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Did U Know?

Major League Soccer (MLS) was formed on December 17, 1993, fulfilling a promise to FIFA from Alan Rotherberg and the US Soccer Federation to establish a 'Division One' professional soccer league in exchange for staging the 1994 FIFA World Cup.



What to Watch

SAB tv
New Zealand v England
Fourth ODI
Live from 4:00am

TEN Sports
UEFA Champions League
Lyon v Man United
Live from 1:00am (Thursday)
Celtic v Barcelona
Delayed from 3:45am (Thursday)

ESPN
Sportscentre India
Sports News
Live at 8:30pm



Talk Turkey



Tino Best
(West Indies fast bowler)
"It's a little sad, but I can't go to the supermarket and say that my name is Tino Best. I bought 90 miles an hour. I want 400 dollars in groceries." On why he joined the Indian Cricket League.

First win for Mohakhali

Mohakhali XI recorded their first victory in the Senior Division Football League yesterday when they edged Purbachal Parisad 1-0 at the Birshreshtha Shaheed Mostafa Kamal Stadium in Kamalapur.

Ohidul slotted the lone goal in the 41st minute as Mohakhali toppled Purbachal in the table, moving to tenth place with nine points. Purbachal are on eight points.

Today's match: Jatrabari v Sunrise (3pm).

Veeru & VVS made 'icons'

The Indian Premier League's governing council has accepted, pending final approval, requests from the Delhi and Hyderabad franchises to name Virender Sehwag and VVS Laxman as icon players, which means the two will only turn out for their respective home cities in the BCCI-backed tournament.

However, there is a stumbling block to the move. The decision taken by the IPL governing council needs to be approved by all eight franchises ahead of the players' auction on Wednesday. The IPL's original tender only had the names of Sachin Tendulkar (Mumbai), Sourav Ganguly (Kolkata), Rahul Dravid (Bangalore) and Yuvraj Singh (Mohali) in the 'icon players' category, and thus a move to add any more players to the list needs to be ratified by all the franchise owners.

"All the franchises will have to approve this decision as the original IPL tender had only four icon players," Ratnakar Shetty, the BCCI's chief administrative officer, told Cricinfo. "The IPL (governing council) will meet all the franchisees just before the auction on Wednesday for a final decision."

At an earlier meeting, the owners

Perfect practice

BISHWAJIT ROY

WARID Cricket Series

If a build-up match is an indicator of what to follow when the real battle starts then the Tigers under the guise of BCB XI could not have been asked for a better finish in their lone three-day warmup match against South Africa that ended in a draw at the Fatullah Cricket Stadium yesterday.

Captain Shakib Al Hasan shone on the final day with a blazing knock of 73 while uncapped Rokibul Hasan chipped in with 44 runs as the home team declared their first innings on 412-9, a lead of 15 runs that still remains elusive for Bangladesh against South Africa in a Test match.

The scintillating effort made sure that the Tigers would go to play the first Test from February 22 at Mirpur with some confidence as most of the players in this lineup drafted into the 14-member Test squad.

One information could have been good enough to understand the importance of the total as Bangladesh could managed four hundred plus runs in four occasions in their previous 51 Test appearances.

Both sides reached a mutual understanding to accept the inevitable draw at tea but sudden rain stopped it much earlier with South Africa scoring 47 runs without loss in their second essay.

The performance in the match definitely gave Bangladesh coach

Jamie Siddons some hopes about his vulnerable batting lineup but the Australian came up with a cautious response to calm down the excitement over his charges' impressive batting performance.

"I am impressed as we bowled well and made a reasonable score. The batsmen scored runs but mind it, it is a warmup match not a Test match," responded Siddons in his post-match reaction.

The shaven-headed coach also expects more patience from his boys when they are involved in a two-match Test series against the formidable opponents.

"It is important to see some runs on the board but it's also important for us to see in which way we scored the runs. We would need more of a patient approach," he said.

On the other hand, South Africa captain Graeme Smith made it clear that it would be a different ball game when they go into the Tests.

"Definitely our tactics will be much more different from the practice match and you can expect a lot more cricket from us. I didn't expect my players to peak in the practice game," the left-hander issued the warning for Mohammad Ashraful's men.

"We could read the nature of the low, slow pitch by playing the match and got enough information. We worked hard in the game but I think everything was fine on our side," he added.

Back to the match and BCB XI resumed the day on 263-5 and took the tally to a commanding one, thanks to Shakib's aggressive batting.

The runs came thick and fast as the left-hander smote 14 boundaries in 68 deliveries before he was caught by wicketkeeper Mark Boucher off Johan Botha. The young batsman reached his half-century in style with an excellent cover drive off Jacques Kallis and executed a straight drive in the same over.

In the very next over, he struck two consecutive boundaries against off-spinner Botha -- one through cover and the other a brilliant sweep.

Right-hander Rokibul was also confident during his 92-ball knock that featured eight fours but both the batsmen were dismissed before lunch.

The home team declared their innings once the last recognise batsman Mushfiqur Rahim, caught at square leg off Ashwell Prince, was dismissed after making 26 runs.

Botha however gave the impression that he can play a vital role in the sluggish pitch here with a haul of four wickets for 76 runs.

SCOREBOARD

Scoreboard on the final day of the three-day warm-up match between visiting South Africa and Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) XI at the Fatullah Cricket Stadium yesterday:

SOUTH AFRICA: First innings 397	
BCB XI: First innings (overnight 263 for 5)	
Nafees c Boucher b Ntini	31
Zunaed c & b Ntini	103
Saleh c Boucher b Morkel	7
Nazimuddin lbw b Botha	22

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SUBLIME SHAKIB: BCB Eleven captain Shakib Al Hasan sweeps the ball fine as South Africa wicketkeeper Mark Boucher (L) and Jacques Kallis look on on the final day of the three-day warmup match at the Fatullah Cricket Stadium yesterday.

India clinch a thriller

Yuvraj strokes into form

AFP, Adelaide



The enigmatic Yuvraj Singh finally returned to form to lead India to a thrilling and crucial two-wicket win over Sri Lanka in their vital tri-series match here Tuesday.

The left-hander burst out of his tour-long slump to make a polished 76 as the Indians successfully chased down Sri Lanka's 238 for six with five balls to spare, making 239 for eight.

With captain Mahendra Singh Dhoni again holding the chase together late in the innings with an unbeaten 50, the win strengthened India's grip on second spot on the tri-series ladder headed by Australia.

The four points they gained for the win moved them to 12 points, six ahead of Sri Lanka, who have a game in hand.

Dhoni paid tribute to Yuvraj. "Credit goes to Yuvraj, he was one of the batsmen we wanted to come back to form," he said.

"He dominated the innings and was excellent."

"It is good to see him score." Sri Lanka captain Mahela Jayawardene was pleased with how his side fought the match out, but thought they came up a touch short with their batting.

"We had opportunities, but Yuvraj batted really well in the middle and Dhoni at the end," he said.

"We were 15 or 20 runs short today."

Yuvraj had struggled for form since arriving in Australia, but from the moment he hit a boundary from his second ball his confidence was back.

He played some crisp drives and powerful pulls, belting the part-time spin of Sanath Jayasuriya into the stands.

Yuvraj reached his half-century

in just 46 balls, and looked set for a century until he was undone by a Chaminda Vaas Yorker.

He had faced 70 balls, hitting 10 fours and the one six and rescued his side after they slipped to 35 for three early in the chase.

Earlier, the class of Kumar

Sangakkara once again revived Sri Lanka after a dismal start with the bat.

The Sri Lankan cause wasn't helped by three run-outs, two dreadfully unlucky, but Sangakkara's polished 128 earned him man-of-the-match honours and helped

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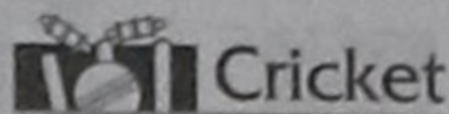


India captain Mahendra Singh Dhoni is ecstatic after picking up the winning runs in the final over of a nail-biting CB Series match against Sri Lanka in Adelaide yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

Abahani in semis

Tourney held back



SPORTS REPORTER

Abahani confirmed their place in the semifinal while Old DOHS kept their hopes alive in the Premier Division Twenty20 tournament yesterday.

Abahani beat newcomers BKSP by 21 runs under the Duckworth/Lewis method in a rain-affected match at the latter's home ground in the afternoon game in Savar and at the same time, Mohammedan suffered a 57-run loss at the hands of City Club at Abahani's Dhanmondi base. Old DOHS hammered Partex by eight wickets in the earlier game at the same venue.

It was announced last night that the tournament would be deferred

until further notice due to the inclement weather. It was however learned that it has been put back by almost a week.

Batting first after winning the toss, BKSP were all out for only 63 in 15.3 overs with one drop Ashraful Aziz scoring 21 off 15 balls that included two fours and a six.

Abahani reached 43-1 in eight overs before the match was halted due to heavy rain. Their winning target under the rain rules was fixed at 22 runs in eight overs. Abahani's off-spinner Rezaul Karim, who took three wickets for 7 runs in four overs, was adjudged man-of-the-match.

Partex decided to bat first but their decision backfired, collapsing to 95-8 in 20 overs. In reply, DOHS rode on man-of-the-match Golam Rahman's blistering 44 to reach their target in 13 overs.

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Youths take on Ireland today

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh under-19 cricket team take on their Irish counterparts in their second ICC Under-19 World Cup group D game at the Bayuemas Oval in Kuala Lumpur today.

The young Tigers hammered Bermuda by 178 runs in their opening game on Monday. On the other hand, Ireland suffered a 10-wicket landslide to England on the opening day of the competition.

Bangladesh, who were helped by three half-centuries from Ashraful Islam, Nasir Hossain and Ashiqul Islam against Bermuda, would look to shut out Ireland in order to gain momentum for their crucial match-up against England on February 22.

Irish opener Christopher Dougherty struck 34 in the loss to England but he would be the only one to threaten the young Tigers.

Bangladesh fined \$4,000

SPORTS REPORTER

The Asian Football Confederation (AFC) disciplinary committee imposed a fine of US dollars 4,000 on Bangladesh for fielding overaged players in last year's qualifying rounds of the AFC U-16 Championship.

An AFC media release confirmed that Bhutan, Cambodia, Kyrgyzstan and Macau were also guilty of infringing the regulations and were also fined the same penalty.

However, there was bad news for North Korea, Tajikistan and Iraq who have been disqualified from the final rounds and fined also for fielding ineligible players.

The AFC had conducted Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) tests during the AFC U-16 Championship qualifiers and the disciplinary committee consulted an expert medical witness on the issue of MRI before coming to a decision on all the cases.

AFC will shortly announce the list of finalists for the finals, which will be hosted by Uzbekistan from October 4-19 this year.

INDO-BANGLA GAMES

West Bengal arrive today

SPORTS REPORTER

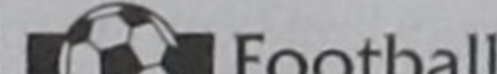
The West Bengal team will cross the border this morning to participate in the 2nd Indo-Bangladesh Bangla Games, which open in Dhaka on Friday.

The visitors will be received at Benapole and on way to the capital, they will be given special reception at six district towns.

A dress rehearsal of the opening ceremony will be held at the Bangabandhu National Stadium this afternoon.

The Bangladesh women's football team, meanwhile wrapped up their preparation yesterday with a 6-0 crushing of Narayanjan DSA at the Osmani Stadium.

AFC asks BFF to hold EGM



Football

SPORTS REPORTER

The Asian Football Confederation (AFC) yesterday asked the Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) to conduct an extra-ordinary general meeting (EGM) to approve the FIFA statutes, confirmed a source from Kuala Lumpur on the condition of anonymity.

The AFC is expected to send an official letter in this regard to the BFF soon.

A four-member Bangladesh delegation had a meeting with AFC president Mohammad Bin Hammam at his office at the Malaysian capital.

The trip of the Bangladeshi

officials and organisers to convince the Asian football body of the importance of government involvement to run the game in the country, however, was futile.

The Bangladesh delegation included inactive Bangladesh Football Federation president SA Sultan, Bangladesh Olympic Association's chief operating officer Col (ret'd) M Waliullah, former national football captain Badal Roy and organiser Mohiuddin Bulbul.

It was also learned that the delegation did not try to ask the FIFA or AFC's favours to go into the election with the previous constitution in a bid to avoid legal threats, an idea made public by Sultan following his meeting with the organisers outside the federation.

The organisers outside the BFF

had long been demanding a general meeting to ratify the FIFA statutes to avoid legal threats as well as inclusion of the government, which owns all the stadiums and other facilities.

The incumbent BFF executive committee has been given a year's time after its expiry on April 30, 2007 to implement the FIFA statutes and form FAs (football association) in districts and divisions.

The BFF, however, kept ignoring pleas to hold a general meeting and approve the amendments for more than nine months.

Out of 64 districts and six divisions, only 51 FAs at districts and three at divisions have been formed before the February 10 deadline.

The BFF has yet to finalise the date of the election.

Sajid outpaces Rasel

SPORTS REPORTER



WARID Cricket Series

Sajidul Islam's pace and energy was considered ahead of Syed Rasel yesterday when the national selectors announced a 14-member squad without any major surprises for the two-match Test series against South Africa.

The first Test will be held at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur from February 22 while the second game will take place at the Chittagong Divisional Stadium from February 29.

The axe also fell on left-arm spinner Enamul Haque and all-rounder Forhad Reza to make way for left-arm spinners Mohammed Rafique and Abdur Razzak.

Fit-again Rasel, who missed the

entire New Zealand series due to a dislocated collarbone, made a good return by taking two wickets in the three-day practice match but Rafiqul Alam-led selection panel kept faith on young left-arm seamer Sajidul, the 20-year old from Rangpur who made his international debut in New Zealand.

"(Syed) Rasel is fit but what we saw was that he was only good in his first spell but you have to have a

bowler who carries his energy and rhythm all through the match. And we believe that Sajidul has got the quality to serve the purpose. He is fast and can move the ball both ways," said Rafiqul while speaking at a press conference at Fatullah.

Ace left-arm spinner Rafique was recalled as expected in the Test side after the New Zealand series while former national skipper Habibul Bashar and left-handed opener Tamim Iqbal passed fitness tests to be drafted into the side but the most interesting selection in the team was the inclusion of Razzak.

Left-arm spinner Razzak, time and again branded as a one-day bowler, was picked ahead of longer-version specialist Enamul Haque when the selectors trimmed their original 17-man squad to 14.

"Razzak is doing well in the

SQUAD

Mohammad Ashraful (captain), Mashrafe Bin Mortaza (vice-captain), Habibul Bashar, Mohammad Rafique, Rajin Saleh, Aftab Ahmed, Shahriar Nafees, Shakib Al Hasan, Tamim Iqbal, Zunaed Siddiqui, Abdur Razzak, Mushfiqur Rahim (wicketkeeper), Shahadat Hossain and Sajidul Islam.

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Chief selector Rafiqul Alam (L) makes a point while announcing the Test squad for the home series against South Africa at the Fatullah Cricket Stadium yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR