

SL Dev squad in driver's seat

SPORTS REPORTER

Sri Lanka Development side tightened their grip on the second four-day against GP-BCB National Cricket Academy as the home team suffered batting blues on the second day at the Chittagong Divisional Stadium yesterday.

Replying to an imposing total of 423, the GP-BCB side lost wickets at regular intervals to finish the day at 118-6 in 50 overs, still 106 runs short of saving the follow-on.

The home team lost their first wicket in the very second over when Nasruddin Faruque was trapped leg before wicket by Nuan Pradeep on naught. The early damage however was repaired when wicketkeeper Sahagir Hossain joined Jahurul Islam to add 61 runs in the second wicket stand.

But wickets fell like nine-pins with the departure of Sahagir who made 31 off 63 balls with four boundaries and a six. They lost five wickets for 19 runs.

Opener Jahurul top scored with 32 off 89 balls that saw five boundaries.

Suraj Mohamed picked up two wickets conceding 38 runs in 15 overs.

The five-wicket haul of left-arm spinner Saqlain Sajib was only bright point in an otherwise uninspiring day for the home side.

Saqlain picked up three more wickets to finish with a figure of 5-97 while Farhad Hossain and Robiul Islam took two wickets each.

Ansar Academy

FROM PAGE 17 BCB acting CEO Nizam Uddin Chowdhury and director training of Ansar and VDP Dilip Kumar Biswas signed the MoU on behalf of their respective organisations at the Sher-e-Bangla National Cricket Stadium in Mirpur.

Varsity

FROM PAGE 17 In the other match, Bangladesh Agricultural University beat Noakhali Science and Technology University by four runs at the BKSP cricket ground.

The match was decided in parabola method as rain stopped the play with Science and Technology making 149-3 in 39 overs in reply to 171.

Ashfaq Ahmed however earlier rescued Agricultural University to put up a decent total on the board as the number eight batsman struck an unbeaten 57 off 88 balls that featured three fours and two sixes.

Mohammedan

FROM PAGE 17 Tithi Rani had an economic spell, just giving 15 runs from 7 overs with 2 maidens and a wicket.

Shuktara was adjudged player-of-the-match and shared the player-of-the-tournament trophy with Panna.

"It is certainly a big prize for me. My team won the championship and that is much more precious," said Shuktara.

"We worked hard and we practised well. Our hard work brought us the success. We are thankful to the BCB for arranging this tournament and we hope that if we keep getting their support we will surely be selected for the World Cup in the near future," said Salma.

We know what

FROM PAGE 17 one-day final. His fielding has always been rated top-class and for a team that drops a million catches, Mashrafe's athleticism could have been useful.

But as is the case, Mashrafe is yet to make his IPL debut despite Kolkata's standing in the points table. Wickets don't fall after Ishant finishes his four overs and Mashrafe just sits in the dugout.

Mashrafe is not on holiday; this is professional cricket and based on conceivable logic, our boy must play.



Did U Know?

Kathy Rinaldi of the United States was the youngest (14 years 92 days) Wimbledon match winner when she beat Sue Rolinson of South Africa 6-3, 2-6, 9-7 in 1981.



Sri Lanka Development players celebrate after the dismissal of GP-BCB National Cricket Academy's Jahurul Islam (L) on the second day of their four-day match at the Chittagong Divisional Stadium yesterday.

PCB gives Asif last chance

Cricket

CRICINFO, undated

Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) has given fast bowler Mohammad Asif another chance to prove he was not deported from the United Arab Emirates last year for possession of opium.

A PCB statement on Monday said Asif was absent from the latest sitting of the three-man committee inquiring into his reported deportation as he was in the United Kingdom "without informing the board or the inquiry committee".

It has set June 1 as the date for its next meeting with Asif.

Asif had earlier verbally informed the committee that he was not deported after being detained for 19 days in Dubai on June 1 last year when 0.24 grams of opium was found in his wallet at the airport, as he made his way back to Pakistan after playing in the Indian Premier League (IPL).

Documents from the Dubai public prosecutor leaked to the press confirmed the identity of

the substance Asif was found with and also his admission that he had used a substance, although he denied that it was opium.

If Asif was indeed deported, he would be unable to ever return to the UAE, thereby casting serious doubts over his international future as Pakistan are scheduled to play most of their home matches there owing to security fears after the Lahore terror attack in March.

"We have scheduled our next meeting on June 1... to facilitate your presence in the meeting," Wasim Bari, the PCB inquiry committee head, wrote in a letter to Asif on Monday.

"In case you are unable to attend because of various reasons, kindly inform us so that the committee can proceed forward and finalise its recommendations to the [cricket] board to close this inquiry."

Asif was also banned for one year by the IPL last September for testing positive for the banned substance nandrolone during the tournament. In 2006, Asif was suspended for one year by the PCB after testing positive for nandrolone, but the ban was overturned on appeal.

Flower banks on Swann

Cricket

ANI, London

England's new coach Andy Flower has wasted little time publicly backing his troops in their bid to reclaim the Ashes following the three-day demolition of the West Indies at Lord's, and off-spinner Graeme Swann is seen as the man most likely to trouble Australia's top-order.

While Cricket Australia is forced to hold a spin summit and has no clear-cut favourite for the tweaking role, Swann has bolstered his reputation by terrorising the Windies' left-handers.

With Australia set to play five lefties in their batting line-up, Swann is being billed as a potential saviour for England.

The Sydney Morning Herald quoted England captain Andrew Strauss as saying: "Swann is an excellent bowler at left-handers in particular. I haven't seen a left-hander play him with real confidence yet. He troubles everyone, has a good variety -- and I think he's a smart bowler."

'Make Warne captain'

PTI, Melbourne



Impressed with performances of Shane Warne-led Rajasthan under Adam Gilchrist in the ongoing Indian Premier League (IPL), John Buchanan has advised selectors to request the duo out of retirement to lead the national team in the World Twenty20 tournament in England.

Buchanan, the most successful Australian coach but a fiasco with the Kolkata Knight Riders in the IPL, was against rising top Test players with Ashes approaching and suggested either Warne or Gilchrist captained the side.

He said Warne, Gilchrist and Matthew Hayden should have been considered, along with specialists such as David Warner, Shane Harwood, Cameron White, Shaun Tait and Moises Henriques.

"Selectors should have been talking with former players to make themselves available for this particular event. I would be looking at Warne or Gilchrist as captain," he was quoted as saying by The Age.

"If I was a selector I would not be risking, wherever possible, key Ashes players such as [Ricky] Ponting, [Michael]

think about his variations, how to out-think people and get them out. We're excited about what he can offer."

Flower's first match in charge yielded a 10-wicket win, capping a remarkable turnaround from the humiliation of the 51-run dismissal in Kingston three months ago, and he believes England can perform a similar about-face from the 5-0 drubbing of the previous Ashes series in Australia.

"We have not talked about the Ashes series in detail but we have had a few thoughts and discussions. We aim high. We want to win the Twenty20 World Cup and, yes, I do believe we can win the Ashes," Flower said.

England has also been buoyed by the emergence of young guns Ravi Bopara at first drop and Graham Onions in the pace attack.

Closer to home, Australian players are locked in a tense standoff with CA over payments for next season, with their contracts having expired two weeks ago.

The Australian Cricketers' Association is fighting for higher wages for players but CA says the global economic crisis has forced it to tighten the belt.

BFF bids

FROM PAGE 17 come to a decision at Bahamas," told Salahuddin.

He also reacted sharply to Bangladesh Cricket Board's (BCB) response over BFF's application for the acquisition of Fatullah Cricket Stadium.

"The comments made by the BCB spokesperson are rather personal and I don't understand why they said those things. There is no vendetta between the two sports bodies and I have mentioned earlier that I will be happy to withdraw my application for the Fatullah Stadium if it is busy for cricket."

Salahuddin had earlier taken an institutional approach to stage the senior division football league at Fatullah by submitting a letter to the National Sports Council which the BCB termed as absurd.

Abahani

FROM PAGE 17 chances. If I am to assess the strengths and weaknesses of my opposition I would say Abahani are the favourites in the tournament," said head coach of the Lankan Army Major S. Pathmanathan.

Ashgabat FC team manager Sahatov Nurgelyev felt that his team are strong contenders to triumph in the tournament as they have eight national players in the side and have been champions of Turkmenistan's top football league for the last two years.

Ashgabat play their first match against Sri Lanka Army on Thursday.

South Korea in semis

Hockey

AFP, Kuantan

Asia's top-ranked field hockey team, South Korea, virtually sealed their place in the Asia Cup semifinals with a closely fought 3-2 win over Japan in a Group A match in Malaysia on Monday.

Korea scored their three goals in the first half and were forced into deep defence in the second half to keep the Japanese at bay.

The Koreans are tagged as favourites to make the final on Saturday and will play lowly Bangladesh Tuesday in the last pool match.

World number five Korea are far too strong for the 34th-ranked Bangladesh and should take maximum points.

The other semi-final team from the pool will come from the winner of the Malaysia and Japan match on Tuesday.

The Malaysians had little trouble defeating Bangladesh 7-1 in the second match of the day.

The Korea-Japan match saw

some fast-paced action with both teams using speed as their main weapon.

The Koreans went into attack from the start and took the lead in the 12th minute through a penalty corner drag flick taken by Jin Kyun-min.

Eight minutes later the Japanese were back on level terms with a penalty corner goal scored by Kei Kawakami.

But the Koreans continued to press hard and earned two penalty strokes in the 22nd and 35th minutes following a penalty corner execution.

Lee Nam-yong converted both the strokes to give his team a 3-1 lead.

The second half saw a charged-up Japan and they had the Koreans back peddling time and again.

In the 53rd Japan earned their fifth penalty corner and Takayasu Mizawa had all the time to place a low flick on goalkeeper Lee Myung-ho's right.

But despite their valiant efforts the Japanese failed to get further goals and will now have to beat Malaysia to secure their berth.

South Korean coach Cho

Myung-jun said that it was a close match and they did not expect such a fight back from the Japanese.

"We missed our experienced players for this game. We are quite safe for the semi-finals but we have to ensure we take full points from Bangladesh."

"Japan is strong too and matches between our teams have been quite tight. It was no different today. We are happy to have collected full points," he said.

Japan team manager Yamanaka Manabu was disappointed with the result but felt that it was a fair reflection of the way the match went.

"Our strategy was to defend in the first half and then go on the attack in the second. It is just that we were not able to convert our chances well."

"Our back is against the wall as we need nothing less than a win tomorrow. But I do feel confident we can win," he said.

The Koreans have four points while the Japanese have three. Host Malaysia also has four points and a draw with Japan will suffice for them to make the semis.

Younus bucks up Akhtar and Afridi

Cricket

PTI, Karachi

Pakistan captain Younus Khan has backed senior players Shoaib Akhtar and Shahid Afridi to fire in next month's ICC World Twenty20 Championship and said he was satisfied with the duo's performance in the just-concluded one-day series against Australia.

"People are criticising Shoaib's performance but the good thing is he is gradually returning to form and fitness and he took part in five of the six matches," Younus said.

With just three wickets in four ODIs in Dubai and Abu Dhabi, Akhtar continues to remain a target for critics and some former players.

Younus, though, said he was happy that Akhtar had tried and worked hard in the series and was hopeful he would deliver better performances in the T20 World Cup in England.

"He can be a handful in English conditions," the skipper said.

Younus also pointed out that Afridi had surprised everyone with his performances.

"I have told him he has so much talent that instead of scoring just 30 or 40 runs he should be converting them into centuries. He is an extraordinarily talented player."

He said Afridi had been one of the most committed players against Australia and during team meetings became emotional with the team not performing well.

"He still has a lot to give Pakistan cricket. There is no doubt that before the series they were the players whose places in the team were doubtful. But both these seniors have done well," he said.

Younus also dismissed reports of rift in the team.

"There is no such thing, the team is united and everyone tried very hard against Australia," he added.

Younus admitted that former captain Shoaib Malik was a bit down after losing the captaincy but he had made him realise his importance to the team.

"I am sad that some people are saying that since I was captain some players deliberately under-performed. This is all rubbish, everyone tried very hard and we will be a different team in the T20 World Cup," he said.

The Pakistan captain said he was unhappy that he could not spend enough time or focus on all-rounder Sohail Tanvir.

"He is a very talented player who had a tough time in the series. But he is our key performer and important for us in the T20 World Cup. I am sure he will regain his confidence soon," the senior batsman said.



AB de Villiers (R) of the Delhi Daredevils plays a cut shot against Kolkata Knight Riders during their IPL Twenty20 match at the Wanderers in Johannesburg on Sunday.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS 35 Bill Clinton, by birth 58 Opposite of 38-Across 40 Discoverer's call 42 Reverberates 45 Look for typos 49 Bridge coup 50 NAFTA signatory 52 Urban carrier 53 Cougar 54 "Platoon" locale 55 Cruising 56 Nays' undoers 1 Requests 5 Spring-time abbr. 8 Standards 12 Injure severely 13 Kiwi's extinct kin 14 Saudi Arabia neighbor 15 Curved molding 16 Wood-shaping tool 17 Peace-keeping grp. 18 Whiz 20 Capital of Croatia 22 Deli loaf 23 Floral accessory 24 The "Say Hey Kid" 27 Still having a rind 32 Resume, for short 33 Estuary 34 Deposit 57 College transcript no. 11 Uppity one 19 Big Apple abbr. 21 Milwaukee product 24 Biz deg. 25 Broadcast 26 Japanese city 28 Actress Peeples 29 Complete view 30 Listener 31 Go red? 36 Scents 37 Born 38 Human fabric 41 That guy 42 Get a glimpse of 43 Fingerprint, often 44 Trilled 46 Relaxation 47 Graph lines 48 "Buenos" 51 Enervate

Grid for crossword puzzle with numbers 1-58.

CRYPTOQUIP VFQS RNIKQJJ WHSRVRZ WKQJJQW HBRJJI SLND TRJI ZQRK, L JHBBBCJQ GCTDJ NRTTQW FQK JRSIR GRZQ. Yesterday's Cryptoquip: IF A PRODUCE SHOP'S SPECIALTY IS OFFERING FRESH-PICKED CORN, MIGHT YOU CALL IT A STALK MARKET? Today's Cryptoquip Clue: B equals P