

BCB not to renew Shaun's contract

SPORTS REPORTER

The Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) has decided not to extend the contract of Shaun Williams.

The Australian joined the board as a national game development manager but later acted as interim coach of the national team following the departure of Dave Whatmore.

Under his guidance Bangladesh toured Sri Lanka and then took part in the first-ever Twenty20 World Championship of Cricket in South Africa.

After Jamie Siddons's appointment as national coach, Shaun was made assistant coach of the Tigers but the board conveyed the decision to Williams after a recent meeting that they would not renew his contract.

However, Williams will continue to perform his responsibilities under the existing contract till June this year.

The board acknowledged Williams' immense contribution to the development of Bangladesh cricket as the BCB's national game development manager and as coach and assistant coach of the national team.

India warned over WC

AFP, Miami

India are in serious danger of losing the right to host field hockey's men's World Cup in 2010, the world governing body warned on Monday.

The International Hockey Federation (FIH), worried at India's falling standards, devised a 'Promoting Indian Hockey' project last year to raise standards in the country's national sport.

FIH president Els van Breda Vriesman warned Indian officials they could miss hosting the 2010 World Cup in New Delhi if the project was not implemented immediately.

And the issue and the organisation of the World Cup were again addressed during a three-day meeting of the FIH Executive Board ending on Saturday.

"After having carefully studied the progress made with the project 'Promoting Indian Hockey' as well as the actions taken in the preparation of the World Cup 2010, the Executive Board noted that satisfactory progress had not been made in either area," the FIH said in a statement.

"However, the Executive Board decided to give Indian Hockey some additional time...to urgently address those issues before taking a final decision."

"In the meantime, FIH is looking for alternative host countries in case the FIH would be forced to take the decision not to host the World Cup in India," the statement added.

Eight-time gold medallists India have failed to qualify for the Olympics for the first time.

Since winning the last of their eight Olympic golds at the western-boycotted Moscow Games in 1980, India claimed just one major title when Dhanraj Pillay's men took the Asian Games gold in Bangkok in 1998.

India finished seventh in the last two Olympics and were forced to qualify for Beijing after failing to win an Asian Games medal in Doha.

Olympics torch re-lit in Beijing

PTI, Beijing

Chinese President Hu Jintao yesterday officially declared open the start of a grand Olympic torch relay by re-lighting the flame in the host city Beijing, amidst tight security after pro-independence Tibetan protesters marred a similar ceremony in Greece.

The ceremony kicked off at the Tiananmen Square, the world's largest, two hours after a specially chartered Air China plane carrying the flame from Greece touched down at about 9 am local time.

At the ceremony held in front of the Great Hall of the People with the Forbidden Palace forming the backdrop to the rostrum, Hu kindled the cauldron and handed over the torch to Olympic champion hurdler Liu Xiang, kickstarting the longest-ever Olympic torch relay.

"I declare the torch relay of the Beijing 2008 Olympic Games begun," Hu announced amidst a joyous atmosphere with thousands of doves and colourful balloons released into the sky.

The flame is scheduled to depart from Beijing tomorrow for the Kazakh city of Almaty, the first stop in its global tour of 135 cities, including New Delhi, India, where it will reach on April 17.

The relay, with highest number of torchbearers in its history, will cover 137,000 kilometers in 130 days before the flame finally arrives at the National Stadium in Beijing on August 8, 2008 for the opening ceremony.



PHOTO: AFP

Spaniard Rafael Nadal stretches to return a shot against Germany's Nicolas Kiefer during the third round of the Sony Ericsson Open at the Crandon Park Tennis Center in Key Biscayne on Sunday.

Davenport stuns Ivanovic

Q Tennis

AFP, Miami

Former world number one Lindsay Davenport defeated Serbian second seed Ana Ivanovic 6-4, 6-2 to reach the fourth round of the WTA and ATP Masters Series hardcourt tournament here Sunday.

World number one Justine Henin of Belgium, third seed Svetlana Kuznetsova and defending champion Serena Williams also advanced to the round of 16 at the 7.54 million-dollar event with straight-set triumphs.

On the men's side, world number two Rafael Nadal moved a step closer to his first title of the season, defeating Germany's Nicolas Kiefer 6-2, 6-4 to reach the fourth round.

While not as efficient as his second-round victory over German qualifier Benjamin Becker, in which he committed just four unforced errors, Nadal shrugged off a rain delay to complete his second straight match without facing a break point.

"Well, it was not the best day because I was playing unbelievable in the beginning, playing very well, hitting very well the ball, and playing almost perfect match," he said.

"When I come back to the court

the ball was a little bigger and slower, and it was a little bit more difficult for me," he said.

Next up for Nadal is France's Paul-Henri Mathieu, who ousted Carlos Moya of Spain 7-6 (7/1), 7-5.

Nadal is playing in his 12th tournament since his last title at Stuttgart in July.

Ninth-seeded American James Blake stayed on course for a possible quarter-final clash with Italy's Francesca Schiavone. Henin has already taken titles this year in Sydney and Belgium and is 14-2 on the season.

Also advancing to the round of 16 was Kuznetsova, who rallied to defeat Victoria Azarenka of Belarus 1-6, 7-5, 6-0. Kuznetsova, the 2006 winner here and runner-up in Indian Wells, saved a match point down 5-3 in the second set.

Defending champion Serena Williams, the eighth seed, shrugged off a slow start to defeat Italian Flavia Pennetta 6-7 (6/8), 6-3, 6-2 in a rain-disrupted match.

Williams needed 2 hours, 12 minutes to polish off Pennetta, largely because of a stream of unforced errors.

"I just think I had a bad day today," she said. "Every time I went to connect it was like I didn't have my contact point."

Serena's elder sister Venus, the sixth seed, also reached the fourth round, beating New Zealand's Marina Erakovic 6-2, 6-1.

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Italy's Sara Errani. Henin, who has won two titles in four tournaments this year, will next face Russian Elena Vesnina, who ousted American Ashley Harkleroad 6-4, 5-7, 6-4 after three hours and seven minutes.

This is Henin's return after nearly one month off since losing a Dubai quarter-final to Italy's Francesca Schiavone. Henin has already taken titles this year in Sydney and Belgium and is 14-2 on the season.

UNB adds:

BEACH KABADDI

Bangladesh Rifles and Bangladesh Ansar clinched the men's and women's titles of the first-ever Beach Kabaddi tournament held at Laboni Point of Cox's Bazar sea beach.

Bangladesh Rifles emerged unbeaten champions in the men's group with eight points beating Bangladesh Police 39-26 in the last league match. Police finished runners-up with six points.

Ansars won the women's crown outplaying Jatrabari KC 48-24 in the final.

GYMNASTICS

BKSP clinched the top slot in the day-long Independence Day Gymnastics Competition at the National Sports Council (NSC) Gymnasium.

BKSP established absolute supremacy in the meet winning eight of 11 events.

Chittagong University, Dinajpur and Ka, Kha, Ga Shishu Shikkhalya won the remaining three events. A total of 57 competitors from 12 teams took part in the meet.

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Spirit satisfies Smith

Q Cricket

REUTERS, Chennai

Captain Graeme Smith praised a South African bowling fightback that allowed them to draw the first Test against India on Sunday.

South Africa were jolted after Virinder Sehwag blazed an Indian record 319 before paceman Dale Steyn grabbed four quick wickets to peg the lead down to 87 runs on the fourth day.

"The positive for us is actually we took control of the game," the South African captain told reporters. "We changed the game instead of dealing with what came our way and moved it into our direction."

"That is the big shift in terms of the way our team is at this moment."

"We went for a lot of runs yesterday, probably we lost a couple of wickets in doing that and it put us back a bit."

"South Africa scored 540 and restricted India to 627 all out despite Rahul Dravid's 111 and Sehwag's heroics. McKenzie then guided them to 331-5 on Sunday."

"It was an incredible day for us," Smith said, referring to Saturday's bowling. "If we had not taken con-

trol like we did, we might have had to bat out (defensively) today."

"To then come out and bat as solidly as we did was good for us."

The tourists are aiming to win their third Test series in a row in the region after succeeding in Pakistan and Bangladesh.

India skipper Anil Kumble bemoaned a flat pitch that offered little assistance to the home side's spin bowlers.

"It came as a surprise to us to know that Malin was in Mumbai. We were told he was not playing in domestic matches because of the illness of his mother," a selector said.

Sources said Malin had been to Mumbai for some official ceremony of the Indian Premier League and in connection with the legal case he was pursuing against the Siddiqui family in Hyderabad.

"I think the bowlers did the best you could possibly do on this pitch," Kumble said. "You can't expect anything else."

"As soon as you come to India people start talking about spinners right from day one and till the last day is over."

Kumble also said his side chased runs too quickly on Saturday after finishing day three at 468-1.

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Selectors angry with Malik

PTI, Karachi

Pakistan's national selectors are unhappy with captain Shoaib Malik for his absence during the selection of the squad for the Bangladesh series.

The selectors were surprised when they were told to communicate with Malik, who was not available for the last 10 days citing his mother's poor health, on telephone in Mumbai to finalise the squad for the first two one-day series.

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Sources said Malin had been to Mumbai for some official ceremony of the Indian Premier League and in connection with the legal case he was pursuing against the Siddiqui family in Hyderabad.

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