

Buck talks up Lee's chances

INTERNET, undated

Former Australia coach John Buchanan believes fast bowler Brett Lee could be Ricky Ponting's trump card on the tour of India next month.

The 31-year-old opted out of the ongoing one-day series against Bangladesh in Darwin because of his separation from his wife, but will return for the four-Test Border-Gavaskar series.

Buchanan, also known as Buck, said: "It is going to be a tough and exciting tour, like any India-Australia series."

"We expect to see some good bowling from both teams, but Lee, knowing the sub-continent well, will be an effective bowler on these wickets."

Buchanan, who is coach of Indian Premier League side Kolkata Knight Riders, reckons the series will be decided by the top-order batting.

"The real crux of the series will be how the top order negotiates the opposition bowlers," he added.

"That will be crucial in determining the result of the match."

Deccans to probe Laxman, Afridi spat

INTERNET, undated

The management of the Hyderabad Deccan Chargers has decided to take up the issue of the clash between skipper VVS Laxman and mercurial Pakistani player Shahid Afridi.

According to a release from Deccan Chargers Chief Executive Tim Wright from Hyderabad, following remarks which have appeared in the news media this week attributed to Shahid Afridi and the response to those remarks attributed to VVS Laxman, we will hold a full inquiry to establish the facts.

"In the interest of fairness and of thoroughness both players have been advised of this process and have been invited to contribute to the inquiry."

"When we have established the facts we will take whatever action we consider necessary and appropriate in accordance with the provisions of the Indian Premier League contracts between the players and Deccan Chargers," it said.

It may be recalled that a war of words had erupted after between Laxman and Afridi after the latter had commented to a Pakistani channel that Adam Gilchrist would be a better choice to lead Deccan Chargers and that Twenty20 would not suit Laxman's style of play.

Laxman, in response, had reminded Afridi that it was a collective failure which led to the team finishing last in the IPL, and he had no business to blame the captain alone.

Afridi has no team ethics. Speaking negatively about the team in public, let alone the captain, is just not on. Being an experienced cricketer, he should not be questioning the way the team functions. I am really shocked to say the least.

"He should know that it was a collective failure because he was part of the team. It is unfortunate that he chose to blame the captain for it," Laxman had said.

Deccan Chargers were left holding the wooden spoon in the inaugural edition of the IPL, despite having one of the most formidable sides on paper, including huge hitters like Gilchrist, Andrew Symonds, Herschelle Gibbs and Afridi.

The recent case of Symonds coming to grief with the Cricket Australia authorities would also no help their cause much.

NZC reports big loss

INTERNET, undated

New Zealand Cricket announced a significant 7,586 million New Zealand dollars loss for the 2007-08 financial year on Friday.

NZC chief executive Justin Vaughan told the ruling body's annual general meeting in Wellington that he expected the money to be recouped in the coming years.

Vaughan said the organisation had planned to make an initial loss as part of their four-year cycle.

He said: "NZC operates on a four-year cycle due to variations in revenue over the four-year period arising from ICC events such as the World Cup and inbound tours from the likes of England and India."

"Overall for the four years ending May 31, 2010, NZC is forecasting a surplus result."

Back pay for players in an agreed lump sum to cricketers saw NZC take a hit, but they are expecting a bumper pay day from next year's incoming tour by India.



Members of the Australian cricket team pose with the Commonwealth Bank trophy in Darwin yesterday after their 3-0 win over the Tigers.

So close, yet so far

Cricket

CRICINFO, Darwin

The first man to take a one-day international hat-trick for Bangladesh almost repeated the feat this week. Shahadat Hossain rates his three from three balls against Zimbabwe in 2006 as the highlight of his career. It would have been overtaken quicker than a broken-down Kombi van had he reproduced the deed against Australia.

The moment came in the 50th over of the first ODI in Darwin last Saturday, on August 30. Shahadat crashed the ball into Cameron White's off stump from the third delivery and next ball had Mitchell Johnson caught and bowled top-edging an attempted hook. The problem was the batsmen crossed while the ball was in the air, so instead of targeting the debutant Brett Geeves, Shahadat was forced to try for the milestone against Michael Hussey.

Sitting on the boundary of the Marrara Cricket Ground after a lengthy session of bowling drills on Friday, fidgeting, impossibly effervescent Shahadat reflected happily on the opportunity. "With Hussey there I had no chance," he said.

True, Hussey did easily deal with the hat-trick ball, nudging it from outside off towards deep cover. But

Shahadat got the next best thing: Hussey tried to slog the next one and lost his off stump, giving the bowler three wickets from four balls. The whole scenario brought back memories for Shahadat, whose triple-strike against Zimbabwe is etched in his mind.

"I enjoyed the hat-trick most. Nothing compares to it," he said. "I thought I was in dreamland. Hat-tricks are taken by Wasim Akram, bowlers like that."

He's not Akram just yet but it's successes like that, and his remarkable 6 for 27 in a Test against South Africa this year, that prove he should be known for more than just his trademark delivery grunt. The strange noise, more suited to a tennis player, comes just before he releases the ball and hints at near total exhaustion, which is at odds with his seemingly boundless energy.

Is it offputting for the batsmen? Who knows. Perhaps it is only coincidence that an inordinate number of players misread him and suffer extravagant blows to the head. Even Ricky Ponting felt the full force of Shahadat's bounce in the Fatullah Test of 2006 when he took his eyes off the ball and coped one on the helmet. "He is the best player of the pull and hook shot," Shahadat said, "so that gave me a lot of confidence."

It was not a first for Shahadat, who has been injuring batsmen for a decade. As a teenager Shahadat

developed a reputation in his hometown, where he was the most fearsome wielder of a taped tennis ball. He was the quickest young bowler in the district by far, and his rivals would head home with ugly bruises and swelling after facing his vicious deliveries.

His father, a banker, decided that if Shahadat was going to spend all his time playing cricket anyway, he might as well try his luck at a junior training camp. It was there that he first picked up a proper cricket ball, although because he had no running shoes he would tear in off his long run-up with bare feet.

A couple of years and at least one pair of cricket boots later, Shahadat was training with the Bangladesh Institute of Sports in a set of nets adjacent to those of the national team. When he was invited to send down some deliveries to the Test batsmen, Shahadat duly gained notice by thumping Hamid Sarkar and Mohammad Rafique in the head and hands.

The Under-19 captain of the day was less fortunate. Shahadat struck him so cleanly on the side of the head with a bouncer that the screws from the other side of the helmet flew out. The batsman was in severe pain. "There was blood everywhere," a smiling Shahadat said.

Since then, the 190-centimetre bowler has developed into comfortably the quickest in Bangladesh

and has been clocked at up to 148kph. Importantly, he not only intimidates batsmen, he also takes wickets. His most memorable victim was Ponting, who he trapped lbw in the Fatullah Test, but his 6 for 27 against South Africa in Mirpur this year was a breakthrough effort.

"The year has gone pretty well for me," Shahadat said. "The six wickets against South Africa was one of the highlights. In that series I didn't actually think that I was bowling to [Graeme] Smith or [Jacques] Kallis or anything. I just tried to bowl in the right areas."

Nicknamed Rajib -- he says he has no idea what it means, his sister gave him the title -- he has not been at his best during the Australia series, where he has leaked a few too many runs. Perhaps the absence of one of his fast-bowling role models, Brett Lee, has robbed him of inspiration.

"I did bowl very well in New Zealand and against South Africa back home prior to this series," he said. "I'm trying to repeat everything I have done on those tours; it's just not happening at the moment."

"This tour is very important for Bangladesh cricket overall because if you do well against Australia everyone takes note. The players have gained a lot of confidence. I've targeted this series but so far it has not happened for me."

Lucky for Australia.

'Ashraful close to axe'

FROM PAGE 17

"I asked for contributions, it didn't need to be a super-human effort from anyone," Siddons said. "Everything fell into place today. The pitch spun, it was slow, hard for the batsmen to score. It suited our style of cricket perfectly. It suited our batsmen perfectly as well. But for some unknown reason they all threw their wickets away."

The only man to show real resolve was Tamim Iqbal, whose 63 gave Bangladesh hope of an upset. While Siddons said Tamim would need to start converting his regular starts into centuries, the coach was happy with the opener's aggressive but largely controlled display.

Tamim was out to a what he himself called "a stupid shot" when he slashed at a cut shot off Shane Watson and was caught at third man. He was running out of partners but Tamim was angry with himself for throwing away the team's last remaining hopes and his chances of a century.

He said the batsmen were disappointed to continually let down Siddons with loose strokes. "We're working hard and we have a very

Razzak 10 1 22 1

Mahmudullah 4 0 15 0

BANGLADESH

Tamim c Clarke b Watson 63

Zunaid c White b Clark 0

Ashraful c Clarke b Clark 3

Kapali b Johnson 0

Shakib c Hussey b Hopes 27

Mahmudullah b Hopes 1

Dhiman b/wb Hopes 1

Reza c D Hussey b Watson 0

Razzak b D Hussey 14

Mashrafe not out 8

Shahadat absent hurt

Extras: (b-2, lb-2, w-4) 8

Total: (For nine wkt in 29.5 overs) 125

Fall of wickets: 1-2, 2-13, 3-22, 4-48, 5-96, 6-98, 7-99, 8-103, 9-125.

Bowler O M R W

Bracken 6 1 19 0

Clark 5 1 12 2

Johnson 4 0 36 1

D Hussey 4.5 0 16 1

Hopes 5 1 30 3

Watson 5 0 8 2

Result: Australia won by 73 runs and clinched three-match series 3-0.

Man-of-the-match: Tamim Iqbal.

Man-of-the-series: Mike Hussey.

Toss: Australia

Umpires: Peter Parker (AUS),

Shakib 10 0 25 0

good coach," Tamim said. "He pushes us in everything."

"We are a young side and have to learn a lot of things. The more matches we play, the more improvement will come. We have to listen to him first. At this moment I don't think we are listening to him."

SCOREBOARD

Scoreboard of the third and final one-day international between Australia and Bangladesh in Darwin on Saturday:

AUSTRALIA

Marsh b Reza 30

Watson run out 27

Clarke run out 25

M Hussey not out 57

D Hussey run out 11

Haddin c Kapali b Razzak 16

White not out 22

Extras: (lb-1, w-9) 10

Total: (For five wkt in 50 overs) 198

Did not bat: Hopes, Johnson,

Bracken, Clark.

Fall of wickets: 1-41, 2-84, 3-87, 4-11, 5-150.

Bowler O M R W

Mashrafe 10 0 55 0

Shahadat 6 0 37 0

Reza 10 0 43 1

Shakib 10 0 25 0

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Cricketers had complained the matter to the President Mahinda Rajapakse as soon as they returned to the island after winning the Asia Cup in Pakistan and the President had advised Sports Minister Loko to settle the issue through discussion between officials and players, the paper adds.

Players had signed the IPL contracts some time back, while SLC stepped in later to fill in for a cancelled tour to England by Zimbabwe. The stand off became worse after England refused to change the itinerary.

SLC officials have also refused to soften their position and have confirmed the tour with SLC Chief Executive Duleep Mendis signing a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the England and Wales Cricket Board.

"We have a Memorandum of Understanding with the England and Wales Cricket Board for the tour and we must honour that," SLC interim committee chairman Arjuna Ranatunga was quoted by media as saying on Friday.

They have reportedly pointed out that the England tour was hastily arranged later by SLC officials without consulting the cricketers who

were under IPL contracts.

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