

Hockey team off to India

SPORTS REPORTER Bangladesh youth hockey team left for India by road yesterday to take part in the 6th Men's Junior (under-21) Asia Cup Hockey tournament...

Magical Mendis

AFP, Karachi Captain Mahela Jayawardene hailed new spinning sensation Ajantha Mendis after he demolished India to help Sri Lanka retain the Asia Cup...



AJANTHA MENDIS "It was a brilliant innings, and the turning point for us. I know Mendis created so much, but we needed runs in the first place, and that's what Sanath did."

some pressure will be taken off Murali," said Jayawardene. "Mendis has just come into international cricket, batsmen will get used to it. He will have to work harder," he added.

Bhola still leading

SPORTS REPORTER Bhola Lal of Sonargaon Hotel retained solo lead in the Premier Division of Delta Life Open Squash tournament securing 18 points after six rounds...

INDIA PICK TEAM FOR LANKA SERIES TODAY Seniors set to return

Cricket PTI, Mumbai A fit-again Sachin Tendulkar and the controversial spinner Harbhajan Singh are set to return and beef up a struggling Indian team...

both the tournaments, the finals, and lost to Pakistan and Sri Lanka respectively. With Tendulkar reportedly fit and Harbhajan Singh having served out his five-match ODI ban...

The remaining spot might go to Suresh Raina who has returned to the ODI squad after a long gap and seem to have edged ahead of Rohit Sharma and his UP teammate Mohd Kaif on current form.

Ponting doubtful for Darwin series

AFP, Sydney Australian captain Ricky Ponting returned home Monday from the West Indies tour and underwent immediate wrist surgery, Cricket Australia said.

Ponting, who left the Caribbean with two one-day internationals to play against the West Indies to seek treatment, had an assessment with Cricket Australia medical officer Trevor James and wrist specialist Greg Hoy.

He then had surgery to repair the tissues that hold a tendon in place in his right wrist, which he injured in the third one-day international against the West Indies in Grenada last week, CA said.

Ponting had the surgery to give him extra recovery time ahead of Australia's three one-dayers against Bangladesh in Darwin next month and September.

The Bangladesh series will serve as a warm-up to the Champions Trophy tournament in Pakistan.

"We're not sure at this stage," a CA spokesman said of the skipper's availability for the Darwin series.

"We'll have to assess him as we go along. But that's why they got him in for assessment so quickly, so they could decide on a course of action rather than him leaving it for a week. This way it gives him more time to recover."

Michael Clarke captained the one-day side for the first time in Ponting's absence, leading them to a 5-0 series whitewash of the West Indies in St Kitts on Sunday.

Australia are expected to name a provisional 30-player squad for the Champions Trophy later this week.

School chess

FROM PAGE 17 part in the 9 round Swiss-League competition. The event will be held in three groups - Class KG to V, Class VI to X and Girls.

Greatest win

FROM PAGE 17 final like this," said Nadal. "He is a great champion. His attitude always is positive when he loses, when he wins."

"We are not close friends but I always have a lot of respect for him. I admire him a lot. At the same time I am very happy for me, but sorry for him because he deserves his title, too."

Pinning hopes

FROM PAGE 17 get an opportunity to play a Twenty20 tournament in Canada before flying for Australia," said Rafique.

Bangladesh will play three one-day internationals against Australia in Darwin.

"Shakib is a very important player and that's why we hope he takes this opportunity in England to make up his absence from cricket," he added.

The strong second-string Bangladesh side will play four more three-day games including one against visiting South Africa from July 25-27 at the County Ground, New Road in Worcester.

The remaining three-day matches are scheduled against Warwickshire (July 11-13 at Edgbaston, Birmingham), Leicestershire (July 16-18 at the Grace Road, Leicester) and Derbyshire (July 21-23 at the County Ground, Derby).

The limited-overs matches will be held on July 30 against Lancashire at the Moss Lane, Alderley Edge, on August 1 against Marylebone Cricket Club at the Racecourse, Durham University Grounds, Durham and on August 3 against Durham at the Riverside Ground, Chester-le-Street.

SQUAD

Zunaed Siddique (captain), Tamim Iqbal, Nazimuddin, Rokibul Hassan, Nayeem Islam (vice-captain), Mushfiqur Rahim, Dhiman Ghosh, Rajin Saleh, Mosharraf Hossain, Sajidul Islam, Dollar Mahmud, Nazmul Hossain, Rubel Hossain, Syed Rasel and Shakib Al Hasan.

Challenge begins now

Cricket CRICINFO, undated Lord knows how they classify Ajantha Mendis in other areas of the world but round these parts, people of a certain vintage will most likely refer to him as a finger bowler.

These were types found mostly in Karachi in the 1970s, tennis ball in hand and an unresponsive tarmac road or cement pitch to bowl on, odds stacked against them. The ball was squeezed in the kind of grip Jack Iverson had, or for locals, similar to how you would strike the striker on a carrom board.

On pitching and regaining its original shape again the ball would shoot through, with sharp spin, either way, predictably leaving batsmen none the wiser. Nadeem Moosa was a modest first-class left-arm spinner with the cricket ball in hand but a lethal finger champion with the tennis ball. His success on the local circuit, goes the urban legend, hastened the prevalence of the taped tennis ball: the logic being it was harder to squeeze and thus spin.

But if Mendis keeps bowling as he has done through the Asia Cup, through his brief career so far, eventually people will not much care how to typecast him. Mendis is what he is, for now at least.

His approach to the crease is less run-up and more the hurried walk-through of a harried financial executive. The grips are of the kind super slo-mo was really created for. The absence of a stock ball is the only other tangible conclusion from eight quality overs tonight and many more through the last two weeks. Some he turns one way, some the other, though the most profitable delivery here was the one that threatened much yet did nothing but fizzes on straight. In this there were shades of early 1990s Anil Kumble, just wackier and less earnest.

And like Kumble, for tonight at least, he located not just the arrow-straight line but also the length: too far forward, you look a fool, stay back and risk being trapped. Admittedly, some of his victims gave themselves up, though it can be argued that in playing for something that never came, the victory is also the bowler's. The leg-break to remove RP Singh should've been reserved for a more capable opponent. Even a hatrick could've been his, but you suspect more opportunities might come his way against clueless tailenders.

His most remarkable achievement of the night, however, was that facing the great Muttiah Muralitharan appeared a doddle by comparison. Mahendra Singh Dhoni said later that he just couldn't be read at all. His men weren't alone; Mahela Jayawardene admitted he'd been bowled a couple of times facing Mendis and that Kumar Sangakkara spent an hour a day in the nets before the tournament keeping to Mendis, trying to pick up his variations. It's one thing, Jayawardene said, to read him from the hand, another altogether to then play him off the pitch.

Jayawardene's ploy not to play him in the group game against India was less to rest him than to keep him cloaked in secrecy, though he coyly suggested otherwise later. There has been a growing curiosity around Mendis over the last few months, but this performance will propel him on to the big stage, right in to the glare. The secret is now out. Video machines and laptops will start whirring, chewing up his every step, his every variation, his every grip.

A mystery spinner he has been thus far. The mystery is now out in the open and every batsman is out to solve it. The real challenge for Mendis, of uncertain categorisation, to maintain that secrecy, begins now.

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WA to help in Malaysian development

AFP, Perth The Western Australian Cricket Association said Monday it has signed an agreement to develop cricket in Malaysia.

WACA chief executive Graeme Wood signed a four-year memorandum of understanding with the Malaysian Cricket Association in Kuala Lumpur, it said.

The two organisations will share proposals and programmes and cooperate on cricket development.

Wood, a former Test opening batsman, said there was great synergy between the two cricketing organisations.

"Kuala Lumpur has played host to international matches and the inaugural Super 8's tournament, while the recent ICC Under 19 World Cup showcased the nation as a major cricket destination," he said in a statement.

"Both the WACA and the MCA will encourage and promote an exchange of programmes, experiences, information and knowledge in a partnership to improve the game in both regions."

Two of Malaysia's leading players, Banerji Nair and Harris Abu Bakar, went to Perth to train and play early in their careers and both have shown the benefit of their Australian experience in their local competitions.

Younis speaks for Shoab

PTI, Karachi Projected a spoilt brat by the media, Shoab Akhtar is actually a child in a man's body, says senior Pakistan batsman Younis Khan who feels the maverick pacer is in desperate need of some privacy to get his career back on track.

"Shoab is a match winner and I have spent a lot of time with him... He is like a kid who needs attention all the time... He is in need of extra care," Younis said.

Shoab is battling to save his chequered career after being handed a five-year ban by the Pakistan Cricket Board for disciplinary violations, a punishment that was later reduced to 18 months after an appeal.

He has got temporary reprieve from that as well after the Lahore High Court suspended his ban until further hearing in September.

His every move is being tracked by a curious media and Younis feels this is exactly what Shoab does not need. The veteran right-hander says Shoab would be better off if his off-field life stops making national headlines.

BFF plans

FROM PAGE 17 Salam said the federation will not consider hasten the start of the tournament.

"All matches will be played in Dhaka and it will begin on July 31 because the grounds have yet to be prepared. It will take some time because of the monsoon."

The tournament committee is also looking forward to give extra facilities like providing accommodation and food to the outside clubs.

It was learnt that BKSP, who have a number of footballers playing for senior division clubs, will get them back.

Five players of the Savar sport institute are enrolled with Badda but they are not playing. Muktiyoddha, Victoria and Wanderers, who are going to enter the meet, also have BKSP students but agreed to release them.

For Rajshahi champions Diganta Prasari, it would be a consolation after their bid to join the B. League failed.

TEAMS

Automatic qualifiers: Abahani, Mohammedan, Muktiyoddha, Sheikh Russel, Brothers Union, Arambagh, Chittagong Mohammedan, Farashganj, Khulna Abahani, Chittagong Abahani, Rahamatganj (B. League).

Qualifiers: Victoria, Sunrise SC, Jatrabari, Dhaka Wanderers (Senior Division), Bangladesh Army, Bangladesh Navy, Bangladesh Air Force, Bangladesh Police (Services), BKSP and Diganta Prasari.

Something special!

Cricket AFP, London scored a double century during a crushing innings win, has proved a happy hunting ground for South Africa on their recent visits.

Now, boasting an impressive pace attack led by the in-form Dale Steyn, hopes are high amongst the tourists that they can become the first South Africa side since 1965 to win a series in England when batting great Graeme Pollock's masterful hundred at Trent Bridge set up the decisive victory in a 1-0 triumph.

Arthur, after seeing the final day of a three-day tour match against

England, the Proteas were 2-1 up heading into the final match of the series only for England to win by nine wickets at The Oval.

In 1994 the series in England between the two sides ended all square while in 1998 England, after a poor start, emerged as 2-1 winners.

All added to the impression, reinforced by their dramatic exit in the 1999 World Cup, on a tie against eventual winners Australia, that South Africa were 'chokers', one of the cruellest taunts that can be levelled against any group of sportsmen.

Indeed, former South Africa fast bowler Allan Donald told the Observer newspaper here Sunday: "We have always been labelled as 'chokers' and it is a horrible word."

"But we really messed it up when we had chances to put teams away. I suppose, being dead honest, we have choked."

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ICC won't compromise

Cricket AFP, Karachi World cricket chief Haroon Logart on Monday promised to pull the Champions Trophy out of Pakistan if there was any threat of violence, after a deadly suicide blast on the night of the Asia Cup final.

The International Cricket Council (ICC) chief executive vowed no compromise on safety after 19 were killed in the capital Islamabad.

"The ICC will not compromise the safety and security of any individual at one of its tournaments and if it is not appropriate to play in any country then we will not do so," Logart said in a statement.

Players from Australia, New Zealand and England have expressed concern over playing in Pakistan, which is due to hold the prestigious Champions Trophy from September 11-28.

Rawalpindi, one of three venues

ICC won't compromise

Cricket for the tournament, adjoints Islamabad where 14 policemen and five civilians were killed and scores injured in Sunday's attack.

Sri Lanka is the designated alternative venue but is also facing renewed violence between Tamil Tiger rebels and government troops, with South Africa mentioned as a possible replacement.

Logart said security was monitored during the Asia Cup while an ICC executive board meeting last week discussed an independent assessment. A security process had also been agreed ahead of the tournament, he said.

"Our consultants on security have been working with the Pakistan authorities during the Asia Cup and will report back to us as soon as possible with their views," he said.

A private security expert, hired by Australia, New Zealand and England has said there was work to be done ahead of the Champions Trophy.

"Some fine-tuning needs to be done and everyone acknowledges

ICC won't compromise

Cricket that," Reg Dickason said last week. Pakistan Cricket Board chairman Nasim Ashraf, who attended the ICC meeting, said he was confident the biennial 'mini-World Cup' will be held in Pakistan.

Sri Lanka won the Asia Cup final in Karachi, beating India by 100 runs.

Hardest loss

FROM PAGE 17 After holding his nerve to win a third set tie-break, he then saved two match points at the end of the fourth and, for much of the fifth he looked the more likely winner.

"It was a great feeling to turn it around in the fourth set tiebreak and to push it to the fifth set was awesome," he said. "I really thought that with the momentum and having won in five sets last year that I was going to do it again."

"I saw he was getting very nervous in the fourth set tiebreak. He could not make the returns he usually does. I really felt he was feeling it and the momentum was with me."

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer. Includes crossword clues and a grid. CRYPTOQUIP: ZG GAV MUZDNZXYFH DTZFG. GCU CUOXVOM JZTMVTB ZSSEMVK UJ MUNVGAYFH MAUEGVK "TBVM! ZTT TBVM!" Saturday's Cryptoquip: IF A FOREIGNER COMES INTO A CITY AND IS ALL BY HIMSELF, MIGHT HE BE CALLED THE LONE STRANGER? Today's Cryptoquip Clue: G equals T