

Academy's do-or-die game today

SPORTS REPORTER

The series deciding one-day match between GP-BCB National Cricket Academy and Sri Lanka Cricket Development XI take place at the NCC ground in Colombo today.

The three-match series locked 1-1 as the home side bounced back in the second match with a four-wicket victory on Tuesday.

In the first match the visitors pulled off exciting one-wicket victory.

Div II football

SPORTS REPORTER

Gazirchot Sporting Club came from behind to play out a 1-1 draw with Euro Famous Club in the Second Division Football League at the Kamalapur Stadium yesterday.

Shohag put Euro Famous ahead in the 49th minute before Kalu scored the equaliser six minutes later.

Uttar Baridhara take on Friends Social Welfare Organisation in the day's match at the same venue.



Did U Know?

Bob Paisley is the only man to coach three Champions League winning sides in 1977, 1978 and 1981 (all Liverpool).



Talk Turkey



Harbhajan Singh

(Star Indian spinner)
"They are a very competitive side, there is no doubt about that. But, I'm looking forward to playing them and I'm sure this will be another great series."
On the upcoming series against Australia.



What to Watch

ESPN
Sportscentre India
Sports News
Live from 8:30pm



Day's Event

Citycell B. League
Brothers Union v Ctg Abahani (3:30pm)
Venue: Bangabandhu National Stadium

'It's upto the seniors'

PTI, Mumbai

Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) secretary Niranjan Shah on Wednesday put the onus on the senior cricketers to inform the board or the selection committee about their future retirement plans to enable a smooth transition in the Indian team.

"The senior players, who can be phased out in two or three years, should make their own (retirement) plans and inform the BCCI or selection committee. Like Rahul (Dravid) had done when quitting."



A plethora of microphones and mobile phones are held in front of Bangladesh captain Mohammad Ashrafur (C) after BCB allowed him to speak to the media yesterday after practice at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur.

PHOTO: STAR

Hussey warns India

Cricket

AFP, Jaipur

Reliable batsman Michael Hussey said Wednesday the inexperienced Australian side were capable of rising to the occasion in the demanding Test series soon to start in India.

"A Test series on Indian soil is considered tough. It's the toughest series, but it gives you immense satisfaction if you are able to win it," Hussey told reporters ahead of the four-match series starting in Bangalore on October 9.

Australia clinched their previous Test series in India in 2004, their first success in 35 years.

Only four members of the Australian squad -- skipper Ricky Ponting, Matthew Hayden, Michael Clarke and Simon Katich -- have played a Test in India, but Hussey warned the hosts not to underestimate the tourists.

"We definitely take a lot of things out of 2004, but the personnel are so different that we are a new team really and trying to create our own history," said the middle-order batsman, 33.

"The big strength we have is the Indians might think we are inexperienced and perhaps in Test cricket in this country we are, but the guys that have come in have played a lot of first-class cricket."

"It would be a bit of a mistake to underestimate the newer, less experienced guys. I think they are hardened cricketers and it's a case of how quickly we can adapt to the conditions."

Hussey, who has scored 2,325 runs in 25 Tests, said the experience of playing Twenty20 matches in India early this year would help him.

"I may not have played a Test here, but have played other forms of the game. I think patience will be the key. The experience will come in handy as we played on different wickets," he said.

Hussey said his team was not focusing on Indian off-spinner Harbhajan Singh alone as the hosts had an impressive bowling attack.

Harbhajan troubled Australia the most in previous home series, having grabbed 55 wickets in seven Tests.

"Not only Harbhajan, but (leg-spinner) Anil Kumble and other Indian bowlers are also good. They have a balanced attack," said Hussey.

"You have to have a clear gameplan on how to play spin. Hayden, Ponting or Clarke have their own gameplan. So will I, but you have to be clear how you are going to tackle it."

Australia arrived on Monday, a week ahead of schedule following the postponement of the Champions Trophy in Pakistan, and will train in Jaipur for a week before the official part of the tour starts.

They play a four-day practice game in Hyderabad from October 2 before the Test series. The last three Tests will be held in Mohali, New Delhi and Nagpur.

Martin is not coming here

AFP, Wellington

New Zealand fast bowler Chris Martin has withdrawn from the one-day series against Bangladesh next month because of a hamstring strain.

Team manager Lindsay Crocker said Wednesday that Martin would be replaced by Michael Mason for the early part of the tour to Bangladesh.

Martin, who has been playing for English side Warwickshire, was expected to return to the team in time for the two-Test series against Bangladesh after receiving treatment in New Zealand.

The first of three one-day international matches will be played on October 9 in Mirpur against a Bangladesh side depleted by 13 defections to the rebel Indian Cricket League.

The first Test starts in Chittagong on October 17 with the second in Mirpur from October 25.

Tour Of Pakistan India to go by govt advice

PTI, Mumbai

The Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) on Wednesday said they will follow the government's advice though it had agreed in principle to the itinerary prepared for India's tour of Pakistan early next year by the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB).

"We have finalised our Pakistan tour programme with the PCB and in fact have done so till the end of April, which includes our tour of New Zealand. But as the time comes nearer to touring (Pakistan) we will have to wait for the advice (on the itinerary) from our government," BCCI Secretary Niranjan Shah told PTI here.

As per the itinerary finalised and released by the PCB yesterday, Rawalpindi is set to host a Test and a one-dayer during the January-February 2009 tour.

The PCB had also said it might have to review the itinerary in the wake of the deadly blasts in neighbouring Islamabad while declaring the tour programme.

As per the programme, the January 4 to February 19 tour next year would feature three Tests, five one-dayers, a Twenty20 game and a three-day practice match at Hyderabad (Sind), which kicks off the visit.

Bradman bat sold for record price

AFP, Melbourne

Donald Bradman's first Test cricket bat sold at auction here late Wednesday for a record 145,000 dollars (121,938 US dollars), the auction house said.

An Australian bidder acquired the bat, which was signed by the country's greatest cricketer and the entire 1928-29 Test team and their English rivals.

"This is a record price for a cricket bat and there were several bidders, all of them within Australia, hoping to win the auction," a spokeswoman for Leski said.

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Ash gives his version

Cricket

SPORTS REPORTER

At last Mohammad Ashrafur spoke to the media after Bangladesh Cricket Board's (BCB) gag order ended yesterday.

The Bangladesh captain was presented in front of journalists but it was evident that the cricket board did not want any goofs-ups as they posted the media manager and the team operations manager during the informal press meet, Ashrafur's first since he arrived in the country from England on Monday.

However, there would be no complaint from the board as Ashrafur expressed his side of the story quite efficiently.

Ashrafur confirmed speculations that talk of a player revolt was being planned during the recent Australia tour.

"Our coach [Jamie Siddons] told me that some of the players could be signing for ICL [Indian Cricket League]. When I asked the players, they all denied it straightaway," informed Ashrafur after Wednesday's practice at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur.

"If I had any idea that so many players were actually joining then I definitely would have told the

cricket board," said the 24-year-old Ashrafur.

But he confirmed that a three-year deal did come his way and that it was worth around Tk 15 crore.

"The first ICL offer came to me through an agent and it was a three-year deal. I informed our chief selector [Rafiqul Alam], [Gazi Ashraf Hossain] Lipu bhai and my coach [Wahidul Gani] about it," confided Ashrafur.

"When I asked Lipu bhai what will happen if I take up the contract, he told me that I wouldn't be able to play for Bangladesh."

"He also told me that if I play well, we might have a chance to play in the Indian Premier League (IPL) next year. After hearing all these from him, I immediately rejected the offer and don't know what happened next," said Ashrafur.

So the million-dollar question is: Were you the mastermind behind all these?

"That is totally wrong. I have never met that agent and only talked to him over the phone. He is well known to many Bangladeshi players as he has arranged sponsors for a number of local players and helped them in getting club contracts in the UK. I believe he contacted them directly."

"Some people are calling me the mastermind. They should remem-

ber that the biggest offer came to me. Fifteen crore taka over a three-year period is not a matter of joke. But my involvement with the ICL ended the moment I refused that offer," said Ashrafur.

When he was pressed further in this regard, he defended himself and challenged the player in question, Dhiman Ghosh, who alleged the skipper of encouraging him (Dhiman) to sign in ICL as he's not the first-choice wicketkeeper.

"I would have preferred if he [Dhiman] had said that in front of me," demanded Ashrafur.

"Even if some people held any grudges against me, they never mentioned it. Professional players should understand that if you are out of the side that means you are not performing. There is no way in the world that you will be left out when you have performance behind you."

"I read somewhere that [Shahriar] Nafees and Aftab [Ahmed] had remarked that I wanted them out of the way as they could have been future captains; that I stopped their path. If they knew they were captaincy material then why an earth would they want to leave?" said the ace batsman.

Ashrafur also reiterated that he would not be going to the rebel Indian league even if he were to be

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Abahani back on track

SPORTS REPORTER



Amalash Sen will have to find the right combination for Abahani's backline during Citycell B. League's Eid vacation despite his side's 2-0 win over visiting Chittagong Mohammedan yesterday.

The defending champions, after a shocking 2-1 defeat to Rahmatganj in the opening round, claimed their stake for the top spot after three rounds with two successive wins.

Striker Emily and Nigerian midfielder Emeka scored early in the first half at the almost empty Bangabandhu National Stadium to hand Chittagong Mohammedan their first defeat after two consecutive draws.

Abahani's six points will put them atop the table at the first break of the league if Brothers Union or Sheikh Russel failed to win in the ongoing round.

Although the scoreline suggests a comfortable victory, even the tired legs of the tourists -- who were playing their third game inside eight days -- found big holes in the Sky-blues defence after the break. However, the final efforts were either clumsy or not enough to beat the Dhaka giants' goalkeeper Biplab.

Skipper Nazrul, who had provided the chance for Abahani's lone goal in last week's 1-0 win against Farashganj away at Narshingdi, felt uncomfortable as rightback but once again showed his attacking flair by helping Emily find the net after 12 minutes.

Nazrul sent a high cross inside the area and Emily, after firing blank in the first two games, leaped in the

air to get between Mohammedan centre-back Dhiman and goalkeeper Mamun Khan to stab a fine header into the net.

Biplab came to the rescue of the side three minutes later when the national custodian punched out a drive by rival captain Camara of Guinea.

It was then Touhid's turn to frustrate the visitors when an overlapping rightback Sharif picked up the striker, who failed to keep his header on target with Biplab standing helplessly at the near post in the 19th minute.

Abahani dominated the rest of the first half and Ibrahim's dazzling run down the middle put the game beyond the Chittagong Black and Whites.

The Ghanaian forward raced past two defenders in one of his trademark runs and chipped an

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PHOTO: STAR

Chittagong Mohammedan defender Shawkat goes for a sliding tackle to stop a run by Abahani striker Emily during their Citycell B. League match at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

Asif awaits IPL hearing

Cricket

AFP, Karachi

Pakistani fast bowler Mohammad Asif said Tuesday he was anxiously waiting for a hearing before an Indian doping tribunal so he can get a chance to clear his name.

Asif, 25, faces a two-year ban after he tested positive for the banned steroid nandrolone during the Indian Premier League (IPL) competition held between April and June of this year.

The Pakistan Cricket Board suspended him. His B sample also tested positive in August, and since then he has been waiting for a hearing before a three-member tribunal set up by the IPL.

"I am anxiously waiting to put my case before the IPL tribunal because I want to get my name cleared and return to where I belong

-- cricket grounds," Asif told AFP.

Asif said discrepancies in the level of nandrolone in the two samples (6.2 nanograms per millilitre in the A sample and 5.4 in the B sample) could help him.

"I am confident that I will get cleared on the basis of discrepancies in the quantity, but the first thing is to get a hearing where I could prove myself," he added.

The tribunal, comprising former India captain Sunil Gavaskar, doctor Ravi Bapat and lawyer Shirish Gupta, asked Asif to appear on August 30, but the paceman asked them to push it back.

Any ban would be imposed by the IPL. The decision of the body, which is under the aegis of the International Cricket Council, would apply to both national and international cricket.

But Asif said that since the postponement he had not heard from the IPL.

Asif's lawyer Shahid Karim said he had sent a reminder to the IPL, but there had been no reply.

Asif, who is in Karachi to play club cricket, said he wants to play for Pakistan as soon as possible.

"I have already missed a lot of cricket," said Asif, who along with fellow paceman Shoaib Akhtar also tested positive for the same substance in 2006.

He was then banned for one year and Akhtar for two, but the bans were overturned on appeal.

Asif, suspended after the latest doping offence, also faces a possible ban or fine from the Pakistan Cricket Board after he was detained in Dubai, while returning from the IPL, on charges of possessing an illegal drug.

He was held for 19 days before police deported him.

Asif said the last few months have been frustrating for him.

"My whole career has suffered

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PHOTO: INTERNET

New Zealand skipper Daniel Vettori is about to drive a ball off the back-foot during a training session in Auckland on Wednesday.

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