

McGrath wants Tendulkar

PTI, New Delhi

Missing his long time on-field rival Sachin Tendulkar, retired Australian fast bowler Glenn McGrath hopes to bowl at the master batsman when Delhi Daredevils and Mumbai Indians face off again in the Indian Premier League (IPL).

"Hopefully, Sachin will be fit in the next match. I wish him best of luck," the legendary pacer told PTI.

Talking on the sidelines of a fashion event in the capital last night, McGrath said the Mumbai team was clearly missing Tendulkar.

"If Sachin comes to the Mumbai side, it will add extra pressure on the rival team as the little champion has the capability to win matches on any given day, he said.

The Australian said the Delhi Daredevils was a balanced side and was one of the strong contenders for the title.

"We have a good combination of youth and experience. Losing the last match against Chennai felt bad but we played some good cricket," said McGrath.

Delhi Daredevils captain Virender Sehwag exuded confidence that his side would lift the IPL title.

"We have performed very well till now and the boys are enjoying the IPL format. We are sure that we will win the IPL," he said.

Bhaji 'unmasked'

PTI, Melbourne

Australian captain Ricky Ponting on Saturday hit out at Harbhajan Singh, saying that the Indian off-spinner has been unmasked by his attack on teammate Sreesanth.

Ponting said people can now make their own judgment on Harbhajan after the slapping row since involved his own teammate.

"The (slapping) incident was him dealing with a guy that he has probably played 20 Tests with," Ponting, who had a brief stint with Kolkata Knight Riders in the Indian Premier League during which the slap-gate took place, said.

"After this latest issue in India, I think people should be making their own judgments about Harbhajan. He has again done something wrong," Ponting told 'Herald Sun'.

The Sydney fiasco involving Harbhajan and Andrew Symonds is more than three months old but Ponting remained incredulous at how Harbhajan got off with a slap on the wrist after being charged with racially abusing Andrew Symonds.

Harbhajan was initially suspended for three Tests but after an appeal received a 50 per cent match-fine on a lesser charge.

"It certainly wasn't the outcome that we expected. He ended up being fined 50 per cent of his match fee. As it is, I will cap a 20 or 30 per cent match-fine most one-day games because I am behind in the over rates," Ponting said.

Nat'l team need

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But we will give priority to what the coach thinks. Still, the decision will be taken by the NTMC," said Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) vice-president Badal adding that the committee will be formed very soon.

It was also learned that the BFF has decided to investigate why the Under-14 national team failed to go to Iran for the AFC Football Festival.

A probe-committee will be formed soon.

Anwar gets

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Babul told. It would take some time to complete the formalities and it seems Anwar, who is in the middle of a six-week recovery period from injury, would not be able to play in next month's SAFF Championship.

"It would make my father very happy," Anwar told after his meeting with Salahuddin.

Canary Wharf, UK, official Zakir Khan, who was present, has also offered BFF help from Bangladeshi expatriates in England for different development projects.

BCB sets

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After the discussion with the national selectors, I think we should enhance the interaction between the coaches and the committee regarding the national team," he said adding that they met with Tamim Iqbal yesterday as the left-hander was abroad while the board talked with the Tigers regarding the Pakistan tour debacle.

In another important move, the board has decided to prepare a common playing condition for all districts associations.

"There are actually no guideline for the districts and therefore, all of them have been holding different tournaments under their own role. But what we felt was that there should be one playing condition for everybody to follow in limited-over, Twenty20 and longer version cricket. Jalal Ahmed Chowdhury will prepare the guideline, informed Ashraf.



Action from yesterday's Premier Volleyball League match between Bangladesh Rifles and Bangladesh Police at the Volleyball Stadium.

SC to hear Malik

Cricket

AfP, Lahore

Former Pakistan captain Salim Malik Saturday said he hoped to overturn his life ban for alleged involvement in match-fixing after the country's top court granted him an appeal hearing.

Malik was banned by a match-fixing inquiry in 2001 after three top Australian players accused him of offering bribes for them to underperform.

But after Saturday's decision by the Supreme Court the 44-year-old told AFP: "It is a sort of a win for me."

He said he was told he could start proceedings on May 19.

"This means a lot to me because I have been fighting to clear my name for eight years and once I get this ban overturned I would like to associate myself to cricket once again."

The May 2001 ban, imposed by an inquiry headed by high court judge Justice Malik Mohammad

Qayyum, also prevented him from holding any office or involvement in any cricket-related activity.

The ban was imposed after Shane Warne, Tim May and Mark Waugh claimed he offered them bribes to underperform during Australia's 1994 tour of Pakistan.

In 1995 Malik was cleared of the allegations by a one-judge commission on the grounds of lack of evidence.

However the Qayyum commission, which conducted an extensive inquiry that also included recorded statements from the Australian trio in Australia, decreed there was enough evidence to ban Malik for life.

Former fast bowler Ataur Rehman was also banned for life on charges of perjury during the inquiry, although that was lifted in 2003.

The Qayyum commission also fined six other Pakistan players -- Inzamamul Haq, Wasim Akram, Waqar Younis, Mushaq Ahmed, Saeed Anwar and Akram Raza.

Malik's name also featured in an Indian match-fixing inquiry, which

led to life bans for former Indian captain Mohammad Azharuddin and Ajay Sharma in 2000. Late South African captain Hansie Cronje, also banned for life on match-fixing, also named Malik as an offender in a separate probe in South Africa.

Malik's appeal against the ban was rejected by Lahore High court in 2001. His appeal to the Supreme court has been pending since then.

In October 2006 India pardoned Azharuddin -- a move that inspired Malik, who said: "India has already lifted the ban on Azharuddin and I feel my ban can also be lifted."

He added: "I can't play cricket at my age now but there are hundreds of things linked to cricket which I can do and one is coaching," said Malik, whose efforts to start his own coaching academy were blocked by the Pakistan Cricket Board in 2006.

Malik played 103 Tests and 263 one-day internationals for Pakistan between 1981 to 1999. He also led his country in 12 Tests and 34 one-day internationals.

Nanavati can only probe incident

PTI, Ahmedabad

BCCI-appointed commissioner Sudhir Nanavati, who is probing the slap-row involving Sreesanth and Harbhajan Singh, on Saturday made it clear that it was not his mandate to recommend punishment to the guilty in his report which he will now submit on Tuesday.

"I will not recommend any sort of punishment to the players as I have been appointed to inquire about the incident under rule 32 of the BCCI," Nanavati told PTI.

"I will have to submit my report on the incident to the Board President and he will forward it to the disciplinary committee which will decide about the quantum of punishment to be given to the person who is found guilty," he said adding that "it is upto them. They can even let off a person."

"Earlier, I was going to submit my report on Monday, but now I have decided to do it on Tuesday," Nanavati added.

"Change of date is due to busy schedule on Monday. I have to appear for some cases in the Gujarat High Court," Nanavati, who is a senior advocate, said, adding that the stipulated time of 15 days given to him to complete the inquiry also ends on Tuesday.

Asked what punishment a player can get if he is found guilty, Nanavati said the maximum limit is upto life ban.

LOCAL SNIPPETS

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Rifles confirmed their absolute supremacy in Premier Volleyball League as they clinched their 11th consecutive title yesterday.

They defeated Bangladesh Police in the final in 3-1 sets (20-25, 25-15, 25-21, 25-16) at the Volleyball Stadium.

Rifles have been picking up the title ever since 1995-96 when the league began.

Bangladesh Police became runners-up while Bangladesh Power Development Board (PDB) finished third.

Uttara Sporting Club has been relegated to the First Division League for not taking part in the Premier League.

Rajesh of Water Development Board received the award of the most promising player of the meet.

DIV II CRICKET

Udity Club and Kalabagan Cricket Academy moved a step closer to safety after winning their respective matches in the Second Division Relegation League yesterday.

Farhad smashed 99 off just 70 balls to power Udity to their winning target of 176 runs in only 23.5 overs in a 25-overs-a-side match against Chandpur Cricket Academy at the Dhaka University ground. Chandpur's score of 175 was built around Fazlul's 40, earlier in the piece.

At the Dhanmondi Cricket Stadium, the Kalabagan academy thwarted a six-wicket haul from Rayer Bazar's Asif to score 197 in 43.4 overs. Later, Rayer Bazar were bowled out for 176 in 44.5 overs with Miraz contributing 36.

The losses would put Chandpur and Rayer Bazar in limbo as they must win all their remaining matches to stay afloat in the league.

DIV II VOLLEYBALL

Nabajagarani Sangha emerged champions in the Second Division Volleyball League at the Volleyball Stadium.

Prisons Directorate became runners-up and Nagar Samaj Kalyan Sangha finished third.

Amalesh of Nagar Samaj Kalyan Sangha earned the award of most promising player in the league.

Bangladesh Olympic Association (BOA) secretary general Kutubuddin Ahmed distributed prizes among the teams as chief guest.

Bangladesh Volleyball Federation vice president Morshed A Chowdhury, general secretary Anisur Rahman and league committee secretary Mohammad Sirajul Islam were, among others, present.

New injury for Flintoff

BBC ONLINE, undated

Andrew Flintoff will miss two of England's three Test matches against New Zealand because of a side strain.

The all-rounder experienced discomfort on the left side of his body during Lancashire's 232-run victory over Durham at Old Trafford on Friday.

Flintoff has been bowling at brisk pace after recovering from ankle surgery.

"It's frustrating to have picked up an injury at this time. I want nothing more than to return to the England side," said Flintoff.

He added: "(I) will continue to do everything to make myself available for selection."

The England and Wales Cricket Board stressed Flintoff's side strain has no relation to the ankle injury which kept him out of England's winter tour to Sri Lanka and New Zealand.

England have fitness concerns over Paul Collingwood and keeper Tim Ambrose but both are likely to make the squad.

Collingwood was given a pain-killing injection because of a shoulder problem during Durham's Championship defeat by Lancashire, and England's medical staff will assess his condition when the team gathers at Lord's.

But Ravi Bopara could be included in the squad as cover after recently turning down the chance to play in the Indian Premier League to focus on trying to further his England career.

Ambrose, meanwhile, has a sore neck, but he is confident he will shake it off in time to make his first home Test appearance.

Must-win

FROM PAGE 17 the bat against Rajasthan Royals in Jaipur though his side lost the match.

The Australian, who has made 284 runs in eight matches, is the highest run-getter for the team, followed by Rohit Sharma who has been consistent so far and has worn the Orange cap for highest run getter though he is now in the fourth place with 263 from eight matches behind Gautam Gambhir, Gilchrist and Virender Sehwag.

Tremlett up the ante

Cricket

AFP, London

Seam bowler Chris Tremlett made England selectors take note as he underlined his credentials for an international return as he shined for England Lions against the New Zealand Tourists on Friday.

The Hampshire bowler had suffered a difficult time during the winter with injuries and, despite impressing in three Tests against India last summer, looked like he had fallen out of favour within the England camp.

But with Matthew Hoggard and Steve Harmison having been dropped during the recent series in New Zealand, competition for places has intensified ahead of next week's first Test against the Kiwis.

And given an opportunity to face the tourists for the England Lions at the Rose Bowl this week, Tremlett looked the most accomplished of the seamers attempting to attract the selectors' attention.

He claimed two early wickets to leave the Kiwis, playing their final warm-up match before the start of the npower Test series, struggling on 47 for three in reply to the Lions' first-innings 280.

Tremlett then returned with the

second new ball to dismiss all-rounder Jacob Oram as New Zealand reached 261 for nine before the close of the second day.

Aaron Redmond looked to have done enough to secure a Test debut at Lord's next week with an unbeaten 139.

While Tremlett flourished, Yorkshire seamer Hoggard struggled to make the same impact in front of watching selector James Whitaker as he seeks to add to his 67 caps.

However he did at least manage to rescue a frustrating day with three late wickets with the second new ball.

Given the first new ball at the start of the day, Hoggard was outbowed by emerging Durham seamer Graham Onions, who claimed a wicket with his second ball when he earned an lbw verdict against opener Jamie How.

Onions' early breakthrough was followed up by Tremlett, who was brought into the attack as a replacement for Hoggard and tempted Jamie Marshall into fending a short ball straight to Luke Wright at short leg.

Tremlett also induced Ross Taylor, New Zealand's best batsman against England during the winter, into edging behind for five.

While the other members of the top order may be struggling for

runs before Lord's, Redmond showed a determined application to hit his fifth first-class century.

He batted all day to reach his highest score and shared a 77-run stand with Brendon McCullum which threatened to put the tourists firmly in control.

But with McCullum, who is leading the side in place of injured captain Daniel Vettori, in sight of his half-century he was involved in a mix-up over a quick single and was run out by Michael Carberry's direct hit.

Dejected after running out his side's leading player, Redmond made amends by reaching his own half-century and then survived being hit on the helmet by a hostile short ball from Tremlett.

He showed great resilience to recover from that shock to reach a superb century, which included 17 boundaries, having been dropped on 97 after giving a regulation catch to Graeme Swann at second slip off Onions.

He went on to surpass his previous best first-class score of 135 and put New Zealand on course for a first-innings lead.

Hoggard had to wait until the 85th over for his first success when Jeetan Patel edged to second slip. He followed up by removing Tim Southee and Iain O'Brien to leave the tourists trailing by 19 runs.

Adil in no hurry

Cricket

REUTERS, Southampton

Adil Rashid is one of English cricket's hottest prospects but there is more pressure on him than most because he has a rare quality for his country -- he bowls leg-spin.

Rashid, 20, is playing for the England Lions -- a team made up of Test match prospects -- against the New Zealanders. The Yorkshire all-rounder echoed the guarded sentiments of those around him by downplaying an England call-up.

"It would be a dream come true but I have to perform for my county first," Rashid told Reuters in an interview. "If I look too far ahead things can go wrong."

"I'm a down-to-earth character and if somebody says I will be playing for England soon I won't think too much about it and will get on with my game."

There has been a dearth of quality leg-spinners globally though Australia had Shane Warne, India have Anil Kumble and Pakistan have Danish Kaneria. Not since 2000 have England been able to select a leg-spinner when they

picked 21-year-old rookie Chris Schofield and Ian Salisbury.

Rashid, Bradford-born with Pakistani origin, could soon end the wait, though his mentors want to ensure he does not become 'the next Schofield'.

The then Lancashire player was released by his county four years after his Test debut.

"Everybody's dream is to play for England and in the Ashes," Rashid said. "But Yorkshire want to protect me and don't want to expose me too early."

"You see cricketers aged 19 or 20 on their debut and sometimes they don't do so well and can go down very quickly. They are trying to prevent that happening to me."

Rashid, who considers himself a role model to young British Asians, is surprised at the pace of his career development since July 2006 when he claimed 6-67 against Warwickshire on his first-class debut. Two weeks later he scored 114 and took 8-157 for England Under-19s against India.

He has been coached by Warne's mentor Terry Jenner for the last five years and Rashid is grateful of his expertise.

"He's been a great help," said

Rashid. "He helps me technically more than anything. It's exciting to be working with the man who coached the best leg-spinner ever."

Rashid approached Warne for advice last year after Yorkshire played his Hampshire team in the county championship. It was their first conversation and Rashid will never forget it.

"We spoke for 20 minutes after the game about leg-spin," Rashid said. "He told me how he tries to react when things are not going so well and how to work out a batsman. He was a really good guy."

Rashid knows he has a long way to go before he reaches Warne's level but many observers see the potential.

"Adil is a very talented young player but needs more county cricket before he will be ready for international cricket," Yorkshire coach Martyn Moxon told Reuters. "He needs to be left to play his cricket."

"The problem is that because we are so desperate in this country to get a leg-spinner playing, when a youngster like Adil comes along we can't wait for it to happen. But he needs to be able to develop at his own pace."

Doubt over Colly

Cricket

AFP, London

A back problem has thrown England all-rounder Paul Collingwood's participation in next week's first Test against New Zealand into doubt.

With England due to announce their squad on Sunday morning, one-day captain Collingwood was also set to have an injection designed to help him cope with an ongoing problem with his right shoulder.

England also have a worry over wicketkeeper Tim Ambrose, who was unable to play for his county, Warwickshire, on Friday because of a stiff neck.

An England spokesman admitted it was Collingwood who was giving greatest cause for concern.

"Paul has received treatment for stiffness in his lower back and a sore right shoulder," he said. "He will continue to receive treatment

and be reassessed over the next 48 hours."

Collingwood, 31, would be an integral part of any plans to field Andrew Flintoff in a four-man attack in the series opener.

Although Flintoff is deemed fully fit following a fourth ankle operation, England would not want to bowl him into the ground and Collingwood could supplement the attack with half-a-dozen to 10 overs a day.

England are likely to select all-rounder Flintoff for his form with the ball as he bids to play his first Test since the final 2006-07 Ashes defeat.

Flintoff has looked smooth from the off in his latest comeback and his early-season menace was rewarded with seven wickets in the defeat of Collingwood's Durham at Old Trafford on Friday.

The 30-year-old has mustered only 68 runs in seven innings for Lancashire this summer, however, twice falling for nought in his latest outing.

That is not the kind of form to

merit a place in the top six and he is being lined up to slot back in at number seven, a position in which he has not been selected since the tour of Sri Lanka in 2003-04.

England's established batsmen have hardly been rich in runs themselves, however, with captain Michael Vaughan's lack of a half-century this season of concern and Collingwood in a real rut.

He has scored just 32 in five innings in all forms of cricket but does have a reputation for pulling performances out of the bag in difficult circumstances.

"It's a bonus if you can come out and score hundred after hundred every innings," he said. "Realistically it's not going to work that way and you come up against difficult conditions."

"Runs would be good to get that confidence going but I'll back myself to go out there and score out in the middle when the time comes."

"I am sure that everybody has got me down as the first one off the team sheet but I am a batter."

Rajasthan go on top

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the track to Warne and edged to third man, Rohit Sharma, run out by a direct throw from Warne, and Sanjay Bangar, who edged Watson to the keeper.

Much of this was, however, down to Rajasthan's bowlers and fielders, who kept their cool while Gilchrist was batting and put the brakes on the scoring after his dismissal. Watson and Tanvir went for 20 and 16 respectively in their first two overs but they came back for their second spells determined to make amends. In his third over Watson picked up Bangar's wicket and after Venugopal Rao hit Tanvir for successive fours, the bowler countered with skidding yorkers to slow Deccan.

Deccan appeared uninspired by their low score and their lack of confidence may have worked to Rajasthan's advantage as Smith and Yusuf Pathan edged and slogged their way to a 109-run

opening stand. Yusuf lifted a good-length delivery off Scott Styris for six just after he was nearly stumped by Gilchrist. He then targeted Pragyan Ojha, hitting him for 17 runs in one over where he pulled a short ball for six, slog-swept to mid-off for four and then had a two converted to four after Rohit Sharma touched the boundary rope with his foot while fielding the ball.

There was little answer to the attack. Gilchrist spent a lot of time talking to his bowlers -- six were used in the first ten overs -- and fielders but nothing seemed to work. Their spirit -- or lack of it -- was best summed up in the life given to Yusuf at 30. He top-edged a delivery from Afridi to midwicket and DP Vijaykumar ran uncertainly towards it and slowed down just as the ball fell in front of him.

Deccan now lie just above the Bangalore Royal Challengers at the bottom of the points table and

winning this game would have eased a little pressure in their bid to avoid elimination. They now face three tough games -- two at home, against the resurgent Kolkata Knight Riders and Mumbai Indians and one in Delhi against the Daredevils.

SCORES IN BRIEF

DECCAN CHARGERS: 140 for 8 in 20 overs (Gilchrist 61, Gibbs 19, Styris 13, Sharma 5, Afridi 1, Bangar 3, Teja 6, Rao 23 not out, RP Singh 2, Ojha 1 not out; Watson 1-22, Patel 1-28, Warne 2-20, Patten 1-19, Trivedi 1-28) RAJASTHAN ROYALS: 141 for 2 in 16 overs (Smith 40, Pathan 68, Kaif 17 not out, Watson 5 not out; RP Singh 1-24, Ojha 1-47) Result: Rajasthan Royals won by 8 wickets.

Man-of-the-match: Yusuf Pathan. Umpires: MR Benson (England) and AM Saheba. Toss: Rajasthan Royals.