

Dhoni misread the wicket

PTI, Dambulla

India ODI skipper Mahendra Singh Dhoni yesterday admitted that he made a mistake in gauging the wicket and elected to bat in the morning which cost the side its first match against Sri Lanka here.

"I misread the wicket. In the morning there was something for the bowlers but I thought it will be just for half an hour or so but it went on to assist them for longer," Dhoni said after the match.

"Moreover, we were not chasing well for sometime (in last few matches) but all credit to the Lankans they bowled really well," he added.

India could scalp only two Lankan wickets after posting a paltry 146 but Dhoni still said his bowlers fared well.

"Both Munaf and Zaheer bowled well but I guess it was not enough," he said.

Asked about his plan for the next match, Dhoni said, "The next match is a day after, so we will involve ourselves in some team activity, take a day off and come back strong in the next match."

His Sri Lankan counterpart Mahela Jayawardene heaped praise on his players and said the home team played to their strength and bowled well against a quality opposition.

"Playing to our strength and the urge to keep working hard against a quality opposition was the key," he said.

On his decision to hold back Ajanta Mendis a bit in the match, Jayawardene said, "The Indians were not taking any chance against Mendis, so we decided to hold him back and introduce other bowlers in the meantime."

Jayawardene said he tried to see off the new bowl which did the trick for him.

"It was not easy to bat but I decided to see off the new bowl and bat through the overs," he said.

U-14 tennis begins today

UNB, Dhaka

The Prime Bank ITF Under-14 Asian Tennis Championship begins today at the Ramna National Tennis Complex.

Chief Advisor's Special Assistant for Youth and Sports Mahbub Jamil will inaugurate the six-day tournament as chief guest in the morning. Chairman of the meet's sponsor Prime Bank Limited Azam Chowdhury will be the special guest on the occasion.

A total of 32 boys and 17 girls from seven countries -- India, Malaysia, Sri Lanka, South Korea, Thailand, Saudi Arabia and host Bangladesh -- will take part in the four event meet-boys singles, boys doubles, girls singles and girls doubles.

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Overall Medal				
	Gold	Silver	Bronze	Total
GER	9	7	7	23
RUS	8	13	15	36
KOR	8	9	6	23
JPN	8	5	7	20
ITA	6	6	6	18
UKR	5	3	8	16
FRA	4	11	13	28
ROM	4	1	3	8
NED	3	5	4	12
ESP	3	3	2	8
POL	3	3	1	7
SVK	3	1	0	4
CAN	2	3	4	9
KEN	2	3	2	7
CZE	2	3	0	5
JAM	2	2	0	4
DEN	2	1	3	6
NZL	2	1	3	6
PRK	2	1	3	6
ETH	2	1	0	3
SUI	2	0	3	5
GEO	2	0	1	3
CUB	1	5	5	11
BLR	1	3	7	11
KAZ	1	3	4	8
ZIM	1	3	0	4
AZE	1	2	2	5
NOR	1	2	2	5
INA	1	1	3	5
SLO	1	1	2	4
BUL	1	1	1	3
FIN	1	1	1	3
MGL	1	1	0	2
BRA	1	0	5	6
CMR	1	0	0	1
IND	1	0	0	1
PAN	1	0	0	1
THA	1	0	0	1
TUN	1	0	0	1
HUN	0	4	1	5
SWE	0	3	0	3
TUR	0	2	1	3
AUT	0	1	2	3
GRE	0	1	2	3
UZB	0	1	2	3
ALG	0	1	1	2
COL	0	1	1	2
CRO	0	1	1	2
KGZ	0	1	1	2
SRB	0	1	1	2
CHI	0	1	0	1
ECU	0	1	0	1
EST	0	1	0	1
MAS	0	1	0	1
POR	0	1	0	1
RSA	0	1	0	1
SIN	0	1	0	1
TIR	0	1	0	1
VIE	0	1	0	1
ARM	0	0	5	5
TPE	0	0	2	2
ARG	0	0	1	1
EGY	0	0	1	1
LTU	0	0	1	1
MAR	0	0	1	1
MEX	0	0	1	1
TJK	0	0	1	1
TOG	0	0	1	1



Manchester United striker Wayne Rooney (R) and Newcastle United defender Fabricio Coloccini fight for the ball during their Premier League encounter at Old Trafford on Monday.

MU's struggling start

AP, London



Chelsea gained an early advantage over Manchester United in the Premier League title race on Sunday, routing Portsmouth 4-0 as the defending champion were held 1-1 by Newcastle.

Aston Villa suggested it can improve upon last season as American goalkeeper Brad Friedel made his league debut for the Villans in a 4-2 win over Manchester City in Sunday's other match on the opening weekend of the season.

Chelsea, which last season finished runners-up to Manchester United in England and in the Champions League, showed a new nerve in manager Luiz Felipe Scolari's first game and thoroughly outclassed the FA Cup holders with

goals by Joe Cole, Nicolas Anelka, Frank Lampard and Deco.

It suggested that United will find it tough to hang on to its titles as it struggles through the opening weeks of the campaign with a weakened squad.

Cristiano Ronaldo, last season's top scorer, is sidelined until October and United will now have to contend without Michael Carrick (ankle) and Ryan Giggs (hamstring) for at least two weeks. Alex Ferguson also had to cope Sunday without Carlos Tevez of the Argentina striker went home due to a family death.

Obafemi Martins put Newcastle ahead in the 22nd minute, when the unmarked Nigeria striker evaded Darren Fletcher and buried a powerful header.

But Fletcher took just two minutes to strike back. Ryan Giggs cut through the visiting defence with a

low cross from the left and Fletcher was to deftly steer it past Shay Given, who continuously denied United's pursuit of a winner.

Villa, which finished sixth last season, looked a better bet than Portsmouth to challenge for fifth place and a UEFA Cup spot after an eight-minute hat trick by striker Gabriel Agbonlahor.

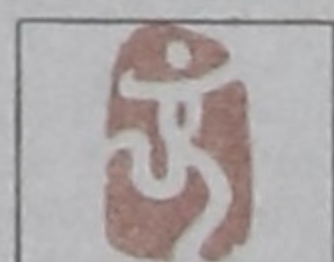
John Carew put the home side ahead with a 47th-minute header from Ashley Young's left-wing cross.

Although Elano made it 1-1 with a penalty kick awarded for Luke Young's foul on Michael Johnson, Agbonlahor, who on Saturday was left out of Fabio Capello's England squad for a midweek friendly against the Czech Republic, swiftly put his team out of sight.

Vedran Corluka got a late goal back for City, which badly disappointed fans in its first game under new manager Mark Hughes.

Brazil face USA in final

AFP, Beijing



Brazil came from a goal down to stun Germany 4-1 on Monday and book a place in the women's Olympic final on Thursday where they will meet the United States who beat Japan in a six-goal thriller.

Formiga, Marta and a Cristiane brace did the damage for Brazil, cancelling out a Birgit Prinz strike to avenge their painful defeat to the European powerhouse in last year's World Cup final.

The United States also bounced back from a goal down to win a pulsating encounter 4-2 with a double from Angela Hucles, a cracker from Lori Chalupny and Heather O'Reilly after Shinobu Ohno had put Japan ahead.

Substitute Eriko Arakawa pulled one back for Japan in injury time.

It set up an enticing replay of the final four years ago in Athens which the United States won 2-1 in extra-time. The USA also defeated Brazil in the third-place play-off in Sydney in 2000.

"My girls are excellent, the fans also helped us," said Brazilian coach Jorge Barcellos. "But what is important is not to win but just to compete."

Cristiane, the tournament's top scorer with five goals, said gold was all the team cared about.

"The whole team is aiming at the gold medal," she said. "It's more important to win the gold for the team than for me to be the top scorer."

German coach Silvia Neid said that she hoped they went on to win gold.

"Brazil is a very strong team. Last year in Shanghai we won the World Cup. Now I hope Brazil win the gold medal. They have a good chance."

Prinz got the opener for Germany on 10 minutes, making the breakthrough after a nervy start by both sides, using her brute strength to muscle past a defender and into the box before calmly rounding goalkeeper Barbara.

Rattled, Brazil looked to their three most creative players - Cristiane, Marta and Daniela -- for inspiration and they duly delivered. Cristiane sent a low cross into the box with three minutes left in the half which was met by the advancing Formiga who smashed the ball into the net from 20 yards.

Brazil came out after the break just as determined and were ahead within four minutes after Marta picked up the ball just inside her own half and went rampaging down the middle of the park.

Drawing the defenders, she laid off the ball to Cristiane in acres of

space and the 23-year-old made no mistake.

Brazil had another on 53 minutes when Marta rounded two defenders as she cut into the box on the right before burying the ball with the outside of her left foot.

Germany's back line was at fault again for the fourth goal when Cristiane danced past three defenders before coolly placing the ball beyond the oncoming keeper with 14 minutes left.

The United States, two-time gold medalists, recovered after Yukari Kinga found Ohno unmarked inside the six-yard box and she drilled the ball home from point-blank range in the 16th minute.

But the match swung America's way with two goals in three minutes nearing half-time.

Amy Rodriguez won the ball on the right and her cross eluded two defenders for unmarked Hucles to tap in from close range to equalise.

A minute before the break Chalupny cut in from the left and unleashed a thumping volley to give the USA a 2-1 lead.

The Americans went further ahead in the 70th minute when a speculative drive from O'Reilly flew over goalie Miho Fukumoto and into the net.

Hucles grabbed her second when she beat Fukumoto with a tightly angled volley at the near post with 10 minutes left.

Lanka blow India

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R Sharma c Jayawardene b Thushara 19
Dhoni c Jayawardene b Mendis 6
Pathan lbw b Muralidaran 7
Harbhajan c Sangakkara b Muralidaran 12
Zaheer c Thushara b Muralidaran 12
Ojha not out 16
Patel b Mendis 15
Extras: (b-2, lb-2, w-3) 7
Total: (All out in 46 overs) 146
Fall of wickets: 1-0, 2-23, 3-36, 4-73, 5-75, 6-87, 7-87, 8-107, 9-117, 10-146.

Bowler O M R W
Vaas 9 0 34 1
Kulasekara 7 0 23 2
Thushara 6 0 18 1
Mendis 9 4 21 3
Muralidaran 10 2 37 3
Jayasuriya 5 1 9 0
SRI LANKA
Jayasuriya c Pathan b Patel 10
Sangakkara c and b Patel 19
Jayawardene not out 61
Kapugedera not out 45
Extras: (b-4, lb-3, w-5) 12
Total: (For two wickets in 34.4 overs) 147
Did not bat: Silva, Dilshan, Vaas, Kulasekara, Thushara, Mendis, Muralidaran.
Fall of wickets: 1-18, 2-45.

Bowler O M R W
Patel 9 0 32 2
Zaheer 7 1 24 0
Pathan 7 0 35 0
Harbhajan 4 0 18 0
Ojha 3 0 9 0

Sharma 2.5 0 11 0
Raina 2 0 11 0
Result: Sri Lanka won by eight wickets.
Man-of-the-match: Ajantha Mendis.
Toss: India

She is 16

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subject any more because those who know me, they know that I'm 16," she said.

The New York Times reported last month that online records showed two members of China's women's team, He and Jiang Yuyuan, may be only 14.

The age of a third athlete, Yang Yilin, then came into question when the state-run China Central Television (CCTV) website posted a profile indicating she too was 14. Due to concerns about the well-being of young gymnasts whose bodies are under huge stress when they reach elite level, officials introduced a rule in 1997 saying they had to turn 16 during an Olympic year to compete at the Games.

Earlier this month an FIG statement said: "The FIG has received confirmation from the International Olympic Committee that all passports are valid for all gymnasts competing in the Beijing Olympic Games."

Tamim

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varied his flight and kept a stump line and displayed the importance of variation on such a flat track. For the AIS the first five in the order made 74, 55, 83, 69 and 34 and the eventual score of 330-4 was reward for that consistency. They also hit hard whenever the opportunity arose and at least three times the ballgot lost.

"We have to bowl better. It's as simple as that. We were poor in that department and almost made up for that with our batting. But we need more control from the bowlers," said Ashraf.

Bangladesh also left out batsman Alok Kapali and pacer Dollar Mahmud from Monday's match besides injured Nazimuddin.

The next warm-up against the AIS is on Wednesday.

SCORES IN BRIEF

150: 330-4 in 50 overs (G Moller 74, M Wade 55, P Forrest 83, M Henriques 69, M Hill 34, L Davis 3*, extras 12; Nazmul 1-62, Razzak 1-51, Forhad 1-67, Shakib 1-45).

BANGLADESH: 316 all out in 49.3 overs (Tamim 85, Mehra 24, Ashraf 71, Rokibul 34, Shakib 20, Riyad 1, Dhimani 1, Razzak 33, Nazmul 1, Forhad 30, Shahadat 1, extras 15; G Sullivan 1-60, M Henriques 3-38, J Holland 4-43, S Smith 1-21).

Result: AIS won by 14 runs.

'Players will trust them'

CRICINFO, undated

Despite concerns from several members of the team, Australia's players would trust the advice of security experts on whether to tour Pakistan, according to the former vice-captain Adam Gilchrist.

Gilchrist's comments came as Cricket Australia (CA) again said it was now up to the International Cricket Council (ICC) to respond to issues raised during a meeting in Melbourne on Friday.

"I was speaking to a couple of [players] yesterday [Sunday]," Gilchrist told Australian Associated Press. "There's a lot of uncertainty and there always seems to be these big decisions to be made."

"It is an important time for cricket, everyone has identified that -- players and administrators. But as was the case throughout my career, you just take the advice of the experts in the security field and that's what Cricket Australia and the players' association are continuing to do and the players would trust that opinion, I have no doubt about that."

After Friday's security briefing Australia captain Ricky Ponting said the players still had concerns about visiting Pakistan for the Champions Trophy, particularly regarding whether the safety measures that were planned could be implemented properly. Michael Brown, Cricket Australia's acting chief executive, said the ICC needed to respond to such queries before Australia would decide whether to tour.

"Our view is quite simply we need now to see where the ICC choose to go with this," Brown said. "I'm sure they will come back to us in the next few days. The ICC are the ones who are in control of both the detail and the possible alternative venue, so I'm sure we all understand that it's their position now."

Brown said Cricket Australia had not asked individual players whether they would go ahead with the tour as such discussions were irrelevant at this stage. "The important issue now is for us to work with the ICC," he said.

"We are not in the business of going to players and asking their answers prior to us making a decision."

He takes gold

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Chen Yibing extended China's perfect run of gold by winning the still rings competition. That string ended only because no Chinese men qualified for vault.

It seemed as if a hurricane couldn't have swayed Chen, the two-time world champion, during his routine. He was perfectly still on nearly every move in registering a 16.600 that blew away the field of eight.

"I was nervous, but I was prepared mentally and I believed I had the ability to win," Chen said.

Chen hammed it up big time. He lingered on the podium after his performance to soak in the cheers, and exulted with both arms high in the air when his name was announced at the medals ceremony. After an arm bump with silver medalist Yang Wei, Chen looked like he was smelling his medal before he kissed it and held it up to the crowd. He sang every word of China's national anthem, his eyes tearing toward the end.

"This is the highest individual honour for me," he said, "and I waited a long time."

All-around champion Yang Wei wasn't nearly as impressive as in his previous rings routines, but his strength and steadiness earned him silver. Aleksandr Vorobiov of Ukraine took bronze.

Five-time Olympian Jordan Jovtchev went first -- and soon was gone. After he missed a handstand, the five-time Olympian knew he wasn't getting a fifth Olympic medal. Jovtchev left the arena moments later.

Booters, officials

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The probe committee, led by Harunur Rashid, also had recommended sacking coach Abu Yusuf, who failed to give the team proper shape for international standard in one and a half months and compromised with the players rather than taking any measures against them for breaking discipline.

Yusuf, who resigned after the fifth SAFF Championship, was also charged with breaking code of conduct by talking to the press, talking against part of the team management and for failing to inform the BFF high-ups in time about pressures on him by members of the National Team Management Committee for team selection.

Assistant coach Golam Rabbani Choton has proved inept for the job while both the team leader and team manager have been told to be more careful in the future.

"It was expected that as a former player, manager Sheikh Mohammed Aslam would be able to inspire the team and help tactically but in vain. Team leader Shaquazzaman also failed to lead the team properly," added the report.

The probe committee, which also comprised of Sirajul Islam Bachchu and Anwarul Hoque Hela, recommended that the BFF should take more time to prepare the national team and the players and officials must be fully committed in future.

Arch-rivals clash today

AFP, Beijing



Games final.

The Argentines, inspired by Barcelona superstar Lionel Messi, have negotiated Ivory Coast, Australia, Serbia and the Netherlands to get to the last four, with Messi scoring two of their seven goals.

Despite being five-time World Cup winners, Brazil have yet to win the Olympic gold medal, coming up short twice in their final appearances in 1984 and 1988.

The Brazilians, spearheaded by AC Milan's Ronaldinho, yet have to concede a goal in putting a total of 11 goals past Belgium, New

Zealand, China and former champions Cameroon.

In 93 internationals, Brazil edge Argentina 35-34 with 24 drawn, but even though the Olympic football competition is geared for under-23 players, teams are allowed to field three over-age players.

Much will again be at stake for these two South American giants, not only the lure of going on to play for Olympic gold on Saturday, but intense regional pride.

Barcelona fought hard to prevent Messi playing in Beijing and wanted him back in Spain in time for the Champions League third qualifying round matches, but the all-action 21-year-old has illuminated the tournament as he did when Argentina won in Athens four years ago.

Messi scored a brilliantly-taken early goal and set up the second for Angel di Maria in a hard-fought 2-1 extra-time win over the Dutch in a Shanghai quarterfinal on Sunday. Brazil also needed extra-time to

put away belligerent Cameroon 2-0 in Shenyang last Sunday, needing goals from Rafael Sobis and Real Madrid's Marcelo to go through.

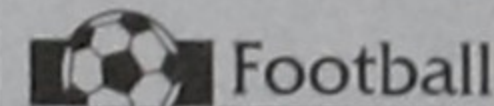
"Many people think the Olympics are not as important to us as the World Cup. But we're Brazil, and every time we take to the pitch, we do so to win. We want to claim our country's first gold medal in football," coach Carlos Dunga said.

Brazil's pragmatic playing style under Dunga has been criticised with the aficionados obsessive about 'Jogo bonito' - play beautiful - but Dunga insists he will not change his results-oriented approach against Argentina.

"We have to play against everything, we have to play to win, there's no other way," he said. "If the opposition play open football against Brazil, then we can play open and pretty football."

In the day's other semifinal, Nigeria played Belgium, who upset the more-fancied Italy 3-2 in the quarterfinals.

BFF pins hopes on Manik



SPORTS REPORTER

As expected, Shafiqul Islam Manik has become the highest paid local coach for the national football team.

Announcing him as the new coach for the next three and half months at a press conference at the BFF Bhaban, Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) vice-president Badal Roy told that the contract is renewable and the federation will watch Manik's activities during the period.

"He starts working from today and once the National Team Management Committee (NTMC) gives its prescription for team selection, it will not interfere in Manik's business," said Badal, also the chairman of the NTMC.

"After selection, all responsibilities belong to the coach. We want to ensure that this is not breached. Although we have made a brief contract, our plan is long-term with Manik."

"We will recruit a technical director and he will decide everything about national team's coaching. That's why we've gone for a short contract. We know he is an able coach and believe he will do the job properly."

Badal added that although Manik will get only one tourna-

ment -- Merdeka Cup in Malaysia -- during this period, he would not be judged by the result as the BFF has no target in the Merdeka Cup.