



Did U Know?

American Sybil Bauer became the first woman swimmer to break an existing men's record when she won the 100m backstroke in the 1924 Olympics.



Frank Rijkaard
(Barcelona coach)

"I don't want people to forget what he's done for this club. I hope that he leaves with his head held high and that he demonstrates to the world of football just who he is." On Brazilian superstar Ronaldinho.



SET Max

Indian Premier League
Delhi Daredevils v Royal Challengers
Bangalore
Live from 7:30pm

ESPN

Sportscentre India
Sports News
Live at 8:30pm

TEN Sports

UEFA Champions League
Chelsea v Liverpool
Live from 12:00am (Thursday)

New EC welcomed

Football

SPORTS REPORTER

The triumph of a 'mixed-panel' in the Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) election was hailed by different quarters but too much expectation could put the new executive committee led by Kazi Salahuddin under pressure from the world go.

The 21-member EC will start its journey this afternoon when they take over from SA Sultan's committee and the first task would be to name a national captain for the AFC Challenge Cup qualifiers in Kyrgyzstan.

Regarding the mountain of damage they will have to repair in the near future, it would possibly be the easiest decision the BFF will have to take in next four years.

However, they have to put their differences behind first to work together. With the two panels winning almost equal number of posts (10 for new chief Salahuddin's panel and 11 for losing president candidate Maj Gen (ret'd) Amin Ahmed Chowdhury), adjustments and

compromises will have to be made for cooperation.

The good news was that the EC-elect spent busy times together yesterday. In the morning, they met AFC vice-president and FIFA development officer Manilal Fernando at a local hotel to discuss pending issues of the FIFA projects including the Goal Project.

It was learned that Manilal has asked the BFF to prepare a summary report and send it back to FIFA for its further attention.

Also on election day, candidates of both panels sat together in friendly atmosphere and at one stage, an opposition leader reportedly consoled one of the president candidates who feared defeat watching the trend of vote counting.

Everyone hopes this camaraderie remains when they are to sit in an executive committee meeting to take major decisions for the revival of football.

"I believe if they work together, they can produce many things for our football. Yes, I think nothing could have been better than this committee," commented veteran coach and former footballer Golam Sarwar Tipu.

"There are a lot of footballers in the committee including the president. We have criticised organisers in the past. Now it is time to see what the footballers do. They will also need organisational skill to run the show," added Tipu, who played alongside Salahuddin.

National coach Abu Yusuf, another colleague of the new BFF boss, welcomed the committee and said that Salahuddin has already talked with him to know about the national team.

The current footballers, who were eagerly waiting for results on Monday, also sounded happy.

"This is the best possible committee. I hope it would be able to fulfil the footballers' demands and establish their rights," said former national captain Alfaz Ahmed.

"With respect to the others (who have been elected), I can say that the players have always wanted the Salahuddin-Badal combination. It would be the ideal pair to take our football ahead."

"The presence of eight footballers in the committee is a plus point but everyone will have to prove their worth now. We feel they will

SEE PAGE 18 COL 5

Yusuf names team

SPORTS REPORTER

With a goal of playing all out football in the

AFC Challenge Cup, Bangladesh coach Abu Yusuf yesterday declared his team for the competition's qualifying rounds in Kyrgyzstan.

In absence of a number of seniors, unavailable due to early retirements, Yusuf had to pick many new faces alongside the trusted ones for the four-team qualifiers to begin in Bishkek on May 5.

The former national footballer, however, has yet to name a captain of the 18-member squad that will leave Dhaka on May 2.

Bangladesh play Afghanistan on the opening day, Laos on May 7 and hosts Kyrgyzstan on May 7 at the Central Stadium of the Kyrgyz capital.

Bangladesh, hosts of the inaugural Challenge Cup, are expected

to shrug off Afghanistan and Laos in Group C but the central Asians would pose the major threat on way to the final rounds to be held in Hyderabad, India in June.

All matches of the finals will be held at the Gachibowli Stadium in Hyderabad.

Talking to reporters at the BKSP at a press conference organised by national team's clothing sponsor Nokia yesterday, Yusuf said he was

seeing this tournament as part of their preparation for the SAFF Football Championship in June.

"Our aim is to prepare ourselves through the Challenge Cup qualifiers for the SAFF Championship, but we will desperately want to qualify for the finals of the Challenge Cup," said Yusuf.

Four qualifying group winners will join North Korea, Myanmar, Turkmenistan and hosts India in the 8-team finals.

Sri Lanka are the only team to have qualified so far as Group A winners following a massive 7-1 win over Pakistan in Chinese Taipei.

"If we finish top in the qualifiers, it will certainly inspire the boys in the SAFF Championship," said the ex-central international defender.

Yusuf, announcing the team in an extraordinary situation as no federation officials were beside him, said he would let the new BFF

SEE PAGE 18 COL 1

SQUAD

Goalkeepers: Aminul Haq, Biplob Bhattacharya; defenders: Hassan Al Mamun, Anful Islam, Wali Faisal, Rajani Kanta Barman, Atiqur Rahman Misha, Mefazzel Hossain Saikat, Arup Kumar Baidya; midfielders: Arman Aziz, Enamul Haq Sharif, Zahed Parvez, Faisal Mahmud, Maruf Ahmed, Mamunul Islam Mamun; forwards: Mehdi Hasan Ujjal, Mohammad Robin and Zahid Hasan Emily.



Bangladesh fullback Hassan Al Mamun stretches during a training session at the BKSP yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

BCCI probe soon

Cricket

CRICINFO, undated

The Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) investigation into Harbhajan Singh's spat on Friday with Sreesanth, his India teammate, will examine the background of the incident to find out whether the off-spinner was instigated in any manner, the Indian board's probe commissioner has told Cricinfo.

Sudhir Nanavati, the BCCI's appointee to conduct a 'preliminary inquiry', said he would take note of the match referee's report which 'says that one of the umpires, Amiesh Saheba, had warned Sreesanth for his behaviour after the dismissal of a rival player in that match'.

A senior lawyer from Ahmedabad, Nanavati is also vice-president of the Gujarat Cricket Association and chairman of the BCCI's finance committee.

However, Nanavati said the Indian Premier League's decision on Monday to ban Harbhajan for the inaugural season and previous records of indiscipline of both players will not be taken into account 'to avoid any bias'. 'I may refer to the procedure adopted by IPL leading up to the verdict, especially the documents and TV footage placed as evidence,' he said. 'But Monday's decision will not be taken into account and the players' career history, too, I will focus only on this particular case.'

The match referee's report says that one of the umpires, Amiesh Saheba, had warned Sreesanth for his behaviour after the dismissal of a rival player in that match, 'Nanavati said. 'So I will view the events during the match leading up to the incident too, to verify whether there has been any instigation of any sort. In such situations, the background is very important.'

Nanavati said he had the authority to summon any player or

official associated with the match over the next two weeks till he submits his report to the BCCI. 'I will go through the necessary papers associated with the complaint and call both parties -- in this case, Harbhajan Singh (Mumbai Indians) and Sreesanth (Kings XI Punjab). I can also call other players like the captain of the team (Yuvraj Singh for Kings XI Punjab), those who were in the queue as players of both sides were shaking hands when the incident happened, the match referee (Farooq Engineer) and even the umpires (Amiesh Saheba and Aleem Dar).'

Harbhajan was banned by the IPL on Monday after Engineer found the off-spinner guilty of slapping Sreesanth after Friday's match in Mohali between Mumbai Indians and Kings XI Punjab. Harbhajan was leading the Mumbai franchise in the absence of Sachin Tendulkar.

Explaining why he would not be

SEE PAGE 18 COL 1

DESPITE THIS UTTER DEVASTATION,



No Shakib for Tigers

SPORTS REPORTER

The Tigers returned to business after a break of one week to prepare for the tri-nation tournament involving two traditional rivals India and Pakistan in June.

Except Shakib Al Hasan and left-arm spinner Abdur Razzak, all the players who toured Pakistan attended the fitness session at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur.

The all-rounder from Khulna, who made a splendid hundred after a brilliant half-century during the five-match series, skipped training as he has decided not to play the upcoming triangular tournament because of his HSC examinations.

While Razzak is now involved in the ongoing Indian Premier League for the Bangalore franchise.

"I have already talked with the board officials regarding my examinations and sent them a letter by citing leave to complete my academic obligations which will start from May 29. It would not be possible for me to play the series because my exams will continue during the tournament," Shakib told over phone yesterday.

The tri-nation one-day series will kick off with the match between hosts Bangladesh and Pakistan in Mirpur.

Chief selector Rafiqul Alam, who was present during the national players' bleep test along with Naimur Rahman, said that they have yet to get any information from the board regarding Shakib's absence.

"Actually the board will decide whether they will let him go or not. We still have not received anything from the board," said Rafiq.

The full-fledged training for the tournament however will start after the completion of the Premier Super League which is likely to start from May 8.

In absence of coach Jamie Siddons, who is now in Australia, and his foreign aids, fielding coach Mohammad Salahuddin conducted the first day's training.

Abahani begin brightly

SPORTS REPORTER

Abahani began defence of their Green Delta Insurance Premier Hockey League title comfortably when they defeated Wari Club 3-1 yesterday.

The sky-blues, who lifted the Club Cup title a few days earlier, led 1-0 against the promoters at the break at the Maulana Bhasani National Hockey Stadium.

Two-goal Mamunur Rahman Chayan looked to be the brightest import for Abahani, who shared joint championship of the league last season, as the defender put them ahead after seven minutes.

The penalty corner specialist converted the first opportunity and was also on target in the 40th minute after wasting three more chances in the first half.

Moududur Rahman Shuvo sealed the victory from a field goal but Abahani paid for relaxing in the dying moments as Taifur Rahman Tapu pulled one goal back for Wari one minute before the final hooter.

Earlier, Green Delta Insurance vice-president Nazim Tajik Chowdhury declared the 10-team league open. Bangladesh Hockey Federation general secretary Sajed Adel and other officials were also present.

Stop the propaganda!

Cricket

QUAZI ZULQUARNAIN ISLAM

Before we go any further, a commendation is in order.

Praise should be showered to any and all members and/or staff of the Bangladesh cricket team, for the courage to find it within them to smile optimistically and find positives in the face of such incredulity (if two series white-washes in a row does indeed foster that).

Hope after all springs eternal. So it seems, does optimism at least as far as the Tigers are concerned.

It may be sombre times for cricket loving fans in the country, the pits in the eyes of pundits and just plain stupidity in the view of some others.

But for the real people, those who are entrusted with running the game and playing it the past is nothing if not full of positives, the future is nothing if not bright.

Who knows? A fool's tinge of orange maybe, the colour?

Perhaps the following analogy will not be entirely relevant but living through these Dark/Grey/Bright (depending on who you believe) times for Bangladesh cricket one is reminded of another story of such blatant optimism.

The year is 2003. The scene is Iraq. And what's going on is definitely not cricket.

In April of 2003, the US invasion of Iraq was in full flow.

It was a dismal time for most and a sobering experience for many but the blatant optimism of one man shone through like a lighthouse on stormy seas.

That man was Mohammed Saeed al-Sahhaf.

Those not entirely familiar with the name would probably remember the toothbrush-moustached, bespectacled al-Sahhaf as Iraq's Information Minister under Saddam Hussein.

As invading soldiers burrowed in, signalling the end of Iraqi resistance al-Sahhaf seemed unperturbed. Losses after losses followed but at the end of it all during the 'meet the press' sessions Sahhaf was there to add a positive

spin on things. Mass defection -- no problem, upheaval no sweat, repeated defeats by irrational margins what's there to worry about?

After all there are always positives to take from everything. And whatever else, the future was bright.

His eternal optimism didn't go unnoticed. He was praised in all the right quarters. He was nicknamed 'Saddam's Optimist' but some even got away with the less than glorious 'Comical Ali'.

Like all good things though, it was not to last. (The Bangladesh cricket team should take notice)

The final straw sadly came on the seventh day of April.

On April 7, American tanks had breached Baghdad and were seen patrolling the streets of the capital. In the eyes of everyone the invasion was well and truly complete.

But al-Sahhaf did not let something as ephemeral as sanity put a stop his positive attitude. Oh no!

In a press conference, not a stone throw away from the boldest tank, he claimed that there were no

SEE PAGE 18 COL 5

Dhoni devises win



CRICINFO, undated

The Chennai Super Kings overcame two adverse situations, the first with the bat and then with the ball, to extend their unbeaten streak in the Indian Premier League to four matches, defeating the Bangalore Royal Challengers by 13 runs at the Chinnaswamy Stadium on Monday.

Chennai were struggling for momentum during their innings, having scored only 102 for 3 off 15 overs before Mahendra Singh Dhoni, who struck a blistering 65, and Michael Hussey clouted 76 off the last five overs. Their bowlers were under pressure as Bangalore, chasing 179, cruised to 102 for 2 in 11 overs but Chennai's medium-

pace attack persevered and the hosts' middle order panicked towards the business-end of the chase. Bangalore were dismissed for 165, falling to their third straight defeat at home.

Bangalore were coasting towards the target while Wasim Jaffer, who was dropped three during his 50, and Ross Taylor put on 89 for the second wicket. Palani Amarnath provided the breakthrough when Jaffer holed out to long-off immediately after reaching his half-century but Bangalore were still comfortably placed with Jacques Kallis and Taylor batting fluently.

The turning point came when both Kallis and Taylor fell in the space of six balls: Kallis nicked Joginder Sharma to Dhoni and Taylor struck a fierce drive straight at Suresh Rana at point. Bangalore slipped from needing 52 runs off 36 balls with eight wickets in hand to 47 runs off 29 balls with six wickets left. Their hopes lay with Mark

Boucher, who despite being dropped on 4, skied a catch the very next ball to Hussey at third man off Manpreet Gony.

Dravid, who had demoted himself below Virat Kohli, the India Under-19 captain, fell for his second consecutive golden duck as he was struck on the pad by Gony while moving across to flick. It was perhaps a bit too high but one could sense Dravid's lack of confidence. The final blow came when Albie Morkel uprooted Kohli's leg stump for 12. Bangalore were left with 30 runs to get off 16 balls with only the tailenders left. The task proved to be too much and Dravid once again was left to ponder over what could have been.

Chennai pulled off this victory from an improbable position but they had their captain to thank for setting a competitive total. They were in desperate need of acceleration and found it hard initially, with

SEE PAGE 18 COL 2

Harbhajan's chequered career!

REUTERS, New Delhi

Harbhajan Singh's boorish behaviour again blighted the India spinner's career when he was banned on Monday from a domestic Twenty20 league for slapping a rival player.

India's third highest Test wicket-taker was suspended from the remainder of the league after being found guilty of hitting pace-man Shanthakumaran Sreesanth at the end of an Indian Premier League (IPL) match on Friday.

The incident occurred after the Mumbai team captained by Harbhajan in the absence of the injured Sachin Tendulkar lost to Sreesanth's Mohali.

Television pictures showed Sreesanth, an international teammate of Harbhajan's, sobbing after

SEE PAGE 18 COL 6



Goalmouth action from yesterday's opening day Green Delta Premier Hockey League match between defending champions Abahani and Wari at the Maulana Bhasani Hockey Stadium.

PHOTO: STAR