

Yousuf laments fewer games

PTI, Karachi

Pakistan batsman Mohammad Yousuf has expressed disappointment at the lack of international cricket opportunities available to the national team.

Pakistan will go without a Test this year as Australia postponed their tour to Pakistan because of security reasons.

Yousuf, one of Pakistan's most accomplished batsmen with 79 Tests and 269 one-day internationals behind him, said he was concerned about the future of Pakistan cricket in the existing circumstances.

"It is very disappointing that Pakistan hasn't played a Test match this year. I don't think such a thing has happened to any country in the past," Yousuf said.

To make matters worse the Champions Trophy which was to be held from September 12 in Karachi and Lahore was also postponed because of security concerns.

Yousuf said lack of Test cricket would affect the progress of Pakistani cricketers.

"We would have played at least three Tests had Australia toured Pakistan but it is very sad that we are having a year without Tests. The more Test matches in Pakistan, the better for the country since Test cricket is the real test of a player's temperament and skill," Yousuf said.

Pakistan last played a Test in December in India and their next match would also be against arch-rivals at home in January.

Yousuf also dispelled the impression that he had started to lose interest and passion for cricket because of his growing religious commitments.

"My religious duties are a way of life for me and cricket is my profession and passion. I don't mix both of them. I opted out of the Champions Trophy because I had prior commitments in Ramadan," he said.

PCB to go on with lawsuit

PTI, Karachi

The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) legal counsel on Saturday said that even though the Champions Trophy has been postponed, it had not affected the status of the legal notice sent to fast bowler Shoaib Akhtar, which had asked him to pay a fine of seven million rupees.

The PCB had sent a notice to the controversial paceman asking him to pay the fine or he would not be considered to play in the Champions Trophy despite being selected in the final squad of 15 players.

Tafazzul Rizvi said that the notice to Shoaib did mention the Champions Trophy because it was the next tournament in line.

"But now the notice applies to any tournament or series that Pakistan plays next. Before he can wear the Pakistan colours, he has to pay the fine or he gets an injunctive order from any court against the fine," Rizvi said.

Rizvi confirmed that Shoaib had received the notice and so has his lawyer.

"We sent it to the pacer via courier and to his lawyer by e-mail, fax and courier and it has been received. But so far they have not responded to the notice," he added.

Shoaib was asked to pay the seven million rupees fine by an appellate tribunal which in June reduced a ban of five years imposed on him by the PCB's disciplinary committee to 18 months.

The fast bowler filed a writ petition in the Lahore high court against the ban and fine. The court will hear the petition from next month and suspended the ban till the case is heard but didn't pass any stay on the payment of the fine.

Rizvi said he hoped that the fast bowler would make his position clear on the payment of the fine soon.

Ballack doubtful for friendlies

AFP, Frankfurt

Germany captain Michael Ballack is doubtful for next month's 2010 World Cup qualifiers against Liechtenstein and Finland because of a niggling foot injury, the German Football Federation (DFB) said on Saturday.

"Ballack spoke by telephone on Friday with Joachim Low (Germany coach) to tell him that his foot injury picked up at the start of the English championship was still painful," the DFB said.

"It's probable that he will need a longer break."

The 32-year-old, who has won 87 caps and scored 38 goals for the national side, will join the German team on Tuesday to have his injury further assessed.

Ballack already missed an international friendly against Belgium, and will not play in Sunday's Premier League tie against Tottenham.

Germany play Liechtenstein on September 6 at Vaduz and Finland four days later in Helsinki.



Indian players celebrate on top of their skipper Mahendra Singh Dhoni's prize at the R Premadasa Stadium in Colombo on Friday after their 3-2 ODI series win over Sri Lanka.

Dhoni hails team spirit

Cricket

CRICINFO, Colombo

At the end of a series few expected India to win, their captain Mahendra Singh Dhoni readily paid tribute to his young bunch of hopefuls, who came to Sri Lanka under criticism for their defeat in the Asia Cup final.

Stressing a collective effort rather than the need to rely on experienced or individual players, Dhoni credited a group that, while not always in form, stuck together to give India their first bilateral series win on Sri Lankan soil in 23 years of trying.

"Cricket's not a game in which you can rely on form in the sense that you can get a good start but the bowler running in is better touch," he said. "If you get a start and the rest bat around you, you get a chance to put up a big score. If we win series like this we can afford to carry the players who aren't in form. You know what they're capable of and they've paid dividends in the past. But you cannot rely on one individual."

That was India's leitmotif all series, and it's paid off. India lost key players to injury and Dhoni was quick to admit this series win was a real achievement, stressing on the importance of continuance. "You can't sit back and say you won the World Twenty20 or the CB Series or this series. Sachin [Tendulkar] and [Virender] Sehwag help achieve consistently, but there were injuries. We didn't have Ishant Sharma and Sehwag was in prime form. But the others contributed and I'm glad with the contributions of the new players."

The single-biggest gain, Dhoni felt, was how his batsmen handled the threat of Ajanta Mendis and Muttiah Muralidaran. "These were slow tracks and it was important to rotate strike," he said, "and we were able to do that and played the spinners well. We negotiated

Murali well, which has been tough over the years in Sri Lanka, and we tackled Mendis well. I was impressed by the way we handled these two in the middle overs. It wasn't just about playing Mendis; it was about scoring off him. Whoever got set in made it big. A 70 on such tracks was immense."

Dhoni spoke of winning "crucial" games, and in a season where India lost consecutive finals he was relieved to have nipped this one in the bud with a game to spare. "If this was the last game of the series, tied 2-2, and we lost people would start saying that 'in the last 23 finals India have lost 18', but neither this team nor I have played 23 finals. It was crucial we finish the series before reaching this game."

It has been almost a year since Dhoni took over the limited-overs captaincy and lead India to the ICC World Twenty20 title. Reflecting on his tenure, he felt he had been given the right team and that made his job easier. "It's about the 16 guys in the team and the bench strength... a captain is only as good as his team," Dhoni said. "A captain shares responsibilities, finds problem areas, and sends the best guy to rectify that problem. A good team makes a good captain, not the other way around. You have to let players go in the right direction; after that it's up to the individual."

The selectors have backed Dhoni's vision of youth, not without criticism, and Dhoni felt it was necessary because of the demands of today's game. "You want to have batsmen who run quickly, who can convert ones into twos and put pressure on the fielders," he said. "It is good to have a side like that. If you're scored a par score and have a fielding side which is safe then you add 15-20 more runs."

"It's not about randomly selecting players," he said. "The players who have done well domestically and on A tours have been rewarded. In the selection process you come across equally consistent

players, and it gets tough. That's when you have to make the choice to take you forward. You have to give everyone enough chances, not just a few games. If he can't prove he knows what his mistakes are and can go back and correct those."

Dhoni's 193 runs and Man-of-the-Series performance has taken him back to the No. 1 ODI batting spot he held briefly in April 2006, and he credited a self-imposed absence as a relief. "I enjoyed my break but I enjoyed my training more," he said. "What you do in practice reflects in the game. I'm glad to have contributed."

SCOREBOARD

Scoreboard of the fifth and final one-day international between India and Sri Lanka at the R Premadasa Stadium in Colombo on Friday:

SRI LANKA: 227				
INDIA				
Kohli lbw b Kulasekara	31			
Gambhir c Sangakkara b Kulasekara	11			
Yuvraj b Mendis	17			
Raina c Fernando b Kulasekara	10			
Sharma lbw b Kulasekara	3			
Dhoni b Fernando	1			
Pathan c Warnapura b Mendis	7			
Zaheer lbw b Mendis	3			
RP Singh c Jayawardene b Fernando	5			
Ojha c Kulasekara b Mendis	4			
Patel not out	4			
Extras: (b-1, lb-2, w-4)	7			
Total: (All out in 26.3 overs)	103			
Fall of wickets: 1-38, 2-45, 3-70, 4-76, 5-79, 6-85, 7-90, 8-91, 9-95, 10-103				

Bowler	O	M	R	W
Kulasekara	9	2	40	4
Thushara	6	0	26	0
Fernando	7	1	24	2
Mendis	4.3	2	10	4

Note: Target revised to 216 off 44 overs after rain interruption. Result: Sri Lanka won by 112 runs. India clinched five-match series 3-2. Man-of-the-match: Nuwan Kulasekara. Man-of-the-series: Mahendra Singh Dhoni.

Spurs start against Magpies

AFP, London

English League Cup holders Tottenham will start their defence of the trophy in the third round against Newcastle.

Juande Ramos's side, who beat Chelsea in last season's final, travel to St James' Park in search of their first win over Newcastle since December 2005.

Chelsea visit Portsmouth, who have already lost 4-0 at Stamford Bridge, as Luiz Felipe Scolari's team try to get back to the Wembley final.

Manchester United take on Middlesbrough at old Trafford. Arsenal will take on Sheffield United at the Emirates in a repeat of last season's fourth-round clash.

Everton, who were beaten in the last four by Chelsea, will travel to face Blackburn. Rafa Benitez's Liverpool host Crewe.

Dhoni happy

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difference and they were doing just that," Dhoni said, before adding "But of course you miss individuals, specially the great players." Looking back, Dhoni said India negated the threat from Sri Lanka's two-pronged spin attack and played well in the 20-40 over stretch to win the series 3-2.

Places at risk, warns Arthur

AFP, London

South African coach Mickey Arthur has warned his players they are fighting for their places following their one-day series loss to England.

The South Africans went down by 126 runs at the Oval as England took an unbeatable 3-0 lead in the five-match series.

The tourists won the Test match series 2-1 but have looked out of sorts and disinterested in the subsequent 50 over games.

And Arthur has told his players they must buck up their ideas or risk losing their places ahead of the next World Cup.

Arthur said: "It is really time for us to move out of this era of South African one-day cricket. We have got to start moving forward before the next World Cup. We have got to re-evaluate the personnel and start anew."

"Everybody is under serious threat and they need some big performances."

"We have got some very young players who we need to get out there and expose them. We want the youngsters to put their hands up and stake a claim for their places in the team."

South Africa have been hampered by injuries in this series but Arthur refused to hide behind the casualties for his team's poor performances.

Symonds does

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was banned for the match and one more after he wobbled during pre-match training and subsequently, Australia famously lost to the Tigers.

And the Australian media's reaction during the lunch break was anything but comfortable as the match fell into a pattern that was akin to Cardiff as the world champions were restricted to a score of 250-plus again. But this time history did not repeat itself, as the Tigers were bowled out for a new low.

Speaking after Australia crushed Bangladesh by 180 runs, Clarke said Symonds was a required player, but needed to meet team ideals and show the necessary commitment to the cause.

"It's so hard to play for this team," he said.

"In my opinion we are the greatest sporting team in the world, and we have standards."

"They may be higher than other teams, but if you don't fulfil those standards, unfortunately, you're not going to be a part of our squad."

"The main concern for us is Andrew's commitment to playing for this team."

Clarke now hopes Symonds will use his time back home in Brisbane to do some thinking and return stronger than ever in time for the upcoming tour of India.

"Andrew was very disappointed but he accepts our decision and I know Andrew pretty well and I hope he goes away from this and gets himself right and gets himself back into our team, because he's a very important player and we certainly want him as part of our squad," Clarke added.

Symonds' most famous fishing incident came in 1999 when he went out with Matthew Hayden and their boat sank off Queensland's North Stradbroke Island. The men were forced to swim for more than an hour through Moreton Bay in areas well known for sharks. On that occasion everyone was relieved the pair returned in good health.

KP wants 5-0

Cricket

AFP, London

England captain Kevin Pietersen said he would go for the jugular after seeing his side take an unsailable 3-0 lead in the one-day series against South Africa at The Oval on Friday.

The sides meet at Lord's on Sunday and Cardiff on Wednesday with Pietersen determined to inflict a whitewash on the tourists.

Samit Patel took five wickets and Andrew Flintoff hit 78 not out to inspire England to a 126-run win and wrap up the series comfortably.

England are now chasing only the second 5-0 series win in their history after they triumphed over Zimbabwe by the same margin in 2001-02.

Pietersen said: "The 5-0 thing puts a lot more extra pressure on us as it would take us up to second in the world rankings."

"That is the kind of pressure we want - pressure is a privilege and if we win 5-0 it takes us right up to the top. It is something we have talked about and if we deliver we can win 5-0. The dressing room is very happy place."

"We are putting pressure on their batters and playing to our potential. We're hitting their good balls for four and doing a really good job on them."

"I know South Africa really well and they wanted to beat us. They are very proud people and stubborn people."

South African stand-in captain Jacques Kallis said: "The cricket we are playing is not good cricket but England are playing unbelievable cricket. They are one of the best

one-day sides we have played against recently."

Flintoff's 77-ball innings and 31 from Patel carried England to 296-7 from 50 overs and South Africa were never up with the rate as they were bowled out for 170 with Patel taking 5-41 to cap a memorable fourth international match.

Patel said: "It has always been a dream to play for England. As an individual you couldn't ask for more. I played against South Africa for the Lions and although it was always going to be tough they knew I could bat."

The South African chase flickered only briefly when Albie Morkel hit Patel for two sixes in an over but having planted him into the stands for a second time the batsmen offered a low return catch that Patel took low down.

But the tourists were out of the game by the 30th over of their innings when Mark Boucher was fifth man out with only 114 on the board.

Flintoff, adding to the 78 he made in the first game at Headingley, and relishing his role at number five put on a free-scoring partnership of 74 for the sixth wicket with Patel that took the game away from the South Africans.

"His recent form with the bat is another triumph for new captain Kevin Pietersen who has promoted the all-rounder up the order and persuaded Steve Harrison, a crucial figure in this series, out of one-day international retirement."

Flintoff survived a nasty blow to his temple on 38 when he was late on pulling a Morkel Morkel bouncer but recovered to hit nine fours and a six. The pick of the South African bowlers was Johan Botha who took 2-35 from nine overs with his spin.

Tigers reach the nadir

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claiming three wickets in four balls in the final over of the Australia innings. The fielding, apart from a couple of fumbles by Razzak was of high standard.

The bowling was good but I still think we could've restricted them to 220. Rajib (Shahadat Hossain) gave away 20 in his first two overs. I guess we conceded 20-30 extra runs."

Ashraf said there were no excuses for the debacle.

"We just did not turn up in batting today. The pitch was not conducive to stroke making and then our bowlers did not give any loose balls. When you are not scoring runs easily that creates pressure and you make mistakes. Our shot selection was very poor and when you are 5/58 inside 20 overs there is no coming back," said Ashraf who also refused to blame the pitch.

"It was not like the Gardens Oval track where balls come on to the bat and you can play strokes. This

one's a drop-in wicket and the bounce is up and down sometimes and something like 220 or 230 can be a defendable total. Having said that I don't think it is that difficult to stay at the wicket if you apply yourself. We were guilty of bringing about our own downfall."

Australia's stand-in captain Michael Clarke was delighted with the performance.

"I thought Shaun Marsh again with the bat was spot on, Michael Hussey led from the front as vice-captain and then our bowlers and in the field, I think certainly showed great energy and a fantastic performance," Clarke said.

"It's obviously a great honour for me to have this opportunity but when you've got guys in your team like I have, it makes my life so much easier. I've got the backing of every player there, they performed as well as I could have asked, so it made my job so much easier."

Mohammedan keep

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but Aminul brilliantly punched away Nigerian Anthony Pele Doe's powerful shot and they created three more chances at the fault of their opponents defense but failed to capitalise with any of them.

In the 21st minute, Arman Aziz was however unlucky not to put the Dhaka giants ahead as he chipped the ball from the right flank only to see it being kissing away by the crossbar leaving Mamun losing his balance which forced him to leave the ground.

Bukola then erupted the Black & Whites' supporters in the 35th minute when the lanky striker brilliantly headed home an Arman Aziz free-kick. The lead could have been double if Robin had not failed to connect on a Bukola cross four minutes from the break.

The favourites took only four minutes in the second half to double the lead when a Robin cross kissed the net while fragile Chittagong substitute custodian Uttam, who

later however foiled an attempt of Sharif, misjudged the flight.

Chittagong Mohammedan however pulled back a goal in the 70th minute when Chamrin headed on a Lincon cross to reach home but Hazem scored the third goal for the Motijheel side aided by Bukola after two minutes to deny any fightback of their opponents in the uneven surface.

TEAMS

Dhaka Mohammedan: Aminul, Hasan Al Mamun, Rajani, Jewel, Arman, Sharif, Faisal, Nasir, Hazem, Bukola (Ronny) and Robin (Komol). Chittagong Mohammedan: Mamun (Uttam), Shawkat, Prodip, Dhiman, Khan Sharif, Linkon, Anthony (Chamrin), Doulat, Touhidul, Ridon and Tuckile. Referee: Tayeb Hassan.

Yellow cards: Hazem (Dhaka Mohammedan), Prodip and Anthony (Chittagong Mohammedan).

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS		39	"How — love thee?"	DOWN	19	"Out of the question?"	
1	Robert of "Air- plane!"	40	List- ending abbr.	1	Horse- shoe	21	Whatever number
5	Frenzied	41	"In Cold Blood"	2	Church area	22	Upper limit
8	Existence (Latin)	42	author	3	Scream	23	Be below
12	Tourna- ment format	43	type	4	Hailmets	24	par
13	"The Greatest"	45	Deodor- ant	5	"Enter- tainment Tonight"	26	"Flight Club"
14	Nerdy sort	47	"Exodus" author	6	Pub request	28	actor
15	Norway's capital	49	sort	7	Frisbee, e.g.	29	Lest!
16	Thing, in law	50	Old wire service	8	Yuletide quaff	30	Periodic
17	Merri- man	51	opera	9	She plays Dr.	31	Lamb's
18	Crime	53	Nibble	9	House's ex	32	Some loops
20	Ground- less	54	Sinbad's flier	10	Crystal gazer	37	Set of pieces
22	Homer's interfec-	56	Diner sign	11	Supple- mented, with "out"	38	Elongated cream puff
23	Present	57	Have bills	11	Inter- mented, with "out"	41	Inflation Indicator
24	Urban fleet	58	Impetu- ous			42	Rubik's baffler
27	Yanks at Fenway, e.g.					43	Melody
32	Melody					44	Italian money, today ...
33	Director					46	... and yesterday
34	Uncivil-					47	Rhythmic tributes
35	Some oceanic biota					48	Doggerel
38	Film					49	Ogden "Bam!"

Solution time: 25 mins.

F	E	D	S	A	M	P	A	R	S	E
A	M	A	P	P	O	N	E	A	I	
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