

Foreign players to play Ranji

AFP, New Delhi

The Indian cricket board on Saturday decided to allow international players to take part in its first-class domestic championship starting this year.

The technical committee of the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI), which is chaired by batting legend Sunil Gavaskar, said state sides were now free to include one foreigner in their ranks for the Ranji Trophy contest.

"The state associations will be allowed to include four guest players in their squad," board secretary Niranjan Shah said in a press release.

"One of these four players could be a cricketer from overseas who has played at least ten Tests and/or twenty one-day internationals."

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BCB, AIUB sign MoU

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with American International University-Bangladesh (AIUB) yesterday in a bid to improve the English language efficiency and leadership skills of the young cricketers.

The private university will conduct courses for the young cricketers free of charge and side by side with English, the players will be taught computer literacy

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Did U Know?

Australian Steve Hooker set an Olympic record of 5.96 metres in winning gold medal in pole vault in the 2008 Beijing Olympics, making it the first track and field gold for his country's men since 1968.



Jamie Siddons

(Coach of Bangladesh cricket team) "I can shout and yell at them or I can take them down to the nets and make them practice. I think I'm going to take the second option." After his boys stooped to a new low against Australia on August 30.



BTV
Fed Cup Football Final
Abahani v Mohammedan
Live from 5:00pm

ESPN
Sportscenter
Live from 8:30pm

TEN Sports
US Open Tennis Day Eight
Live from 9:00pm



DAV'S EVENT
Fed Cup Football Final
Abahani v Mohammedan
Venue: Bangabandhu National Stadium
Time: 4:30pm

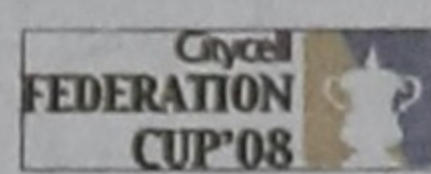


Pranotosh (L) and Sujan warm up during Abahani's training at their club ground in Dhanmondi yesterday. They are eyeing their eighth Federation Cup title to catch Mohammedan in the roll of honour.

FED CUP FINAL TODAY

No clear favourites

AL MUSABBIR SADI



There will be no clear favourites when the country's most popular clubs Abahani and Mohammedan -- on equal terms in current form and strength unlike the recent past -- clash in the final of the Citycell Federation Cup this afternoon.

The 21st final of the prestigious competition will kick off at 4.30 pm at the Bangabandhu National Stadium. Live telecast would be available on Bangladesh Television.

In the last few years, the two archrivals -- under pressure from teams like Muktiyoddha, Brothers and Russell -- could not strengthen their squads as they had wished.

This was not the case this year as Abahani, who had managed to break the chain last year, retained the same strength that won them the inaugural professional league in 2007.

Mohammedan, with a very inexperienced side, gave the eventual B. League winners a run for their money but in the end, finished a distant second.

This season, the black and whites

went out early to sign eight national players, making it no secret that they are going for the top not just verbally.

And battle royal it will be if the weather remains dry for at least the last 24 hours. Although the organisers had postponed the tournament for a week in the middle to avoid heavy rains, inclement weather continued to chase the season's curtain raiser. As a result, all the quarterfinals and the semifinals were played on virtually an unplayable pitch, taking toll on the footballers.

"I expected my players to rich the pick of their fitness by this time but due to playing matches and training in poor conditions constantly, they have lost the initiative," mentioned coach Maruf Haque on the eve of Mohammedan's 12th final.

"Abahani, who are balanced in every department, have had enjoyed better practice facilities because of their own ground, which is good.

"In spite of this slight disadvantage, we are positive to go into the match," said Maruf -- in charge of a top team for the first time -- whose side have won all their five games so far despite a struggling start.

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Hassan Al Mamun (front), who will play his first Federation Cup in the famous black and white strip, stretches at the BUET ground on the eve of the Federation Cup final with his Mohammedan teammates.

Nadal rolls into round 4

AFP, New York



World number one Rafael Nadal rolled into the fourth round of the US Open, winning the final 11 games Saturday to answer a fightback while serving notice he could take his first Flushing Meadows title.

The Wimbledon and French Open champion raised his game when challenged to defeat Serbia's 71st-ranked Viktor Troicki 6-4, 6-3, 6-0, giving the Spaniard his 41st triumph in his past 42 starts.

"I have started playing better," Nadal said. "Today I served very well. I have more confidence and I hope to continue to improve my tennis. I know I have to keep improving my tennis if I want to win."

Nadal can match his best US Open showing to date by winning his next match over Sam Querrey, the 55th-ranked American who ousted Croatian 14th seed Ivo Karlovic 7-6 (7/5), 7-6 (7/5), 6-2.

"I have to play very well if I want

to win," Nadal said. "I will just focus on my next match because every match is difficult. He's playing very well."

Seventh-seeded Venus Williams also advanced to the fourth round, the US sisters who met in the Wimbledon final moving one step closer to a quarterfinal showdown at the year's last Grand Slam championship.

British sixth seed Andy Murray rallied past Austrian Jurgen Melzer 6-7 (5/7), 4-6, 7-6 (7/5), 6-1, 6-3, booking a date with Swiss 10th seed Stanislas Wawrinka in the round of 16 after battling for three hours and 52 minutes.

"He was playing unbelievable," Murray said. "He was putting serves bang on the line. I really didn't get any rhythm. I just kept fighting. Once I broke him in the third set that's when I started to get my rhythm."

"This is why you put in all the work. Hopefully I can keep it going."

France's Gael Monfils pulled off the biggest surprise so far on the men's side by ousting Argentina's seventh-seeded David Nalbandian

6-3, 6-4, 6-2. Monfils will next face either US ninth seed James Blake or American Mardy Fish.

Nadal, whose only loss in his current run came to Serbia's third-ranked Novak Djokovic in the Cincinnati semifinals, thrilled a record crowd of 37,380 at Arthur Ashe Stadium.

After breaking Troicki in the last game of the first set, Nadal surrendered a break by netting a forehand to give his rival a 2-1 lead.

But Nadal responded in the sixth game by swatting a running forehand winner past Troicki to break back level at 3-3 and never lost another game.

"That gave me a lot of confidence that I could win," Nadal said. "He was playing well in that moment but after that I started playing better and he made some mistakes."

After capturing Olympic gold at Beijing, Nadal is trying to become only the fourth man to win three Slam titles in a row in the 40 years of the Open era, joining Roger Federer, Pete Sampras and Rod Laver.

Nadal, seeking his ninth title

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Rokibul jolt for Tigers

SPORTS REPORTER

Rokibul Hasan is doubtful for the next two one-day internationals against Australia as the middle-order batsman fractured his right thumb during the first match at the TIO Stadium on Saturday.

The right-hander, who has been showing some sort of consistency in the vulnerable Tigers batting line-up, received the injury when he was struck on the gloves while getting out to pace bowler Brett Geves during the match which Mohammed Ashraf's men lost by 180 runs.

Rokibul was seen by a doctor on Saturday afternoon and had his X-ray done yesterday which has revealed a comminuted fracture. The batsman will be examined by an orthopedic surgeon this morning before a decision is made on his condition.

The team was already hit by the absence of opening batsman Nazimuddin, who flew home after injuring his left ring finger before the first warm-up match at the Gardens Oval in Darwin.

The Tigers, who had recorded their lowest total ever in an ODI after being wrapped up for only 74 runs in the first game, will play the last two matches on September 3 and 6 at the same venue.

Father knows best

Cricket

CRICINFO, Darwin

If it wasn't for some frank words from his father, Brett Geves would have been toiling away in a manual labour job in the miserable, wintry Tasmania weather on Saturday. Instead, he was working hard in draining heat for the priceless reward of two wickets in his one-day international debut.

Geves had such a disappointing 2006-07 season with Tasmania that during the following winter he was hours away from giving up on the game, fearing he would lose his state contract. He was dejected at his poor form and being overlooked for the Pura Cup final, a match when his Tigers teammates made history by winning the title for the first time.

"Probably ten hours," Geves said when asked how near he came to giving up on his cricket career. "I was really, really close. I'd been offered a job and I was going to take it. I spoke to my father and he said 'No, don't. That would be pretty

stupid'. Luckily I didn't and it's all worked out quite well. It was a labouring job. It was going to be tough work. I'm obviously stoked that I didn't take the position."

Instead, he concentrated on getting into better shape and completed a football pre-season with the Glenorchy club. Geves believes the hard fitness work helped him become a more dangerous bowler and the results bear that out. In 2007-08 he was Tasmania's Player of the Year and was the equal leading wicket-taker in the FR Cup.

"(Glenorchy) flogged the pants off me to be honest," Geves said. "I ran more than I ever thought I could run and it was just key to me getting back on the park and playing some good cricket. I've now got some confidence in my body, I hit the wicket a bit harder."

Despite his strong domestic season -- and the surprise of being picked by the Indian Premier League team the Delhi Daredevils -- Geves was stunned to be called into the one-day international team. He had to wait until Bangladesh were four wickets

down before getting his first chance to bowl but the build-up did not bother Geves, who was too busy soaking up the atmosphere.

"There was always the chance of getting a couple of cheap ones at the end," Geves said. "It was great just to be out there, the first 18 or 20 overs before I bowled. I got a catch and ran around and was patting everyone on the bum. It felt quite surreal."

Just as pleasing for Geves was that his first wicket came with a genuinely good delivery, a leg-cutter that caught the outside edge of Dhiman Ghosh's bat. He finished with 2 for 11 but is not guaranteed of holding his place for the second match on Wednesday, with Shane Watson set to return to the side.

Regardless of what happens, Geves remains thrilled to have capped off a remarkable 12 months by achieving something that seemed impossible less than two years ago. "I didn't even think I'd play for Australia," Geves said. "It's not really something I've thought about in the past. For it to happen has been quite unbelievable."

The Kamikaze Kid

AFP, New York



More than two-and-a-half hours into a marathon US Open slugfest, Japan's Kei Nishikori sat down during the break between sets and pulled a small red and blue book out of his gym bag and started to read.

Nishikori, who had just dropped two straight sets in his third-round Grand Slam tennis match against world No. 4 David Ferrer, studied the words carefully.

"I was reading about what I should do in the match," he explained. "Such as stay calm. And don't get pissed off too much."

Nishikori took the words to heart, beating Ferrer 6-4, 6-4, 3-6, 2-6, 7-5 in a thriller to become the first Japanese man in the modern era to reach the round of 16 at the

US Open. "I still can't believe it," said Nishikori of the three-hour, 25-minute match against the 2007 US Open semifinalist. "I was playing great. This is the biggest win for me."

After squandering a two-set lead, Nishikori, who is ranked 126th in the world, stepped it up in the fifth set, clinching the victory on his third match point.

The 18-year-old Nishikori is just the second Japanese to reach the fourth round of any Grand Slam in the modern era after Shuzo Matsuoka made it to the 1995 Wimbledon quarterfinals.

By reaching the fourth round, he surpassed countrymen Jun Kamiwazumi (1973) and Toshiro Sakai (1971), who advanced to the third round of the US Open before being eliminated.

"I never think about it," Nishikori said of his historic run at Flushing Meadows. "That I am

making history or something. But I know Shuzo made the quarters of Wimbledon."

The unseeded Nishikori will next face Juan Martin Del Potro of Argentina, who comes into the fourth round riding a 22-match win streak.

Nishikori became the first Japanese in 16 years to capture an ATP title by winning the Delray Beach tournament earlier this year.

Nishikori, who was ranked 281st at the end of 2007, won 61 per cent of his first serve points and converted eight-of-14 break point chances on Saturday.

He clinched the victory by hammering a forehand winner to the open court on his third match point and second match point of the final game.

"I was tired and my legs were almost cramping," he said. "But I tried to tell myself that I am playing David and he's number four in the

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What next for Roy?

Cricket

CRICINFO, Darwin

Andrew Symonds is committed to forcing his way back into the Australia team but whether that is possible for October's tour of India is uncertain, according to his agent Matt Fearon. Symonds was thrown out of the squad in Darwin after missing a team meeting because he went fishing.

It was only a misdemeanour but it was the last straw for a team leadership group that was already concerned about Symonds' dedication and frame of mind following several other incidents. Symonds flew home to Brisbane while his colleagues took on Bangladesh on Saturday and he said in a statement on Sunday that he had taken on board his teammates' concerns.

"I have had some time to reflect

on the events that took place in Darwin," Symonds said. "I would like to say thanks for the many messages of support that I have received over the past day or so. I appreciate your best wishes. I've been asked to think about what is important to me and I will take this time to do that."

Fearon told Cricinfo the allrounder was pondering his attitude and his future. "Andrew's going to take some time to reflect on what's happened," Fearon said. "He's still committed to playing cricket at the highest level. How he goes about doing that and how it plays out I don't know. Whether it means India I don't know."

It has been an eventful year for Symonds, who among other things was at the centre of a racism row with India's Harbhajan Singh in January. Although his Australia teammates would love to have him on board for the upcoming Test

tour, they know his value to the team is diminished if he is not focused.

"He's had success there and is a very good player of spin and that is important," Michael Hussey told AAP. "He's not going to be built up with pressure with the spinners where it's dot ball after dot ball, which is going to be important when we get to India."

"(On Saturday) I thought, gee it would be great to have Symo here to come in and smack a few to put the pressure back on the Bangladeshi bowlers a bit. But it's the way it is. Maybe if Andrew Symonds was playing and he's not 100 per cent committed he's not going to be able to give his best, so we want someone to come in and give their best."

Paul Marsh, the chief executive of the Australian Cricketers' Association, said the latest incident

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CROCODILE MORE DANGEROUS THAN A TIGER? Nathan Bracken (L) floats inside a glass box with Australia's fielding coach Mike Young in the 'Cage of Death' for an up close experience with an 80-year-old crocodile called Chopper at Crocosaurus Cove in Darwin on Sunday.

LOCAL SNIPPETS

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Rifles retained the title when they became champions of the 28th National Kabaddi competition with a 29-9 victory over Bangladesh Army in the final at the Comilla Stadium yesterday.

On way to the final, BDR beat Khulna 47-22 while Army eliminated Bangladesh Police in a tie-breaker after regulation time ended in a 9-9 draw at the same venue.

Eighteen district teams, including hosts Comilla, and three services teams took part in the six-day meet.

DIV 2 FOOTBALL

East End Club blanked Gazirchot Sporting Club 3-0 in the Second Division Football League at the Kamalapur Stadium in the city.

Shahid struck twice in the 46th and 75th minutes and Rehan netted the other goal in the 66th minute.

In the day's other match, Matuail Udayan Sangha secured a solitary goal win against Dhanmondi Club at the same venue.

Sailesh netted the all-important goal in the 25th minute.

UNDER-15 CRICKET

Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) has selected 24 players for the under-15 preparation camp.

The players are Armanullah, Yasir Ali Chowdhury, Jane Islam Jalal (Chittagong), Abdullah Al Mamun, Salman Hossain (Bansal), Mehdi Hasan, Sourav Hossain (Khulna), Asadur Haque Rana (Sylhet), Mohammad Zakaria, Mesbah Kabir Naveem (Rajshahi, south), Seratun Nabi Adnan, Mohammad Saddam, Sadman Shabbir Shayek (Rajshahi, north), Mohammad Saddam, Joyanto Kumar Dey (Dhaka, south), Musaddek Hossain, Jubair Hossain, Pritom Sarkar (Dhaka, north), Sadman Islam Anik, Mohammad Ashraf, Mohammad Rabbi (Dhaka Metro Blue), Golam Rabbi, Jan-E-Alam and Forhad Khandaker (Dhaka Metro Green).

The selected players have been asked to report at BKSP at 1:30pm on September 3.

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