV Sridhar, the assistant manager of the side, said his condition had improved a day on.

Golovin set for big 2008

Tennis

AFP, Perth

Four years after bursting on to the tennis scene as a precocious teenager, France's Tatiana Golovin believes she is ready to make the quantum leap from talented youngster to top-10 player.

Golovin was just 15 when she made her Grand Slam debut at the 2004 Australian Open and stunned the tennis world by reaching the fourth round.

That performance, along with another fourth-round appearance at Wimbledon and a mixed doubles title at the French Open, saw her named tour newcomer of the year, but injuries have meant her emergence has been a little slower than many expected.

However, a stellar finish to 2007, with narrow losses in successive finals against former world number one Justine Henin in October and a career-high ranking of 13, has the Russian-born and Miami-based 19-year-old poised to make her mark.

Golovin also claimed her first two singles titles this year and said here Sunday she was full of confidence about 2008.

"A lot," she told AFP when asked what confidence she took from her late season form.

"I thought I was playing amazing and it was a shame I had to stop there and have to start all over again. It's going to take time, but I definitely know what I can do."

"I know I can beat the top players, I have beaten them before, and I know I can play consistently for two or three weeks."

"Now it is just a matter of really focusing on the Grand Slams, staying healthy, and really believing in

myself."

Golovin has battled various injuries in the last couple of years and was frustratingly sidelined by ankle and respiratory problems at various times during 2007, while a knee injury prematurely ended her season.

However, she was confident those dramas were behind her.

"It was unfortunate that I had to stop for two and a half months in the middle of the year when I was playing so well on clay," she said.

"It takes a while to come back, but I was very happy with how I ended (the season) and it gave me something to look forward to."

The glamorous Golovin looked in fine fettle as she opened the new season with an impressive straight sets win over Argentina's world No.38 Gisela Dulko at the mixed teams Hopman Cup.

She heads into the new year with a new coach, Glen Schapp, who previously worked with Dinara Safina and Nadia Petrova and is known as a strict disciplinarian.

Golovin said the pair were working towards fine-tuning her all-round game.

"We started working together two weeks ago," she said.

"He's out there with me every day and making me work hard, he's very professional."

"We're working on coming in (to the net) and I hit a couple of volleys today."

"My doubles game is improving, we are working on a lot of things, just little touch ups."

Golovin obviously values representing her country and has already marked the Beijing Olympics in her calendar.

"Olympics is like a dream come true, being able to participate," she said.



TATIANA GOLOVIN

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

| ACROSS | | DOWN | |
|---------------------------------|---------------------------|---|-------------------------|
| 1 Where Napoleon became unable? | 32 Tolerate | 1 And so forth (Abbr.) | 13 Castle protector |
| 5 Doo follower at Camp-town | 34 Domini precursor | 2 Romanian money | 19 Tardy |
| 8 Restaurant employee | 35 Petty gangster | 4 National Railroad Passenger Corporation | 20 English channel? |
| 12 Baton recipient? | 36 Re robins and ravens | 5 Moist | 21 Floral rings |
| 14 Satan's domain | 37 Madrede y-padre store? | 6 Chowd down | 22 Kiln |
| 15 One of the clientele | 40 Half and half? | 7 Enclosed in this | 23 Kirk cohort |
| 16 Relaxation | 41 Early garden song | 8 Inferior in quality | 25 Sprang (from) |
| 1750 Cent piece? | 42 Annie's song | 9 Ardor | 26 Short skirt |
| 18 Overjoyed | 43 Annie's song | 10 Otherwise | 27 Sicilian spouter |
| 20 Swell | 44 Annie's song | 11 Raced away | 29 Too confident |
| 23 Trade | 45 Annie's song | | 31 Daughter's brother |
| 24 Nut-hatch's nose | 46 Annie's song | | 33 With candor |
| 25 Embodiment | | | 34 Side-sleaps |
| 28 Opposite of "trans-" | | | 36 In due time |
| 29 Struck, biblically | | | 37 Ernie's pal |
| 30 "No, — Super-man!" | | | 38 Smell |
| | | | 39 Take out of context? |
| | | | 40 Portent |
| | | | 43 Eggs |
| | | | 44 Tear |
| | | | 45 Praiseful verse |
| | | | 46 Marry |

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CRYPTOQUIP

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TMOP AMWFXRPXP KXBKGX.

M WNXZZ JBN TMWV ZRJ

FX'Z XWB-QYMXOPGJ

Saturday's Cryptquip: MUSICAL ABOUT

FOLKS WHO ARE DEVOTEES OF VERDI AND

PUCCINI WORKS: "FANDOM OF THE OPERA."

Today's Cryptquip Clue: K equals P