



PHOTO: AFP

Kolkata Knight Riders' newcomer Yashpal Singh dives in spectacular fashion at the mid-wicket boundary to catch King's XI Punjab captain Yuvraj Singh (not in picture) in their IPL match at the Kingsmead in Durban yesterday.

Jamie focused on T20 World Cup

Coach in favour of multiple captaincy



SPORTS REPORTER

Ahead of the ICC World Twenty20, Bangladesh coach Jamie Siddons has his eye more on the world cricketers playing in the Indian Premier League (IPL) rather than his two charges -- Mohammad Ashraful and Mashrafe Bin Mortaza -- who are yet to make the first eleven.

"I'm looking more at the Indian players and the other world players and maybe looking for their weaknesses. I haven't been looking at Ash [Ashraful] and Mash [Mashrafe] and didn't have a chance to," said the Australian during the Tigers' first day's practice session at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.

The national cricketers got back to business after more than two weeks to prepare for the ICC World Twenty20 to be held in England in June. Besides captain Ashraful and his deputy Mashrafe, three more players were absent as pacer Nazmul Hossain and opener Imrul Kayes have been suffering from jaundice while wicketkeeper-batsman Mohammad Mithun is taking his HSC examinations.

Siddons was hopeful about his two charges' chances of playing in South Africa, but the shaven headed coach was not happy with the

number of Bangladeshis participating in the high-profile Indian T20 competition.

"If they get a game or two, I'm sure they will become a part of the team. I know there is a lot of competition within their teams," he opined.

"It's a little bit unfair that our boys are not getting games in the IPL because at least our top five players could be there and something has to be done from the board's end," said Siddons.

After postponement of Pakistan's tour of Bangladesh, there was a long break for Siddons and he said that he made good use of the time by chalking out strategies and plans for the T20 World Cup.

"I didn't have free time at all, bearing in mind that the T20 World Cup is not far away and I have been working out strategies and plans on how we are going to go about implementing our plans for the World Cup. No break for me and the boys had had time off since the end of the Premier League," he informed.

The Tigers coach was also happy with the preparation schedule, especially expressing his satisfaction over the PCL (Port City League) which will kick off on May 2 in Chittagong.

"I think it's a fantastic idea no matter where it is played. Our preparation schedules ahead the World Cup look fantastic, so there will be no excuses once we get to England. The lead up to

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Kolkata ride on rain, Gayle

AFP, Durban



Chris Gayle hammered an explosive 44 not out to power Kolkata Knight Riders to an 11-run victory over Kings XI Punjab in a rain-hit Indian Premier League match on Tuesday.

The West Indies skipper smashed four sixes in his 26-ball knock as Kolkata raced to 79-1 off 9.2 overs in reply to their opponents' 20-over total of 158-6 when the game was called off due to rain.

Kolkata, who were 11 runs ahead on the Duckworth-Lewis method, posted their first win in two games. Punjab have lost both of their matches.

Left-handed Gayle put his team on course for victory when he put on 57 off just 33 balls for the opening wicket with New Zealander Brendon McCullum, who cracked two sixes in his 16-ball 21.

Punjab paid dearly for letting off Gayle early in the innings, with Karan Goel dropping an easy catch at mid-wicket off South African left-arm seamer Yusuf Abdulla.

Yuvraj Singh and Kumar Sangakkara (26)

helped Punjab post a respectable total with a 56-run stand for the fourth wicket after a double-strike from Kolkata seamer Sourav Ganguly.

Skipper Yuvraj, who smashed six sixes in an over at this venue against England in the Twenty20 World Championships in 2007, top-scored with a 28-ball 38 with the help of two sixes.

Former India captain Ganguly ended Punjab's early flourish with two wickets in his opening over, having pinch-hitter Irfan Pathan (32) caught at deep mid-wicket and removing Ravi Bopara (15) caught behind.

Yuvraj and Sangakkara then steadied the innings before Mahela Jayawardene cracked a 19-ball 31 not out to help his team cross the 150-mark.

SCORES IN BRIEF

KINGS XI PUNJAB: 158-6 in 20 overs (Yuvraj 38, Pathan 32, Jayawardene 31 not out, Sangakkara 26; Ganguly 2-24)

KOLKATA KNIGHT RIDERS: 79-1 in 9.2 overs (Gayle 44 not out, McCullum 21)

Result: Kolkata won by 11 runs (D/L method) **Man-of-the-match:** Chris Gayle.

Culinary lesson for Tigers' family

SPORTS REPORTER

Fitness is an integral part of any modern game and cricket is no exception. Admittedly one should maintain proper training to keep himself fit enough to fulfill the demand but on top of everything, a healthy diet is a vital prerequisite for good fitness.

Here may lie a big problem with the Tigers. What they want to eat or love to eat hardly satisfies the foreign coaches and trainers. The foreign staff might have said a few hundred times to change the food habit of their charges but to no avail. Then it's better to try it in different way.

And that was the reason the national cricket team's man

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BFF can afford one month

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) president Kazi Salahuddin said that they could not afford to spare the Bangabandhu National Stadium (BNS) for more than one month for the inauguration ceremony of the 2011 Cricket World Cup.

"I have no problems with the opening ceremony of the cricket World Cup being held at the BNS but I must know the exact time period for which the stadium will be needed. We had a meeting on this issue and the executive committee deemed that one month is the most we can afford to spare," said the BFF boss while talking with the reporters at his Motijheel headquarters yesterday.

Salahuddin said that if the stadium was used for more

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KKR's inside news leaked?

CRICINFO, undated

Things just aren't going right for the Kolkata Knight Riders. After the captaincy controversy and a disastrous first game, they now have to deal with bouncers and googlies of a different kind - the writing of a mystery blogger, who claims to be a member of the team and seems determined to out every team secret, warts and all. The jury's out on the blogger's identity he blogs as 'Fake IPL Player' - but the writing indicates a keen knowledge of the team's working and the typical daily grind of an overseas tour. Few players are named but the nicknames are unambiguous the blogger's 'team-mates' include a former India allrounder called Kaan Moolo, an opener called Calypso King, a former captain in Lord Almighty and an opening bowler called Little John.

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PHOTO: STAR

Bangladesh coach Jamie Siddons shake hands with Suhawardi Shuvo (L) while Shamsur Rahman, the other Shuvo, looks on during the Tigers' first training session at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium yesterday.

Pressure on IPL stars

CRICINFO, undated



Andrew Strauss has a "fairly good idea" who will be batting No. 3 for England against West Indies and hinted that those candidates in county cricket could edge ahead of those plying their trade in the IPL.

Michael Vaughan, Ian Bell, Owais Shah and Ravi Bopara are all options at three and while the first two have started the domestic season, Shah and Bopara - along with Test certainties Kevin Pietersen, Andrew Flintoff and Paul Collingwood - are in South Africa with their IPL franchises.

Bell has begun the summer with a bang, scoring 172 in the Championship and 108 in the Friends Provident Trophy, while Vaughan hit a polished 43 against Durham on Sunday. Meanwhile, Shah couldn't get a game in Delhi Daredevils' opening encounter against Kings XI Punjab, for whom Bopara was opening the batting.

"I suppose there is a slight advantage about being back in England and pushing your claim

forward," Strauss said. "Obviously if someone is back in England getting hundreds they are pushing their claims whereas for others who aren't it's harder for them to push their claims, especially if they are not playing."

Strauss also warned that it was the responsibility of the players at the IPL to make sure they were in right frame of mind for a Test by May 6. "The challenge for the guys over there, and it's an important one, is to adapt their game from playing Twenty20 to a Test match the following week," he said. "That's on their shoulders and they need to do that, but they are all good enough players. They are aware of what is required."

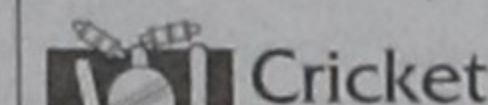
Of those chasing the No. 3 berth Bell has made the ideal start with his two centuries for Warwickshire, but Strauss added that other factors will come into the final decision which leaves the door open for Vaughan's experience.

"I doubt we'll be basing selection purely on early-season runs. I think we have a fairly good idea which direction we need to go in."

"It's fantastic that Bely has come back and hit the ground running, he had a very frustrating tour [in West Indies] to be fair. The one thing

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Hughes' big dream



AFP, London

Australia batsman Phillip Hughes says it will be the realisation of a childhood dream if he plays against England in the Ashes this year.

The 20-year-old left-hander is in possession of one of the two opening spots after a blistering start to his Test career during Australia's recent 2-1 Test series win in South Africa.

In only his second match at this level the New South Welshman became the youngest player in history to score two hundreds in the same Test with scores of 115 and 160 against the Proteas in Durban.

With England hosting the Ashes this year, Hughes is doing his best to acclimatise to local conditions with a six-week stint playing for Lord's-based Middlesex, the county side of England captain Andrew Strauss.

"I'm at Middlesex for six weeks and I'm thoroughly looking forward to it and obviously the Ashes will be here not long after that," Hughes said here on Monday. "Hopefully I'll be there and that will be a massive thing."

"The hype around the Ashes is always massive all around the world. It's a five-Test series that as a kid I always wanted to play in."

"I don't really know what to expect because I have not been here before so we'll have to wait and see how it pans out."

Australia won the last Ashes series 5-0 but they will be without the likes of retired greats Glenn McGrath, Shane Warne and Adam Gilchrist when the latest chapter in international cricket's oldest rivalry starts in Cardiff in July.

But the trio were all missing in South Africa where, having lost on home soil to Graeme Smith's men, Ricky Ponting's new-look side showed they were not ready to surrender their position as the world's best Test side just yet.

"You saw in South Africa that there are a few new faces around - your Marcus Norths, your Ben Hilfenhaus' and obviously myself," said Hughes.

"We have come off a series win in South Africa and the guys are pretty pumped about that. That's what you play cricket for, to play with your mates and to enjoy it and to win games of cricket."

Middlesex's decision to sign Hughes has

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What to WATCH

SET Max

Indian Premier League
Bangalore Royal Challengers v
Deccan Chargers
Live from 8:30pm

TEN Sports

Pakistan v Australia
First ODI (D/N)
Live from 4:30pm

ESPN

Sportscentre India
Sports News
Live at 8:30pm

English Premier League
Man United v Portsmouth
Live from 1:00am (Thursday)

STAR Sports

English Premier League
Chelsea v Everton
Live from 1:00am (Thursday)

TALK TURKEY



Kevin Pietersen

(Star England batsman)
"You can't buy that experience. No shop in Cape Town sells it. No shop in Bangalore sells it." While praising Anil Kumble after the spinner took 5 for 5 in Bangalore Royal Challengers win against Rajasthan Royals in the Indian Premier League on Friday.

U-19s 3-dayer from today

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Under-19s take on the visiting Sri Lankan Under-19 side in the first three-day match at the Fatullah Cricket Stadium today.

All-rounder Mahmudul Hasan, who played for Premier League side Gazi Tank in the Premier League this season, will lead the side that also features Amit Mazumder and Saikat Ali from the 2008 Under-19 World Cup squad.

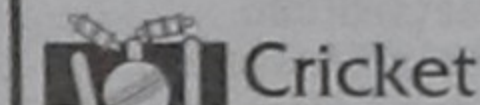
Hasan, an offspinner who bats in the middle-order, will have the confidence of an unbeaten 82 in the two-day practice game where newcomer Mohammad Rubel also slammed a breezy 73 in the second innings.

The visiting captain Dinesh Chandimal also has reasons to be happy after a good batting

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Pakistan finds a home

First ODI against Australia today



AFP, Dubai

Security-hit Pakistan finds shelter in the United Arab Emirates as they host Australia in the first one-day international here on Wednesday, with a hope that the desert venues continue to be their new home of cricket.

Pakistan's reputation as a safe host was dealt a severe blow last month when gunmen attacked the Sri Lankan team bus, injuring seven players and their assistant coach besides killing eight policemen near the Lahore stadium.

That forced the International Cricket Council (ICC) to strip Pakistan of its share of World Cup 2011 matches, further ending any hopes of Pakistan staging any international cricket in the near future.

Even before the Lahore attacks, Pakistan was a danger zone for foreign teams who continually turned down tours to the country where the national army is fighting militants and Al-Qaeda since 2001.

Pakistan was forced to play their three-match home series against the West Indies at Abu Dhabi in November last year and had to relocate the current series to Dubai and Abu Dhabi after Australia refused to tour them.

After the second match in Dubai on Friday, the remaining three matches will be played at Abu Dhabi on April 27, May 1 and 3.

The only Twenty20 match will be played in Dubai on May 7. Pakistan captain Younis Khan said conditions in Emirates are like back home.



PHOTO: AFP

Pakistan paceman Shoaib Akhtar walks into the ground as Pakistan begin training in Dubai yesterday.