

Afridi may lead Pakistan against NZ

PTI, Karachi

Flamboyant all-rounder Shahid Afridi may lead Pakistan in next month's One-day series against New Zealand if regular captain Younus Khan fails to recover from his finger injury.

Sources in the Pakistan Cricket Board said the message was conveyed to Afridi by PCB chairman Ejaz Butt during a meeting they had in Lahore on Friday.

"Younus is struggling to recover from his finger injury that he sustained in the

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Stray bullet kills young cricketer

AFP, New Delhi

A young cricketer who represented India in an under-19 series in Australia was killed by a stray bullet during a brawl, report said Saturday.

Gagandeep Singh, 18, was killed by the bullet after the fight broke out at a roadside eatery in Meerut, 80 kilometres (50 miles) north of New Delhi, the Press Trust of India said.

The restaurant owner was also killed and another bystander hurt in the shooting, the news agency quoted police as saying.

The gunman has been arrested, police said.

Singh was in Meerut to play in a local cricket tournament.

The left-arm spinner toured Australia six months ago for an under-19 tournament.



Steve Waugh

(Australian cricket legend) "I think we will know in next 12 months where one-day cricket is heading. Twenty20 is becoming popular. At the moment, Twenty20 is in a honeymoon period. Everyone wants to see a lot of action. That's what Twenty20 provides. It has a lot of value because it is entertaining and not time consuming."



Did U Know?

Hollywood Oscar winner Tom Hanks is a great fan of Aston Villa.



STAR Sports
Champions League T20
NSW Blues v Sussex Sharks
Live from 5:30pm
Daredevils v Wayamba
Live from 9:30pm



Federation Cup Football
Mohammedan v Shuktara (5:00pm)
Venue: Bangabandhu National Stadium

Mohammedan not complacent

Take on Shuktara in quarterfinal today

SPORTS REPORTER



Despite having already stormed into the knockout phase with a haul of 19 goals in three outings, there is no feel of complacency in the Mohammedan camp as they take on newcomers Shuktara Jubo Sangsad in a quarterfinal match of the Citycell Federation Cup at Bangabandhu National Stadium today.

Mohammedan's striking duo Nigerian Alamu Bukola Olaleken and Zahid Hasan Emily found the back of opponent nets in each of their three group matches including hatrick and thus topped the scorers' lists with six goals each while Nigerian medio Christina Emeka was following them with four goals in two matches.

Nevertheless the trio is now a major worry for any team, but coach Maruful Haq is not complacent about the trio, rather he looks up to the Narayanganj outfit, consisting of experienced booters.

"Yes, they are among goals but we also have to consider who we played against in the group stage. Now we are going to face a comparatively better side, who have some experienced as well as quality players and we are not taking them lightly," said Maruf before preparing his boys for the crucial tie yesterday.

Maruf, who guided Mohammedan to clinch the title of last season's curtain-raising tournament, already found out a couple of Shuktara's strong points and

planned to tackle those in a bid to confirm their semifinal berth.

Maruf is however a bit worried over Shuktara's striking duo of Mehdi Hasan Tapu and Nigerian Iddi Batambuze as well as playmaker of Rezaul Karim Liton, the heart of Shuktara's midfield.

Shuktara coach Riaz Biswas also believes the midfield comprising of Liton, Dalim, Sujan and Lintu is the main strength of his side.

"Mohammedan have already proved how strong they are in their previous three matches with 19 goals in three matches. But, I am not thinking about them, rather we are preparing to show our natural game regulated by the midfield," said Riaz.

Without their regular defenders Robin Hasan and Abul Kasem, each serving one match suspension, Shuktara backline will be facing an uphill task to resist Mohammedan's striking duo of Bukola and Emily. And according to Riaz, in their absence Shuktara would prefer to play a safe side game against their mighty opponents.

Recent heavy spells of rains following the depression over the Bay of Bengal not only forced the Bangladesh Football Federation to defer the quarterfinals by four days but also hampered the training of the teams.

The downpours over the last few days made the pitch of Bangabandhu National Stadium unplayable and the football's governing body was still preparing the ground till yesterday for the knockout phase.

Cobras bite Otago

CRICINFO, undated



The crowd at the Rajiv Gandhi Stadium did not have a home team to support in the first part of the Saturday double-header but those who bothered to show up certainly got their money's worth, thanks to a wonderful display of power hitting by the Champions League's first centurion, Andrew Puttick, and later by Justin Ontong.

After upstaging Royal Challengers Bangalore, the Cape Cobras booked themselves into the second round with a solid performance in the field to back their batsmen, who piled on 193. Otago barely dominated any passage of play during their chase and fell 54 short of the mark.

Both teams went into the game with seven international players each. Otago looked the more formidable, but only on paper. As is turned out, Otago were caught woefully short on the batting department. The fortunes of both teams at the end of 10.1 overs told the story -- the Cobras were at 79 for 2; Otago made the same number of runs but lost, crucially, three more wickets. Save for a brief cameo blaze from Nathan McCullum, a Cobras victory was inevitable.

Perhaps the best formula to draw in the crowds to support teams with plenty of unknowns is to prepare a road of a pitch and allow the batsmen the license to whack. It was a pity in the context of the game that Otago failed to match that total, but Puttick certainly made it a game to remember, not just for himself. Punters would have placed bets on one of the national stars to notch up a century but Puttick grabbed the headlines instead.

He relied more on power rather than timing to fetch his boundaries. He set the tone by slashing Neil Wagner past slip and flicking the same bowler off his pads in the opening over of the match. With the ball coming on to the bat,

the pair of Puttick and JP Duminy wilfully chipped down the track to unsettle the lengths of the seamers. Length deliveries were punched down the ground and the spin of Nathan was smothered and slogged, even as he tried to vary his length and flight.

It didn't take long for the Cobras to realise that hitting through the line was the order of the day. As the innings wore on, the Cobras brought out their paddle scoops and stylish flicks to toy with the inexperienced Otago attack. Otago could learn a thing or two from the England international Dimitri Mascarenhas, who managed a wicket-keeper and changed his pace cleverly to fetch his two wickets, including that of Herschelle Gibbs.

It was just a matter of seeing off Mascarenhas before launching into the rest. Puttick favoured the wide long-on boundary for his big hits. Nathan, Craig Cumming and Ian Butler looked back only to see the ball sail over the ropes. A four down to deep midwicket brought up his fifty but little did Otago know that his job was only half done at that point.

Puttick was particularly harsh on Butler, smacking 32 off 14 balls and then taking Neil Wagner for 27 off 16. Considering that they were the quickest of the lot, it was easy for Puttick to use the pace and launch the ball to all parts. When Puttick swooped Butler over midwicket, the smile on his face indicated just how much he enjoyed batting in the middle, possibly in the form of his life. It was a fortunate twist of fate since he wasn't included in the original squad and came in after Graeme Smith's pull-out. He was beaming again when he squeezed out a full delivery by Wagner to bring up a boundary to third man, and his century.

After Duminy and Rory Kleinveldt holed out trying to clear the boundary, Ontong came out to have some fun of his own. He slogged the seamers as if it was his birthright, and ended the innings with one such smack over long-on off Butler. He biffed four sixes in his 39 and

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Victorian Bushrangers batsman Rob Quiney (R) is bowled by Amit Mishra of Delhi Daredevils (not in picture) during their Champions League Twenty20 match at the Feroz Shah Kotla in Delhi on Friday.

PCB against WC matches in India

ANI, Lahore

The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) is against playing its matches in India during the 2011 World Cup, and has reportedly asked the International Cricket Council (ICC) to shift its matches to Sri Lanka or Bangladesh.

Sources said PCB chief Ijaz Butt, during the recent ICC executive board meeting, had apprised the game's governing body regarding its stance.

"Even the ICC is aware of

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Age-group swimming on Oct 15

SPORTS REPORTER

The 25th National Age-group Swimming Championship will get underway on October 15 at the Mirpur National Swimming Complex.

Some 500 swimmers from districts and divisional sports associations, services teams, swimming clubs and educational boards are expected to take part in the two-day meet.

Zahid Ahsan Rasel, the chairman of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Youth and Sports, is likely to inaugurate the meet.

Victoria vanquish Delhi

CRICINFO, undated



A similar story to Thursday's panned out at the Feroz Shah Kotla, with another Indian team failing to capitalise on home conditions and crowd support. Delhi Daredevils -- under new captain Gautam Gambhir -- were comprehensively beaten by Victoria, for whom Clint McKay led a devastating seam attack, in the opening match of Group D.

The win capped off a remarkable day for the Australian participants, after New South Wales pummeled the Eagles a few hours earlier at the same venue.

Delhi had been left to look like outsiders against an attack that was relentless on a track with consistently uneven bounce, and which made run-scoring quite problematic. Gambhir had not bargained for such a dismal showing after choosing to bat and Delhi just managed to scrape past the second-lowest Twenty20 score at this venue, recorded by the Eagles earlier.

The signs that a devil might just be in the pitch were first seen in the third over. The ball from Shane Harwood kept low, Gambhir was slow in getting his bat down in time and his off stump went cartwheeling.

Virender Sehwag attempted to stamp his authority at home by smashing boundaries off successive Harwood deliveries, but was superbly caught and bowled by McKay in his first over off a mistimed shot on the leg side. McKay followed it up by getting Owais Shah caught behind for a duck.

The Victorian fielders were always alert, keeping the batsmen on their toes. A moment of indecision from Tillakaratne Dilshan had Dinesh Karthik scrambling for safety at the bowler's end. Cameron White swooped in from cover and threw it back to Andrew McDonald, who took the bails off in a flash.

The situation called for Dilshan to play the anchor role and he was relatively sedate till the 16th over, when McKay -- who seemed to be enjoying the conditions -- lured him out and

removed his off stump. Mithun Manhas tried to make the most of his run-out reprieve, but a suspected hamstring injury did not augur well for Delhi and Harwood broke through his defences to send him back for 25. McDonald capped off a superb display by casting Bhatia and Sangwan in the final over. However, there was more disappointment in store for the partisan crowd.

If there were any doubts about the pitch during and after Delhi's innings, Rob Quiney settled them in style. Dirk Nannes, bowling to his state teammates, was handed no favours, as Quiney belted the ball past him to the mid-on boundary. Nannes' new-ball partner Ashish Nehra fared no better and was carted for a four and a six in his third over. With 32 on the board in the fifth over, Delhi were in a state of panic and bewilderment.

The introduction of legspinner Amit Mishra did not prove fruitful immediately, with Quiney attacking him from the start. Mishra was dispatched for six over long-on in his very first over, and the second and third deliveries of his next over disappeared for ten runs. Mishra persisted with flight and bowled Quiney next ball, the batsman failing to connect while trying to work to the leg side.

Brad Hodge, who had been watching the pyrotechnics from the other end, was cleaned up by Dilshan two balls later, but with Victoria racing to 55 for 2 in the ninth over, Delhi needed a pre-Diwali miracle. Dilshan and Mishra, bowling in tandem, managed to stifle the runs but Victoria had been delivered a productive start, and could afford to sit back.

Even Rajat Bhatia's dismissal of David Hussey with a slower one did little to instill confidence in Gambhir to try out Pradeep Sangwan's left-arm seam. It didn't make much difference, for Aiden Blizard ended the innings on a high, smashing Bhatia for a six over long-on.

BRIEF SCORES

Victoria 100 for 3 (Quiney 40) beat Delhi Daredevils 98 for 8 (Manhas 25, McKay 3-17) by seven wickets.



Svetlana Kuznetsova of Russia plays a shot against compatriot Nadia Petrova during their semifinal match of the China Open in Beijing yesterday. Kuznetsova won 6-1, 6-3.

Cilic fells Nadal

Sets up final against Djokovic

Tennis

AFP, Beijing

Croatia's Marin Cilic dealt Rafael Nadal his heaviest defeat in nearly two years Saturday, earning a 6-1, 6-3 victory at the China Open to set up a final with Novak Djokovic.

The eighth seed's surprise win in one hour, 22 minutes was the first loss in Beijing for the Spaniard, who as top seed had set a blistering pace all week.

"If you lose there lots of things you are doing wrong, mentally I probably wasn't there," said Nadal. "I had a chance to come back in the second set, but I didn't play well."

"It was very difficult for me, he served unbelievable, with winners almost all the time. I had a chance to come back and I didn't play very well. He gave me many chances to play but I was under pressure."

"I can do better next time -- I must," said the top seed at next week's Shanghai Masters.

Djokovic powered into Sunday's final after a 6-3, 6-3 win over Sweden's Robin Soderling, which also ensures he will claim the number three ATP ranking next week ahead of Andy Murray.

The Serb stands at 3-0 over Cilic, including a victory this season in Dubai.

"I've lost three times but this time I'm playing good," said Cilic. "If I can put in a performance like I did today, I have a shot."

On the women's side, Russian Svetlana Kuznetsova will try to improve a 1-2 record in Beijing finals when she plays against Polish 12th seed Agnieszka Radwanska.

Kuznetsova, 2006 winner, overcame fellow Russian Nadia Petrova 6-1, 6-3. Radwanska beat France's Marion Bartoli 6-4, 6-3.

"If I play my best game I think I'm to be the favourite but you never know," said Kuznetsova.

Djokovic, the second seed, improved his record over French Open finalist Soderling to 4-0 and maintained pace as the top winner on the men's circuit with 62 victories in 2009.

Murray has not played on the ATP World Tour since the US Open, missing the Asian swing due to complications from a wrist injury.

"It was another great win," said Djokovic, who is 2-5 in finals so far in 2009. "I had to take my chances."

"But it's a final and it's unpredictable -- it's the last day of motivation. I hope I can win this title."

Nadal's defeat was the heaviest he has suffered since going down 6-0, 6-1 to Russian Mikhail Youzhny in the Chennai final in January, 2008.

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