

BD-Eng D/N Test at Lord's?

CRICINFO, undated

The first Test under lights may be held in May next year when England open the summer against Bangladesh at Lord's, according to a report in the Sunday Telegraph.

The change in playing conditions could prompt a change in the players' traditional white kit and the red ball, which will not be easily visible under the floodlights. The ICC cricket committee will discuss the matter when it meets this May. "As this would involve a change to the standard Test playing conditions and the clothing and equipment regulations for Test cricket, it would require our proper consent and the ECB have not approached us yet for any such approval," Dave Richardson, the ICC general manager, told the newspaper. "But the ICC is supporting the research by the MCC, which includes whether a white ball can be developed that can last longer and be suitable for longer versions of the game."

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Getting into IPL stride

Cricket

SPORTS REPORTER

Mashrafe Bin Mortaza is a special one in our country's cricket. His performance with Abahani in the ongoing Premier Division Cricket League once again proved why he is exceptional from other cricketers of his generation. Constantly living with a career-threatening injury and barred from bowling at any pace to heal his recurring back pain in the last four Premier League games, the Narail Express still played a major role in holding Abahani in pole position either with his off-spin or with the bat. His last knock against Mohammedan on Saturday that contained seven sixes can be best described as a perfect warm up for a bigger battle that he would embark on when the billion-dollar IPL starts in South Africa next month.

After leading Abahani close to retaining the title, the brave-heart cricketer is now

looking forward to win the hearts of his Kolkata Knight Riders employers, who bought the Bangladesh vice-captain with a stunning sum of 600,000 dollars.

"I am hopeful that I can prove my worth in this competition if I am fit. You know I



MASHRAFE BIN MORTAZA

bowled off-spin in the last few league matches because of my old back pain and did an MRI today. Hope everything would

be okay before start of the tournament," said Mashrafe yesterday, the Abahani captain who was advised by the national team physio Michael Henry not to play any further matches in the league.

Bollywood superstar Shahrukh Khan's Kolkata Knight Riders snapped up the Bangladesh pace-spearhead in a sensational bidding battle of the IPL auction last February.

"I know it's a challenge for me to prove that the sensation unfolded for my possession in the bidding was not a fluke. I have had a very good preparation in the league. I took a lot of wickets and have scored some quick runs although I know in the IPL it would be a different ball game," said Mashrafe.

The second version of the IPL will kick off on April 18 in Cape Town with Mumbai Indians taking on Chennai Super Kings and Rajasthan Royals pitting against Bangalore Royal Challengers in the opening double-header. Mashrafe's Kolkata Knight

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PHOTO: STAR

Ansar players celebrate their triumph in the Citycell Women's National Football Championship final at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday. Ansar defeated Narayanganj 2-0 to clinch the trophy.

DIV-1 CRICKET Fight for top intensifies

SPORTS REPORTER

Baridhara Dazzlers have strengthened their claim to rise to the Premier Division Cricket League when they won their First Division Cricket League match against Khelaghar by 16 runs at the Fatullah Cricket Stadium yesterday.

Baridhara posted a competitive total of 248-6 in 50 overs after winning the toss and opting to bat first. Rasel and Atiqur contributed with 61 and 55 respectively while Khelaghar's Saker picked up four for 35 in ten overs. Khelaghar were then all out for 232 falling just 16 runs short of victory. Nur Hasan and Masud both picked up three wickets apiece.

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Did U Know?

New Zealand's Jess Ryder scored his first double century on the second day of the second Test against India on Friday.



TALK TURKEY



Kazi Salahuddin

(BFF president)
No doubt the crowd was marvellous, amazing and scintillating but the quality of the game could have been lot better. The people love football, that's why they come to the field. But to keep them in the stands we need to raise the standard of the game.
On Friday's Super Cup final between Mohammedan and Abahani.



Neo Cricket

New Zealand v India
Second Test, Day Five
Live from 4:00am
ESPN
Sportscentre India
Sports News
Live at 8:30pm



PHOTO: STAR

Bangladesh's Brazilian football coach Edson Dido Silva (L) watches his charges jogging at the BUET ground in the city yesterday. Dido is preparing the national team for next month's AFC Challenge Cup qualifiers in Dhaka.

LOCAL SNIPPETS

SPORTS REPORTER

Fide Masters (FM) Abu Sufian Shakil and Mehdi Hasan Parag jointly lead the points table with five points each after the fifth round of games ended at the preliminary phase of the Mercantile Bank 35th National Chess Championship at the chess federation hall-room.

In the 5th round games Shakil beat Polish, Parag beat Aminul, Taibur beat FM Mohammad Javed, Robin beat Jamal Ahmed, Ali beat IWM Rani Hamid, Debaraj beat Amir Hossain, Emon beat Delwar Hossain, Shafiq beat Obaidul Islam Shahin, Reza beat Mainuddin, Masum beat Imran Ali Elin, Monir Hossain drew with Habibur Rahman Sohel and Golam Moshitafa

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False start for Dido

Football

SPORTS REPORTER

Brazilian coach Edson 'Dido' Silva was not happy the way his first day of training with the national team started.

The team, preparing for next month's AFC Challenge Cup qualifiers at home, had a morning training session at the Bangabandhu National Stadium but Dido was not happy to see the transport for his charges.

He did not want to split the players in two minibuses that were available for the short trip from the BFF Bhaban. As a result, the whole party walked to the venue where Dido only briefed them for a couple of

hours instead of any physical workout.

The Brazilian was also agitated as the training jerseys were not ready in time.

However, the BFF was also irked about Dido's outburst to the media.

"Everybody was busy about the Super Cup, so there was some miscommunication," said a BFF official. "I feel what Dido wanted (bus and jerseys) was right but he should have not complained to the media. This is what we are going to talk about with him," he added.

It was learned that the coach wanted an air-conditioned bus where all the players could travel together in comfort.

Later in the afternoon, the

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Gambhir ton lifts India

Cricket

AFP, Napier

A batting master class from Sachin Tendulkar and a century to Gautam Gambhir took India to the verge of making New Zealand bat again on the fourth day of the second Test in Napier yesterday.

India closed the penultimate day at 252-2, requiring a further 62 runs before they can start setting New Zealand a target and set about saving the Test.

Gambhir on 102 and Tendulkar not out 58 were firmly entrenched with their unbroken third-wicket stand of 89, and the New Zealand bowlers were helpless to threaten on the benign wicket.

Having been forced to follow on 314 run in arrears, India believed they had at least saved the game after a dogged day in which they only scored 205 runs, but lost just one wicket. Rahul Dravid out for 62.

"We've shown that we can fight back," Dravid said.

"We've not been put in this position a lot over the last year. We found ourselves with our backs to the wall on day four and we needed some character, we needed to fight and we showed that."

However, New Zealand

coach Andy Moles remained confident his side could still pull off a victory on the final day.

"It's an exceptional batting wicket," he said. "You're looking for mistakes from the batters as opposed to the ball

misbehaving on the last day as you'd normally like to see.

"We've still got a chance to win. We're playing an exceptional Indian team and we're the only side that can win."

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PHOTO: INTERNET

THE SAVIOUR! India's opening batsman Gautam Gambhir plays one through extra-cover during his potentially match-saving knock of 102 not out on the fourth day of the second Test at the McLean Park in Napier yesterday.

Icing on the cake for BFF

SPORTS REPORTER

The Citycell Super Cup not only entertained the fans but also enriched the purse of Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) as about Tk 20 lakh came from gate money.

"We have sold total tickets of Tk 19,38,360 in 21 matches," informed tournament committee chairman and BFF member Harunur Rashid yesterday.

"We are also grateful to the media for taking football to people's home during this tournament," he said thanking the role of the media.

In the last ten years, only the SAFF Championship in 2003 came as close as the Super Cup in terms of ticket selling.

The final was worth Tk 7,68,530 although the earning should have been higher as more than 40,000 spectators enjoyed the game at the brimming Bangabandhu National Stadium.

"The capacity of the BNS is 35,000 according to the National Sports Council. We sold 27,600 tickets and 400 tickets were reserved for women. We also distributed about 5,000 free passes and school students' entry was free. So it is difficult to tell actually

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Maruf kept waiting

SPORTS REPORTER

Despite delivering two trophies including the Tk one-crore Super Cup to Mohammedan, coach Maruful Haque's job at the local giants looks at stake.

Maruf's one-year contract ends this month but the authority has yet to start talks about negotiation for a farther contract.

Maruf has said he would give strict conditions if the Black and Whites want to keep him for the next season as he was not happy with the club's management.

Many members of the Mohammedan football committee, most of them ex-players, have criticised Maruf throughout the season and even during the Super Cup, which Mohammedan took home with a 1-0 victory against archrivals and favourites Abahani on Friday.

"I have seen what Maruf said about the management. It has damaged the club's goodwill," Mohammedan general secretary Lokman Hossain Bhuiyan told reporters yesterday.

"I am happy with the coach because he has deliveries us the Federation Cup and the Super Cup. But the technical things are discussed in the football committee, which will take the decision on Maruf," Lokman added.

With Maruf's critics being the major part of the Mohammedan football committee, it is highly unlikely that Maruf will retain his job although many have praised his modern and effective approach to coaching.

Joy for Ansar

Football

SPORTS REPORTER

Just a couple of days after the jam-packed Bangabandhu National Stadium witnessed a high-voltage Abahani-Mohammedan final of the Super Cup, it was not easy to stare at the nearly empty stands during another final.

But the finalists of the Citycell Women's National Football Championship did not bother about the circumstances rather they fought a fierce battle on the pitch braving storm warnings.

And when Bangladesh Ansar clinched the title of the inaugural edition of the countrywide women's championship with a 2-0 win over Narayanganj, the jubilation was no less than Mohammedan's Tk one-crore triumph.

Women's football, in Bangladesh, has not reached a position to talk about but the enthusiasm proves that it could go a long way under the right leadership.

It needs to be nurtured carefully and top coaches have to come forward to guide them, not treating the women footballers of the country as minority.

It is also difficult for the district teams to run camps round the year but teams like Ansar and VDP have done that to harvest rich crops by reaching the last four.

And Ansar, who have footballers in their payroll, could be a big support for the interested.

After a barren first half, Ansar broke the deadlock from a 39th minute penalty when their midfielder Suniu Pru Marma beat Narayanganj goalkeeper with a left-footer from the spot.

Narayanganj tried hard for an equaliser but they hardly got beyond a tight Ansar backline before striker Rawshan Akhter shot the ball into the roof of the net inside from the box to seal Ansar's victory in the dying moment.

Nuby Ching Marma, adjudged player of the tournament, told after receiving a cheque of Tk 5,000 that she is happy to be able to train football throughout the year.

"I like football and I am happy that the Ansar allow me to train only this game. Usually, one has to play more than one game at the (Ansar) Academy, but those who are really good in one game are permitted to stick to that," the Class X student told.

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PHOTO: AFP

Argentina sensation Lionel Messi spins away to celebrate his goal in their World Cup qualifying match against Venezuela at the El Monumental in Buenos Aires on Wednesday.

Astounding Argentina

SOCCERNET



Diego Maradona made a dream home debut as Argentina coach when his side demolished Venezuela 4-0 in a World Cup qualifier on Saturday while Uruguay and Colombia followed suit with

home wins. Uruguay beat South American group leaders Paraguay 2-0 while Colombia ended a five-match goal drought as they overcame struggling Bolivia by the same score.

Paraguay stayed top of the 10-team South American group with 23 points from 11 games while Argentina went second, four points behind. Brazil, third with 17, visit Ecuador, seventh with 12, on Sunday.

Uruguay moved into fourth place with 16 points, ahead of Chile on goal difference, and Colombia climbed to sixth with 14. Chile are away to table-propping Peru on Sunday.

The top four teams qualify for South Africa and the fifth plays off against the fourth team

from the CONCACAF zone.

Lionel Messi inspired Argentina by scoring their first goal and setting up the second on a day which Maradona described as better than fiction.

Maradona, who began his reign with friendly wins away to Scotland and France, was given a rousing reception by the crowd when he came onto the field before the game at the Monumental stadium for his first competitive match at the helm.

"This was better than I expected, reality has overcome fiction," said Maradona, who since retiring as a player has been treated for drug addiction, obesity and alcohol-induced liver disease, at one stage spending 10 days in intensive care.

"I couldn't have imagined what happened today. It was perfect."

Messi opened the scoring after a one-two with Carlos Tevez in the 26th minute and returned the compliment by providing the cross for Tevez's first goal of the qualifiers two minutes after halftime.

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