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Did U Know?

Last British lady to win Wimbledon was Virginia Wade. She won the title in 1977.



Lleyton Hewitt

(Australian tennis star)
"I feel like the cricketers, I think. What's going on with all the refs these days? They're useless." While empathising with cricketers' complaints over umpiring standards.



What to WATCH

TEN Sports
South Africa v West Indies
Third Test, Day Two
Live from 2:00pm

ESPN
Sportscenter India
Sports News
Live at 8:30pm

SAB tv
New Zealand v Bangladesh
Second Test, Day One
Live from 4:00am (Saturday)

Lawson hopes on Aussie tour

AFP, Karachi

Pakistan cricket coach Geoff Lawson Thursday said security assessments after next month's elections will determine whether Australia will go ahead with their planned tour here.

Lawson was speaking after learning of a suicide bomb blast that killed at least 22 police officers outside Lahore high court, but the former Australian paceman remained unperturbed.

"I don't know much about the blast because I am here in Karachi. I do feel safe in Pakistan and have expressed that to some of the Australian players and informally to Cricket Australia (CA), but they make their own decisions," Lawson told reporters.

The latest killings raised further doubts over Australia's tour. Several players have raised fears over security in Pakistan but CA have adopted a wait-and-see policy.

CA is due to send a security delegation to Pakistan after elections on February 18 before making a decision on the tour, scheduled for March and April.

"Australians want to see what state the nation is in after the elections... They do their own thorough investigation and they make careful judgments because they know the importance of the series and their relationship."

"I sincerely hope that it takes place and it is a good series but it's still a long way off."

When asked whether he would like the series played at neutral venues in the event of an Australian pull-out, Lawson said: "It is up to the administrators of the game to decide but I would like the series to happen."

Lawson, who played 49 Tests for Australia, said India's improved show in last week's Sydney Test proved the Australians are beatable.

His team's next assignment is a five-match one-day series against Zimbabwe at home, a series he wants to sweep.

"With due respect to them, I think if we play to our potential we must beat them 5-0 and then get ready for Australia," he said.

No compromise: Jamali

Abahani, Mohammedan to talk to Brothers

Cricket

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) president Major General Sina Ibn Jamali yesterday said he was hopeful about the start of the Premier Cricket League soon despite facing legal battle.

Talking to reporters after a meeting with the Premier and First Division cricket clubs at Hotel Sheraton, he told that the board was looking for a way to start the league that has shaped the country's cricket for long.

"I wanted to meet the club officials and hear what they need and want. The clubs have played a very important role in development of the game in the country. So it is better that their thoughts are being reflected in our works," said Jamali.

Although it was termed as a meeting to 'exchange views', it seemed that it was an official effort to solve the recent crisis following Brothers Union's getting a court stay order in the activities of the Cricket Committee of Dhaka Metropolis (CCDM).

Representatives of all 32 clubs

except Brothers were present in the meeting.

Brothers, who were relegated from the Premiership alongside Indra Road KC after refusing to take part in last season's Relegation League, filed a writ petition against the board decision and got a stay order till January 24.

"We have been trying to find a way to start the league. Different clubs have given their opinions. One thing was clear that everyone is interested to play."

"There are two ways to start the league. Either to withdraw the writ or get a verdict from the court," Jamali said.

When asked whether there was any scope of negotiation to end the stalemate, the BCB boss said there was no chance of compromising.

"We had given them (Brothers) every chance: time, facilities everything to play the Relegation League. But they went to the court instead. We cannot sit for discussion with a legal notice on our heads. They even did not attend today's meeting. So there will be no compromise."

"It [going to court] is not good for any kind of sport. Whenever the system is broken, someone has to

pay. This time, it would be the cricketers. Now we have to find out how to give them a chance to earn their bread for the season."

"If we cannot start the league, there will be other tournaments. But we are still thinking what form of tournaments those will be. Still, I am hopeful that the league will be played in its rightful way."

Local heavyweights Abahani and Mohammedan, meanwhile, vowed to talk with Brothers Union in a bid to solve the situation.

BCB's cricket operations committee and CCDM chairman Gazi Ashraf Hossain Lipu welcomed the two clubs' effort.

"The clubs want to play, so it would be great if they succeed," Lipu said.

In reply to a question, the former national captain said that it was difficult to compensate the cricketers' loss by organising different tournaments as an alternative of the league.

It was learned that the board also promised financial and logistic supports to the clubs. The BCB is

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India's Rahul Dravid executes his trademark flick shot on the opening day of the three-day tour match against ACT Invitational XI at the Manuka Oval in Canberra yesterday.

MSC receive green signal

UNB, Dhaka

Mohammedan SC, the organisers of Victory Day Club Cup Football, received green signal from National Sports Council (NSC) to hold the tournament from January 26 at the Bangabandhu National Stadium (BNS).

"We received an official letter from NSC today (Thursday)," Mohammedan SC additional general secretary Mostaqur Rahman told UNB.

NSC, however, directed that the Club Cup fixture should be arranged

in a way that there would be no clash with First Division Football League fixture, which will also be held at the same venue.

NSC earlier allowed the Dhaka Metropolis League Committee to hold the first division football league at the BNS at that time.

Mostaq said Prothi Pharmaceutical became the title sponsors for the tournament and electronics company Walton as co-sponsors.

"We are also getting offers from more companies showing interest

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Captains call for calm

Cricket

AFP, Sydney

The Australian and Indian cricket captains sought to ease the racism and sportsmanship rows overshadowing their series, as India returned to action on Thursday after fears they would abandon the tour.

India's Anil Kumble said he hoped to hold talks with opposite number Ricky Ponting, while the under-pressure Australian captain said he wanted to ensure "the guys are remembered as being good people as well as great cricketers."

"It's important that Ricky and I get together and speak," Kumble told reporters in Canberra, where India began a tour match against the Australian Capital Territory XI.

"We are equal partners in ensur-

ing that cricket is played in the right spirit, and I'm sure moving forward everybody can stick to that."

"On behalf of my team, I can assure we will play it in the right spirit."

Ponting said he was keen to meet Kumble before the third Test, which starts in Perth next Wednesday, to ensure there was no lasting ill-feeling and to make sure the remaining matches were played in the right spirit.

"It's going to be very important," he told Nine Network television. "He's had a little bit to say the last couple of days and I'm holding no grudges against him whatsoever."

The conciliatory tone follows Sunday's explosive finale to the second Test in Sydney, when ill-feeling between two of the world's biggest teams reached fever pitch.

Kumble accused Australia, who

narrowly won the match for a 2-0 series lead, of poor sportsmanship, a charge echoed by the usually protective Australian media and public.

Spin bowler Harbhajan Singh received a three-Test ban for alleged racism, prompting India to effectively halt their tour in protest.

India made the trip to Canberra only after umpire Steve Bucknor, whom the tourists faulted over a number of key decisions, was axed from the rest of the four-Test series.

However India, the sport's financial powerhouse, has issued veiled threats to suspend the tour again if their appeal against Harbhajan's ban fails.

Kumble said he had asked Australian skipper Ponting to settle the race row without making a formal complaint, local media reported.

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Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) president Maj Gen Sina Ibn Jamali greets the officials of Dhaka Premier and First Division clubs prior to the open discussion at Hotel Sheraton yesterday.

Pollock, Smith put SA atop

Cricket

AFP, Durban

Shaun Pollock made a successful return to Test cricket and captain Graeme Smith smashed a century as South Africa dominated the first day of the series-deciding third Test against the West Indies at Kingsmead Thursday.

Pollock took four for 35 as the West Indies were bowled out for 139 after being sent in to bat and South Africa surged into the lead before close of play, reaching 213 for one when bad light stopped play.

Smith was on 122 not out, made off 133 balls.

Veteran all-rounder Pollock, in his first Test appearance in almost a year, took advantage of an under-prepared pitch and overcast conditions as the West Indies were bundled out.

Smith turned the day into a lop-sided one in favour of the home country as he charged to his 13th Test hundred off 112 balls.

The West Indies, already without injured captain Chris Gayle, were effectively a bowler short because stand-in captain Dwayne Bravo went into the match with a side strain.

"He is playing as captain and batsman," said West Indian media liaison officer Philip Spooner.

Pollock, 34, did not play in South Africa's first six Test matches of the season because of concerns that he had lost some of the pace that had helped him take 416 wickets in 107 Tests.

But South Africa decided to pick an all-seam attack for the series decider in Pollock's home town on a pitch that usually favours pace bowlers, bringing back Pollock ahead of left-arm spinner Paul Harris.

Pollock came on to bowl in the sixth over and almost immediately had the batsmen struggling. He struck with his 13th delivery when he trapped Runako Morton leg before with an off-cutter and followed up with the wickets of new cap Brenton Parchment and Bravo,

both caught at gully by Herschelle Gibbs.

He also ended the West Indies' best partnership, 42 for the eighth wicket between Darren Sammy and Jerome Taylor, when Taylor was caught at fine leg.

Gibbs, who was dropped for the second Test but returned to the side because of an injury to Neil McKenzie, held three catches. The first, to dismiss Parchment, was a spectacular effort when he flung himself full length to his right.

Parchment made his Test debut in place of Gayle, who could not play because of a broken left thumb as well as a hamstring injury.

Andre Nel took three for 45 and Makhaya Ntini two for 30. Ntini captured the key wicket of Shivnarine Chanderepaul, whose run of form ended when he was caught at second slip for a duck. Chanderepaul made 247 runs in the first two Tests at an average of 123.50.

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BACK WITH A BANG: South Africa paceman Shaun Pollock appeals for one of his four scalps on his comeback match against the West Indies on the opening day of the third Test in Durban yesterday.

Under-19s return home today

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Under-19 cricket team returns home from South Africa on Friday at 7:45am after taking part in a triangular one-day series and a three-day match against South Africa under-19 side.

Bangladesh drew the lone three-day match against their South African counterpart and reached the final of the triangular one-day series eliminating hosts South Africa.

But in the final, the Young Tigers conceded a frustrating 137-run defeat against India on Tuesday.

Wanderers make flying start

SPORTS REPORTER

Dhaka Wanderers made a good start in the EXIM Bank Women's Kabaddi League defeating Victoria SC 54-48 with three creditable 'lonas' in the opening match at the Outer Stadium Kabaddi Court yesterday.

Entrepreneur/promoter of league sponsors EXIM Bank M Nazrul Islam Swapan formally inaugurated the five-day meet, organised by Bangladesh Kabaddi Federation.

EXIM Bank managing director Kazi Moshir Rahman and Bangladesh Olympic Association deputy secretary general and celebrated footballer Ashrafuddin Ahmed Chunnu were present as special guests.

In the day's other match, Jatrabari outplayed Azad Sporting 74-36 with six lonas at the same venue in the afternoon.

Six metropolis clubs, split into two groups, are taking part in the league.

Cricket

REUTERS, Sydney

The silverware in the trophy cabinet bears testimony to the results of Australia's win-at-all-costs approach to playing cricket.

No other country has come close to matching their success on the playing field and there seems to be no end to their global domination.

They won the World Cup for the third time in succession last year and are on the verge of breaking their own world record for the most consecutive Test wins.

Yet, at the same time they should be celebrating their remarkable achievements, the players are under attack, facing intense criticism and scrutiny

about their behaviour.

They have not broken any laws or rules of the game and most of their opponents have openly adopted the same ruthless approach.

Still, the critics, and there are plenty of them, have accused the Australians of being arrogant and breaching the spirit of the game through excessive appealing, refusing to walk and sledging their opponents.

They have also been accused of employing double-standards, happy to bully their opponents whenever they are winning but the first to cry foul when they start losing.

The players have laughed off the claims, sticking to the Australian mantra that cricket is a professional sport and they play the game hard but fair.

The debate about Australia's on-field conduct has been raging for decades, but has been thrust back into the spotlight after the bad-tempered end to last week's second Test against India.

The Indian captain Anil Kumble accused the Australians of bad sportsmanship in the aftermath of his team's loss, evoking memories of the infamous Bodyline series of 1932-33.

Kumble's comments might easily have been mistaken for sour grapes but they struck a raw nerve with many cricket followers who have grown tired with the team's antics.

Emotions were running high as the tabloids and radio shock-jocks tried to blame Australia's on-field antics for the far more serious claims of racial abuse that had

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Dhaka Wanderers players desperately try to stop a Victoria raider during the opening match of the EXIM Bank Women's Kabaddi League at the Outer Stadium kabaddi court yesterday.