



LONG TIME NO SEE: Recalled India batsman Mohammad Kaif (C) exercises with teammates during a training session in Ahmedabad yesterday. Kaif is returning to India's Test team after 21 months for the second match against South Africa which starts today.

DU cricket

SPORTS REPORTER

Tajul Islam struck 54 as Marketing defeated Public Administration by six wickets to become champions in the Dhaka University north zone inter-department cricket competition yesterday.

Bangladesh opener Shahriar Nafees was the other notable scorer with an unbeaten 27 as the winners reached the target of 127 losing four wickets in 19.3 overs in reply to public administration's 126 in the final at the Jagannath Hall ground yesterday.

Tajul was adjudged man-of-the-match. Earlier, public administration managed 126 for seven in stipulated 20 overs with Golam Hossain making 48 runs. Ahad and Faisal claimed three wickets each for the winners.

DU Pro-Vice Chancellor Dr AFM Yousuf Haider distributed the prizes as the chief guest.

Moulvibazar wants cricket

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Moulvibazar

Members of the Moulvibazar Cricket Unnayan Parishad and cricket players have submitted a memorandum to local administration yesterday to press home their demand to immediately start the local cricket league.

In the memorandum to the deputy commissioner (DC) and president of the district sports association (DSA) Md. Alkama Siddiquee, they blamed DSA for their failure to arrange local league for the last five years in the district.

They urged the local authority to declare the schedule of the league immediately and realise their demands before April 10. Siddiquee assured them that he would do everything for development of the game in the district.

'Verdict as expected'

PTI, Karachi

Former Pakistan captain Rameez Raja has supported the decision to impose five-year ban on Shoaib Akhtar, saying the temperamental fast bowler had become a "problem child" and the verdict was just and expected.

Rameez, who worked as chief executive of the Board between 2003 and 2005, said the speedster had brought the problem upon himself.

"He has been a problem child for some time now. This is not the first time he has had problems with discipline. I think the five-year ban is justified and was coming for a while now. The authorities had no other choice," Rameez said.

"It was time the authorities took a hard decision because indiscipline should not be tolerated at any cost," he told 'Geo News'.

Former captains like Imran Khan, Javed Miandad, Zaheer Abbas and Rashid Latif have all condemned the ban, saying it would effectively end Shoaib's career and also prove to be detrimental to Pakistan cricket.

Shoaib was banned on six counts of speaking out against the policies of the Board and defying orders from the manager and coach of the Federal Areas team for whom he played in the recent Pentangular Cup.

India in Kumble

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"I think India have a few more things to think about than us after the last game. If he (Kumble) does not play, they will lose a very competitive cricketer. He is an experienced campaigner and a fierce competitor," he said.

Smith's hopes on pitch

Cricket

REUTERS, Ahmedabad

South Africa skipper Graeme Smith is hoping the pitch for the second Test against India this week will be far more responsive than the benign strip provided in the series opener in Chennai.

Last week, India opener Virender Sehwag smashed the fastest triple century in Test history on a flat track that left the pace-oriented attack of the visitors frustrated in the high-scoring draw.

South Africa's top order also shone with opener Neil McKenzie and Hashim Amla scoring centuries and Smith cracking 73, but the match looked set for a draw as early as the third morning.

"All cricketers want to see a good cricket wicket," Smith told a news conference on Wednesday.

"One with a good balance between bat and ball," he added.

According to the curator of the Ahmedabad ground, the pitch is likely to be responsive when the

match starts on Thursday, raising South Africa's hopes of executing their plan to restrict the aggressive batting of Sehwag.

On Tuesday, South Africa coach Micky Arthur said the tourists may resort to fast, short-pitched bowling directed into the body of the India opener.

"We are obviously looking for a little more help (from the pitch)," Smith said.

"The wicket does look good... looks different from the Chennai wicket," he added.

When quizzed about the plan designed to curb Sehwag, Smith said: "I think you always assess things as a team."

"Certainly we have the attack to be able to use that. The pitch will last too we hope," he added.

Smith said his team would look to build on the newfound confidence in tackling India's experienced spin bowlers after rallying to draw the first Test.

"Out of the last game, India probably have a few more things to think about than what we do in terms of combination, in terms of

the selections of bowlers," Smith said.

"So their answer is to answer our challenges, to make sure we come back down to neutral."

Injury-hit India are sweating over the fitness of captain Anil Kumble for the crucial match.

Talismanic batsman Sachin Tendulkar is ruled out of the game with a groin injury and there are injury concerns over fast bowlers Ishant Sharma and Ruidra Pratap Singh.

Smith said Kumble's unavailability would be a big loss for India.

"You lose a real competitor, someone who can really change a game... make a difference to the game," he said of the experienced leg spinner.

The visitors are chasing an Asian treble after winning a Test series in Pakistan last year and in Bangladesh in March.

Smith said in all likelihood he would go into the middle leg of the three-Test series with the same combination that played in the first Test.

"As long as we get our execution right, we can win," he said.

Akhtar feels 'victims'

AFP, Islamabad

Pakistani fast bowler Shoaib Akhtar said Wednesday that he had been "victims" by the country's cricket authorities after they banned him for five years for disciplinary problems.

Akhtar also urged fans to remain calm and not to damage public property after several dozen supporters gathered in the capital to protest on Wednesday, a day after the ban was announced.

"I have been victimised, I have been pinpoint targeted. I should be told what I did and if I violated discipline," the maverick paceman told a news conference in Islamabad.

"I did not commit any crime. This is a great injustice with me. But I assure people that everything will be alright," said the 32-year-old, who has vowed to fight the ban in court.

Akhtar was hauled before a Pakistan Cricket Board disciplinary panel after publicly slamming the board for refusing to award him a central contract in January.

The board said it took the harsh step of a five-year ban, effectively ending his international career, because he was on two years' probation for hitting teammate Mohammad Asif with a bat in October.

Akhtar, who has twice hit the coveted 100 mile-per-hour (161 kilometres) mark, has had a controversial career plagued by injuries, discipline problems and a doping scandal in 2007.

He addressed his fans in this cricket-obsessed nation, adding: "I appeal to people not to damage public property and to remain calm. I will appeal to higher authorities, I will contest the ban."

Geoff regrets Shoaib ban

CRICINFO, undated

Pakistan coach Geoff Lawson expressed regret at the five-year ban imposed on Shoaib Akhtar by a PCB disciplinary committee, adding that the fast bowler would remain an unfulfilled talent.

"Whether he got banned today or not, there was always going to be some problem with Shoaib," Lawson told the Daily Telegraph.

"He has so much ability but he lacks the responsibility that's needed to become a great fast bowler."

"At times he tried really hard for us, but you just never knew what to expect when you turned up to the ground. Personally, I wouldn't have banned him; I'd have made him earn his international place back by playing domestic cricket. It's always sad when you see a guy who doesn't fulfill his talent."

Lawson, in his recent tour report on the away series against India, had advised against Shoaib's selection for Tests, indicating that he had lost confidence in his abilities in the longer version of the game. But Lawson thought Shoaib would perform well in the Indian Premier League, to which the ban does not extend. "I reckon he'll go pretty well. We timed him in the nets last week and he was bowling over 93mph."

Meanwhile, Shoaib's ban brought out contrasting reactions in Pakistan, with Shafqat Rana, a national selector, saying that Shoaib deserved the ban. "Akhtar has been involved in a number of controversies, and in my view the ban is justified. The decision will set an example for other cricketers as well. And they will concentrate on their game," he told the Daily Times. "It is true that a person learns from his mistakes, but unfortunately the fast bowler made it a habit of repeating his mistakes. I think the board's zero tolerance policy should be commended."

But former captain Imran Khan criticised the PCB for its decision. "The ban on Shoaib and even on the players who have gone to play in the Indian Cricket League are unacceptable and will shake the foundations of our cricket system. We are losing good players to bad policies of the board."

Stars by name

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leadership. It would have been interesting to see the same player if he was in the Pakistan-bound tour party.

It reminds this reporter of days when the national footballers were said to have 'saved their legs' for the clubs whenever they appeared for Bangladesh. The trend is similar in cricket, only difference being the players have most of their efforts for lucrative international cricket.

Even four months ago, there was no guarantee of club cricket taking place. Clubs had little money and when the board came forward with enhanced financial help, there was the Brothers Union court case that held up the league.

Now that everything seems rosier, better cricket could have been hoped for. A 'star-less' Premier League is usually ridiculed as boring and unappealing but what of a league with non-performing stars?

SL eye clean sweep

Final Test against WI from today

Cricket

AFP, Port of Spain

Sri Lanka can kill the proverbial two birds with one stone when they face West Indies in the second and final Test, starting on Thursday at Queen's Park Oval.

When Sri Lanka flew into the region a fortnight ago, they had a single objective on their mind - to win a Test series on Caribbean soil for the first time.

They gained a welcomed boost to their chances when they clinched the opening Test at the Guyana National Stadium by 121 runs to take a 1-0 lead in the brief series.

But there is an extra special reason that Sri Lanka will pursue victory vigorously in the second Test - and that is to become the first side visiting the Caribbean to sweep a Test series of any length.

"It is important that we go for a win in the second Test," Sri Lanka captain Mahela Jayawardene said.

"This is the way we play cricket. We want to win every match in which we play. This is the attitude with which we play whether we are playing at home or away."

"This is the attitude that has helped us in the last few years, and this is why we have been winning Test matches away from home, and we will not move away from this attitude."

"We want to get accustomed to the conditions in Trinidad. We'll make sure we do all the hard work and challenge West Indies, and see if we can win this Test series 2-0."

In the 80 years that West Indies have been a Test-playing nation, no side has ever come into their backyard and embarrassed them with a series sweep, although West Indies have achieved this several times on

foreign soil.

Australia came close five years ago, when they won the first three Tests in a series of four before the West Indies embarked successfully on a World record 418 to win the final Test at St. John's.

Jayawardene acknowledged that his side outplayed West Indies in every department in the opening Test, but he does not intend to ease up on his opponents.

"We are going to pay attention to all areas of our game, and see where we can tighten-up," he said.

"This is how we work. The first Test is finished, and the next venue is totally different, and conditions will be totally different."

West Indies captain Chris Gayle is well aware that his side faces an enormous challenge to win and level the series - but he would settle for a draw at this stage to spare the flak from another failed mission.

"I believe that if we can remain positive and focus, we can win the Test," Gayle said. It's a must win situation for us to square the series.

"We'll try and see what Sri Lanka has to offer a second time around both in the batting and bowling, so it is just for us to return to the drawing board, and come up with a plan, and come prepared to play a tough Test."

Gayle would love to make a couple of changes to fortify the West Indies line-up, but the selectors have tied his hands, since they have retained the same squad from the first Test, except for left-hander Ryan Hinds, who will miss the Test because of a hamstring strain which should rule him out of cricket for about two or three weeks.

One of the places up for grabs is the opening slot alongside Gayle - although the West Indies captain dropped down the order in the second innings of the opening Test,

he said he would return to the top for the second Test.

With scores of 14 and 10 in the opening Test, Devon Smith failed to cement his place in the side, and left-handed opener Sewnarine Chattergoon should make his Test debut, after illness prevented him from receiving this distinction in his native Guyana.

The only other selection dilemma facing West Indies would be the composition of their attack - Jerome Taylor and Daren Powell should reclaim their places, but the selectors are mulling over whether to boost the attack with another fast bowler, or add a second spin bowler.

Beantop left-arm spin bowler Suleman Benn did reasonably well on his Test debut and both Gayle and Head Coach John Dyson favour his retention, but hometown boy Amit Jaggernauth has made strong claims for his first Test cap, following a 10-wicket match haul in a West Indies domestic first-class match against Barbados over the weekend.

SQUADS

WEST INDIES (from): Chris Gayle (captain), Ramnareesh Sarwan, Suleman Benn, Dwayne Bravo, Shivnarine Chanderpaul, Sewnarine Chattergoon, Fidel Edwards, Amit Jaggernauth, Daren Powell, Denesh Ramdin, Marlon Samuels, Devon Smith, Jerome Taylor.

SRI LANKA (from): Mahela Jayawardene (captain), Kumar Sangakkara, Ishara Amerasinghe, Tillakaratne Dilshan, Rangana Herath, Prasanna Jayawardene, Nuwan Kulasekera, Muttiah Muralidaran, Thilan Samarawera, Chamara Silva, Thilan Thushara, Chaminda Vaas, Michael Vandort, Malinda Warnapura, Chanaka Welegedara.

BOA polls today

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voters. Councillors who have failed to gain places in the so-called 'acceptable to all' panel led by Kutub could eventually vote for Babu.

There had been complaints against Kutub that as acting secretary, the successful businessman gave little time to BOA, paving way for a paid official of the organisation to become a dominating force in recent years.

It was also learned that Kutub threw a dinner party last night to calm the councillors.

"I admit that I have given little time to BOA but I vow that if elected, I will be regular," Kutub promised.

"My aim will be to take BOA ahead. I want BOA to be the players' organisation where sports will be in the field all through the year," he added.

Babu, on the other hand, has gone to the councillors asking for their consideration.

"BOA has many things to offer to sports. My dream is to spread sports into different corners of the country. The BOA chief also wants that. I also want to bring back transparency in financial matters of the organisation. I also feel that all BOA activities should have acceptability to all," told Babu on the eve of the polls.

Although the 'acceptable to all' panel was presented after a lot of thoughts, some miscalculation could not be avoided and four names were nominated for the three posts of members as divisional representatives.

Four candidates - Asaduzzaman Khasru (Barisal), Begum Lily Aziz (Chittagong), Qutubuddin Akmal (Dhaka) and Mahmud Jamsir (Rajshahi) - will compete for the posts of three executive members from the divisional quotas.

Two nominations have been cancelled as Abdus Sattar Nini, a Commonwealth Games gold medalist shooter, was made a councillor as an Olympian, which he is not. His councillorship has also been cancelled by the Election Commission headed Brig Gen Shawkat Hossain.

Also, Rafia Akhter Dolly submitted her nomination for the members' post but as a nominee of the Patron, the councillor is ineligible to compete for this post.

Election can later be held to fill these gaps but the new committee will be of maximum 35 members as there is no representative of the IOC while a place for the Women's Sports Federation has fell vacant.

A spoiled

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scandal and fall-outs with his ex-captain Inzamamul Haq and late coach Bob Woolmer didn't help his cause either.

He and fellow paceman Mohammad Asif were banned for two and one years respectively after the duo tested positive for banned drug nandrolone in October 2006.

The bans were controversially lifted on appeals. However, the pair were pulled out of the World Cup held in the West Indies in 2007.

Not playing in that World Cup was the most regrettable moment in Akhtar's career.

"If you ask me, that was the worst moment of my career. West Indies is known for fast bowling and I have not played there. Maybe my wish is granted some day," said Akhtar last year.

It appears now that wish may never be granted.

After me, its Akhtar

PTI, Karachi

Discarded all-rounder Abdul Razzaq yesterday accused the Pakistan Cricket Board of targeting senior players, the latest being Shoaib Akhtar, and trying to end their international careers.

"I think after me now the Board has targeted Shoaib Akhtar. Their next targets are Mohammad Yousuf and Shahid Afridi," Razzaq claimed.

Razzaq, who was reacting to the five-year ban imposed on Akhtar yesterday, told Pakistani reporters in Hyderabad to cover the Indian Cricket League that he was saddened by the way senior players were being treated by the present set-up.

"I had started realising after the 2007 World Cup that the senior players were in for a hard time. Soon these fears started coming true and we were all gradually shunted out," Razzaq said.

Razzaq joined the ICL after he was not considered for the Twenty20 World Cup last year in September and is now banned from playing in Pakistan.

Ban will last

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"Banning Akhtar will harm Pakistan cricket," said Latif, adding he thought the team would be significantly weaker as a result.

"PCB should have supported Akhtar more because there have been characters like Akhtar - there was John McEnroe in tennis and our own Aamir Sohail - who were temperamental yet talented and gave sports a lot to cheer."

Latif said he believed the ban will be lifted in two months.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS	40 The whole	DOWN	20 Camping enthusiast
1 Spring-time	41 Astronaut	1 Piercing tool	21 Porter's "Let's go"
2 mo.	42 East	2 Lush side dish	22 Domini
3 Cow's	43 Cue	3 Flich	23 Denominational
4 chow	44 Car grill	4 Wandered	27 Tavern
5 Court	45 Car material	5 Roughened by rubbing	29 podrida
6 Not just chubby	46 Chicken	6 Architect I.M.	30 Scream
7 Clay's ring	47 Wreath	7 Son of Abraham	32 Angelic glow
8 name	48 Unrefined	8 No	34 Render
9 Book	49 Coach	9 Re some	36 Rell
10 keeper?	50 Parsegian	10 Arm bone	37 Loin
11 Em	51 Camera	11 DVD, e.g.	39 Related
12 halves	52 Alveolus	12 "Go, team!"	40 Need
13 "I"	53 Flan		41 Unlikely
14 One	54 Vena		42 One
15 Foot	55 Zellerweger		43 Operate
16 Follower	56 Sum		44 Sailors' assent
17 Disen-	57 Cumber		45 Fresh

Solution time: 24 mins.

CRYPTOQUIP

NVA BVQLROJOJVK BWORAVDP

UVD LVVBMRH OMWO

LRDUVDQ SRWTOJUTCCP JK

NVILVTDH: SRHO JK HMVIRD

Saturday's Cryptquip: BASIC SONG ABOUT A SHEPHERDESS AND HER SMALL, TRUSTY LIGHT SOURCE: "MARY HAD A LITTLE LAMB"

Today's Cryptquip Clue: K equals N