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Sourav would have retired from ODIs

PTI, New Delhi

Surprisingly sidelined for the one-day cricket tri-series against Australia, Sourav Ganguly has confessed that he was anyway considering retirement from the limited overs version in next 7-8 months.

Ganguly said he had realised that he would not play in the 2011 World Cup, to be co-hosted by the Asian cricketing nations, but when selectors asked him he had expressed his wish to play in ODIs for a few more months as there were not many limited overs games scheduled this year.

"They (selectors) just asked me whether I wanted to continue one-day cricket. I said, yes definitely, at least for the next 7-8 months," Ganguly said.

"There is not much of one-day cricket this year. This is Australia series then India goes to Sri Lanka for Test and one-day, so there is five one-days there and there is Champions Trophy in September and rest of the year is full of Test cricket."

"So I wanted to play till September then probably take a call because at some stage you would not have gone out to play 2011 World Cup," he told the 'Times Now'.

Ganguly said although he did not discuss the issue with anyone else he felt he was not dropped on the ground of this form.



Did U Know?

The ICC U-19 Cricket World Cup was initially staged as a one-off event in Australia in 1988, and has been held every two years since 1998.



Ronaldinho
(Barcelona's Brazilian forward)
"Even if lots of people thought that I could be (a super hero), I'm human and it's clear to me that I've never been a super hero."



STAR Sports
Australia v India
CB Series, 7th ODI
Live from 3:15am
FA Cup (Round-5)
Sheffield United v Middlesbrough
Live from 7:55pm
Preston North End v Portsmouth
Live from 10:00pm
Primera Liga
Atletico Madrid v Bilbao
Live from 2:00am (Monday)
STAR Cricket
ICC U-19 Cricket World Cup
India v Papua New Guinea
Live from 7:55am



What's Next
Premier Division T20 League
Mohammedan v Biman (BKSP-2)
Abahani v City (BKSP-1)
Kalabagan v BKSP (DCS)
DOHS v Pegasus (BKSP-2)
Victoria v Partex (DCS)
Sonargon v Sunjo Tarun (BKSP-1)



ANOTHER ONE GOES DOWN: Shahriar Nafees (R) fails to take a catch during a practice session at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.

Stars back U-19 kids World Cup from today



AFP, Kuala Lumpur

Cricket's brightest young talent will not be short of inspiration when they contest the International Cricket Council's under-19 World Cup starting here on Sunday.

The stars of tomorrow have only to look at the greats of today to realise the value of making an impression in the 16-nation tournament that ends with the final at the Kinrara Oval here on March 2.

Graeme Smith, who captained the senior South Africa team within three years of playing in the 2000 junior event, hoped his remarkable rise will inspire the youngsters.

"I look forward to following the tournament and spot the stars of the future that I may be playing against in the near future," Smith told the tournament's host broad-

caster from South Africa. "After all, I wonder how many people who watched me play in 2000 would have thought that within three years I would be captaining my country at Test level."

"I certainly did not and I hope my story is an inspirational one for all those taking part."

Among other major players to emerge from the junior World Cups were Test captains Sanath Jayasuriya of Sri Lanka, Brian Lara and Chris Gayle of the West Indies, Michael Atherton and Nasser Hussain of England and Inzamam-ul Haq of Pakistan.

"Use it to learn," Smith advised the current young crop preparing to battle in the two-yearly event.

"Whether it's attending your first-ever press conference, giving your first post-match television interview, signing bats, attending education sessions or watching how other teams prepare for matches."

"All these elements are things that you will do time and time

again as a senior player. "There will be a global audience watching on television and it is a great opportunity to put your name on the lips of the international cricket community."

Sri Lanka's Jayasuriya, who played in the inaugural under-19 World Cup in 1988 alongside Lara, Atherton and Inzamam, said the experience was invaluable.

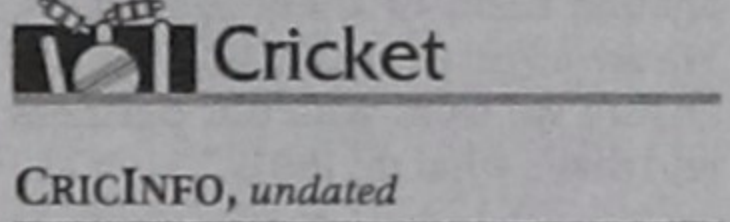
"This is a great tournament," the swashbuckling left-hander said. "I got the exposure and I came up with a good performance. It helps you to establish yourself as an international player in your own country."

The competition has often been tougher and more unpredictable than at the senior level where Australia are the undisputed champions in both Test and one-day cricket with three successive World Cup titles.

At the junior level, the young Aussies have won just one of the last five World Cups since 1998.

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FTP important: Modi



CRICINFO, undated

The ICC's Future Tours Program (FTP) remains paramount for the Indian Premier League. Lalit Modi, the IPL chairman and commissioner, has told Cricinfo. Modi also reiterated the IPL would strictly follow the two-year freeze on players post their retirement, to prevent a rush of active cricketers towards the financially lucrative Twenty20 league.

"The IPL is here to stay and I am sure it is in everyone's interest that it carves its own place. That does not mean we will play less bilateral cricket. We will all continue to fulfill our commitments to the Future

Tours Programme...[which is] the most important for all countries and most definitely for the BCCI," Modi said. He also made the point that, in most countries, the season ends by March.

There is also a concern that the IPL's economy is on a completely different scale to traditional cricket economies, an imbalance that could harm the game. Modi indicated that the IPL was aimed at protecting cricket's primary position on the subcontinent. "As far as scale is concerned India already has the largest market or appetite for cricket. The IPL will further ensure there is little erosion of support for cricket. Other sports like football have been slowly trying to make inroads, through the English Premier League. We think

the IPL will help put a stop to that."

He also downplayed fears, most recently expressed by Australia captain Ricky Ponting, that the IPL would lure experienced cricketers into an early retirement by saying the onus would be on the player's home board. "Even two years after his retirement, the player still needs a NOC [No Objection Certificate] from his home board. Only then will we take him. Our objective is to have players who currently or in the future are playing for their country. So we will always work with other boards to ensure that we are all on the same page."

And with just five days to go for the players' auction in Mumbai, Modi addressed fears expressed by

SEE PAGE 18 COL 7



England pacer Stuart Broad gives bowling tips to a young boy at a coaching clinic in Auckland yesterday.

Shakib to hold back spin 3-day practice game from today

SPORTS REPORTER

WARID Cricket Series
Bangladesh coach Jamie Siddons will take a good look at his charges' progress when Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) XI take on the visiting South Africa in the three-day tour opener at the Fatullah Cricket Stadium today.

Most of the Test probables have been drafted into the local side to adjust with the South African attack and team's captain Shakib Al Hasan made it known during the practice session yesterday that their main objective would be to occupy the crease for as long as possible.

"I will highly appreciate if someone could occupy the crease for a whole day. Our intention is very clear: to spend time in the middle as much as we can to get accustomed to the South African bowlers before the first Test," said all-rounder Shakib.

The pitch at Fatullah is believed to be friendly to batsmen because of its even bounce, different to the Mirpur surface where the first Test of the two-match series will start from February 22.

Injured opener Tamim Iqbal has been drafted into the squad at the last moment but the left-hander has a bleak chance to play the match while

former national skipper Habibul Bashar was also ruled out due to a minor thumb injury during practice.

Under Siddons's new training method, Tigers have had mostly concentrated on match practice for the last few days and the young left-hander believes that the warm-up match gave them an opportunity to look at their improvement.

"We played a number of matches during practice which will definitely help us," he said. BCB XI will field 12 players and lanky pacer Talha Jubair may miss the game.

Shakib also expressed his desire not to expose his spinners too much to the South African batsmen during the match as it is expected that

the spinners will get the advantage in the series, especially in Mirpur where the slow and low bounce could be a big factor for the visitors.

"We have only two spinners -- Enamul Haque and myself -- in the team and we will definitely try to use spin bowling as less as we can," he added.

South African coach Mickey Arthur however said that they will try their best to capitalise on the warm-up game to acclimatise with the condition before the start of the first Test.

"We will try to utilise the game to the hilt. We have twelve players available right at the moment and all will play the match," said Arthur.

Graeme Smith's team came to Dhaka on Thursday without batsman Neil McKenzie and left-arm spinner Robbie Peterson. The pair will join the team on Wednesday.

The South African coach was not too concerned with the sub-continent conditions. "I never expect bouncy pitches here. We are prepared to play in low and slow wickets," he said.

Arthur said that his side will miss slow left-arm spinner Paul Harris, who already showed his character to become a match-winning spinner for his side.

"Definitely we will miss him (Harris) but we have (off-spinner) Johan Botha," he said.

TEAMS

BCB XI: Shakib Al Hasan (captain), Mushfiqur Rahim (vice-captain), Tamim Iqbal, Zunaid Siddiqui, Shahriar Nafees, Nazimuddin, Rajin Saleh, Aftab Ahmed, Enamul Haque Jr, Sajidul Islam, Talha Jubair, Forhad Reza, Syed Raseel, Rokibul Hassan.

SOUTH AFRICA: Graeme Smith (captain), Ashwell Prince (vice-captain), Hashim Amla, Johan Botha, Mark Boucher (wicketkeeper), AB de Villiers, JP Duminy, Jacques Kallis, Morne Morkel, Andre Nel, Makhaya Ntini and Dale Steyn.

Rumi made manager

SPORTS REPORTER

Former national cricketer Omar Khalid Rumi has been named Bangladesh team manager for the upcoming series against South Africa.

The 48-year-old all-rounder represented the national side from 1973 to 1985 and played in the 1979 and 1982 ICC Trophy tournaments.

A top-order batsman and leg-spin bowler, Rumi's domestic cricket career began in 1969. He retired from cricket in 1993.

He is also a former national selector. At present he is a member of the BCB's domestic cricket review committee.

Fourth JFA Cup from today

SPORTS REPORTER

The zonal round matches of the 4th JFA Cup Under-15 football championship begins at eight venues across the country today.

Opening day matches take place between Gazipur Sherpur at Jamalpur Stadium, Jhenidah-Satkira at Khulna Stadium, Gaibandha-Rangpur at Dinajpur Stadium, Faridpur-Rajbari at Manikganj Stadium and Habiganj-Brahmanbaria at Moulvibazar Stadium.

A total of 59 district teams along with BKSP, split into eight zones, are taking part in the nationwide junior football meet.

The eight zonal champions will play in the 10-team final round in Rajshahi with holders Dhaka and final round hosts Rajshahi in the first week of March.

Each team of the zonal round will be awarded Tk 9,000 as participation money and each winning team will receive Tk 4,000 as prize money.

Each venue organiser will receive Tk 30,000. Meanwhile, the ten participating teams in the final round will receive Tk 25,000 while the four semifinalists and the two top teams in the competition will be given Tk 5,000 as prize money for each match.

Of the total budget of Tk 21,09,000 lakh, sponsors Japan Football Association provided Tk 17,00,000 lakh (US\$ 25,000) to organise the meet.

Tournament committee chairman Abdur Rahim disclosed the details of the championship at a press conference at the BFF conference room this afternoon.

More draws in Sr Div soccer

UNB, Dhaka

Wari Club played out a one-all draw with City Club in the Metropolitan Senior Division Football League at the Bir Shreshtha Shaheed Sepoy Mohammad Mostafa Kamal Stadium in Kamalapur yesterday.

Mobarak put Wari Club ahead in the 50th minute and then Mehdi equalised the margin for City Club in the 75th minute.

In the day's other match, Youngmen's Club also shared points with Victoria SC playing in a goalless draw at the same venue.

Arambagh Krira Sangha take on Victoria while Badda Jagarani face Sunrise Sporting Club.



STAND AND DELIVER: South Africa all-rounder Jacques Kallis knocks in the nets during a practice session at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.

Lee's absence crucial India-Australia game today

CRICINFO, Adelaide



It remains to be seen if India can take advantage of Brett Lee's absence as they take on Australia for the third time in the league phase of the CB Series at the Adelaide Oval on Sunday. Lee earns a well-deserved rest after working tirelessly to establish himself as the bowler of the season, taking 40 wickets in six Tests and eight in the triangular ODI tournament so far.

His absence could be a significant plus for an Indian team which has been pushed to second place after Australia's convincing win against Sri Lanka in Perth on Friday.

After his magnificent five-for in the series opener at the Gabba that destroyed the Indian top order, Lee managed just one wicket in each of the next three games, but he has posed plenty of problems with his pace and movement. Keeping in mind the long summer and the fact that the tournament has just reached the halfway mark, the Australian management thought it would be wiser to preserve their

most precious bowler instead of overburdening him.

Mitchell Johnson, who might get the new ball in Lee's absence, admits a mini break is a good move for him. "Brett's having a well-deserved rest. It's very important. I had a break during the Twenty20 game against India earlier in the month, and understanding that rest periods are very good for the bowlers," Johnson said as Australia arrived in Adelaide after earning their second bonus point of the tournament.

Mahendra Singh Dhoni, the Indian captain, believes the Australian firepower doesn't diminish in Lee's absence. "They are a good bowling side with or without Lee. They've the power to get batsmen out," Dhoni said as his team came out for their third and final practice session before the game. Dhoni agreed it was an important encounter and indicated that India still hold the edge in the wake of their five-wicket victory against Australia in Melbourne.

It's difficult to ascertain which of the two teams have the momentum, but Dhoni based his confidence on

the fast-improving performances of his young batsmen and bowlers. "The bowlers have taken up the responsibility and raised the level of their performance. Now the key is to be consistent."

The batsmen haven't always done the job, but Dhoni said he was willing to persevere with the out-of-form players. Yuvraj Singh heads that list, but given the importance of the game, the Indian think-tank will probably opt for his experience. "We'll look at the others but it is important to look at the series and what the best possible XI is," Dhoni said. One of the batting reserves - probably Manoj Tiwary - might still get a look-in if Virender Sehwag, who is battling a side strain, doesn't recover in time. A final decision will only be taken on the morning of the match.

The Australian batting, meanwhile, has been lively as well, and Johnson agreed that the middle order had to lift their game. On Saturday Australia were eyeing at big total at 3 for 171 with 14 more overs to go, but eventually stuttered to 236. "We started off well on

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