

Sachin still best, says Adam

PTI, New Delhi
Mahendra Singh Dhoni may have pipped Sachin Tendulkar to the ICC ODI Player of the Year award but Adam Gilchrist believes the Little Master is still the best batsman around.

Here on a promotional tour, Gilchrist said he does not doubt Dhoni's ability but Tendulkar is simply the best.

"Well, it's hard to compare whether statistically or in your mind or opinion. It's a big award for Mahendra to win but I would still say Sachin is the best player of recent times," Gilchrist told NDTV.

Making a comparative study of both the Indians, Gilchrist said, "Dhoni is firepower, (it's more about) his explosiveness and unpredictability. If there is anything about Sachin, it's his technicality, he is beautiful to watch and clinical whereas Dhoni is almost carefree, playing without fear that can hurt you most."

"He (Dhoni) hits some extraordinary shots that are quite unique to the game. You never see them in textbooks but are equally effective," said the Australian.

SEE PAGE 18 COL 1



Did U Know?

Henri Cochet of France was the most French Open tennis titles winner. He won nine titles (four singles, three doubles, and two mixed doubles) between 1926 and 1930.



Marcello Lippi
(Italy football manager)
"He is one of the best midfielders in the world. He is at the level of (Frank) Lampard and (Steven) Gerrard."
On Daniele de Rossi.



ESPN
English Premier League
Liverpool v Man United
Live from 5:40pm
Blackburn v Arsenal
Live from 7:55pm
West Bromwich v West Ham
Delayed from 10:30pm
Primera Liga
Barcelona v Racing
Live from 1:00am (Sunday)
STAR Sports
English Premier League
Portsmouth v Middlesbrough
Live from 7:55pm
Man City v Chelsea
Live from 10:25pm

Bima ride on Biplob

UNB, Dhaka
Sadharan Bima beat Mutual Udayan Sangsad by a solitary goal in the Second Division Football League at the Kamalapur Stadium yesterday.
Biplob scored the all-important goal for the insurance men in the 30th minute.
In the other match, Friends Social Welfare Organization played out a 1-1 draw with Gazirchot.
Akhtar put Friends Social Welfare Organization ahead in the 24th minute, before Zahid scored the equaliser in the 73rd minute.



Reigning champions Abahani preparing at their club ground in Dhanmondi for today's Citycell B. League opener against Rahmatganj.

PHOTO: STAR

The wait is over Abahani-Rahmatganj opener today

SPORTS REPORTER



The long 13-month wait for the second edition of the professional football league ends today

when defending champions Abahani take on Rahmatganj in the opening match of the Citycell B. League.

The Dhaka derby will kick off at 3.30pm at the Bangabandhu National Stadium, which is both the sides' home ground.

Abahani will look forward to bury the early-season failure of losing two finals -- the Federation Cup and the inaugural futsal competition -- with a big win against last year's bottom table club from the older part of the capital.

The Sky-blues, who will also end their 20-match campaign of the competition against the same side, have the strongest team on paper but will face typical rivalry from Federation Cup winners Mohammedan, who launch their crusade with a tricky fixture against Chittagong Abahani in Dhaka tomorrow.

Among all the five opening round games to be played in Dhaka, Tuesday's fixture looks to be a mouth-watering clash between Sheikh Russel, one of the title contenders, and the impressive Farashganj, who led Abahani

1-0 before eventually going down 2-1 in last month's Federation Cup semifinal. Arambagh have a bye in the first round.

It would not also be easy tasks for a struggling Muktiyoddha who host Khulna Abahani and Gopibagh giants Brothers Union, who are pitted against visiting Chittagong Mohammedan.

There are injury worries for Abahani with former captain Arif Khan Joy and defender Pradeep Poddar set to miss the opener. Centre-back Mohammed Sujon and midfielder Mamunul Islam are also doubtful starters but Abahani manager Satyajit Das Rupu told that the two national players are fit to start.

The strength of the holders, however, lies in a very strong reserve bench and they could easily have a formidable line-up without these four.

Coach Amalesh Sen would have no headache as he can field Siraj, skipper Nazrul, Yussif and Waly as the back four with Obaidur and Sonyas reserves.

The presence of Emily and the trusted Ghanaian forward Ibrahim in addition of Nigerian striker Emeka will tempt any coach to go for a 4-3-3 formation but Amalesh is expected to appoint Emeka as the attacking midfielder with Pranotosh settling for the holding role.

He will have to choose from Zahed Parvez, Ujjal and Abul to complete the eleven.

"We have all the players from the last season plus Sujon, Mamun and Emeka. Ghana's Ibrahim and Samad

Yussif have also shown good form. So our team look balanced and the back up strong enough to retain the title," said Rupu.

"Our players are spirited and we created a lot of scoring opportunities could not convert most of them. I have told the players to increase goals and keep cool," he added.

Syed Golam Jilani, who makes his B. League debut for Rahmatganj, has high hopes.

"The youngsters are raring to go. The blend youth and experience is our force. All I can say now is that Rahmatganj will be a fighting outfit in every match," said Jilani.

Rahmatganj, who finished last in the 2007 league, are likely to miss GM Mamun, who joined from Khulna Abahani, due to a knee injury.

Meanwhile, Abahani -- the home side of today's match -- have announced the eastern gallery free for school students who need to wear school uniform or show ID cards for free entry.

Gallery tickets will cost Tk 20 and VIP tickets Tk 50 each.

The top eight teams of the 11-team B. League will qualify for next year's proposed Super Cup where the winners will pocket Tk one crore as prize money.

But the Tk 10-lakh reward for winning the country's most coveted competition remains small -- although double from last year's prize money -- compared to the Super Cup.

Academy ahead by 65 runs

SPORTS REPORTER

Sri Lanka Cricket Development XI trailed by 65 runs at the end of the third day of the four-day against GP-BCB National Cricket Academy in Dambulla yesterday.

Masmulla made 118 as the hosts made 376 for six, made in 94 overs, chasing the visitors' first innings score of 441 made in the first two days.

Jeevan Mendis added 87 while Nadira and Akalanka (24) were unbeaten at stumps.

Marshal Ayub captured two wickets for 16 runs with his part-time legspin while Farhad Hossain, Suharwardi Shuvo, Mahbulul Karim and Rubel Hossain took one wicket each.

On the first day, Farhad Hossain struck a useful half-century as GP-BCB NCA built a huge first innings total.

ICC to continue referral system

PTI, New Delhi

The ICC decided to continue the trial of umpire referral system, which took place in the recent Sri Lanka-India Test series, to some upcoming series before its actual implementation, it was decided in a meeting.

The system allows players to seek reviews, via the television official, of decisions by the on-field umpires on whether or not a batsman has been dismissed. Each team can make three unsuccessful requests per innings.

A final report on the Umpire Referral System will be submitted by ICC umpires' and referees' manager Vince van der Bijl and Doug Cowie after the trials to ICC Cricket Committee in May next year and it will then be considered by the CEC in June.



Twenty20 International Performance of the Year winner and Indian batsman Yuvraj Singh soaks up the Dubai sun after the ICC Awards on Thursday.

Rafiq defends Tigers

Cricket

SPORTS REPORTER

Chief selector Rafiqul Alam pointed out some reasons behind Bangladesh's dismal performance in the three-match one-day series against Australia in Darwin.

"I think bowling- and fielding-wise, the tour was good but the batting was terrible. Especially, batting in the last match was simply frustrating as we lost an opportunity while chasing 198 runs. Our batsmen actually surrendered meekly against the Australian pace attack," said Rafiqul yesterday.

This came after the questions were raised whether the Tigers have been missing motivation from the bench or did Mohammad Ashraful men's senseless approach towards the game was the cause.

But the former national cricketer, who accompanied the team to Darwin, was not ready to take any blame from the side's gradual demotion.

"I believe our players have the ability to play much better and they should have batted well (in

Darwin). I don't want to give any excuses but the wicket was not perfect for one-day cricket."

"On the other hand, we struggled with some injuries. Actually it was a depleted batting line-up in absence of Aftab Ahmed, Mushfiqur Rahim, Rokibul Hasan and Shahriar Nafees. Unfortunately for last the few months, we never got the full strength team due to injury or players attending exams," he said defending his team.

Rafiqul also said that the cricketers have been trying their best to improve performance and had showed signs of improvement before the series against Australia.

"The boys were practising well and working hard to improve. We are also not short of motivation. It has been a tough tour for us," he explained.

Talks about fate of Ashraful as captain and comments of coach Jamie Siddons on the issue have added more fuel to the debate but Rafiqul said that the board will give the final verdict.

"It's not my jurisdiction because the board has the sole authority to decide about the issue. I can say that Ashraful was not bad as a captain on the field because the way he handled the

bowlers and changed fielding positions were good. But the main problem is that he has struggled with his batting," said Rafiqul.

The chief selector was, however, hopeful about the upcoming home series against New Zealand, who arrive in Dhaka on September 30 to play three one-day internationals and two Tests in Dhaka and Chittagong.

"We'll get back a full strength squad and most importantly, we will play in our own condition. We are pinning hopes on improvement in our batting in the Kityly Cup at home and the Asia Cup in Pakistan. I am hopeful that the players will get back their confidence in the coming series."

Rafiqul was also excited with the news that there was no problem with the two operated knees of pace spearhead and vice-captain Mashrafe Bin Mortaza, who had a check-up in Melbourne by Dr. David Young, who had operated upon both the knees of the "Narail Express" five years back.

"David Young was very happy by the condition of Mashrafe and the doctor said Mashrafe is fully okay to continue his career. It's really a good news for us."

Ryder back for Kiwis

NZ arrive on Sept 30

Cricket

CRICINFO, undated

Jesse Ryder is in line for a possible Test debut after earning a call-up into the 15-man New Zealand squad for their two-Test tour of Bangladesh. However, there was no place for James Marshall, Peter Fulton or Michael Mason, all of whom were in the group that toured England this year.

Aaron Redmond retained his place in the Test squad despite the disappointment of making only 54 from his six innings in England, where he made his debut. But the removal of Marshall and Fulton from the list of top-order options means Ryder has every chance to add a Test cap to his five ODI appearances.

It is a major vote of confidence in Ryder, who badly hurt his hand after punching a window in a local bar in a late-night incident in February. Ryder has also been starved of first-class cricket recently and played only three State Championship games for Wellington last season, but the selectors were impressed when he captained New Zealand to the Emerging Players title in Australia in July.

The Bangladesh tour starts with three one-day internationals and Mark Gillespie and Scott Styris have been named only for the limited-overs portion. In the lead-up to the first Test, which begins on October 17, that pair will fly home and the squad will be



JESSE RYDER

joined by the Test specialists Redmond and Iain O'Brien.

The team will arrive in the country on September 30, instead of October 4 as originally planned.

Chris Martin has been included in the 15-man ODI squad after being largely pigeon-holed as a Test player in recent times. The

squad will leave a few days earlier than planned, on September 30, and Dion Nash, one of the selectors, stressed it would not be an easy trip.

"The team will have the challenge of competitive cricket in sub-continent conditions after the break enforced by the postponement of the Champions Trophy," Nash said. "Bangladesh will provide a stern test going into another international season, which offers the Black Caps the chance to build on this year's home and away series against England."

TEST SQUAD

Jamie How, Aaron Redmond, Ross Taylor, Daniel Flynn, Jesse Ryder, Jacob Oram, Brendon McCullum (wicketkeeper), Gareth Hopkins (wicketkeeper), Grant Elliott, Daniel Vettori (captain), Kyle Mills, Tim Southee, Iain O'Brien, Jeetan Patel, Chris Martin.

ODISQUAD

Jamie How, Brendon McCullum (wicketkeeper), Scott Styris, Ross Taylor, Daniel Flynn, Jesse Ryder, Jacob Oram, Gareth Hopkins (wicketkeeper), Grant Elliott, Daniel Vettori (captain), Kyle Mills, Tim Southee, Mark Gillespie, Jeetan Patel, Chris Martin.

Symonds kept out

Cricket

AFP, Sydney

Australia on Friday left out all-round Andrew Symonds for disciplinary reasons and chose 36-

year-old leg-spinner Bryce McGain for next month's four-Test tour of India.

Symonds is considering his future in international cricket after being axed from the Australian squad for this month's one-day series against Bangladesh in Darwin after opting to go fishing rather than attend a compulsory team meeting.

Chairman of selectors Andrew Hilditch said Symonds, who has played 22 Tests and 193 one-day internationals, will be left behind to give the 33-year-old time to consider his playing future.

"Andrew Symonds was stood down for disciplinary reasons in Darwin and is now going through a process managed by Cricket Australia designed to give him time to assess whether he is fully committed to all of the things needed to be a member of the world's number one team," Hilditch said.

"Cricket Australia has told us that selectors will be advised once Andrew can be considered again for selection and we hope we can look forward to that advice in due course because as we all know a fit and fully committed Andrew Symonds can be a world-beater."

"In the meantime, our advice was that he was not available to be

considered for selection this time."

Australia selected Victorian McGain and Tasmanian Jason Krejza as their spinners in the 15-man party for the spin-friendly Indian wickets, and also included fast bowlers Doug Bollinger and Peter Siddle.

Hilditch said he expected McGain to be well suited to the Indian conditions and he had been selected subject to a fitness test on an injured right shoulder.

"Bryce McGain was the stand-out leg-spinner at interstate level last year and we think he is really well suited to the Indian conditions and bowling plans," he said.

Hilditch said finger-spinner Krejza was another selection with an eye on the Indian conditions.

"Jason had a good season for Tasmania last year and the selectors felt right-arm finger spinners would perform well in India, and Jason now has a chance to prove himself at the international level."

Hilditch said Bollinger and Siddle had been included to gain valuable international experience, adding veteran opening batsman Matthew Hayden was selected subject to fitness on an Achilles injury.

"The tour of India is an icon series for the Australian team and the selection process has been a highly detailed exercise," Hilditch said.

"A lot of planning has gone into how we want to play against the Indian team and how we go about that in Indian conditions."

Australia's opening Test of the series against India starts in Bangalore on October 9.

Where is Yousuf?

Cricket

CRICINFO, undated

Mohammad Yousuf, the Pakistan batsman, was one of the players nominated for ICC's ODI Player-of-the-Year Award. Yousuf didn't win; Mahendra Singh Dhoni did. And Dhoni and fellow nominees, Sachin Tendulkar and Nathan Bracken, were named in the ODI Team of the Year, Yousuf wasn't. Yousuf's omission was puzzling not only because he was one of the nominees for the top award, but also one of the prolific run-scorers in the period considered by the ICC.

The awards were based on performances from August 9, 2007 to August 12, 2008. In that period, Yousuf scored 1161 runs at 68.29; among batsmen with at least 500 runs, only Shivnarine Chanderpaul had a better average and he wasn't in the ODI team either. Pakistan did play back-to-back series against Zimbabwe and Bangladesh but even if you considered performances only against the top eight ODI teams, Yousuf's average is 59.09.

In the ICC's XI, only Yousuf's teammate Younis Khan averaged as much. Ricky Ponting and Andrew Symonds were the other middle-order batsmen in the team but Ponting, the captain, averaged only 42.23 in 20 innings, while Symonds fared marginally better with an average of 45.

Another surprise pick was allrounder Farveez Maharoof, who

played only seven matches in the period. Granted that he took 14 wickets at 17.42, but he scored only 45 runs in four innings.

In the ICC's Test Team of the Year, Kumar Sangakkara was chosen as the wicketkeeper but he kept wickets in only one Test out of Sri Lanka's ten during the period under consideration. He's played as a specialist batsman while Prasanna Jayawardene has impressed one and all with his sharp glove work while keeping to Muttiah Muralitharan and Ajantha Mendis. However, the other Test keepers fared poorly with the bat, a factor that could have swung the



MOHAMMAD YOUSUF

vote Sangakkara's way. England may have seen a turnaround under Kevin Pietersen's leadership, but his position in the middle order denies a place to either of AB De Villiers, Andrew Symonds or Michael Clarke -- all three averaged over 55, while Pietersen managed only 47.25.

Captaincy nothing for Sehwag

PTI, New Delhi

Virender Sehwag does not hanker after Test captaincy and the swash-buckling opener says as a senior member of the squad, he would keep giving his inputs to whoever leads the side.

While ODI and Twenty20 captain Mahendra Singh Dhoni is the overwhelming favourite to take over the Test reins from Anil Kumble in the future, a section of former players believe Sehwag might be the right choice for the job.

The Delhi batsman, however, made it clear that he does not crave for the job and would keep helping the team as a senior member.

"As a senior member, I would keep giving my suggestions. I suggested something to Kumble in Perth and it clicked. Likewise, I would keep giving my suggestions and it won't have anything to do with whether I'm the skipper or not," Sehwag told reporters here on Friday on the sidelines of a Neo Cricket channel programme.

In the Perth Test, Sehwag had asked Kumble to persist with Ishant Sharma, who was off-colour till then, and the move paid off with the Delhi speedster removing Ricky Ponting.

Told about the view of some of the former players who would have liked to see him as the next Test captain, Sehwag said, "It's their opinion." Sehwag said he had fully