



India off-spinner Harbhajan Singh (R) celebrates taking the wicket of New Zealand batsman Jesse Ryder (L) on the fourth day of the third and final Test at Basin Reserve in Wellington yesterday. PHOTO: AFP

Shuvo knocking on the door

Cricket

SPORTS REPORTER

Promising batsman Shamsur Rahman caught the eyes of none other than Sri Lankan great Sanath Jayasuriya during the just concluded Premier Division Cricket League.

And there was a genuine reason in the eulogies as the elegant Mohammedan right-hander not only finished as the highest run-getter in the country's most coveted com-

petition with 677 runs in 15 matches but also the way he batted made many believe that he can be a good fit in the national top-order.

The 20-year-old batsman from Chandpur has all kinds of shots in his arsenal and got the ability to handle the pace and spin bowling faultlessly, especially his on-side drive is always eye pleasing. The young man has also the rare ability to push for single to build up the innings.

"It's nice to see him as the top run-getter but the most

important thing was he looked positive and compact. You know we have a lack of quality



SHAMSUR RAHMAN

backup middle-order batsmen and [Shamsur Rahman] Shuvo could be a good choice," said chief selector Rafiqul Alam yesterday.

With good performances in the Super League, some national batsmen like Tamim Iqbal (576 runs), Mohammad Ashraf (543 runs) and Imrul

Kayes (540 runs) have moved into the list of top-ten but Rafiqul still highly rated the performances of the young stars in the competition.

"Ashraf, Tamim and even struggling Rokibul [Hassan] got back among runs but I think the young players hogged the spotlights in this year's league. I must say it is encouraging to watch the way players like Nasir Hossain, Rony Talukdar and Mohammad Mithun played this year," said the former national player.

He also heaped praise on young pace bowler Abul Hossain who grabbed 29 wickets in 10 matches to top the list and Sabbir Rahman, the young leg-spinner from Rajshahi, who scalped 28 wickets in 16 matches and left-arm spinner Saqlain Sajib (26 wickets in 16 matches). Pace spearhead Mashrafe Bin Mortaza also captured 28 wickets in 13 matches.

But the chief selector was

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Lanka rewards Pak bus driver

AFP, Colombo

Sri Lanka rewarded a Pakistani coach driver with 21,800 dollars for his role in protecting the island's cricket team during last month's gun and grenade attack in Lahore in a ceremony held at Colombo.

Meher Mohammad Khalil was hailed as a hero for driving the team to safety after their coach was attacked by suspected Muslim militants in the Pakistani city on March 3.

"I did it for Pakistan. I did it for Sri Lanka, who were our guests," Khalil said at the ceremony, during which he was given 21,800 dollars donated by Sri Lanka Cricket (SLC), the Sports Ministry and private companies.

"Khalil, you are our hero. We will always remember you with gratitude," said Mahela Jayawardene, the former Sri Lankan skipper on the Pakistan tour.

Seven Sri Lankan players and their British assistant coach Paul Farbrace were

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Victoria Azarenka

(Belarusian tennis player) "It was a great honour to meet Serena in the final and even greater to win against her. It's only this season that I have started to believe in myself and to believe that I can win tournaments."

After beating top seed and world number one Serena Williams in the final of the Sony Ericsson Open on Saturday.



NEO Cricket

New Zealand v India
Third Test, Day Five
Live from 4:00am

ESPN

Sportscentre India
Sports News
Live at 8:30pm

TEN Sports

UEFA Champions League
(Quarterfinals)
Man United v Porto
Live from 12:00am (Wednesday)
Villarreal v Arsenal
Live from 2:45am (Wednesday)

India scent victory

Cricket

AFP, Wellington

India were on the brink of their first series win in New Zealand since 1968 after the hosts lost four second-innings wickets still needing 450 runs for victory in the third Test in Wellington on Monday.

New Zealand were struggling at 167 for four when bad light stopped play almost an hour early on the fourth day, after being set a massive target of 617 to win the final Test.

India had a 1-0 lead coming into the Test at the Basin Reserve and a draw would be enough to clinch their first series win in New Zealand for more than four decades.

Victory for New Zealand is out of reach, with the highest fourth innings winning total in Test cricket history being 418 scored by the West Indies against Australia in 2003.

New Zealand's remaining batsmen face the imposing task of trying to survive the final day, with forecast rain their best chance of salvaging a draw.

New Zealand vice-captain Brendon McCullum admitted his team was eyeing the rain forecast for Tuesday, but was ready to attempt to fight for a draw.

"I guess you can't pray for rain or expect rain to get you out of a sticky situation," he said.

"We got a partnership formed late this afternoon, hopefully with a couple of batters to come we can still try and get out of this."

Indian batsman Yuvraj Singh conceded India had both the weather and a slowing pitch to contend with in seeking their second win of the series.

"The wicket has become a little slow, so if a batsman gets set he can get runs. You've got to work hard to get those last six wickets."

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Macheda rescues MU

AFP, Manchester

Italian teenager Federico Macheda netted an injury-time winner on his Premier League debut as Manchester United reclaimed top spot with a dramatic 3-2 victory against Aston Villa on Sunday.

Macheda, 17, signed from Lazio in 2007, curled a stunning strike past goalkeeper Brad Friedel two minutes into stoppage time here at Old Trafford to snatch all three points for the reigning champions.

United looked set for defeat after John Carew and Gabriel Agbonlahor had cancelled out Cristiano Ronaldo's opener.

But Ronaldo's second and Macheda's strike saw United to a victory that left Sir Alex Ferguson's team a point in front of Liverpool and with a game in hand.

Liverpool's injury-time victory at Fulham 24 hours earlier had enabled Rafa Benitez's team to go top and heap the pressure on United ahead of this game.

That pressure was tangible as Ferguson's men toiled in the early stages, clearly nervous without the suspended trio of Wayne Rooney, Paul Scholes and Nemanja Vidic and the injured Rio Ferdinand.

This was a makeshift United line-up and Villa were

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TOTALLY UNEXPECTED: Manchester United's Italian starlet Federico Macheda (L) gets a congratulatory hug from manager Sir Alex Ferguson after scoring the winning goal against Aston Villa deep into injury time during their Premiership match at Old Trafford on Sunday. PHOTO: AFP

Rahul catches world record

BBC ONLINE, undated

India cricketer and former captain Rahul Dravid has broken the world record for the number of catches in Test matches by an outfielder.

When Dravid helped to dismiss the New Zealand batsman Tim McIntosh on Monday it was his 182nd catch in a Test career going back to 1996.

David's landmark was reached on the fourth day of India's third Test match against New Zealand at Wellington.

The previous record holder was Mark Waugh of Australia.

David, 36, is now clearly ahead of Ricky Ponting (148 catches in 131 Tests), Jacques Kallis (147 catches in 131) and Mahela Jayawardene (142 catches in 102) among current players.

"David has spent a lifetime in Sachin Tendulkar's shadow and the big batting records -- centuries, number of runs scored -- were never going to be his, but he is quite on his own in the slips," according to Sambit Bal, editor of cricinfo.com, a cricket website.

Last year, Dravid became only the sixth batsman in history to score 10,000 Test runs.

He has compiled 26 Test centuries and 56 fifties, earning the nickname "The Wall" for his obdurate style of play.

Dravid, who was appointed the captain of the Indian team in October 2005, resigned from the job in September 2007.

He captained India in 25 Tests -- winning eight, losing six and drawing 11 -- and 79 one-day internationals.

LOCAL SNIPPETS

SPORTS REPORTER

Railway Hospital Colony City Corporation High School were awarded the second semifinal of the Standard Chartered Young Tigers Under 16 National School Tournament yesterday at the City Club Ground in Dhaka.

The match was abandoned due to rain and Railway School got the better of Faridpur Zilla School because of a better average run-rate.

Railway School will play Kabi Nazrul Shikka Manzil in the tournament final today at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur.

The 50-over match will start at 9:30am.

EUROPA SCHOOL V'BALL

The final matches of both the boys and girls' sections of the Europa School Volleyball Tournament will be held today at 4pm at the Dhaka Volleyball Stadium.

In the finals, Children Academy will meet BIT in the boys section while Viharunissa Noon School face Green Herald in the girls meet.

NATIONAL MEN'S HANDBALL

Chapainawganj and Bogra reached the "Ka" zone final of the EXIM Bank 19th National Men's Handball Championship eliminating their rivals in

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Akhtar in team again

Cricket

AFP, Karachi

Fast bowler Shoaib Akhtar has recovered fully from a knee injury to win a place in Pakistan's 15-man squad for this month's series against Australia announced in Karachi on Monday.

The 33-year-old paceman was ruled out of last month's Test series against Sri Lanka -- which was abandoned after a deadly attack on the Sri Lanka team in Lahore -- because of the knee injury, which healed without surgery.

Pakistan are due to play five one-day and one Twenty20 match against the world champions in Dubai and Abu Dhabi from April 22 to May 7.

"I would say that he [Akhtar] impressed with his fitness in the tests we conducted last week," said chief selector Abdul Qadir. "After the tests, the trainer and doctor gave a very good fitness report on Akhtar."

Qadir said a fit Akhtar would bolster the squad in the series.

"Now it's up to Akhtar to not only remain fit but also perform. I have been saying this and I repeat that a fit Akhtar is an asset for Pakistan's team," said Qadir, a former leg-spinner.

Akhtar missed the Test series against Sri Lanka in February and March due to his knee injury. The series was called off after gunmen ambushed the Sri Lanka team's convoy in Lahore, Pakistan on March 3, killing eight Pakistanis.

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Bangladesh football team's Brazilian coach Dido (2nd from L) gives some tips to his charges during a training session at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday. Bangladesh are preparing for the AFC Challenge Cup qualifiers to be held in Dhaka later this month. PHOTO: BANGLARCHOKH.COM

'Let Sunil buy a team'

INTERNET, undated



Shah Rukh Khan, owner of the Kolkata Knight Riders (KKR) hit back at Indian batting legend Sunil Gavaskar over his comments about franchise coach John Buchanan, and has asked Gavaskar to stay away from issues concerning his Indian Premier League (IPL) team at a press conference in Mumbai on Sunday.

In his column for the Hindustan Times, Gavaskar termed Buchanan a "failed former cricketer making a living telling international players to do what he couldn't do". It has not gone down well with the IPL franchise, which last week tried to put a lid on the controversy generated by Buchanan's theory of multiple captains by releasing a statement that during a game the team would resort to a group of "strategists" who would report to one on-field captain while making decisions.

Shah Rukh has come to Buchanan's defence, saying there was a marked difference in the time Gavaskar played and now. "I respect Mr Gavaskar -- his knowledge about cricket is a billion times better than me," Shah Rukh told reporters in Mumbai. "But this is an era where Mr Gavaskar has not indulged in; nevertheless his knowledge

about the game does allow him to make comments."

"This is a new format that's being tried out. Please give it some breathing space. I am the owner of the team, I bought it. If he wants to implement something, let him buy a team."

Gavaskar was scathing of

Buchanan in his column, saying the former Australian coach had a way with words in India, a country Gavaskar said had few people capable of defusing opinion makers. "To comment on his multiple skipper theory is to give it the

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Bollywood superstar and owner of Kolkata Knight Riders Shah Rukh Khan makes a point while addressing a press conference in Mumbai on Sunday. PHOTO: AFP