

Tall task for Academy

SPORTS REPORTER

GP-BCB National Cricket Academy will have to bat out the last day with nine wickets in hand after the Sri Lanka Development side set them a stiff target on the third day of their four-day at the Chittagong Divisional Stadium yesterday.

Left-handed opener Nasiruddin Faruque (33*) and Sahagir Hossain (1*) remained unbeaten as the home side were 62 for one at stumps in their second innings. The tourists set them 438 for victory after declaring their second innings at 178-9.

Jahurul Islam fell to seamer Suranga Lakmal after the tall right-hander made a patient 25.

On a day when three innings of the match were played out, GP-BCB Academy were first bowled out for just 164 in their first innings, trailing by 259 runs. Then the Lankans came out with swinging blades but the Academy bowlers made sure they never got away with it.

Pacemen Rabiul Islam and Shaiful Alam and left-armers Saqlain Sajid all took three wickets each as the visitors batted for 45.1 overs in the second day.

Warne out for ten days

PTI, Kimberley

Defending champions Rajasthan Royals were dealt a massive blow as captain coach Shane Warne was on Monday ruled out of the Indian Premier League for the next ten days owing to a hamstring injury.

The Australian was injured while fielding in their last match against Deccan Chargers last night, making him unavailable for the rest of the team's campaign unless his side makes the final.

The Jaipur-based outfit needs to win all its remaining games to make the semifinals and Warne's absence would severely hurt the team's hopes of advancing to the knock-out round, especially in the wake of two successive losses.

South African captain Graeme Smith is most likely to lead the team in Warne's absence.

Besides, the team has also lost pacers Kamran Khan and Amit Singh due to suspect bowling action.

Rajasthan Royals director of coaching Darren Berry has reportedly said: "I think it is a balancing act that will be our focus to get it right. We can field just four overseas players and it is a difficult thing to manage. We have now put ourselves under pressure."

Psychologist for Pakistan players

AFP, Lahore

Pakistan's cricket team has enlisted the help of a motivational psychologist to try to boost player unity and mental strength ahead of key matches, coach Intikhab Alam said Tuesday.

Following the lead of teams like Australia, India and Sri Lanka -- all of which have employed sports psychologists -- Alam said he believed the new hire would help the team ahead of the World Twenty20 tournament in England in June.

"We have hired the services of Dr Maqbool Sabri, who is a specialist in motivating people for better teamwork, unity and passion," Alam told AFP.

"I hope this will help the players get more focussed in the major events like the T20 World Cup."

Alam said the psychologist will have one-to-one sessions with the players next week during training in Lahore, adding that he thought greater mental strength might give his cricketers the edge.

"This is one area where we lag behind other teams like Australia and South Africa," said Alam, whose team lost a five-match one-day series against Australia 3-2 in the United Arab Emirates last week.

Pakistan, however, won the one-off Twenty20 match against Australia by seven wickets in Dubai last Thursday.

Pakistan, who finished runners-up in the inaugural Twenty20 World Cup held in South Africa in 2007, is among the top favourites for the second World Twenty20 event to be held from June 5-21.



Sri Lanka Development batsman Mahela Siriwardena defends the ball during his blazing 64 against GP-BCB National Cricket Academy on the third day at the Chittagong Divisional Stadium yesterday.

Indians miss the stars

AFP, New Delhi

A new shopping mall on the outskirts of New Delhi is the closest that fans of the city's IPL cricket team get to attending a home game this year.

In an open-air square between fashion shops and chain restaurants, a huge screen shows every Delhi Daredevils match live from South Africa to a few hundred cheering supporters.

The loss of the Indian Premier League abroad this year has dented public support for the tournament, which in its inaugural season last year attracted massive fan loyalty to its eight city-based teams.

"Last year was great, and everyone was watching every evening," Shashank Sharma, an 18-year-old student, said. "But this time there is less excitement."

"It is better when there are Indian crowds in the stadium, they are very noisy."

Sharma watched the match at the mall with six of his friends, as huge speakers blared out the commentary and loud music.

Every time the Daredevils -- led by captain Gautam Gambhir -- took a wicket or scored a boundary, four scantily-clad, female dancers jumped onto a stage in front of the screen to lead the celebrations.

Organisers were forced to move the five-week event out of India due to its clash with general elections, which meant security arrangements could not be made for the cricketers.

With the action exported to South Africa, interest among India's massive cricket following has not matched last year's event -- even though games have been scheduled in television prime time.

Viewing figures were down in 18 of the first 27 matches compared with 2008, according to Audience Measurement and Analytics, an independent ratings company.

Last year the IPL's blend of dramatic, short-format cricket and Bollywood glamour proved irresistible to millions of Indians for whom the games became an evening fixture and the biggest talking point in the country.

Sponsors hope the teams, including the Mumbai Indians and Bangalore Royal Challengers, will develop passionate fan bases similar to those enjoyed by British football side such as Manchester United.

SC Vohra, a retired diplomat, watched the Delhi Daredevils beat the struggling Kolkata Knight Riders on Sunday evening at the mall with his wife, son, daughter-in-law and grandson.

"The big screen makes this a good place for a family evening out, but there is not the same atmosphere with the team playing so far away," he said.

"In theory it is the same on television wherever you watch it, but the IPL is about entertainment and they will have to be careful that interest doesn't decline year after year. The novelty factor has gone already."

Also among the crowd was Nani Kapur, a 25-year-old who works in marketing.

"I went to the stadium to see the Daredevils last year and it was fantastic. The atmosphere around the tournament is less this year," she said.

"Of course people still watch it on TV but definitely the general mood is down. It can't be the same without the team playing here."

One person counting the cost was Vicky Suri, a manager for Genesis, the official merchandise partner of the Delhi Daredevils.

"We've lost a lot of sales, we can't deny it," he said. "We sell replica shirts for 600 rupees (13 dollars) and the games going outside India has been a real blow."

"We sell a lot of goods at the stadiums and that opportunity has just disappeared. We've been shipping shirts to South Africa, but that's very expensive."

"I just hope there will now be a hunger when the teams finally come back home and play here next year."

Rohit vying for purple cap?

PTI, Kimberley

Deccan Chargers captain Adam Gilchrist could not help but praise Rohit Sharma for his fine bowling efforts in the Indian Premier League (IPL), wondering his batting mainstay was fighting for the Purple Cap instead of chasing the Orange Cap for the highest run scorer.

Rohit took a hat-trick against Mumbai on May 6 and followed it up with three wickets for just 12 runs in Deccan's 53-run thumping of Rajasthan Royals here today and Gilchrist was all praise for the young Indian.

"Yeah, Rohit looks like fighting for the Purple Cap (for highest wicket taker) instead of Orange Cap. I was telling him like this after his hat-trick. He was fantastic today also and every team would have loved to have a player like him," Gilchrist said after the match against Rajasthan Royals.

Harmison, 30, was dropped for the Test at the Kensington Oval after two lacklustre performances in the Caribbean series, and question marks were being raised as to whether to can rekindle the required pace and hostility to lead the attack. According to Malcolm, Harmison should never play for England unless he had use of the new ball.

"He should have the confidence to say: 'I want that new ball. As an out-and-out fast bowler that should be my right,'" said Malcolm. "Harmison as second-change. No way! You're hiding him like that. The opposition sees the guy who is meant to be your quickest bowler is not taking the new ball and it's a psychological advantage."

PCB row with ICC

February-March tour, which was itself the first major bilateral contest in Pakistan since October 2007. A number of teams since then had refused to visit in the wake of an unsettled and increasingly violent domestic backdrop.

There is a feeling within the board that they have been targeted by certain members of the ICC, who have used the situation to their advantage. It is believed that Pakistan are willing to pursue the option of Abu Dhabi and Dubai as a 'surrogate' host for Pakistan's matches, though no official proposal has yet been tabled.

In its legal notice to cricket's governing body earlier, the PCB called the decision to do so discriminatory and "legally flawed" after the ICC, at a recent board meeting in Dubai, decided to take away Pakistan's share of the World Cup matches. The move came after terrorist attacks on the Sri Lankan team during their

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Qadir talking with captain

PTI, Karachi

Pakistan chief selector Abdul Qadir rubbished media reports claiming he had serious difference with captain Younus Khan and the duo was not on talking terms.

Qadir told reporters in Lahore that he was very upset after reading media reports about a 'serious dispute' with Younus over the selection of the squad for the forthcoming ICC Twenty20 World Cup.

"These reports are not true. It is not true that we are not on talking terms. I have been in touch with Younus on a regular basis over selection matters. There are no serious differences between us," an upset Qadir said.

"Everyone has a different view in selection matters and the purpose of taking the captain and coach into confidence is to reach a consensus after proper discussions," he said. Qadir said he was not aware why the media was trying to give the impression that he and Younus were not getting along.

Media reports had earlier claimed that Younus and Qadir got into a deadlock in Abu Dhabi while finalising the squad for the World Cup and in the end the captain used his veto power to get his team.

Beach v'ball

SPORTS REPORTER

Thailand and Australia will play the men's final of the 2nd Asian Beach Volleyball Tournament at Laboni Point in Cox's Bazar.

Australia beat Sri Lanka-B2-0 in the first semifinal while Thailand bettered Sri Lanka-A in the second semifinal also by 2-0 yesterday to reach the final.

Earlier in the men's quarterfinals, Sri Lanka-A defeated India, Sri Lanka-B defeated Nepal, Thailand defeated Nepal-B and Australia defeated Nepal-A, all with the same margin of 2-0.

In the women's semifinals, Thailand and China beat Nepal and India respectively, also by 2-0.

The men's and women's final matches will be held today at the venue.

A total of 18 teams are participating in this international beach volleyball event.

Botha allowed to play

CRICINFO, undated



Johan Botha, the South African vice-captain, has been given the green light to play in the World Twenty20 on condition he does not bowl his controversial doosra.

Botha was informed on Monday by South Africa's bowling coach, Vinnie Barnes, that tests had cleared his stock off-break, although his doosra remained under a cloud.

"I have been through the same thing before, where after a while I was retested and then allowed to carry on with it," Botha told Cricinfo. "But for me it is just a great relief to be cleared at last and able to play for South Africa at the World Twenty20."

"With this kind of situation, you're 90 per cent sure that you'll get through, but there is always that little bit of doubt until you finally receive the answer. I have not yet heard about the final results and the measurements, but I know they have said that I am not allowed to bowl the doosra at the moment."

Botha was reported by umpires Rudi Koertzen, Brian Jerling and Asoka de Silva after the fourth one-day international between South Africa and Australia for a suspect quicker ball and doosra. The spinner was subsequently tested at the University of Western Australia by professor Bruce Elliott, the same biomechanist who examined Botha's action when he was last cited in 2006.

Elliott has since submitted his report on Botha to the ICC, but would not reveal whether any of the bowler's deliveries tested in excess of the legal 15 degree elbow flexion limit. Botha, though, confirmed he had received the green light to play in the World Twenty20 -- albeit without his doosra, suggesting the delivery was either borderline or above 15 degrees.

Though happy to abide by the decision preventing him from bowling the doosra, Botha said he was still unsure as to the circumstances in which he was reported in the first place. He insisted he did not bowl the doosra in the Port Elizabeth match against Australia, and only once in the previous ODI in Cape Town.

"It has worked out like this now, so I have to carry on with what I have," he said. "That's fine. I haven't really used it much in the last year. I didn't bowl it at all in the game they called me."

Elliott, meanwhile, confirmed he would test the action of Pakistan spinner, Saeed Ajmal, at the UWA facilities on Thursday. Ajmal was reported by officials Asad Rauf, Billy Bowden, Zameer Haider and Nadeem Ghauri after the second ODI against Australia in Dubai last month. Like Botha, Ajmal also possesses a doosra in his bowling arsenal.

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Malcolm lashes at Harmison