

ACADEMY CRICKET Tourists' batters make merry

SPORTS REPORTER

The batsmen of the Sri Lanka Cricket (SLC) Development Team warmed up well on the first day of the only two-day practice match against the GP-BCB National Cricket Academy side at the Chittagong Divisional Stadium yesterday.

Four of the top-order struck half-centuries as the visitors made 339 for five in 90 overs at stumps.

Opener Dilshan Gunawardene batted for three hours to score 74 off 136 balls with the help of three boundaries before Lahiru Thirimanne (79), Ashan Priyanjana (61) and Nawami Siriwardena (54\*) all reached fifties of their own.

For the home side, left-arm paceman Shafaq Al Jabir took two for 63 while there was a wicket each for leg-spinning duo Marshall Ayub and Raihan Arafat and off-spinner Farhad Hossain.

The Academy side take on the tourists in two four-day matches at the same venue from next week.



Mohammedan Sporting Club's Rumana Ahmed celebrates after scoring the first century of the Women's Club Cup competition against Victoria Sporting Club at the Gulshan Youth ground yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

Taylor fit, off to England

CRICINFO, undated

West Indies fast bowler Jerome Taylor, who passed a fitness test before flying out to join his teammates in England earlier this week, has said he is looking forward to another hard-fought Test series.

"Everything went well and I'm feeling all right. It's a matter of getting back in the groove and doing the job," the Jamaica Gleaner quoted Taylor as saying after a three-hour training session in preparation for a four-day game against England Lions starting Friday.

It was Taylor's five-wicket haul in the first Test in Jamaica two months ago that proved decisive in West Indies regaining the Wisden Trophy after nine years. However, he sustained an injury in a vehicle accident which forced him out of the IPL.

"It is always a pleasure to be among the boys (West Indies team)," he said. "I missed being among the boys when I was not playing, so I'm happy to be back. We all get along well together and we have a good team spirit."

The first Test of the series is at Lord's and starts next Wednesday.

ECB endorse P20

AFP, London

The England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) confirmed here on Wednesday their plans to stage a two-division Twenty20 competition next year, an event they hope will rival the Indian Premier League.

The move was backed by the English governing body's board despite criticisms that it will lead to too much Twenty20 cricket in a domestic season which also includes the existing Twenty20 Cup.

The new tournament, which will be called the P20, is due to be staged in June when English officials hope many of the world's best players will be available to play, just as they do in the IPL which is currently taking place in South Africa.



Guus Hiddink

(Chelsea soccer coach) "This was a good result but the tie is not decided yet and we have another very hard game ahead of us. It was not an easy match to play and we will have to improve in some areas for the next game but overall I am happy as we defended very well."

After his side's 0-0 draw against Barcelona in the Champions League semifinal first-leg match on Tuesday.

PCB to deal one by one

CRICINFO, undated

CRICINFO, undated

Pakistan will consider selecting players who break away from the ICL on a case-by-case basis, following the decision by the BCCI to grant an "amnesty" to ICL players who cut ties with the league by May-end. Though the BCCI has put in place a "cooling off" period of a year - whereby an ex-ICL player will only be eligible to represent India after a year away from the ICL - the PCB has left the door open for players to return sooner.

The stance adopted by the PCB is understandable, given how badly it was affected by the ban on ICL players. Nineteen players from Pakistan signed up with the league, nearly half of whom, can conceivably represent Pakistan still. The defection took away nearly the entire bench strength of the national side. Key among them are the likes of Mohammad Yousuf and Abdul Razaq, and even players such as Imran Nazir, who could well be part of a Pakistan lineup in one of the three formats of the game.

"It is pertinent to note that at the last executive board meeting of ICC, it was emphasized that the action against players who have participated in ICL is the prerogative of the home board," the PCB said in a statement.

"The PCB's position on players who have participated in ICL is that such players must resign from ICL if they are to be considered for selection by PCB. While permitting such players to play cricket, PCB will decide on case-to-case basis the penalties to be imposed and the time period for which they will remain banned. This arrangement will continue till the end of May 2009."

Pakistan has been more ambiguous about the ban on ICL players than most boards. Last year, PCB's director general, Javed Miandad, said there was great "public pressure" on the board to pick ICL players and moves were constantly underfoot privately to try and bring

some of them back into the fold somehow. Earlier this year, a local Sindh court ruled that ICL players can play domestic cricket. Recently, Pakistan's selectors also picked three ICL players in a preliminary 30-man squad for the Twenty20 World Cup. They were withdrawn a day later, however, senior board officials calling it a "faux pas."

But the road back for players such as Yousuf or Razaq - players the PCB "could do with in the national side" - will still not be an easy one. "ICL contracts, in the board's legal opinion, are pretty one-sided," a senior official told Cricinfo. "It will not be easy for a player to rescind from them. We have sent a communication to the ICL asking for some clarity on the contracts but have not received a reply yet. When a player does come to us and has documents stating that he has left the league, we will consider his case."

Further muddying up the issue is the recent flirtation of a number of Pakistan's ICL players with the American Premier League (APL), another - thus far - unauthorized, private Twenty20 league. The APL, brainchild of local entrepreneur Jay Mir, is scheduled to be held in October on a converted baseball field in Staten Island, New York City. But the ICC has said it will hold the same status as the ICL, effectively that players involved cannot play internationally.

"A number of our ICL players are interested in the APL," the official said. "That will complicate matters even more. Jay Mir has been in touch with us, the ICC and the BCCI and he has been told that his league needs to be authorized first. If players join that, then it will become more difficult."

The PCB's policy of looking at individual players is likely to be replicated by Cricket South Africa. Cricinfo understands CSA will assess players on a case-by-case basis. Of South Africa's ICL players, only Justin Kemp and Johan van der Wath could entertain notions of an international recall, though both are still considered long-shots.

Bolt-ed in car crash

Athletics

THE GUARDIAN

The triple Olympic gold medalist Usain Bolt has been involved in a car accident in Jamaica but walked away with only scratches. Bolt, along with his brother and a female passenger, was taken to a hospital in Spanish Town, near Kingston, where the Jamaican sprinter was treated before being sent home.

Bolt's manager, Norman Peart, said that the 22-year-old sustained nothing worse than scratches from thorn bushes when he stepped out of the car on the side of the road. "We are very relieved he's OK," Peart said. "Everybody is fine."

He is reported to have had a thorn stick him on the soft part of his left foot, after he stepped out of the car which overturned in a ditch off the high-

way. The extent of the damage to the car was unclear.

The injury may see Bolt miss an invitational meeting in Kingston on Saturday. He is



USAIN BOLT

also due to run a 150m street race in Manchester on May 17. "We will see how he is in the next few days before his coach will decide if he is able to run

on Saturday," Bolt's agent said.

Police sergeant David Sheriff reported that Bolt lost control of his BMW M3 a present given to him by his sponsors at Puma after his performances at the Beijing Olympics after apparently speeding on a rain-slicked highway west of Kingston. The car, Bolt's favourite, is believed to have been left in a ditch.

Bolt, 22, attended a specialist BMW driver school at the Nuerburging in Germany last year to learn how to handle the high-performance car. The IAAF world athlete of the year won the 100m and 200m at the Beijing Olympics and was part of the Jamaica team that won the 4x100 relay all in world record times.

"We are keeping a close watch on Usain and will update the public as necessary," said Peart. "We also want to use the opportunity to thank the public for all the calls of concern and the show of affection for Usain."

Myanmar finish

FROM PAGE 17

team to the final round of AFC Challenge Cup 2010.

Myanmar head coach Tin Myint Aung said that he was not satisfied with his side's performance in the match but was content with the overall result from the tournament.

"I think we could have played much better today and won it better than 1-0 but Cambodia really came hard at us and played very well. I appreciate my player's hard work throughout this tournament and as group champions I would like to thank my countrymen and the people here who supported us. Football is the main sport in Myanmar and our people expect us to win international

matches so this victory means a lot to them and to be able to do it for them gives me a true sense of achievement," said Tin.

Cambodian head coach Prak Sovannara reiterated Tin's words on their performances agreeing that Cambodia played well but were a bit unlucky to eventually lose the match.

"We played good football throughout the match but were unfortunate to miss some close chances. The freekick which bounced off the bar post was unbelievable but things like this happen here and we just need to pick the pieces from here and play better from next time," said the Cambodian head coach.

Zahid brace

FROM PAGE 17

than us and the standard of football will be higher. So we really need to work hard at our game and I just hope we meet our own expectations"

Manik, who turned up to face the press after Dido missed his commitment with a headache, also stated that while the win looked good on paper, they had not played their best football today.

"Out of the three matches we played our best football against Cambodia in our first match. The boys did exactly as planned and implemented our strategies successfully. The match against Myanmar and today's match against Macau were not upto the mark."

LOCAL SNIPPETS

FROM PAGE 17

Sinha Textile (222-7) defeated Dhaka Mariners Youngs Club (218-9) by three wickets at the Dhanmondi Cricket Stadium.

NATIONAL CLUB CUP

Oikya Sammilani Krira Sangstha of Rangpur destroyed Lalmonirhat's Harivanga Sporting Club by an enormous margin of 308 runs in one of six first round matches of the National Club Cup competition at the Rangpur Cricket Garden.

Batting first, the Rangpur club piled on 365 for 7 in 41 overs after the match began two hours late. In reply, Harivanga were routed for 57 runs in only 18.3 overs. Salahuddin (80), Nasir (82) and Tanvir (88) starred for Oikya Sammilani with the bat.

Hi-Fi Krira Sangsad of Laxmipur (199 all out) beat Feni's Friendship Cricket Club (166 all out) by 33 runs to set up a clash with opening day winner Top Sports Club of hosts Noakhali while at the Jhenidah Stadium, Boyra Tarun Sangha (221-9) defeated AH Khan Smriti Sangsad (176 all out) by 45 runs.

Marshall's half-century guided Mukta Sangha of Rajshahi (133-4) to a six-wicket win over Pabna's Dhruva Rudra (132 all out) at home and Barisal's Nazrul Pathagar (110-3) beat Bhola club Ukilpara XI (109 all out) by seven wickets in Patuakhali.

Local club Udayan Sangha (106 all out in 30.4 overs) went through to the next round after taking less number of overs to score their runs after Dashara Pali Mangal Samity of Manikganj (106 all out in 39.1 overs) were tied to their score.

WOMEN'S CRICKET

Mohammedan Sporting Club's Rumana Ahmed struck a fabulous century to help her side to a massive 258-run victory over Victoria Sporting Club in the Women's Club Cup at the Gulshan Youth ground.

The right-hander slammed thirteen boundaries in her 98-ball innings of 112 runs as Mohammedan amassed 290 for three in just 35 overs. Victoria's reply saw them reach just 32 runs before being bowled out in 21 overs.

Rumana found good support from opener Shaiba Sharmin, who made 42 off 44 balls. The two shared a second partnership of 105 runs before Rumana and Tahin Tahera (49) added 151 for the third.

Shaiba took three wickets when the Black & Whites came out to defend their mammoth total.

At the City Club ground, BKSP (139 all out) defeated Khulna Women's Cricket Academy (88 all out) by 51 runs with Sharifa Khatun picking up three wickets for the Savar-based sports institute.

UNDER-17 CRICKET

Habibullah, Arif and Zakaria all took two wickets each on the second and last day of Bangladesh Under-17's only practice game against CAB Combined Under-17 at the Eden Gardens in Kolkata.

The home side made 210 for seven at the end of the day with Abhishek making 74 off 158 balls with the help of 14 boundaries and a six.

Abu Zayed took the other wicket to fall.

UNDER-15 CRICKET

Half-centuries from Anik and Jahid steered Bangladesh Under-15s to a massive nine-wicket win in the third one-dayer against CAB Under-15s at the Mymensingh Stadium yesterday.

Both batsmen took little time as they helped the hosts knock off CAB's target in just 24.1 overs.

Earlier, the visitors made 150 from 39.5 overs after both sides decided to play a 40-over per side due to the intense heat. The game started an hour earlier at 8 o'clock in the morning.

Anik made 54 off 74 balls with three boundaries while Jahid struck 59 off just 49 balls as the two added 104 for the second wicket that never fell.

The hosts lead the series 3-0.

MU gain

FROM PAGE 17

advanced to within 30 yards of the goal before unleashing a wickedly dipping drive that left Almunia completely stranded but clattered against the bar.

By that stage, Giggs had entered the fray and the frustration of the evening for United was summed up by the fact that only a fractional offside decision prevented the veteran Welsh winger from marking his landmark appearance with a goal.

Intikhab's appeal

Crucial fourth ODI today

Cricket

AFP, Abu Dhabi

Pakistan can beat Australia Friday to keep alive their hopes of winning the current one-day series, coach Intikhab Alam said Thursday.

Despite being 2-1 down after losing the third game Monday, Pakistan was still determined to win the remaining two games and the series, Alam said, if only for their fans back home.

"We desperately want to win the series for the sake of millions of fans... who have been deprived of watching (international) matches" by security concerns, Alam said.

Pakistan was forced to move the current series to neutral venues in the United Arab Emirates after Australia refused to tour Pakistan, citing the high security risks.

Pakistan started the series promisingly by winning the first match by four wickets. But Australia came back strongly, winning the second match by six wickets and the third by 27 runs here Monday.

Despite Pakistan's setback, Alam believes Australia are still beatable.

"If you look at the results of the last two matches, they did not outplay us. We made mistakes in batting, especially in the third match," he said of his team's failure Monday to chase a modest 199-run target.

Pakistan were cruising along at 95-0 before Australian spinners Nathan Hauritz and Michael Clarke shared six wickets between them, to blow their opponents away for 171.

Alam said he had asked his senior batsmen to take more responsibility.

"We had a pep talk for two hours before training Wednesday and I told my senior batsmen that they must stay at the wicket and put a

value on their wickets," he said.

Pace spearhead Shoaib Akhtar, rested for the third match, will return at the expense of Sohail Tanvir. Pakistan may also strengthen their batting by including spinning all-rounder Fawad Alam in place of off-spinner Saeed Ajmal.

Ajmal's bowling action was reported as illegal after the second match, a decision which affected his performance as he failed to get any wicket in the third match.

Clarke, Australia's captain, said his players will be on their toes Friday.

"Obviously, they need to win on Friday but don't worry, we will be doing our best to make sure that we prepare better than we have done thus far in this series," said Clarke.

"It's a big game for us too, we really want to win... Pakistan have to be under pressure because they have to win to stay in the series, so we need to be more focused on what we are doing."

Fast bowler Brett Lee joined the Australian squad Tuesday and trained with them for two days. However, he is unlikely to play as the team management is still assessing his progress towards full fitness after injury.

Coach Tim Nielsen said Lee may get a chance in the only Twenty20 on the tour, scheduled for Dubai on May 7.

TEAMS

AUSTRALIA: Brad Haddin, James Hopes, Shane Watson, Michael Clarke (capt), Andrew Symonds, Callum Ferguson, David Hussey, Nathan Hauritz, Stuart Clark, Nathan Bracken, Doug Bollinger.

PAKISTAN: Salman Butt, Ahmed Shehzad, Younis Khan (capt), Shoaib Malik, Misbahul Haq, Shahid Afridi, Kamran Akmal, Umar Gul, Shoaib Akhtar, Iftikhar Anjum, Saeed Ajmal.

ICL stays optimistic

Cricket

CRICINFO, undated

The ICL appears to be facing an exodus of players who are eager to cash in on the BCCI's new amnesty offer but the unofficial league is confident of surviving the latest crisis. It's learnt that the ICL management discussed the BCCI's offer on Wednesday and reiterated its decision to go ahead with plans for the next season in October.

"We are positive about going forward," a senior ICL official told Cricinfo. "Some of our players may be tempted by the BCCI's offer, but we are confident of retaining the players we want. We have legally binding contracts with the players and we expect them to honour those. Breaking contracts and walking away is not as simple as it sounds; there is a notice period, and no-objection clauses involved."

The official also dismissed suggestions that the league would be forced to shut down after it started downsizing its operations this year. The ICL cancelled its March programme due to the deepening economic recession as well as the non-availability of Pakistan players following cross-border political tensions. On Wednesday, barely an hour after the BCCI announced its amnesty offer, Himanshu Mody, the ICL's business head, revealed that the league would not be renewing the contracts of some players and support-staff members.

"Taking forward its Sports Performance Evaluation (SPE) process across all cricket operations, the ICL management has decided not to renew the contracts of some of the ICL players and support staff that have expired," Mody said in a public statement. "As cricket professionals they are free to decide and explore their options."

The ICL official Cricinfo spoke to, however, said this was all part of a long-term plan. "The idea is to have a sharper and leaner programme going ahead with players who are committed to the league," he said. "Obviously, what we do has to be financially viable too." Apparently, some senior Indian players and some foreign players, like Nathan Astle, the former New Zealand batsman, are among those whose contracts may not be renewed.

ICL officials claimed that the BCCI's amnesty is a "desperate ploy" to bring the ICL to its knees before they take the ICC to court for rejecting their request for official recognition. "We have a strong legal case because the new ICC rules on unofficial cricket comes into force only on June 1 and can't be applied in a retrospective manner," the official said. "As per the old rules, the ICC is on a sticky wicket legally. The ICC knows that and this is just a desperate ploy to break us."

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

A crossword puzzle grid with clues for across and down words. The clues include: 1 Across: presses greatly; 5 Across: Youngster in a cave; 8 Across: White-glove discovery; 12 Across: Fish with a prehensile tail; 14 Across: Norway's capital; 15 Across: Lima's beer?; 16 Across: 16 Paper quantity; 17 Across: Heavy hammer; 20 Across: Photo book; 23 Across: Hen pen; 25 Across: G.B.S. devotee; 28 Across: Right angle; 29 Across: Island farewell; 30 Across: Shelter from the storm; 32 Across: Riga resident; 34 Across: Barrel; 5 Down: Nursery feature; 6 Down: Can. neighbor; 7 Down: Famed social-realist painter; 8 Down: 'Sound of Music' song; 9 Down: Second-hand; 10 Down: Refuse; 11 Down: Big book; 13 Down: Baby food; 19 Down: Volcano's outflow; 20 Down: Expert in the hammock; 21 Down: Hang out weapon; 22 Down: Gaucho's say...; 27 Down: Egg container; 29 Down: State with conviction; 31 Down: out a living; 33 Down: Dangerous fly; 34 Down: Chiseled Racertrack adviser; 37 Down: Melody dispenser; 38 Down: Pepper game; 39 Down: Horseback game; 40 Down: renovate and sell quickly; 43 Down: pinch mountain; 45 Down: Every last bit; 46 Down: 'Science Guy' Bill.

A grid for a Cryptokuip puzzle. The grid contains letters and numbers. The letters are: WINNRWLCZJCRZKA, NKA EAKKAOJBAKYJLC, WAHLWREYBQA AWA. BRIFO RCA, BJFFQLHJHIACWYAKHRCWYAK?

CRYPTOQUIP

WINNRWLCZJCRZKA NKA EAKKAOJBAKYJLC WAHLWREYBQA AWA. BRIFO RCA BJFFQLHJHIACWYAKHRCWYAK? Saturday's Cryptokuip: YOU WOULD EXPECT THAT LEXICOGRAPHERS ARE LIKELY TO BE GOOD ABOUT KEEPING THEIR WORDS.

Today's Cryptokuip Clue: H equals M