

Manik's job at stake?

SPORTS REPORTER

Shafiqul Islam Manik's future as national football coach looks uncertain after the National Team Management Committee (NTMC) seemingly fell divided on the issue.

Although NTMC chairman Badal Roy, also a vice-president of the Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF), is still interested to retain Manik as national coach, the members of his committee have been indifferent.

The NTMC had a meeting on Saturday night and according to its co-chairman Nurul Alam Chowdhury, the members have not reached a decision.

"I was not happy with the result of the national team in Myanmar. The team have returned in empty hands," commented Chowdhury yesterday.

Manik's rather defensive strategy is not beyond criticism but the former national footballer, who has been in charge for three and a half months and awaits a renewal of his contract which ended in November, did well with the underprepared side.

Bangladesh have not won under him but the five matches

SEE PAGE 18 COL 5

Race to intensify after resumption

SPORTS REPORTER



The final week's play of the Citycell B. League first-leg will see the four-way league race intensify with the title challengers feeling the heat.

Abahani are the only team to have completed their ten matches of the first-leg, the defending champions enjoying a five-point cushion at the top of the table with 22 points.

But second-placed Sheikh Russel can cut down the lead to a couple of points if they overcome the challenge of giant-killers Rahmatganj after the league's resumption.

The professional league will resume on December 18 after an 11-day break for Eidul Azha, giving most of the teams enough time to rest the tired legs and injured body and soul.

The teams had a hectic last 11 eleven days when the clubs were forced to play at least three matches but Dhaka heavyweights Abahani and Mohammedan had to take field for four times.

Both teams suffered heavy damages and struggled to pick up a fit eleven for crucial games, which resulted in one defeat to each tent.

After an exciting 2-2 draw between the two, Abahani managed to shave off unfancied Muktiyoddha with two late goals but fell prey to Brothers Union where the holders looked pathetic in a 2-0 loss.

Abahani regained momentum in their last match with a 3-0 crushing of Sheikh Russel, who despite having fresh legs, failed to take advantage of the situation.

Abahani still look suspect as their stronghold in the midfield has been reduced to injuries and the Sky Blues must take a quick decision to end a row with attacking midfielder Ujjal, who has been kept out of training despite joining camp after about two months.

Mohammedan needed a last-minute goal to beat Farashganj

SEE PAGE 18 COL 2



A SHOT TO BEHOLD: Chelsea's Brazilian-born Portuguese midfielder Deco (R) executes a spectacular bicycle kick to score his side's second goal against Bolton during their English Premier League match at the Reebok Stadium on Saturday.

A modest C'Ron

Football

AFP, Paris

Portuguese star Cristiano Ronaldo denied here on Sunday that he had ever claimed he was the best player in the world.

The 23-year-old insisted that all he had said was that he was well-placed to win the Ballon d'Or (European Player of the Year) award, which he is here to receive later on Sunday.

"I never said that I was the best player in the world," said the Manchester United winger, who had been quoted as saying that not only was he the best player but also the second and third ones as well.

"I always said that I was well-placed to win the Ballon d'Or."

"I have always had a lot of respect for the other players."

"It is not necessary to say who is the best player in the world, but who has an advantage, and I was carried along by this hope."

"All the players nominated had the possibility of winning this prize."

"Me I have had this possibility and this privilege, but all the nominees had the quali-

ties to win the award."

Ronaldo, who suffered a hip injury in the 1-0 win over Sunderland on Saturday, reiterated that he saw the award as a means of him only getting better as a player.

"It is always a special thing to reach this level of excel-

lence. "But the hardest thing is to stay at that level."

"I am very ambitious and a very strong character and a winning mentality."

"I want to continue to improve like the best players

SEE PAGE 18 COL 1



PHOTO: AFP

Manchester United's Portuguese winger Cristiano Ronaldo kisses the "Ballon d'Or" (Golden Ball) during an award giving ceremony in Boulogne-Billancourt, outside Paris on Sunday. He won the trophy as the European footballer-of-the-year for a phenomenal 2007-08 season in which he scored 42 goals for his Premier League and Champions League-winning club.

Security on ICC agenda

CRICINFO, undated

Managing security and terrorism intelligence were to be on the agenda for the International Cricket Council (ICC) chief executives' committee meeting in Cape Town on Sunday and Monday.

The recent terrorist attacks on Mumbai which put the England tour of India in doubt and the troubled security situation in Pakistan which led to the postponement of the Champions Trophy may have prompted the ICC to consider extending the purview of the Anti-Corruption and Security Unit (ACSU).

The committee, which comprises the chief executives of the 10 Full Members and three Associate Members, will discuss the expansion of the ACSU "in liaising and managing safety, security and terrorism intelligence matters with independent security consultants/agencies".

The committee will continue working on the Future Tours Programme post-2012 which includes a proposal for

SEE PAGE 18 COL 1

L'pool in pole position

Chelsea set new away wins record

AFP, London



Liverpool remained in pole position in the English Premier League as the top four in the table all won on Saturday.

The Reds' 3-1 victory away to struggling Blackburn Rovers kept them a point ahead of Chelsea after the Londoners beat Bolton Wanderers 2-0.

Chelsea's win saw them surpass Tottenham Hotspur's English record of 10 successive top-flight away victories set in 1960.

Reigning champions Manchester United remained six points behind Liverpool in third place although it needed Nemanja Vidic's stoppage-time goal to secure a 1-0 win over managerless Sunderland at Old Trafford.

Arsenal stayed in the top four with a 1-0 win at home to Wigan secured by a goal from Emmanuel Adebayor.

Elsewhere, Newcastle, on course for victory after Michael Owen scored twice, were held to a 2-2 draw at home to Stoke while Hull came from behind to beat Middlesbrough 2-1.

Earlier, Fulham and Manchester City shared the points in a 1-1 draw at Craven Cottage.

Liverpool manager Rafael Benitez was

pleased by his side's return to winning ways after their goalless draw on Monday against lowly West Ham.

"Clearly it was an important three points for us," the Spaniard said. "We are in a very good position and we want to stay there."

Chelsea assistant manager Ray Wilkins, a former Blues captain, praised his team's attitude as well as their skill.

"I thought the spirit and commitment the guys showed was absolutely first-class, coupled with some extremely good passing of the ball as well."

United manager Sir Alex Ferguson, who saw Vidic shoot into an unguarded net after Michael Carrick's deflected strike hit the post, said: "We deserved to win simply because we were the team that wanted to win and Sunderland, understandably, to survive."

Ferguson refused to criticise the relegation-threatened visitors' defensive approach in what was their first match since former United captain Roy Keane resigned as their manager.

"There have been better teams that have come here and played just the same with one-up and five across the middle of the park," said the Scot. "When you are down the bottom, you can understand the desperation to get a point."

Sunderland caretaker boss Ricky

Sbragia said: "The players are disappointed but they gave us everything."

Spain international Xabi Alonso broke the deadlock at Ewood Park in the 69th minute when he sidefooted in Liverpool captain Steven Gerrard's cross.

Then, 10 minutes later, Yossi Benayoun went past Stephen Warnock before shooting beyond Paul Robinson in the Rovers goal.

Roque Santa Cruz pulled a goal back four minutes from time before Gerrard wrapped up the three points with an injury-time effort.

The defeat increased the pressure on Blackburn boss Paul Ince, the former Liverpool midfielder, with Rovers still rooted in the relegation zone after a fifth successive defeat.

Former Bolton striker Nicolas Anelka headed Chelsea into a ninth-minute at the Reebok Stadium.

The Blues made it 2-0 in spectacular fashion through Portugal midfielder Deco's acrobatic 'bicycle-kick' in the 21st minute.

All the goals at Hull's KC Stadium came in a frantic final 11 minutes.

Boro went ahead through Turkey international Tuncay Sanli only for Hull to equalise three minutes later when Bernard Mendy's shot eventually went in

SEE PAGE 18 COL 5



Did U Know?

According to last week's estimate, Michael Clarke has replaced his skipper Ricky Ponting as the highest earning cricketer in the Australian team. He has a salary of 1.01 million US dollars.



Talk Turkey



Jason Gillespie
(Former Australia fast bowler)
"I can see a time where countries will be bypassing Test cricket altogether. With more Twenty20 Leagues, it will go the way where representing your country will take a back seat." While expressing his fear that Test cricket is in trouble.

Mahela 'very serious'

Cricket

CRICINFO, undated

Mahela Jayawardene, the Sri Lankan captain, has said the upcoming Test and ODI series in Bangladesh will be taken "very seriously" given the lack of international cricket for his team.

"We are approaching this series very seriously. Bangladesh has come a long way especially in the last six months," he told the Sunday Times. "In addition we do not have any international cricket for about four to five months after this series, thus it takes on even more significance and obviously we will be going all out to win both the Test and tri-nations series."

Sri Lanka will play two Tests and an ODI tri series, also involving Zimbabwe, in Bangladesh. The tour begins with a three-day warm-up game on December 21, followed by the Tests.

"We are going in with an open mind to Bangladesh," said Jayawardene, "and obviously the challenge for us collectively is to adjust to the different conditions and play to the best of our ability. If we can execute that plan I do not see any reason why we cannot emerge victorious."

Sri Lanka's batting struggled in Zimbabwe. Mahela Udawatte and Upul Tharanga, the preferred openers, both averaged below 20, and Jayawardene scored 19 runs in

four innings, including two ducks. Chamara Kapugedera, long regarded as a player with immense potential, again disappointed.

"You cannot judge the batting based on one series. I agree the batting was a bit disappointing. The wickets we played on in Zimbabwe were under-prepared," said Jayawardene. "People need to understand that every time we go out, we cannot post a 300-plus score. Having said that I do believe that we fell about 30 to 40 runs short in each game."

Sanath Jayasuriya's return, in place of Udawatte, will be a handy boost for Sri Lanka,

who surprisingly struggled in Zimbabwe. "This is a big plus point for us as he has a lot of experience," said Jayawardene. "Only he [Sanath] will know and time will tell whether he will be available for the World Cup. As you know we tried Mahela Udawatte on the Zimbabwe tour and the opening slot is not much of a problem as Kumar Sangakkara has also opened and we have about three to four other guys who can come in. One slot is taken care of with Upul Tharanga coming back into form."

Chaminda Vaas's exclusion

SEE PAGE 18 COL 1

Jason blasts CA

Cricket

AFP, Sydney

Former Australia paceman Jason Gillespie has slammed Cricket Australia (CA), saying it doesn't have the courage to stand up to the Indian cricket board, reports said Sunday.

Gillespie, who has just returned from playing in the rebel Indian Cricket League, claims Cricket Australia has deserted some of the nation's finest players in favour of propping up its relationship with the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI).

Gillespie, 33, was banned from first-class cricket in Australia after signing a three-year deal with the non-ICC

sanctioned Indian Cricket League.

"Unfortunately, they'll [CA] side with [India's] board rather than support players like 'Kasper' [Michael Kasprowicz] and myself, who've played for our country for many years," Gillespie told the Sunday Telegraph. "They're far too worried about the ramifications of not being nice to the BCCI, that's all they're worried about and it's a joke."

"They've basically said, 'No, we don't want you'. Cricket Australia are only concerned about their relationship with the BCCI."

Gillespie, who captured 259 wickets at 26.14 in 71 Tests, also said he believes Test cricket is on its last legs.

Mixed bag for Bangladeshi players

SPORTS REPORTER

Three Bangladeshi players secured one point each after end of the second round of the Asian Junior Chess Championship in Chennai in India.

FIDE Master Minhazuddin Ahmed Sagar beat Navalgund Niranjan in the first round but

SEE PAGE 18 COL 8



December 9	ESPN
English Premiership	West Ham v Tottenham
Live from 1:54am	
December 10	TEN Sports
UEFA Champions League	Chelsea v CFR Cluj
Live from 1:45am	
PSV v Liverpool	
Recorded version from 3:45am	
December 11	TEN Sports
UEFA Champions League	Porto v Arsenal
Live from 1:45am	
Man United v Aalborg	
Recorded version from 3:45am	
Neo Cricket	
India v England	First Test, Day 1
Live from 10:00am	

Moore's eyes full squad

Cricket

AFP, Abu Dhabi

England coach Peter Moores is convinced the entire squad will travel to India for the two-Test series should final security clearance be granted on Sunday.

The squad are at a training camp here while they await the report of England and Wales Cricket Board security advisor Reg Dickson, who is in India assessing security ahead of the series which is due to start in Chennai on Thursday.

England are scheduled to travel to Chennai on Monday if the go-ahead for the tour, which was thrown into doubt after last month's terror attacks in Mumbai, is given.

"There's a general will within the team to go and play those Test matches because, one -- to represent your country and, because of what's happened we all want to play cricket now," Moores told Sky Sports.

"There is a general strong feeling that we want to go and play those Tests."

There has been speculation that some players in the squad were unwilling to travel even after the venues for both Tests were switched to Chennai and Mohali.

"In the team you will have people viewing it slightly differently," added Moores.

"If someone views it differently, and the key will be if

someone decides not to go, we will respect that decision because one thing that I know as coach is that everybody is desperate to play for England.

"It's not like we've been on

a long run of cricket and we have got people who are tired.

"We have got fresh players who want to play and represent their country and if some

SEE PAGE 18 COL 4



England captain Kevin Pietersen prepares for a morning practice session at the Sheikh Zayed Cricket Stadium in Abu Dhabi on Sunday.