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BCCI kept out of World Cup ceremony

CRICINFO, undated
The 25th anniversary celebrations of India's 1983 World Cup-winning campaign will not involve the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) in any capacity.

It is reported that the BCCI was reluctant to get involved because a few members of that squad, including the captain Kapil Dev, have shifted to the rival Indian Cricket League (ICL), which the board has refused to recognise.

The private celebrations have been organised by Professional Management Group, a firm run by Sunil Gavaskar, who was also a member of the squad.

Speaking to the Indian Express, Kapil said it was highly unlikely the BCCI would even be invited.

"I'm not hurt that the board is not organising the function," Kapil told the paper. "Why should I be hurt? The important thing is not whether the board is backing off because of me or the ICL, but whether we will invite the board members or not. Right now, it doesn't look like that we'll be interested in calling them. This is an event by Sunny [Gavaskar] and I'm helping him with it."

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Did U Know?

In the 1948 Olympics, the US won every event in the swimming competition.



Sania Mirza

(Indian tennis star)

"I am naturally disappointed at missing the French Open but there are certain things beyond one's control and I hope to be back on the circuit soon."



BT
Premier Division Cricket Super League
Biman v Mohammedan
Live from 9:00am

TEN Sports
UEFA Champions League Final
Man United v Chelsea
Live from 12:45am (Thursday)

SET Max
Indian Premier League
Mumbai Indians v Kings XI Punjab
Live from 4:30pm
Chennai Super Kings v Bangalore Royal Challengers
Live from 8:30pm

ESPN
Sportscentre India
Sports News
Live at 8:30pm

Premier Division Cricket Super League
Biman v Mohammedan
Venue: Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium, Mirpur
BKSP v City Club
Venue: Fatullah Cricket Stadium, Abahani v Surjo Torun
Venue: BKSP-2



Usha's Pakistani recruit Akhter Ali (R) goes past Mohammedan's Isa Miah during their Green Delta Premier Hockey League match at the Maulana Bhasani Stadium yesterday.

Usha keep winning

Hockey

SPORTS REPORTER

Usha Kira Chakra overcame the Mohammedan hurdle with a 5-3 victory to maintain the solo lead in the Green Delta Insurance Premier Hockey League at the Maulana Bhasani National Stadium yesterday.

Pakistani pair of Akhter Ali and Tariq Aziz terrorised the black and whites to script the winners' eighth straight victory while Mohammedan slipped further with their first defeat after two drawn matches against Sonali Bank and archrivals Abahani.

Like the previous game against their perennial foes, Mohammedan drew the first blood through a spectacular goal from Pakistani Mohammad Sabbir who found the target with a powerful reverse hit from the left side as early as the

fourth minute. Sabbir's success however only spurred his two compatriots in the opponent camp to fire as Akhter along with Tariq mesmerised the youthful Mohammedan to make sure that their team go into the break with a cushion of 4-1 lead.

Akhter, who struck twice in the span of three minutes to take away the Mohammedan's early initiative, was the hero of the match with four goals while Maksud Alam Habul added the other goal for the winners.

The scores were levelled when Akhter scored his first goal fed by Tariq and then the Pakistani attacking midfielder cool-headedly converted a penalty stroke to put Usha ahead in the 15th minute.

The inexperienced Mohammedan looked helpless against the run of the two Pakistanis but it was Habul who extended the lead in the 31st minute with a flick

'Windies need confidence'

AFP, Kingston

Caribbean batting legend Gordon Greenidge, now convener of the West Indies selectors, said confidence was the key for his team in the upcoming three-Test series against Australia.

The West Indies go into the series on the back of a drawn home series against Sri Lanka, with the one-day series won 2-0, and Greenidge said: "The players must believe that they can step up and show what they are really capable of."

"We have to decide to be more forceful, more positive and spend time at the crease. What we want is consistency. This is something we have been fighting for over the years," the former opening batsman said ahead of the opening Test on Thursday.

"This series presents an opportunity for players to be counted -- new

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It's Abahani's for taking

Cricket

SPORTS REPORTER

The stage is all set for Abahani to retain the title of the most-coveted domestic event, the Premier Division Cricket League, when they go into their last Super League match against Surjo Torun Club at BKSP today.

The Dhanmondi outfit played fantastic cricket to secure back-to-back successes in last two games to turn the table on Biman who take on Mohammedan in their last game at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur only with an improbable hope of winning the title.

A seven-wicket victory in the last game saw Abahani and Biman are level on 25 points, but the traditional sky-blues are in an advantageous position with a much superior run rate of +1.53 against Biman's +0.41.

So, the equation is simple. If Abahani, as expected, win their last league encounter against the team who are second from bottom, they

will lift the title even if Biman beat Mohammedan.

"I think the run-rate is now totally irrelevant. Actually we just need to play our normal game to make sure that no upset takes place in the final moment. Of course, cricket is a game of uncertainty but it is too much to think that we are losing our last game," said Abahani skipper Tushar Imran.

"I am hopeful because our team spirit is high after we won the last two games against two tough opponents quite comfortably. We have number of performers in the team which was key behind the successes," said the right-hander.

The Abahani skipper also informed that they would play the match with one seamer short from the previous match because of the condition and Nazmul Hossain, the last match hero whose four-wicket burst spelled Biman's fall in the last game, would play only if he was declared fit from his groin injury.

Biman skipper Sanwar Hossain, on the other hand, was well aware of the practical situation that his side had hardly any chance to

regain the title. "We actually lost everything in one match [against Abahani]. We are not thinking about the title rather our main focus is to win the match against Mohammedan," said Sanwar, the former national middle-order batsman.

However the main focus is now on whether Mohammedan will change their mind to field the national stars including captain Mohammad Ashrafal in the last game.

In an amazing move, Mohammedan decided to drop all their national players in the previous match against City Club as the big-spending club has got hardly anything from Ashrafal and company.

The last match can only give Ashrafal, Afhab Ahmed and Zunaed Siddiqui an opportunity to make their final match practice ahead of the next month's tri-series involving India and Pakistan. Even if Mohammedan change their mind, it is believed that only Ashrafal will be given the opportunity.

BKSP will meet bottom-side City Club in the other match at the Fatullah Cricket Stadium.

Salahuddin rubbishes gentlemen's agreement

Football

SPORTS REPORTER

Kazi Salahuddin will not allow any gentlemen's agreement among the Dhaka clubs to deny the players from their proper remuneration.

The new Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) president made the comments on the most talked about issue in the football arena while talking with the Asian Football Confederation (AFC) website in Kuala Lumpur.

"I assured the top players that they would be part of the transfers and no underhand dealings will be allowed," he said when asked about the Dhaka-based clubs' so-called 'gentlemen's agreement' about the players' transfer to the B League.

Salahuddin also promised that he would appoint three European

coaches for under-17, under-20 and national teams but dismissed the chance of former Bangladesh coach Diego Cruciani, who recently expressed his desire to get back the job, returning.

"We are planning to hire three foreign coaches for our senior, under-20 and under-17 teams. Though the senior team does not have any international engagement after the South Asian Football Federation Championship next month I would like them to train throughout the year," said the 54-year-old.

"We are not thinking about Cruciani because it is difficult for someone to do something different who has already done the job. I have some CVs in my hand and I will start the negotiation after attending the FIFA congress in May 30," he added.

Salahuddin, who was in the

Malaysian capital to meet AFC president Mohamed Bin Hammam, again promised a significant change in the Bangladesh football scene over the next two years and said his top priority is to bring the 'game back to the field'.

"The players are sitting idle for more than six months as there are no activities in Bangladesh and that's one of the main reasons for our team's lacklustre performance at the international stage," he said. He informed that the federation would start the second season of the B League in August, preceded by the Federation Cup in July.

"We have a lot of problems at hand and it will take some time to streamline the process. I have received good response from the sponsors and I believe things will change significantly within a year," said Salahuddin, who is believed to

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Rajasthan rush into semis

CRICINFO, undated



A disciplined performance with the ball, followed by a counter-attacking blitz from Yusuf Pathan, sealed a six-wicket win at Eden Gardens for Rajasthan Royals, who with 18 points from 11 matches, become the first team to firm a spot in the semifinals of the Indian Premier League on Tuesday.

At the toss, Shane Warne had said his intention was to knock out the Kolkata Knight Riders, and the loss leaves the home side nearly out of the running for a last four place.

Rajasthan were on top for most part of the game, barring a spell in the chase when wickets fell in a flurry. Warne decided to stick with his tried-and-tested policy of fielding first, with the pitch offering assistance to the bowlers. They kept Kolkata on the leash, and a regular stream of wickets ensured

the home side could manage only 147. Warne made innovative bowling changes, and tried to unsettle the batsmen by rotating his fast bowlers for each of the first six overs. The faster bowlers varied their deliveries, changing their lengths and pace to keep the batsmen on their toes. Sohail Tanvir, Munaf Patel and Shane Watson kept the batsmen in check during the powerplay, conceding just 32.

Munaf's bowled a maiden first up, snapping Mohammad Hafeez. Salman Butt, fresh from his 73 against Chennai Super Kings, attempted to give the innings a push by striking a few fours, including a superb cover drive on one knee off Munaf -- before falling leg before as he moved across his stumps. Sourav Ganguly, though, struggled for fluency; he needed seven balls to get off the mark and scored his first boundary to third man just when Warne played mindgames by bringing the fielder in the 30-yard circle. The battle

between the two captains continued when Warne brought himself on. Warne had conceded only one off his first over but Ganguly broke the shackles by launching Warne over square leg in his second.

The regular loss of wickets from then on hampered Kolkata. A frustrated David Hussey was bowled as he tried to charge Pathan, while Ganguly later hit Siddharth Trivedi straight into the hands of long-on. However, Kolkata did well to go from 59 for 2 after ten overs to 147 in 20 largely due to Debabrata Das's sparkling 31 off 20 balls. He announced his arrival with a dead-straight six off Warne, and later dispatched Pathan over midwicket. Laxmi Ratan Shukla and the batsmen to follow also chipped in quick runs, and despite Kolkata losing wickets regularly, the big hits helped them post a challenging 147.

Kolkata needed early wickets, and they got just that as Swapnil Asnodkar edged an away-slinger

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UEFA CHAMPIONS LEAGUE FINAL TODAY History beckons United

AFP, Moscow



The first all-English final of the Champions League was always going to be a dramatic affair.

But it would have been hard to predict an encounter quite as rich in sub-plots as Wednesday's meeting between Manchester United and Chelsea at Moscow's Luzhniki Stadium.

Looming largest of all in the backdrop to the 2008 edition of club football's biggest match is the sense of history weighing down on United as they bid to claim the club's third European Cup in a year that has marked both the 50th anniversary of the Munich air disaster as well as 40 years since

they became the first English club to lift the trophy.

For Chelsea it is the uncertainty over the future of their manager, Avram Grant, and several of their leading players, that has made the build-up to this final unlike any other.

On an individual level, there are many more questions that will have been answered before midnight in the Russian capital, chief among them whether Cristiano Ronaldo really is capable of taking on the leading role on one of the game's biggest stages.

Sir Bobby Charlton, a Munich survivor, addressed Ferguson's squad last week and his appeal for a fitting memorial to those lost in the disaster has clearly had an impact on those who listened.

Inevitably there is a risk that the burden of delivering the required

result will weigh too heavily on them, but Wayne Rooney, for one, believes an awareness of and respect for the club's past need not cramp the style of the United's current generation.

"It is very important with the history, 50 years since Munich and 40 years since we won it," Rooney acknowledged. "United had some brilliant teams, I have looked at some old videos and they look like they were great teams."

"But we also need to go out there and try and enjoy it. If we enjoy playing then I am sure we will do well."

Rooney is such a ferocious competitor it is hard to imagine him not enjoying a match of this consequence. Things might not be quite the same for neutral observers of this summit meeting between England's top two, which is expected to be viewed by a live television audience of 150 million as

well as the 61,000 inside what was once known as The Grand Arena of the Central Lenin Stadium.

Meetings between the two clubs of late have rarely been easy on the eye and it is Chelsea who have had the edge in the four seasons that have elapsed since Grant's predecessor Jose Mourinho introduced the term "Special One" to the lexicon of the English game.

In that time, United have won just two of the 11 meetings while their London rivals have walked off with bragging rights six times, a sequence that includes both last year's FA Cup final and the most recent encounter between them.

Michael Ballack's double gave Chelsea a 2-1 win at Stamford Bridge last month that effectively ensured United would be made to work for their Premier League

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LOCAL SNIPPETS

SPORTS REPORTER

Imrul Kayes, Delwar Hossain and BCB HP coach Golam Faruk Chowdhury will attend the Centre of Excellence Program in Brisbane. The program has started on May 19 runs through June 13.

Pace bowler Delwar Hossain and Golam Faruk Chowdhury have already reached Brisbane while opening batsman Imrul Kayes will leave for the Australian city on May 23.

NAT'L CRICKET MEET

The final round of the National Cricket Competition kicks off today at the Sylhet Stadium with Dhaka taking on Comilla in the opening match.

Eight teams -- Narayanganj, Barisal, Nilphamari, Khulna, Rangpur, Dhaka, Comilla and hosts Sylhet -- will compete in the final round.

The final match of the meet will be held on May 28.

PIONEER FOOTBALL

Bangladesh Sporting Club blanked Power Sun Ganderia 5-0 in an East Zone match of the Pioneer Football League at the Jagannath University

Mumbai call for other Dwayne
CRICINFO, undated

Dwayne Smith, the West Indies all-rounder, has been on Monday summoned by the Mumbai Indians to spruce up their line-up after the departure of his West Indies teammate, Dwayne Bravo.

Each team in the Indian Premier League is allowed nine overseas players and Smith will be Mumbai's ninth.

Bravo left after the game against the Deccan Chargers on Sunday to join the national squad preparing for the home Test series against Australia that starts in Jamaica on Thursday.

Though Andre Nel, the South African fast bowler, had already joined the Mumbai squad on Sunday, the team management felt they needed someone who could be an equal replacement for Bravo, who scored 178 runs, picked up 11 wickets and took four catches in nine IPL matches.

Smith has shone more as a bowler in Twenty20 games -- his 11 wickets in nine games at 15.27 is more impressive than his 72 runs at an average of eight.

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Football fans display the official Champions League final merchandise at Red Square in Moscow yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP