

'Captain has to perform'

Cricket

BISHWAJIT ROY in Johannesburg

It is a forty-five minutes drive from Johannesburg to Benoni where Bangladesh play their second one-day match against South Africa today at the Willowmoore Park, the home of Easterns Cricket.

Mohammad Ashraful's men however were unable to practise at the venue prior to the match and see the condition there to decide on the playing eleven because of the hectic schedule, as they have decided to stay at Potchefstroom to avoid too much journey by road.

"The schedule is very tight. We have to make at least a five-hour journey if we go to Benoni via Johannesburg and that's why we have decided to practise in Potchefstroom. I can't recall the venue though Bangladesh played a Twenty20 practice match last year and two one-day matches there," said the Bangladesh skipper yesterday.

"But I guess the condition would be more or less similar to Potchefstroom because it is summer now and the wicket should be very good," he added.

The Tigers skipper however was little bothered with the condition rather he was looking forward to keeping their spirited display in the

series as his side fought hard before conceding a 61-run defeat in the first match at Senwes Park on Friday after losing an opportunity in the Twenty20 International last Wednesday.

Bangladesh lost the match but won the hearts of the local crowd thanks to an entertaining 73 by Ashraful, which gave the captain more confidence to lead the team in the series.

"I think we have been playing good cricket since the Australia tour but my performance was not satisfactory though I scored few runs against New Zealand in the first two one-day matches.

"For a captain it is always important to perform because it makes the job easier," said Ashraful, who was criticised for his poor performance in the Test series against New Zealand.

Even then the Bangladesh captain was not a happy man despite his good knock because he believed that there was another chance for them to win a match.

"We were in a very good position before (Dale) Steyn's double strike. It was a good delivery but I have to survive against the good delivery if we want to win the match.

"We never thought that we could not win the match after South Africa took the score to 283 because the wicket was flat," said

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NASRI FIRES: Arsenal midfielder Samir Nasri scores his second goal against Manchester United during their Premier League encounter at the Emirates Stadium on Saturday.

PHOTO: INTERNET

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Nasri Gunners' hero

AFP, London

BTV
Bangladesh v South Africa
Second ODI
Live from 2:00pm
Neo Cricket
India v Australia
Fourth Test, Day Four
Live from 10:00am
ESPN

English Premier League

Blackburn Rovers v Chelsea
Live from 7:25pm

Fulham v Newcastle United
Live from 9:55pm

STAR Sports

English Premier League
Man City v Tottenham
Live from 8:55pm

Primera Liga
Vallarta v Getafe
Live from 2:00am (Monday)

TEN Sports & ZEE Sports

ICL Twenty20
Chandigarh v Ahmedabad
Live from 2:30pm

Chennai v Lahore
Live from 8:00pm

What to WATCH
Samir Nasri got Arsenal back in the groove as the French midfielder scored twice to give the Gunners a much-needed 2-1 win against Manchester United on Saturday.

Arsene Wenger's side started as underdogs on their home turf after a miserable run of three games without a win - including a tumultuous meltdown at Stoke - but they produced a superb performance to cast aside doubts over their title prospects this season.

Nasri opened the scoring midway through the first half in a thrilling encounter, then added his fifth goal of the campaign moments after half-time to seal the points.

Arsenal had not lost back-to-back league games in 56 outings, but the signs were not looking good as that defeat at Stoke seemed to pray on their nerves early on.

United had a goal ruled out after eight minutes, Bulgarian forward Dimitar Berbatov had strayed offside before slotting home from close range after a Wayne Rooney shot was pushed away.

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the title race, while United are five points off top spot.

Ahead of kick-off much of the talk had been of Arsenal's injury problems, so relief swept around the Emirates Stadium once the teams were announced with Theo Walcott, William Gallas and Mikael Silvestre coming through fitness tests.

For United there was just one change from the side that beat Hull last time out in the league, Park Ji-Sung coming in to replace Nani on the left of midfield.

Arsenal started nervously and goalkeeper Manuel Almunia gave away a needless free kick within one minute as he handled a Silvestre back pass. The set-piece led to Michael Carrick firing wide for the visitors.

After the break Arsenal quickly slipped into gear and doubled their lead.

Fabregas produced a brilliant turn just outside the United area on 48 minutes and slipped in Nasri, who drilled a fine strike beyond the grasp of Van der Sar.

It was a desperate blow to United, the league's in-form team

NCL 5th round starts today

SPORTS REPORTER

Table-toppers Rajshahi take on Khulna in the fifth round of the Ispahani Mirzapore Tea 10th National Cricket League at the Khulna Divisional Stadium today.

Arsenal took the lead in the 22nd minute. Patrice Evra fouled Bacary Sagna on the right side of the penalty area.

Cesc Fabregas's free-kick was cleared by Berbatov as far as Nasri on the edge of the box and he hit a left foot shot which deflected off Gary Neville and into the net.

The remainder of the half was tense. Walcott struck a decent opportunity over the crossbar, and Arsenal hearts were in mouths as Gael Clichy's apparent handball from a Rooney cross was not given as a penalty.

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India have upper hand

Cricket

AFP, Nagpur

Australia's hopes of levelling the series suffered a setback as they failed to counter India's defensive tactics in the fourth and final Test here on Saturday.

The visitors were bowled out for 355 in reply to India's first-innings total of 441 on the third day. With just two days to go, they will need an extraordinary effort to win the match and square the series.

Australia trail 1-0 after their 320-run defeat in the second Test in Mohali. The matches in Bangalore and New Delhi were drawn.

The hosts could not open their account in the second innings after facing just one over. Virender



India off-spinner Harbhajan Singh (C) jumps for joy after taking the wicket of Shane Watson of Australia (R) on the third day of the fourth and final Test at the VCA Stadium in Nagpur yesterday.

concern of the team. The dashing left-hander declared his arrival on the international arena by playing a match-winning half-century against India in the 2007 World Cup in West Indies and his place in the team has never been questioned. Rather there has always been a question about his suitable partner.

"I can't even understand why I failed to make a big one despite a good start. If you see my last few innings I have got starts but failed to convert it into a big one," said Tamim, who made two fifties in his last ten innings besides scoring 8, 26, 21, 0, 12, 0, 35 and 24 runs.

There was another chance for the left-hander on Friday to make a big one and thus help his side to be more competitive against South Africa in the first match but a terrible mess-up with his skipper Mohammad Ashraful put a premature end to his good innings.

"I don't want to make any comments on this run out," the Chittagonian responded.

When asked whether there was any lack of concentration behind the failure of playing big innings while there has been talk about a big offer from ICL, Tamim was very straight forward like his batting: "There is no reason to feel disturbed with the ICL offer because it is very simple to me. If I have any intention to go there, I will definitely do that. It's never on my mind."

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Dissent in Pak camp

Cricket

AGENCIES, undated

Much of the surprise over the appointment of Intikhab Alam as coach of Pakistan has emanated from not knowing precisely what he brings, in this day and age, to the set-up. Yet days ahead of his first assignment, it is becoming clearer what he will bring.

Almost from the day of his appointment as captain last year, Shoaib Malik is said to have shared an uneasy relationship with senior members in the side. Mohammad Yousuf, recently signed up with the Lahore Badshahs of the Indian Cricket League (ICL), was the first - and so far only player -- to go public with the dissatisfaction but he isn't the only one.

At a two-day training camp ahead of the one-day series against West Indies, Intikhab acknowledged there may have been unease within the team, but said the issue was not something that cannot be easily

resolved through open, honest communication.

It is believed that some senior players, including Shahid Afridi and Shoaib Akhtar, openly expressed their grievances against Malik's behaviour in the team meeting in Karachi.

Alam on Saturday said after he encouraged the players to speak up openly, some seniors showed their dissent over Malik's attitude in a nearly three-hour-long meeting.

Sources said Afridi and Akhtar, supported by some other players, questioned Malik's conduct and said after becoming skipper, he has started showing disrespect to the seniors.

The recent outburst against Malik came after veteran batsman Mohammad Yousuf held the skipper responsible for his sudden move to the rebel ICL this week, saying in the last one year, he was under tremendous mental torture and stress because of Malik's attitude.

"I am really disappointed at the way Yousuf went to the ICL without talking to anyone. But what has

happened in the past is now history and we have laid down a clear cut guideline for the players now," Intikhab said.

Renowned from his first stint as coach in the early 1990s as a manager of some skill, Intikhab downplayed the differences. "I won't hide anything," he said. "Yawar and I gave the boys an opportunity to talk openly and we said if anyone does have any issues to resolve do it here and now. The meeting was held in a good atmosphere and reservations came out in a nearly three-hour-long meeting.

The Court gave two weeks from the date of the verdict for the 12 respondents that included the secretary of the National Sports Council (NSC) and BHF general secretary.

"I had earlier received a legal notice on this issue but I'm yet to get a copy of the Court order," said BHF general secretary Khandaker Jamil Uddin, adding that he returned from abroad only on Friday.

Communication, he stressed, would be the key. "I feel a lack of communication often is the biggest problem. There should always be open communication between players and the management. As an elder, it is particularly important

to resolve the issue.

Jamil however said that the NSC, the regulatory body of country's sports federations, would look into the matter since it holds the elections of the federations.

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PHOTO: AFP

Shane Watson of Australia (R) on the third day of the fourth and final Test at the VCA Stadium in Nagpur yesterday.

All about Cricket

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DAY'S EVENT

Nat'l Cricket League (Four-Day Day 1)

Venue: Khulna Divisional Stadium

Barisal v Dhaka

Venue: Faizulah Cricket Stadium

Chittagong v Sylhet

Venue: Chittagong Divisional Stadium

Citycell B. League

Ctg Mohammedan v Arambagh

(3:00pm)

Venue: MA Aziz Stadium, Chittagong

Ball by ball...

Get live commentary of today's match

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PHOTO: AFP

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