



Pacemen Syed Raseel (L), Mashrafe Bin Mortaza (C) and spinner Abdur Razzak walk along a road beside Quigney beach in East London yesterday while a banner on the same street in front of the Bangladesh team hotel displays the details of today's third and final one-day match.

The Mashrafe mystery

Cricket

BISHWAJIT ROY in East London

Much is being made of the apparent 'disinterest' of Tigers pace spearhead Mashrafe Bin Mortaza in representing his country by constantly citing injuries. But for the man from Narail, the signals he is receiving from his body are indeed cause for concern.

The leading paceman missed the tour-opening Twenty20 match due to back pain and is all set to miss today's third and final one-day with the same complaint.

But while the aching back has caused Mashrafe physical discomfort, the bigger cause for apprehension now seems to be the fact that some segments of the squad think he is feigning injury to opt out of the inconsequential final ODI.

"Yes, I am always concerned about my injury and I always fear about this injury because you have to understand that I have had four operations. That's why I always

complain to the physio at the slightest discomfort. You must understand that I do it for my safety."

The physio in question, Darryl Lifson, was mutely ambiguous when asked to assess the fast bowler's condition.

Lifson whose contract will end after this series only replied with the rhetorical: "Mashrafe is a good man."

While that could mean many things in and of itself, the Narail Express is in no doubt as to where the suspicions lie.

"I know, many laughed at me when I complained about the injury...but I don't know what is the meaning of this. The pain is mine and I know how difficult it is for me. I have been playing for eight years now and except for a few initial matches I have never played any match without some sort of discomfort," said Mashrafe, who has had both his knees operated on.

"Many say it's a psychological problem but it's hard for anybody to understand if he is not going through such a painful situation in

his career. I can bet that in my situation nobody will be able to sustain themselves at the international level," he added.

That is understandable, since Mashrafe is the strike-bowler in the side and has often had to shoulder the brunt of the bowling, which being as injury-prone as he has been, is no easy task.

Fast bowlers are a rare breed and need constant looking after something that seems to have gone missing at the Tigers camp as a visibly upset Mashrafe seemed well aware of where the allegations against him seemed to be coming from.

"I feel terrible when people are whispering about my injury and even though I know who they are...I don't want to mention names."

Curiously though and to his benefit, Mashrafe has missed just two games in the past calendar year. It is a fact that he has in mind.

"Last one and half year I dropped out of just one one-day

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Claudio Ranieri
(Juventus manager)
"He's always been the leader, he carries Juventus and everyone else is right behind him. Given half a chance, he scores and that's good for us and our morale."
On Alessandro Del Piero.



- BT**
South Africa v Bangladesh
Third ODI (D/N)
Live from 6:15pm
- TEN Sports**
Pakistan v West Indies
First ODI
Live from 5:00pm
- ZEE Sports**
Carling Cup
Tottenham v Liverpool
Live from 1:00am (Thursday)
- ESPN**
Sportscentre India
Sports News
Live at 8:30pm
- STAR Sports**
Shanghai Masters Tennis
Second Round
Live from 4:00pm



Nat'l Cricket League
(Four-Day, Day 4)
Khulna v Rajshahi
Venue: Khulna Divisional Stadium
Barisal v Dhaka
Venue: Fatullah Cricket Stadium
Chittagong v Sylhet
Venue: Chittagong Divisional Stadium

Hoping for sunshine

Cricket

BISHWAJIT ROY in East London

The series is over after South Africa made it 2-0 and now both teams hoped that they will get better weather in the day-night third game which will take place at the Buffalo Park, very near to the Indian Ocean.

The last three matches including the Twenty20 International was played under cloudy and chilly conditions and it seemed that they are going to face the same fate in the third and final game as there was no sunshine yesterday and there is rain forecast for today.

"It would be fantastic if we can play the match under sunshine and

in better weather because we played all the matches in bad conditions," said Bangladesh captain Mohammad Ashraful.

Jacques Kallis, who attended the pre-match press conference after practicing at the ground yesterday, also said that they were looking forward for some good weather for the final one-day against the Tigers to ensure the clean sweep.

"There are nice practice facilities here and the ground is also nice. Now hope that the weather doesn't play with the match," said the prolific allrounder.

Besides the weather there were however another new factor for the Bangladesh skipper to be worried about which is the proper handling of the bowlers during the batsmen-controlled Powerplay as South

Africa made maximum use of it in the first two games.

"Our bowlers did an excellent job in the last few series but they struggled in the (batting) Powerplay and we have to find a way to stop the runs.

"For us there is hardly any scope to think about the series outcome rather every match is important to show our improvement. We didn't play well in the second match and now we want to get back the confidence before the Test series," said Ashraful.

Kallis however expressed his disappointment like his captain (Graeme Smith) over the approach of the Bangladesh team in the series.

"The performance of Bangladesh team is really disappointing as they

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'No need for changes'

Cricket

SPORTS REPORTER in East London

Bangladesh team management is considering to keep the same squad for the two-match Test series against South Africa.

The first Test will start on November 19 in Bloemfontein while the second and final Test will be held in Centurion from November 26.

Coach Jamie Siddons however was a little bit concerned about the number three batting position.

"We are thinking about one replacement. Rajin (Saleh) may be considered but I am not sure because Imrul (Kayes) looks comfortable," said Siddons.

"We need someone who stands up in the number three position but right now I think we have the best team here and they can do the job. It is quite balanced now," he added.

Bangladesh captain Mohammad Ashraful also echoed the sentiments and he also found no reason to make any changes in the team for the Test series.

"I don't think there is any need to bring changes in the team. There

are talks about Rajin Saleh but he has hardly shown anything in the National Cricket League for which we can consider him. I think this present squad is quite balanced for the Test series," said the Tigers skipper.

"Imrul might not score big but he looked good and the way he was leaving the ball was quite impressive," said Ashraful while reflecting on the number three position.

The team management even did not think about the replacement for Abdur Razzak, who is unlikely for the first Test as the left-arm

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The all smiles Dhaka Warriors team pose for photographs on their arrival at the Zia International Airport yesterday. The Warriors made their maiden appearance in the rebel Indian Cricket League a memorable one by winning half of their eight league matches with Alok Kapali (R) starring the show. They missed the semifinal bus after losing their last game against Lahore Badshahs.

LOCAL SNIPPETS

SPORTS REPORTER

Munshiganj (165) beat Rajbari (109) by 56 runs in the 29th National Cricket Championship at the Faridpur Stadium yesterday.

In other matches of the country-wide competition, Mymensingh (223) crushed Narsingdi (68) by 155 runs, Habiganj (85-3) beat Sunamganj (84) by seven wickets and Rangamati (126-6) beat Feni (122) by four wickets.

Sirajganj (109-4) beat Natore (108) by six wickets, Jhenidah (156-5) beat Kushtia (154) by five wickets and Jessore (232-9) outplayed Chuadanga (151) by 81 runs.

DIVII HOCKEY
Barnak Samaj defeated Bachelors Club by a solitary goal in the only match of the Green Delta First Division Hockey League at the Maulana Bhasani National Hockey Stadium.

Mithun scored the all-important field goal in the 34th minute.

DIVII FOOTBALL
Uttar Baridhara Club scraped to a 1-0 victory over Matuail Udayan Sangsad in the Second Division Football League at the Kamalapur Stadium.

Rezaul scored the winner for Baridhara in the 74th minute. The win took Baridhara to 27 points from 11 matches while Udayan Sangsad remained at 17 points.

In the day's other match, Kawran Bazar Pragati Sangha beat Friends Social Welfare Organization with Ahad scoring the all-important goal in the 57th minute.

Kawran Bazar secured 26 points while FSWO remained at 18 points, both having played 12 matches each.

UNDER-18 CRICKET
Rajshah (140-7) beat Chapainawabganj (139) by three wickets in the Under-18 Young Tigers championship.

Our Correspondent adds: Chittagong (202) registered a 74-run win over Bandarban (128).

Olympic Day Run on Friday

UNB, Dhaka

The Bangladesh Olympic Association (BOA) will organise the Olympic Day Run on Friday.

In a bid to popularise its movement across the country, the BOA has decided to hold the programme at district and divisional level simultaneously for the first time.

The programme of the day includes blood donation, children's art competition and other cultural activities.

The Run will begin from Ramna Tennis Complex in Dhaka at 7:30 am and end at the Bangabandhu National Stadium.

Participation in the Olympic Day Run will remain open for all the sport loving people, said a PID release yesterday.

Bangladesh hold hosts

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh held Myanmar to a goalless draw in the opening match of the 3rd Grand Royal Challenge Cup football tournament in Yangon yesterday.

A 15,000-strong home crowd was frustrated as the home team, who had beaten Bangladesh 1-0 in the Merdeka Cup in Malaysia last month, failed to repeat the act against Shafiqul Islam Manik's tight defensive unit at the Thuwanna Youth Training Centre Stadium.

There was, however, no sign of

the warlike tension between the two nations when the match started with the day temperature rising under a cloudy sky.

Myanmar got an excellent one-on-one chance after three minutes but Bangladeshi goalkeeper Aminul made the first of a series of saves in the game.

Manik started with a 5-4-1 line-up with Emily as lone striker but he failed to reach midfielder Zahid Hossain's 22nd minute lob from the right flank.

It was the only attacking effort the visitors had made during the first half, which saw them lose rightback Ariful walk out with an ankle injury in the 36th minute.

Manik, however, replaced the

defender with a striker in Robin, the first of a couple of changes for the 2005 Challenge Cup runners-up.

Aminul once again came into play in the 48th minute when he gripped a dangerous cross by Myanmar skipper Soe Myat Min, who had scored their lone goal in the Merdeka Cup against Bangladesh.

Mamun replaced Bangladesh captain Matiu Munna after 69 minutes and three minutes later, Sharif released an excellent cross for Emily, whose header was parried by Aung Aung Oo at the Myanmar goal.

Myanmar, 157 in the FIFA rankings to Bangladesh's 179, mounted heavy pressure in search of a goal

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Bangladeshi footballers look to the national colours at the gallery as team mascots guide them to the pitch for the 3rd Grand Royal Challenge Cup opener against hosts Myanmar at the Thuwanna Youth Training Centre in Yangon yesterday.

BCB polls today

Cricket

SPORTS REPORTER

With the Caretaker Government in power, everyone would hope for today's Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) elections to be fair and free of any influence like it happened in football about seven months ago.

As all previous elections (1998, 2001, 2005) of the country's richest sport federation were tainted by political influence, everyone also expects that no interference by the government would allow the best possible candidates to win.

Although 23 directorial posts are at stake for the 25-member committee (the president and a National Sports Council representative to be nominated), two direc-

tors have already been elected unopposed from the divisions. They are Asaduzzaman Khasru of Barisal and Imran Chowdhury of Sylhet, who were lone candidates from their respective divisions.

According to the new BCB constitution, ten directors will be elected in Category 1 (districts and divisions) by 68 voters, 12 in Category 2 from Dhaka-based clubs by 52 voters and one in Category 3 (cricketers, education boards, women's wings, etc.) by 47 voters.

For the remaining eight posts in Category 1, 15 candidates are still in the race with Dewan Shafiqul Arefin Tutul, Abdullah Al Fuad Redwan and Saibul Hossain Tutul competing in Dhaka, Sirajuddin Mohammed Alamgir, Shahin Aftabur Reza Chowdhury, Manjurul Karim and Nazmul Ahsan in Chittagong, Syed

Zahid Hossain, Kazi Shamim Ahsan, Shahidul Islam and Yakub Kabir in Khulna and Mahubul Jamal, Intiaz Ahmed, Jainal Abedin and Shahiduzzaman Shahid in Rajshahi.

After the chances of building a panel of consensus failed, the two groups -- Mahubul Anam and Aminul Haque Moni-led 'cricket development panel' and 'united sports panel' led by Enayet Hossain Siraj and Ahmed Sajjadul Alam Bobby -- for the Dhaka-based clubs will be pitted against each other with full force.

The two panels now have 12 candidates each for same number of directors and the prediction is that both will have equal share of directors in the end with only the tested ones winning -- another identical result like the Bangladesh

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