

## NZ's best is yet to come

SPORTS REPORTER



**Brendon McCullum** has warned the hosts that New Zealand have yet to show their best in the tour although it is nearing its end.

The hard-hitting New Zealand wicketkeeper-batsman has had a very poor run during the one-day series against Bangladesh that the Black Caps came from behind to win 2-1 and also in the Test series that they lead 1-0.

Admitting his lack of form in the season, McCullum said during a practice session at the Sher-e-Bangla Mirpur Stadium yesterday that the second Test, which starts at the same venue tomorrow, could be the ideal stage for Daniel Vettori's side to flourish.

"We have played two one-days here and feel we are ready to go all out and win the Test series 2-0," the New Zealand vice-captain told adding that Mirpur has wickets where the batsmen could get runs if they showed patience.

Having scored a magnificent century in the opening match of the Indian Premier League, runs have not flown from his bat but McCullum said he was working hard on it.

Everyone was fearful of the master-blast one-day opener, especially after his swashbuckling 80 off just 30 balls that throttled New Zealand to finish a chase in just six overs -- a one-day record --

against touring Bangladesh during the 2007-08 season.

But the Bangladesh attack has so far tamed his bat successfully. His one-day scores in the series were 14, 12 and six while his Test figures while batting in middle-order were 25 and two.

"Bangladesh's performance in the Chittagong Test was not unexpected to us because it was their home condition. The spinners dominated there but we made a comeback."

New Zealand chased a record second-innings total of 317 on foreign soil to snatch a three-wicket victory in the first Test in Chittagong from the jaws of defeat, thanks to Vettori's eight-wicket haul and a pair of half-centuries. However, they will be without their ODI series hero Jacob Oram, ruled out for the last Test due to injury.

"We have not done very well (so far) but our best is yet to come."

Only five local players, Tigers captain Mohammad Ashraful, Rajin Saleh, Mushfiqur Rahim, Tamim Iqbal and star performer of the first Test Shakib Al Hassan, had optional batting practice in the afternoon but Bangladesh will return for a full session this morning.

For the convenience of cricket fans and spectators, tickets for the second Test will be sold under special arrangement on weekly holiday (Friday, October 24) at the ticket counter of Sher-e-Bangla National Cricket Stadium in Mirpur.

The ticket counter will remain open from 2-5 pm.



**NOW HE WANTS TO FIELD BETTER:** New Zealand captain Daniel Vettori, who shone with both bat and ball in the Chittagong Test, takes a diving catch during a practice session at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday morning.

## Oram going back home

CRICINFO, undated

New Zealand all-rounder Jacob Oram will miss the second Test against Bangladesh starting on Saturday in Dhaka due to a back injury.

He experienced pain after bowling in Bangladesh's second innings in the first Test in Chittagong and underwent scans in Dhaka.

Oram will return home after watching the opening day of the Test for further assessment of the injury. Grant Elliott, the all-rounder who made his debut against England in Napier back in March, is likely to replace him.

"Oram is flying back (on Saturday) because of a sore back and we are not sure about the extent of his injury but he has a history of back problems so the people who know his injury and have dealt with it will assess him again," Lindsay Crocker, the team manager, said.

New Zealand coach John Bracewell admitted the Chittagong heat had taken a toll on both teams, particularly the fast bowlers. "We've worked pretty heavily on their recovery," he told the New Zealand Herald. "We're constantly weighing them and trying to get the right foods and fluid into them." He (Oram) was struggling with pain in his lower back.

Oram's condition deteriorated when bowling late on Sunday and was rested before Bangladesh were dismissed for 245 -- setting New Zealand 317 to win, a target they reached with three wickets in hand. He nevertheless took part in the successful run-chase and was

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## Did U Know?

Indian Test batsman VVS Laxman on Wednesday has signed up to play for Lancashire in 2009. This will be his second season on the English county circuit after a previous four-week stint with the same club in 2007 that yielded 541 runs in eight matches, averaging 54.28.



## Ricky Ponting

(Australia cricket captain)  
"We do need to definitely get it going as quickly as we possibly can. The Indians have been getting the ball to swing extremely quickly, as early as the eighth over, which is amazing. But for us it is not swinging. This has made a huge difference." On his bowlers' inability to reverse swing the ball on the ongoing tour of India.



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## Manik for ban on foreign booters

Football

SPORTS REPORTER

National coach Shafiqul Islam Manik has urged the need to ban foreign footballers in domestic football in a bid to negotiate the crisis of quality local players.

"It's time we should consider stop foreign players, especially strikers because we don't have many. Most of the teams field foreign strikers, which means our forwards are getting lesser exposure," Manik told at a post-Merdeka Cup press briefing at the BFF Bhawan yesterday.

BFF vice-president Shaukat Ali Khan Jahangir, who was part of the team's management in Kuala Lumpur, was also present.

"Even if it's not possible at this time, the federation should try to restrict the number to one foreign striker per team. And also, clubs should try to bring quality players from abroad, not the ordinary ones we have seen in the recent past," suggested former national footballer Manik.

"I think and the BFF and the

clubs should sit to talk on this and I am also going to give this suggestion to the BFF officially."

Manik, who was criticised for being defensive in the Merdeka



SHAFIQUUL ISLAM MANIK

Cup even after his side conceding goal, defended his style of play.

"I have always preferred a 5-3-2 system and it's not defensive. Yes, our main target was not to concede goals because we have lacked in scoring," said Manik whose side lost 1-0 to Mozambique U-20s and

Myanmar and held Vietnam Olympic team to a 2-2 draw in their group at the Merdeka.

"Our play was never negative on the pitch. Now we have to look to the tournament in Myanmar where opponents are going to be tougher. Now it's not the time to expect results from the team because we are trying to build a team for future."

"And I am happy the way the players behaved in Malaysia during the Merdeka Cup. We want an ideal team that will have discipline, commitment and performance and I believe we have taken one step to get a Team Bangladesh. We hope we would be able to play international matches regularly from now on because it is essential to improve the national team's quality."

"Some press reports claimed that I used injured players -- Hassan Al Mamun, Sujun and Aminul -- against Myanmar but that's not true. In fact, Sujun was the best player of that match," said Manik dismissing allegations against him.

Bangladesh's next foreign tour will in Myanmar where they play the hosts and Indonesia in their group of the 3rd Grand Royal Challenge Cup from November 11-21.

## Malik's life ban lifted

AFP, Lahore

A Pakistan court Thursday overturned a life ban against former cricket captain Salim Malik for alleged involvement in match-fixing.

Malik was banned following a lengthy inquiry in 2001 into allegations by three top Australian play-



SALIM MALIK

ers that he offered them bribes to underperform in a Test against Pakistan.

Malik appealed against the punishment to Pakistan's top court which earlier this year ordered

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## Nielsen calls for calm

Cricket

CRICINFO, undated

Australia coach Tim Nielsen has told his team not to panic after the shock defeat in the second Test in Mohali. Nielsen's outfit has not beaten India in the past four encounters and the 320-run loss on Tuesday was the country's seventh heaviest in history, but he is confident of a turnaround for the third game in Delhi from next Wednesday.

However, he sent the players off for three days of rest with a clear message. "One thing we just have to be so certain about is that we don't panic," he said. "We have to understand what the right way to go about playing over here is, and keep ourselves controlled and calm enough that we can deliver under the pressure we find ourselves."

Zaheer Khan and Ishant Sharma have troubled Australia's batsmen regularly throughout the opening two matches and the spinners also caused a lot of problems in Mohali. The major issue for Australia is that no part of their game is firing and the bowlers, particularly Brett Lee, are struggling for impact against the home batsmen.

"The game [in Mohali] didn't go to plan right from the outset,"

Nielsen said. "We were under immense pressure and in no way able to get back in the game. We understand it's only a week since we played well in Bangalore. If we do the same in Delhi we will be competitive."

The India players spoke of their superiority in the first Test and many supporters in the country believe the team has dumped Australia as the No. 1 unit. Nielsen admitted India were better "over the past five days" but would not concede anything else.

"Our challenge is to ensure the momentum they have gathered does not carry itself through to the next two Tests," he said. "They're a talented side and have great experience, but we showed in Bangalore we can compete and put ourselves in winning positions."

The Delhi curator has promised a pitch that is a present for Anil Kumble, who missed the second game with a shoulder problem. Nielsen said it was important for his team not to obsess over the conditions.

"We have to accept it's not the WACA or the Gabba or Adelaide Oval, and accept it's Delhi," he said. "It's not what we're used to, but it's still a wicket, and we need to execute our skills. It does put a bit of pressure on Anil, coming back

from injury to get a present like that. I hope he bowls well."

If the surface is helpful for the slow bowlers it could magnify the problems caused by Australia's lack of a high-quality spinner. Cameron White has been serviceable in his first two Tests without being consistently dangerous, while the off-spinner Jason Krejza has been overlooked since suffering harsh punishment in the tour match in Hyderabad.

Krejza was originally picked in the squad ahead of White and might come into calculations if the Delhi pitch looks like offering sharp turn. Steve Waugh, Australia's former captain, said the slow bowling was not the reason for the heavy defeat in Mohali.

"We must be patient with Cameron White," Waugh wrote in the Hindu. "After all, he has just started his career and it's too early to jump to conclusions. However, I was surprised that Beau Casson, who was pretty good in the West Indies, did not make this tour."

"But then, it was decided that leg-spin and a finger-spinner were better options. They picked Jason Krejza because they reckoned he was good enough to play, so it's better to try him out rather than to die wondering."

## Biggies stay on course

AFP, Paris



Liverpool only drew at Atletico Madrid in a subdued night of Champions League action.

Following Tuesday's 36-goal spree, Wednesday's eight matches offered less in that area with only Barcelona's 5-0 thrashing of Basel in Switzerland of note in the goal-scoring stakes.

Chelsea's 1-0 home victory over AS Roma kept them well on course at the top of Group A. Inter Milan thanked Brazilian Adriano for their 1-0 win over Cypriots Anorthosis leaving them as pacesetters in Group B, while Barcelona topped Group C.

Chelsea boss Luiz Felipe Scolari believed his side were in good form before the return match against AS Roma in November.

"Roma need to pressure us to try to win more than they did today, maybe there we will have more space to play," Scolari said.

"We only have one more Champions League game at home so this was a very important victory."

England skipper John Terry, who got the 77th minute goal, added:

"They made it very difficult for us the whole game but thankfully we got the goal and picked up three points."

"They are a very good side, they have got some great players in their team and made it difficult for us. They worked very hard all night and maybe they deserved something but thankfully we got three points."

"I think in the first half we got a little bit frustrated and were maybe too keen to get a goal. We had to be patient and wait for a chance because sooner or later it will come."

Terry said of his goal: "I think it was my first goal at the Bridge for a couple of years now, so I'm delighted to get off the mark."

"I got a bit of cramp so I couldn't celebrate but I am pleased we got the three points."

Teen sensation Bojan Krkic scored twice as Barcelona cruised past Basel to keep their 100 per cent record.

Goals from star Argentinian striker Lionel Messi, Sergi Busquets, two from Krkic and a fifth from Xavi Hernandez brought Barcelona up to an impressive 10 goals from their three victories.

Italian champions Inter Milan were made to battle all the way by a spirited Anorthosis Famagusta at the San Siro.

control of the group with seven points from three games.

Adriano had suffered from depression and a loss of form last season and was eventually loaned out to Sao Paulo but he has come back to form this season, looking leaner and more focused.

The Cypriots did themselves justice, though, by hanging in to the end and they are still in a position to qualify for the knock-out stages after Panathinaikos and Werder Bremen drew 2-2 in Greece.

Liverpool's Irish international Robbie Keane, yet to score in the Premiership, had put the visitors ahead in the 14th minute for his second Champions League goal at Atletico's Vicente Calderon stadium.

The 83rd minute goal of Simao, whom the Merseysiders tried to sign two years ago, was a blow for Liverpool although both they and Atletico have seven points at the top of Group D.

Liverpool boss Rafael Benitez said a major miss by Keane had been difficult to accept. "In this situation it doesn't matter how you score, you have to score. That's it," said Benitez.

"You have to finish when you have the chances. We were trying to find the perfect pass. We were in their final third and all we were doing was passing it."

In the group's other match,



Chelsea captain John Terry (2nd from L) is mobbed by his teammates after his headed goal decided a tight Champions League game against Roma at Stamford Bridge on Wednesday. Roma came into the game in poor form, but held tight until Terry's strike gave a subdued Chelsea all three points.

PHOTO: AFP