



Action from yesterday's Metropolitan Women's school football semifinal between Scholastica and BIT at the Dhanmondi Women's Sports Complex.

'Right rap on his knuckles'

PTI, New Delhi
The one-Test ban imposed on Gautam Gambhir on Friday evoked a mixed reaction from former cricketers with some of them describing the punishment as "harsh" while others justifying it, saying offences related to physical contact need to be dealt with strictly.

While Mohinder Amarnath felt the ban was harsh, others like Ravi Shastri, Ian Chappell and Saba Karim said it was perfectly justifiable.

Gambhir elbowed Watson after an angry exchange of words on the opening day of the ongoing third Test against Australia here and later went on to insist in a press conference that it was an accidental run-in.

However, when called for a hearing by match referee Chris Broad, Gambhir pleaded guilty to the charges.

"It is perfectly justified because he is a young chap and he should be given a rap on the knuckles at the right time," said former captain Ravi Shastri favouring the ban that will be challenged by Gambhir in an appeal.

"It should not happen that he does such a thing in a World Cup and then gets banned for the final," he added.

Former Australian captain Ian Chappell agreed and said, "The ban is justified because cricket is not a contact sport." Noted cricket writer and former county player Peter Roebuck hoped the punishment would act as a deterrent for Gambhir in future.

Pietersen close

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or are in need of players," he said. "We need to give an opportunity to those teams to keep the players as a currency, so that they can get a benefit out of that trading."

Several major sporting leagues, including the National Football League (American football) and the English Premier League (football), are mulling over the concept of staging matches abroad and Modi said that he was keen on seeing countries other than India hosting IPL games. "We have a lot of international players who have a great appeal in many countries, so for us to take our league abroad would be far easier than for the NFL which has mainly American players."

Emily fires

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Striker Mithun, already dubbed a future star, raised hopes again for the tourists when he raced past a rival defender in the 75th minute. However, the youngster ran too wide of the goal in a bid to go round an outrushing Biplab and only managed a backpass to the void.

The home side finally made it 3-0 five minutes from time when Ghanaian attacker Ibrahim sent a long ball from their own area and midfielder Zahed, who replaced Emeka 18 minutes earlier, evaded two defenders with his first touch and scrambled the ball past the rival keeper with his second to justify a national recall for this month's Grand Royal Challenge Cup in Myanmar.

Yellow cards: Emily (Abahani) and Mintu (Chittagong Abahani)

TEAMS

ABAHANI: Biplab (Tarek), Nazrul, Sujan, Samad, Waly, Abul, Joy (Pranotosh), Emeka (Zahed), Mamun, Emily and Ibrahim. CHITTAGONG MOHAMMEDAN: Thuan, Jahangir, Kashem, Nazir, Mintu, Monir (Sohel), Ismail, Othello, Emon, Mithun and Rony (Dipu). Referee: Mizanur Rahman.

Adam mocks Sourav

Cricket

CRICINFO, undated

Adam Gilchrist has taken digs at Sourav Ganguly and Harbhajan Singh for their decision to opt out of the 2004 Nagpur Test against Australia, a match that gave the visitors their first series win in the country in 35 years. His comments are part of his autobiography where he also questioned the evidence given by Sachin Tendulkar in the Harbhajan racism case.

Ganguly, India's captain during the 2004 series, pulled out on the morning of the Test complaining of pain in the groin, while Harbhajan missed the game after contracting flu. Gilchrist, who was leading Australia in the series in place of the injured Ricky Ponting, wrote that there was speculation that Ganguly skipped the match because of the grassy pitch.

"There was speculation that Sourav Ganguly was quarrelling with the head of cricket in Nagpur and a rumour that a spicy pitch might be prepared out of spite or revenge against the captain," Gilchrist wrote in his book True

Colours. "When I got to the middle, Ganguly was not there. (Rahul) Dravid was in his blazer, ready for the toss. 'Where's Sourav,' I said. 'Rahul couldn't answer definitively; between the lines I perceived that Sourav might have pulled out from fear of losing a home series.'"

At the start of the third Test in Nagpur, Australia were leading the four-match series 1-0.

Of Harbhajan, Gilchrist wrote that he was out of the Test "with a 'flu', which he seemed to have contracted when he saw the grassy wicket". "...I still don't know to this day what was wrong with Ganguly and Harbhajan."

Gilchrist also slammed Harbhajan for his role in the Sydney Test for which he was charged on grounds of racial abuse against Andrew Symonds. Harbhajan was handed a three-match ban which was overturned on appeal.

"...I heard Harbhajan say to Ricky, 'Sorry, I apologise, it won't happen again'. The look on Harbhajan's face was telling. He looked like he was thinking, 'Oh, no. What have I done here? They're all over me.'"

WAGs at fault?

FROM PAGE 17
room after the game and congratulating both teams, which I have done since day one, to being visible on the field.

"This is my ground, this is the Caribbean and our cricket here is different than it is in England."

Although the England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) have said these matches will be reviewed just like any series involving England, it is understood some officials are concerned by Stanford's conduct.

Stanford flew into Lord's in his own private helicopter to launch the series earlier this year before proudly unveiling a box full of dollar bills.

But while there was no doubting the financier's commercial motives, Atherton said the ECB should have taken a broader view, accusing the board of having "pawed the national team off for little more than a rich man's ego trip".

Although the ECB made sup-

portive noises about assisting West Indies cricket, there is little doubt a wish to prevent England players defecting to the lucrative Twenty20 Indian Premier League (IPL) when required for full internationals was a key consideration in their joining forces with Stanford.

The quality of the lights, which has led to a succession of dropped catches, and the pace of the pitch at Stanford's ground have also come under fire, although there were signs of improvement all-round as the Super Stars piled up 173 for four in their final warm-up match, against Middlesex, on Thursday.

Andre Fletcher made a dashing 90 not out off 66 balls with seven sixes while Kieron Pollard's unbeaten 27 featured four sixes.

Stanford, speaking before that inning ended, was adamant the series as a whole would be regarded as a success. "I think after Saturday people will have a different opinion of what we are doing here."

Aussies stay defiant

FROM PAGE 17
When the players and umpires avoided the buzzers by lying flat in their positions -- some perpendicular to the pitch, some parallel -- the aerial view looked like a human version of the board game Battleship. Sachin Tendulkar was the small and aptly-named destroyer, Hayden the hulking aircraft carrier. And it wasn't long before Sehwag sank the biggest ship with a perfectly targeted missile.

Hayden had survived a few close calls, including an edge off Sehwag that landed centimetres short of Rahul Dravid at first slip, before his fortune ran out. Playing back to the field, Hayden delivered the double century Australia wanted at least a single hundred from one of their topmen.

Still, Hayden's innings was a step in the right direction following his struggles in the first two Tests. He was more composed, he watched the ball closely and waited for opportunities, and rarely did he try to bully the bowlers. He went

over the top only when it was safe to do so -- he pulled a Mishra long-hop viciously for six and cut Zaheer without risk over the cordon to the vacant third man region.

Generally his bat was straight and it was noticeable that he ignored the sweep that undid him in Mohali. A classic cover-driven boundary off Ishant gave Hayden his first half-century of the tour and he was part of two important partnerships: a 123-run opening stand with Simon Katich and a 79-run compilation with Ponting.

In what was by far Australia's most positive start of the tour, Katich scored more freely than the watchful Hayden and used his feet impressively to the two legspinners. But on 64 he tried to close the face and clip Mishra through leg -- a tactic that had worked before -- but could only watch on as the ball spat out of the rough and collected his middle stump.

He was not the only batsman who would have that feeling. The task will only get tougher in the final two days of the Test. For now, Australia cannot look that far ahead. Their primary goal must be

to knock off the 76 runs they require to avoid the follow-on.

SCOREBOARD

Scoreboard at close on the third day of the third Test between India and Australia at the Feroz Shah Kotla Stadium in Delhi on Friday: INDIA: First innings 613-7 decl (Gambhir 206, Laxman 200 no; Johnson 3-142, Watson 2-66) AUSTRALIA: First innings (over-night 50-0) Hayden lbw b Sehwag 83 Katich b Mishra 64 Ponting b Sehwag 87 Hussey b Sehwag 53 Clarke not out 21 Watson not out 4 Extras: (b-16, lb-3, nb-6, w-1) 26 Total: (For four wks in 105 overs) 338 To bat: Haddin, White, Lee, Johnson, Clark. Fall of wickets: 1-123, 2-202, 3-284, 4-326. Bowler O M R W Zaheer 16 4 57 0 Sharma 19 5 46 0 Kumble 17 3 53 0 Mishra 30 7 95 1 Sehwag 22 4 66 3 Tendulkar 1 0 2 0

Aga Khan meet Scholastica in today's final

SPORTS REPORTER

Aga Khan International School will face Scholastica in the final of the Dhaka Metropolitan Women's school football tournament after identical wins in yesterday's semifinals.

The final of the first ever women's school tournament in the country will kick off today at the Dhanmondi Women's Sports Complex at 3.15 pm. Bangladesh Football Federation president Kazi Salahuddin will attend the final as chief guest.

Anika scored a brace in Aga Khan's 2-1 defeat of Vigarunnissa Noon School in the first semifinal. Pinky reduced the arrears for the losers.

Zara and Zerine scored for Scholastica on way to a 2-1 win over BIT, who briefly came back in the game with Lubaba's equaliser.

U-14 cricket

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Manikganj

Narsingdi defeated Jamalpur by three wickets in the under-14 national cricket competition at the Shaheed Miraz-Tapan Stadium in Manikganj yesterday.

Batting first, Jamalpur were all out for only 55 runs in 23.5 overs. Mehedi top scored with 16 runs while Rifat of Narsingdi took four wickets and Yasin claimed two wickets.

In reply, Narsingdi reached 56 runs in 26.5 overs losing seven wickets. Omar Faruk made 12 and Imran added 10 runs. Momin of Jamalpur took three wickets and Mehedi claimed two.

Jamil picks up 3

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Manikganj

Jovat Sangha defeated Biltu Club by seven wickets in the opening day of the Bhasha Shahid Rafiq Smriti Cricket tournament at the Government Devendra College in Manikganj yesterday.

Batting first, Biltu were all out for only 71 runs. Jamil of Jovat Sangha took three wickets.

In reply, Jovat reached 72 for three in just eleven overs. Jamil top scored with 25 runs.

Manikganj Police Superintendent Sheikh Muhammad Maruf Hasan inaugurated the tournament. A total of eight teams are taking part.

ECB invites Pakistan

AFP, Karachi

Cricket-starved Pakistan has got a rare invitation from England for a Test series and negotiations are already under way, a senior official said Thursday.

Pakistan have not played any Tests this year after Australia postponed a full tour over security fears.

They had not been scheduled to visit England in the Future Test Programme (FTP) until 2011, but now have a chance in 2010.

"We are keen to play a series in England so we will be holding negotiations soon with the England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) to sort out financial arrangements," the head of the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) Saleem Altaf said.

Pakistan are likely to play three Tests, five one-day internationals and a Twenty20 international, he added.

If the tour goes ahead it will give Pakistan the chance to compensate the ECB for the losses suffered during the controversial Oval Test on the team's last tour to England in 2006.

The ECB demanded compensation of 800,000 pounds (1.30 million dollars) from the PCB for lost revenue after umpires awarded the match to England on forfeit following the Pakistan team's decision to boycott on the fourth day.

Mumbai's first win

Cricket

INTERNET, undated

A superb all-round performance by Ranjit Khirid enabled Mumbai Champs register their maiden victory of the tournament over Delhi Giants by huge margin of 58 runs in the ICL20s Indian Championship at the Tau Devi Lal stadium here on Thursday.

It was Giants' captain Marvan Atapattu, who elected to field first and Shane Bond responded well to his skipper's call as he packed Subhojit Paul for 3 runs in the third over.

And thereafter a well-disguised slower one from Abid Nabi castled Taufeeq Umar in the 7th over with only 9 runs against his name.

But Dheeraj Jadhav held the mantle of the Mumbai batting. At the half way mark of their innings the Champs were paced at 71-2, making it an intriguing battle between bat and ball in the crucial middle overs stage.

Hasan Raza who had so far had an indifferent tournament was determined to put on a good show and got involved in a battle with ICL's premiere spinner Ali Murtaza.

Jadhav at the other end played a perfect sheath anchor role and in the process brought up his third ICL fifty off 37 balls, including

seven classical fours.

It was for the first time in the tournament that the Mumbai batting showed some class as both batsmen looked in supreme touch, working up a brilliant foundation for the final onslaught at the 15th overmark.

However, Ali Murtaza got the Delhi side back with the wicket of Jadhav for a well-made 59, in turn ending the brilliant 68-run partnership for the third wicket.

However, the Mumbai side was placed at 123-3 with four more overs to go. But Nabi got his second scalp of the match with the big wicket of Hasan Raza in the 18th over to bring the Delhi side back into the match.

Raza's knock was worth 43 runs off 30 balls that included 2 fours and same number of sixes.

But Ranjit Khirid, who came into this match with a cracking half century in the previous game was on the task right away. He played another brilliant unbeaten cameo for the second consecutive time, worth 43 runs off 20 balls, including 3 fours and 3 sixes.

The Mumbai Champs in the end posted a huge 174-4 in their allotted 20 overs.

The Delhi Giants chase was off to a solid start with skipper Marvan Atapattu in company of the aggressive Monish Mishra taking the score to 25 for no loss at the end of the third over.

But debutant Anupam Sanklecha struck back, sending off Mishra for 13 runs. He struck again, getting the big wicket of Atapattu in the 6th over to leave the Delhi chase in a bit of a bother at 36-2.

Astle came up with a new strategy to bowl out his strike bowler Michael Kasprovicz in a single spell and he sure delivered with a fine economical spell of 22-0 in his allotted four overs.

Just when it seemed that Mumbai had the upper-hand, Delhi's batting anchor Abbas Ali staged a fine fight back, racing off to 24 off 14 balls including four hits to the boundary.

But two quick wickets of Mahajan and Abbas had the Mumbai Champs sniff their first victory of the tournament with Delhi scorecard reading a troubled 71-4 in the 11th over.

Avinash Yadav worked up a fine spell in the crucial middle overs as he strangled the Delhi batsmen, causing complete panic amongst the lower middle-order and reduced them to 104-8 in the 15th over.

Avinash's three over spell at that stage earned him 3 wickets for only 17 runs.

In the end it was a perfect show from the underdogs Mumbai Champs. Avinash Yadav scalping four wickets for 18 runs, while Man-of-the-Match Khirid finished with 2-22 in three overs.

Benitez backs Maradona

Football

AFP, Liverpool

Liverpool manager Rafael Benitez is relishing the prospect of new Argentina boss Diego Maradona's visit to England next week.

Maradona is due in the UK from Sunday to meet Liverpool's Javier Mascherano and Manchester United's Carlos Tevez and may take in Liverpool's home Champions League tie with Atletico Madrid on Tuesday.

Benitez said: "I talked to Mascherano about Maradona's appointment, he is delighted. And I have also spoken with the Argentina federation, and everything is okay for Diego to come to Liverpool."

"Everybody will have the chance to talk, and to discuss the

future for Javier and the national team."

Benitez believes Maradona was the right choice to lead the Argentine national team.

"Nobody can ever doubt the quality of Maradona as a player, but I think he will do well as a manager."

"He will find that it is different as a manager, but he has a technical director with plenty of experience and they are trying to bring in some ex-players who have experience as managers to help him."

"That sort of staff around him will make it easier, he will have plenty of help and it will be a very interesting situation."

He added: "I know when Javier was told about the appointment he was excited, and very pleased."

"I do not know whether Maradona will be here for the Madrid game, but I suppose it is possible. There are several good

Argentinians in their squad for him to see."

"Diego will be very welcome to come to our training ground next week, and to see the match. Maybe I can persuade him to take a few free-kicks!"

Benitez is a huge fan of Maradona, who also attended Liverpool's famous Champions League final victory over AC Milan in Istanbul in 2005.

Benitez said: "We are about the same age, he had a great impact on me as a player. I watched him when he was at Napoli and Barcelona. He was absolutely amazing in Naples."

"You talk to the people there and they tell you he is 'God' which just underlines what everybody knows, he was a fantastic player. I think it is an exciting appointment. If he has the right people around him it will be really good for Argentina."

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