

NATIONAL CRICKET Himel, Alauddin slam centuries

SPORTS REPORTER

Dhaka batsman Himel was one of two centuries in yesterday's matches of the 28th National Cricket Championship.

The right-hander smashed 107 off only 87 balls as Dhaka defeated Mymensingh by 60 runs at the Tangail Stadium. Dhaka reached 205-6 in 50 overs before Raihan took five wickets to help bowl out Mymensingh for 160 in 45 overs.

Alauddin was the other batsman to have reached the three-figure mark as Rangpur crushed Natore by 156 runs at the Rajshahi Divisional Stadium. Opting to bat first, Rangpur amassed 253-9 with Alauddin hitting an unbeaten 117 off 84 balls. Later, Ashraf took four wickets as Natore were bowled out for 97 in 30.2 overs.

In the other matches, Cox's Bazar (75-2) crushed Feni (72 all out) by eight wickets at the Comilla Stadium, Nilphamari (132-5) beat Thakurgaon (130-9) by five wickets while Magura (221-9) beat Narail (197 all out) by 24 runs at the Jessore Stadium and Narayanganj (197-4) defeated the hosts Faridpur (194-9) by six wickets.

Jersey farce

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not occur again during my tenure," he added.

The Bangladesh team played with an ordinary jersey without any federation logo or national flag or even players' names on the back.

After a late night conversation with national team coach and manager Abu Yusuf, BFF communications manager Ahmed Sayeed Al Fatah confirmed that Arman Aziz lost both set of his jerseys with his missing luggage.

"Yusuf (bhai) told me that the match commissioner in Bishkek did not allow Arman to wear another players' shirt or any other similar shirt. So the team had to buy a new set of jersey to play the game," Fatah informed.

Afghans or

FROM PAGE 17
place of defensive midfielder Sharif.

"We don't want to let down our spectators and will try hard to beat Bangladesh in the final game," Kyrgyzstan coach Nematjan Zakirov had warned after losing to the Afghans.

His side will have an edge as the Kyrgyz blanked Bangladesh 3-0 in the two sides' only previous meeting in the Nehru Cup in India last year.

Gavaskar quits

FROM PAGE 17
the ICC Cricket Committee."

The former India captain, the first player in history to top 10,000 Test runs and an ICC Cricket World Cup winner in 1983, arrived at his decision in the wake of a meeting of the ICC Board in March in Dubai.

At that meeting the Board discussed the potential for a conflict of interest for a person chairing the ICC Cricket Committee while, at the same time, working for a media outlet.

That fear was put to Gavaskar when he met ICC Chief Executive Officer Malcolm Speed in Dubai later that same month.

No decision has yet been made on who will succeed Gavaskar.

Pakistan square

FROM PAGE 17
intervals. Asmavia Iqbal was their top scorer with 28 and no other batsman scored for more than 20.

Pakistan now have five points from five games, one more than Bangladesh, and both sides have a match left before they leave Sri Lanka.

In the other match, India beat Sri Lanka by eight wickets at the Welagedara Stadium in Kurunegala.

SCORES IN BRIEF

PAKISTAN: 110 all out in 44.4 overs (Asmavia 28, Sajjida 18; Tithy 3-29, Panna 3-18).
BANGLADESH: 72 all out in 33.1 overs (Shathira 19, Ayesha 12; Javeria 6-8, Mumtaz 3-19).
Result: Pakistan won by 38 runs.

Former player

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Allegations that so-called "motivation payments" are dished out -- usually to teams which no longer have anything to play for that are facing a well-placed squad still in the title race - have swirled around Spanish football for years.

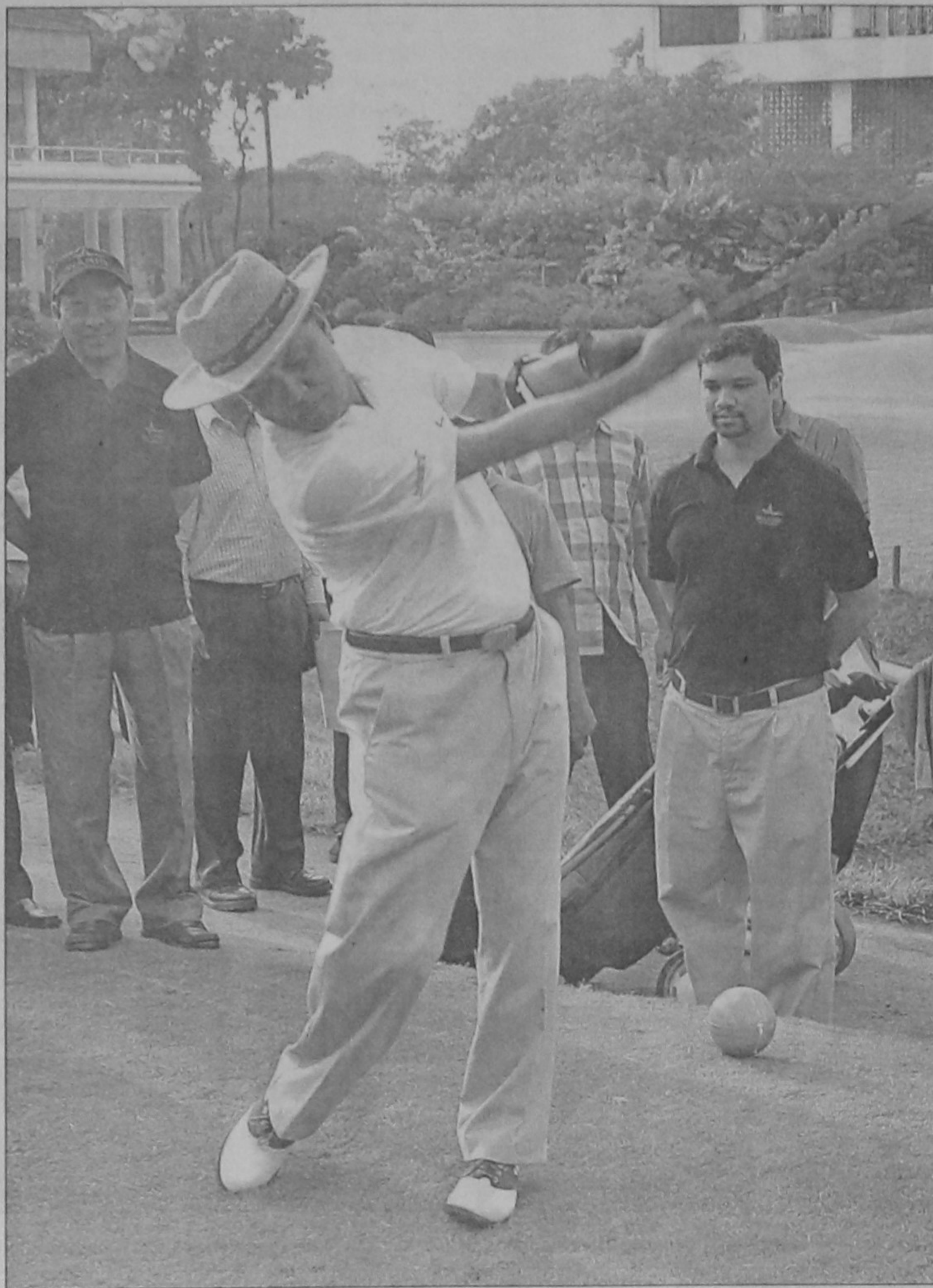
"We know this exists but as long as no complaint is filed, we can't do anything," a spokesman for the Spanish football federation told AFP in June 2007.

"Several inquiries have been opened in recent years following complaints but we have never managed to prove that these payments were made so no penalty has ever been handed out," he added.



Did U Know?

Slazenger has provided every tennis ball for the Wimbledon Championships since 1902.



Army Chief General Moeen U Ahmed tees off the two-day Warid Golf Tournament at the lush green of Kurmitola Golf Club yesterday. The competition, organised by cellular phone operators Warid Telecom, features about 450 professional and amateur golfers.

iSixes on the horizon

AFC, Singapore

A lucrative new tournament, the iSixes World Series, was unveiled Thursday featuring teams from all nine Test playing nations, with one million US dollars going to the winners.

Singapore will host the first leg of the six-a-side extravaganza in July, with further stops expected in Shanghai, Dubai and one other yet-to-be-announced country.

Apart from the Test nations -- Australia, Bangladesh, England, India, New Zealand, Pakistan, South Africa, Sri Lanka and the West Indies -- the host country will field a team, there will be an All Star selection and a wildcard.

Among players confirmed for the All Stars are India captain Anil Kumble, former Zimbabwe captain Heath Streak, New Zealand's Craig McMillan, Australian great Shane Warne and Sri Lanka's Romesh Kaluwitharana.

Each of the first three legs will offer 285,000 US dollars in prize money with the series concluding at a finale in the first quarter of next year for the top six teams, where the

winner takes home one million dollars.

"With all the games and some of the big names we will have on the All Star team packed into one weekend, it is an ideal format," said Warne, who will captain an All Stars.

"All the guys are looking forward to visiting some great cities where we can help grow the game as well, so it is a great concept."

Organisers said they were in talks with the International Cricket Council to have the tournament officially sanctioned.

Ace spinner Kumble said he expected India to field a strong team.

"I have already spoken with some of the boys at home and although I will be on the All Star team, I am sure India will bring a very strong squad," he said.

McMillan, who hit a tournament best 13 sixes at last year's Twenty20 World Cup, said the format allowed players to be more creative than usual, which always gets the crowds going.

"For the players, we get to have a great time entertaining big crowds in packed stadiums, while for the fans, they see plenty of big hits and lots of action over a short period of

time," he said. "It's a fun weekend."

The sixes is the shortest and most dynamic form of the game, featuring six-player teams rather than the traditional 11, with the premium on fast and furious entertainment and a party atmosphere.

Everyone except the wicketkeeper bowls one over each with a match lasting around 45 minutes, allowing 10-12 games to be played in a day.

Perhaps the best-known sixes tournament is held annually in Hong Kong, where the All Star team, led by Warne, lost last year to Sri Lanka.

Organisers of the iSixes World Series said they approached Hong Kong to be involved in the new tournament, but they declined.

The first leg in Singapore will be held from July 4-6 at the Singapore Cricket Club's Padang ground, which last hosted an international series in 1996 when India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka played a one-day series.

It was notable for Sri Lanka's Sanath Jayasuriya setting then-world records for the fastest one-day century (48 balls) and most sixes in an innings (11). Both matches were against Pakistan.

Dates for the other legs are yet to be determined.

CRICKET BRIEFS

NANAVATI TO HEAR BHAIJI, SREE TODAY

PTI, Ahmedabad

Sudhir Nanavati, the Board of Control for Cricket in India-appointed commissioner probing the slapping row involving Harbhajan Singh and Shanthakumaran Sreesanth, will be wrapping up the investigation after hearing both the players here on Friday.

Harbhajan and Sreesanth have confirmed to appear before Nanavati, a lawyer, today after being summoned on May 4.

The Ahmedabad-based lawyer has told reporters that he was "shocked" after seeing the video footage. He had seen the footage at the BCCI headquarters in Mumbai with IPL chairman and commissioner Lalit Modi, board secretary Niranjan Shah and joint secretary MP Pandove.

BOYCOTT WON'T HELP FLINTOFF

BBC ONLINE, undated

Geoffrey Boycott will not be joining the England coaching set-up to help Andrew Flintoff with his batting.

Reports had linked the 67-year-old former England opener with a part-time coaching role with the senior squad.

But English cricket chiefs said informal talks were held with a view to Boycott helping younger age groups.

"We use Nasser Hussain to talk to

age-group teams and that is what we envisage other former players doing," said an ECB spokesman.

All-rounder Flintoff, who underwent a fourth operation on his ankle in October, wants to play in England's opening Test against New Zealand at Lord's next Thursday but has struggled for form with the bat this season.

Flintoff is a known admirer of the former Yorkshire opener and has used Boycott's expertise in the past, notably in South Africa three years ago.

But the ECB insisted any extension of that relationship would be in an unofficial capacity.

TENDULKAR CAN'T WAIT ANYMORE

PTI, Mumbai

Itching to make his Indian Premier League debut after missing seven matches in a row with a groin injury, Sachin Tendulkar on Wednesday said he is hoping to be a part of the Mumbai Indians XI when they play Bangalore Royal Challengers on Saturday.

Watching his teammates win over the Rajasthan Royals in their IPL tie, the regular skipper of the home side said he would take to the field only if he was fully fit.

"I can tell you roughly that I'm targeting the next match," Tendulkar said.

"If I'm in the middle, I should be able to compete, for I'm not able to compete, I'll be letting down the team," said the Mumbaier.

RAJASTHAN WANT TO BOUNCE BACK

PTI, Jaipur

Hosts Rajasthan Royals, for whom the defeat against Mumbai Indians came as a rude shock after five straight wins, will be keen to return to their winning ways against Deccan Chargers in their Indian Premier League match at the Saiwam Singh Stadium today.

Shane Warne's team was totally outplayed Wednesday night just when they were riding high on consecutive wins at the half-way stage of the Twenty20 tournament, which they began with the tag of underdogs after their opening match loss.

At present, with 5-2 record, they share the top spot with Kings XI Punjab and are well placed in the race for the semifinals but lag behind on run rate.

The heartening fact for Warne is that they now play two matches on home turf and Warne has already started calculating how to extract the maximum out of home advantage. Besides, the loss also gives them an opportunity to regroup themselves and work out new strategies.

Although the batting of Rajasthan Royals miserably failed with only Swapnil Asnodkar and Shane Watson getting into the double figure but it was more because of the fact that Mumbai bowlers made full use of the conditions and sent visitors gasping.

Nabil doesn't want SAFF role

SPORTS REPORTER

Just a day after Kazi Nabil was named Bangladesh's team leader for next month's SAFF Championship, the Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) vice-president requested the federation to relieve him off the duty.

It was learned that Nabil, an Abahani director, also has desired not to be in the emergency committee of the BFF, which was also announced on Wednesday.

Nabil reportedly submitted the letter to BFF president Kazi Salahuddin yesterday. However, rumour gripped the football arena that he has resigned as vice-president.

"I have also heard this but as far as I know, he has asked to be relieved as SAFF Championship team leader," informed Salahuddin.

"I will talk to him but first, I have to see the circumstances," said the BFF chief claiming that he was yet to see the letter.

"He might have some personal problems but I cannot say anything further at this moment."

Sources said that Nabil was perhaps irked by an executive committee decision yesterday that left him out of the emergency committee.

Nabil had been selected as a member of the 9-member emergency committee initially but later during the executive committee meeting, everyone found out that a member replaced the vice-president.

When it was questioned why only one vice-president out of total five was missing, his name was included and the BFF announced a 10-member committee.

Nabil could not be contacted for comments.

Div III cricket

SPORTS REPORTER

Matuail Cricket Academy crushed Tongi Cricket Academy by 104 runs in a relegation match of the Third Division Cricket League at the Jagannath Hall ground yesterday.

Batting first after winning the toss, Matuail scored 217-9 in 47 overs with Izharul scoring 76 and Fazle making an unbeaten 54. In reply, Tongi were dismissed for only 113 in 35.5 overs with Harun scoring 18 runs. Sakib claimed three wickets for five runs while Partha took two for 19.

In the day's other matches, Kamrangirchar (220-6) earned a four-wicket win over Gulshan Youth Club (216 all out) at the City Club ground, Talent Hunt Cricket Academy (117-7) beat Young Pegasus A (114 all out) by three wickets at the Dhanmondi Cricket Stadium and GMCC (167-7) outplayed Orient (163 all out), by three wickets at the Dhaka University ground.

Sagnol may

FROM PAGE 20
year he was not being given enough chances to play after returning from injury. Hitzfeld then dropped him for the UEFA Cup game in St Petersburg earlier this month for criticising the club in the press.

The 31-year-old Frenchman's season has been reduced to only eight league games due to knee and back injuries, and in the games he played he was booed by Bayern fans.

Sagnol may fare better under Jurgen Klinsmann, who is set to succeed Hitzfeld in July when "The General" leaves to coach the Swiss national team.

Sven set for

FROM PAGE 20
A Bola suggested Benfica had targeted Eriksson after being turned down by Manchester United assistant coach Carlos Queiroz.

The Benfica coaching position became vacant following the resignation of Jose Antonio Camacho.

Eriksson is no stranger to Benfica, the 60-year-old former England boss having managed the Lisbon side from 1982 to 1984 and then again for a three year spell from 1989.

Eriksson is widely expected to be fired by Manchester City's Thai owner Thaksin Shinawatra after the club's tour of Asia this month.

City play Middlesbrough in the final game of the Premier League season on Sunday.

James fit for

FROM PAGE 20
"I want to play, of course, I wanted to play against Blackburn and Middlesbrough, and if it wasn't for the medical team I would have done, but that's what they're paid to do," James added.

"It was deeply frustrating not playing but then at the same time I'm part of a team, and if it's deemed right that I don't play and the gaffer decides he doesn't want me to play - much as I'll dislike him for the whole match - then fine."

No hi-tech bats: MCC

Cricket

AFF, London

International cricket chiefs have banned hi-tech cricket bats that give an unfair advantage to batsmen, saying the move will help prevent the game becoming too predictable.

Rule changes will ensure bat handles are made with cane, wood, twine and rubber, according to a statement from the Marylebone Cricket Club (MCC), the guardian of the game's laws, released to media Thursday.

The move follows the development of bats that use materials such as graphite and titanium in their lightweight handles, giving extra power to batsmen.

MCC head of cricket John Stephenson said the new laws, passed with overwhelming 98.6 per cent support, were designed to maintain the balance between bat and ball.

"In cricket, the battle between bat and ball is key," he said.

"If one comes to dominate the other, the game will become predictable and less enjoyable to play

and watch."

Stephenson said cricket pitches, balls and boundaries had changed little in centuries but "modern bats have developed to the extent that mis-hits are now sometimes clearing the boundary rope for six."

He said the MCC was mindful of the impact of technology on other sports when it ruled that bats must be made "in the traditional manner."

"Golfers drive the ball enormous distances, tennis players serve at greater speeds, footballers can dip and swerve the ball extravagantly," he said.

"If the development of cricket bats is left unchecked the balance could be tipped too far towards batsmen."

Stephenson said modern training methods meant many batsmen were stronger and fitter than their predecessors, allowing them to hit the ball harder and further.

"MCC is not trying to legislate against those players, but rather the new materials that could give them an unfair advantage," he said.

In addition to setting out the materials that can be used in bat handles, the new laws also state that the handle cannot exceed 52

percent of the bat's total length.

The MCC said it would carry out random tests around the world to ensure bats complied with the new law.

It also said three type of bat grading would be introduced, allowing for more leeway in the materials for bats used in the lower forms of the game.

Car accident

FROM PAGE 20

"Francois was the most talented player I've ever worked with. He was cunning, fast and intelligent."

FC Bruges president Michel D'Hooghe said he was "devastated" at the news of the death of Sterchele who was due to turn out for the club on Sunday for the last day of the season.

With his teammates in shock Thursday's training at FC Bruges was cancelled.

"Francois was one of those players with enormous talent and with plenty of potential. This season he was one of the mainstays of the club and one of the fans' favourite players," commented former Belgian Prime Minister and ardent Bruges fan Jean-Luc Dehaene.

Mumbai's third in a row



CRICINFO, undated

Mumbai's medium-pacers bowled a clever mix of bouncers, slower balls and cutters to restrict Rajasthan to a 103, the lowest first-innings total of the Indian Premier League, on a two-paced pitch at the DY Patil Stadium in Mumbai on Wednesday before some sensible batting sealed a hat-trick of triumphs for the home team. In what was their second successive upset victory, after taming Delhi on Sunday, Mumbai prevailed over the table leaders yet again.

The pitch wasn't conducive to stroke-play: balls stopped, kept low and batsmen didn't find their timing easily. The experienced trio

of Shaun Pollock, Ashish Nehra and Dwayne Bravo were canny with their variations but it was impressive to see the unheralded duo of Dhaval Kulkarni and Rohan Rajae break the back of Rajasthan's line-up.

Sachin Tendulkar wasn't fit for today's game but he had the satisfaction of seeing a wicket fall almost every time the commentators cut to have a word with him. He was particularly thrilled with the performance of Kulkarni and Rajae, young turks who utilised the conditions perfectly. Nehra finished as the most effective bowler, adding two tail-enders to Yusuf Pathan's wicket early on to finish with 3 for 13; Bravo showed the power of the slower ball; and Pollock yet again proved the value of experience.

The fact that the Mumbai wicketkeeper Yogesh Takawale pounced three skiers, when top-edges ballooned off the bat, showed the slow nature of the

surface. Even Mumbai's batsmen weren't fluent with their strokeplay variations but a few lucky breaks ensured a comfortable victory. Shane Watson struck twice -- taking the wicket of Sanath Jayasuriya who pulled one to deep square leg -- and Shane Warne struck with his very first ball, removing Takawale with a slider. However, Robin Uthappa's 34 was enough to take Mumbai past the finish line.

The match, though, was decided by the end of Rajasthan's innings. Pollock, whose decision to field first appeared to be a bold one, nipped out Graeme Smith early though even he would have been surprised at the manner of the dismissal. Smith backed away, took a stride out of his crease, missed an in-cutter from Pollock and kept walking. Had he looked back, he would have seen Takawale fumble the ball but the fact he kept going allowed an easy stumping.

It was only the 53-run stand between Swapnil Asnodkar and Watson that made some sort of recovery for Rajasthan. Both batsmen put away loose balls and Watson even showed the value of hitting straight against the spin of Sanath Jayasuriya. It took an in-judicious swipe from Watson to end the stand -- Bravo working him out from around the wicket -- and what followed was a forgettable collapse.

Raje forced Mohammad Kaif and Asnodkar to go for big shots and had them caught in the deep, while Kulkarni removed Ravindra Jadeja and Shane Warne with short balls. Jadeja top edged while going for the pull and was athletically caught by Takawale, while Warne's attempted slap through the off side ended in an easier skier for the wicketkeeper.

The tail didn't have much of a chance against the slower balls -- indicated aptly by a tantalising one from Bravo that ended the innings. It was Rajasthan's first defeat in six games and they slipped to second place, behind the Kings XI Punjab, in the points table.

SCORES IN BRIEF

RAJASTHAN ROYALS: 103 all out in 16.2 overs (Asnodkar 39, Watson 32; Nehra 3-13, Bravo 2-12, Raje 2-19, Kulkarni 2-21).

MUMBAI INDIANS: 104 for 3 in 15.1 overs (Uthappa 34 not out, Takawale 27, Jayasuriya 18, Nayar 12, extras 12; Watson 2-26, Warne 1-19).

Result: Mumbai Indians won by 7 wickets.

Man-of-the-match: Ashish Nehra. Toss: Mumbai Indians.

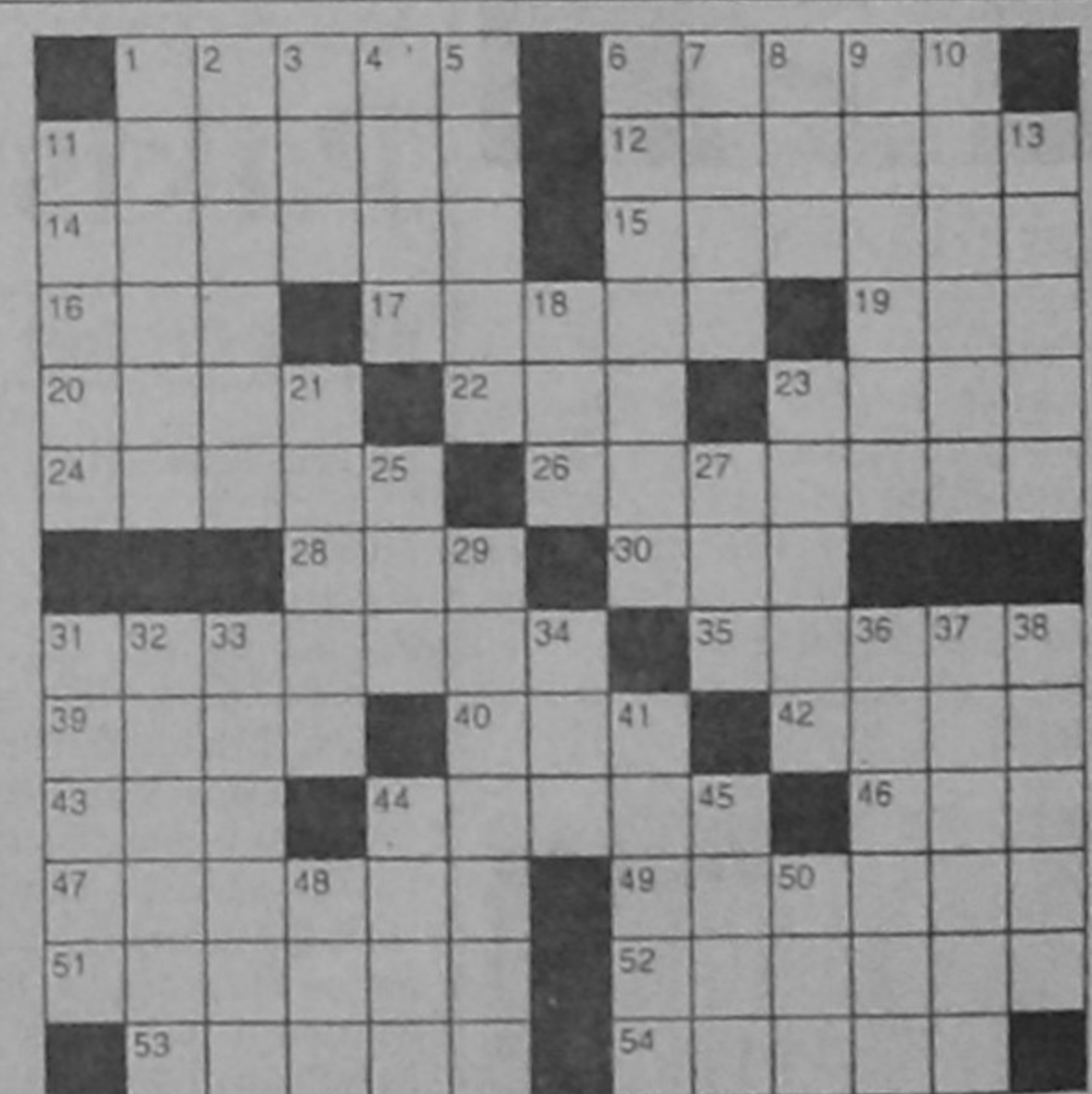
Umpires: Daryl Harper and Rudi Koertzen.



Mumbai batsman Robin Uthappa plays his trademark paddle sweep during his match-winning 34 not out against Rajasthan in the Indian Premier League in Mumbai on Wednesday.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

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