

## HP coming back

**Cricket**

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) has decided to reactivate the high performance (HP) unit and appoint a foreign coach to run the show again in an effort to bolster development of the players and also of those in the pipeline.

The decision came after BCB president AHM Mustafa Kamal and other board high-ups had a meeting with the national team management yesterday at its Mirpur headquarters after the Tigers' 4-1 series victory over Zimbabwe.

Previously, this programme, especially under the guidance of Australian coach Richard McInnes, produced players like current national team captain Shakib Al Hasan and his deputy Mushfiqur Rahim and the programme got special attention when the teen-heavy national side stunned India in the 2007 World Cup in West Indies.

But suddenly the game's governing body discontinued the programme,

citing that it had been incorporated in the National Cricket Academy (NCA), a claim that raised many eyebrows.

"It was our main demand [to reactivate the HP unit] when the officials welcomed the suggestions from the national team management during the meeting. Look at the current squad, almost all of the players came from this programme. The tough training at the unit helped us a lot to cope with the intensity of international cricket," said Shakib, who also attended the meeting.

"But we must ensure one thing that it is run in a proper way like we had earlier and not in a way the NCA is running from where we hardly got anything in the last two and a half years," he added.

The HP project was initiated by former BCB president Saber Hossain Chowdhury with a goal to produce international standard players. The subsequent BNP-led government also took further steps to strengthen the project and reaped the benefits. But the departure of McInnes in 2005 brought a grinding halt to this programme, without anyone's notice.

"It was unanimously decided that the programme would be reactivated very soon. We will try to bring a coach from Australia for the HP programme within a very short time. Actually everybody could understand how important the programme was for us," said BCB's media committee chairman Jalal Yunus, who was also present in the meeting.

He also informed that the national team representatives requested the BCB president to consider reactivating the HP unit, which had been the backbone of international selections like the A Team, Under-19 and Age Groups etc., under the BCB with highly-skilled foreign and local coaches imparting comprehensive cricket and life-related training to the up and coming talent.

Meanwhile, the BCB president also congratulated the national team on completing a highly successful year during which they won every ODI series and also had a historic first overseas Test series victory against the West Indies and a memorable ODI win against World Cup runners up Sri Lanka.



PHOTO: STAR

Abahani opener Imrul Kayes (R) takes an easy single during his fine knock of 115 in a Premier League match against BKSP at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium yesterday. He also shared 145 runs for the fifth wicket with Nasir Hossain (L) who scored an equally impressive 81.

## Big guns win

Imrul Kayes hits 115

**Cricket**

SPORTS REPORTER

Few of the national stars returned to their club duties in the fourth round of matches of the Premier League yesterday, but it was their less-illustrious club-mates who dictated terms as defending champions Abahani and title-contenders Mohammedan kept their hundred percent record intact with wins over BKSP and Cricket Coaching School (CCS) respectively.

Abahani had an easy sail over BKSP as they won by 82 runs at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium while Mohammedan faced some tough resistance against an impressive CCS before eventually winning by three wickets at Fatullah. Former Bangladesh captain Habibul Bashar failed to lift his side Surjo Torun as they lost to Old DOHS by 18 runs at BKSP.

After a few failures in the last matches, Imrul Kayes got amongst runs with a big hundred. He

played the anchor role and batted till the 47th over to score 115 to see his side post a daunting total of 268 runs before being all out exactly in 50 overs. He was supported well by middle order batsman Nasir Hossain who hit a 73-ball 81 as the two combined to put on 145 runs for the fifth wicket.

Kayes' innings of 115 was a carefully orchestrated one that included 10 fours and three sixes. Nasir's innings was a more aggressive one with nine fours and two sixes. Zakaria Masud was the pick of the bowlers for BKSP as he grabbed four wickets for 48 runs.

Replying to a huge total, BKSP lost both their openers within the first four overs. A fifty run partnership for the third wicket between Asif Ahmed (46) and Afzal Ahmed (56) seemed to have revived their chances momentarily, but as soon as they fell, the BKSP innings got tapered little by little and eventually folded for 186 in 47.5 overs.

At Fatullah, Mohammedan welcomed

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## Unbecoming of BFF!

SPORTS REPORTER

It seems that the Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) is reluctant to handle few things in a professional way in the Bangladesh League, the professional football league, despite being noticed many a times by the journalists who are suffering the most.

For the reporters in the press box, it is always hard to recognise a player, such as he is sporting a jersey that the number on it can hardly be read.

The trend began during the season's curtain-raising tournament, the Federation Cup, and is still continuing in the current meet though the match commissioners as well

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## Ctg AKC hold BU

SPORTS REPORTER

Visitors Chittagong Abahani came from behind twice to hold Brothers Union to a 2-2 draw in an entertaining encounter of the Bangladesh League at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

Ghanaian striker Enock Bentil struck a brace for Brothers while Mithun Chowdhury and Sumon Barua netted one goal each for the port city outfit in the last match before a one-and-a-half months break due to national team's preparations for the SAFF Championship to be held over December 4 to 13 in Bangladesh.

With the second draw in three outings, both Brothers and Ctg Abahani secured five points each and shared the crowded fourth spot along with Arambagh KS and Farashganj SC.

Title contenders Mohammedan with maximum nine points from three matches are on top of the 13-team table on goal difference

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PHOTO: STAR

Brother Union's Ghanaian striker Enock Bentil (L) celebrates one of his two goals during his side's Bangladesh League clash with Chittagong Abahani at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.



PHOTO: AFP

I HAVE TO FINISH IT MYSELF! Master India batsman Sachin Tendulkar looks out over his teammates as he enters the Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium ground in Guwahati yesterday for a practice session, ahead of today's crucial sixth ODI against Australia.

## Crucial 6th ODI today

**Cricket**

CRICINFO, Guwahati

Three days ago it was being asked whether Australia would be able to make this series a contest after losing Moises Henriques to injury, the latest in a long line of losses. The squad had already lost Brett Lee (elbow), James Hopes (hamstring), Tim Paine (finger) and Peter Siddle (side strain), and was without first-choice players Michael Clarke, Brad Haddin, Nathan Bracken and Callum Ferguson when the series began. Now they are one game away from an unassailable 4-2 lead after stealing a thriller in Hyderabad on Thursday.

"When you take all those things into consideration, the way we are continuing to improve our cricket is fantastic," said Ricky Ponting after that game. The assertion is difficult to disprove. In Mohali, Australia made 250 and bowled and fielded better than India to level it 2-2. In Hyderabad, on Thursday, they inflicted a painful three-run loss on India who, lifted by Sachin Tendulkar's 45th ODI century, threatened to chase down 351. They may be depleted, but Australia's bowlers and fielders have put pressure on the Indian batsmen -- like Adam Voges's stunning take to send back MS Dhoni -- resulting in six run-outs and dismissals at

crucial junctures.

For a side that was ousted from the top spot after the series loss to South Africa earlier this year, Australia stormed back via a 6-1 win over England and the Champions Trophy title. Undoubtedly the prospect of taking home a third trophy will spur them on. The sixth ODI at the Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium in Guwahati today could decide the series and while it's hard to predict a winner, the high of two straight wins may just tilt the balance against the hosts.

Two losses have turned the series around and put India under pressure. The home side's win in Nagpur was a comprehensive rout -- the batsman piled it on and the bowlers put the stranglehold on the Australian top order and kept up the pressure, the fielders backing them up. In Delhi Dhoni and Yuvraj Singh made easy work of the modest target of 230 on a tough track, often making the visitors appear complacent.

This is a similar situation to the one India found themselves in during the seven-match series in England in 2007. They were 3-1 but managed to claw back to 3-3, only to lose the decider.

Knowing Dhoni's captaincy they won't be thinking about Wednesday's game in Mumbai, but India know they're up against it here. India have not lost a bilateral series since the last time

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## MS looks forward

**Cricket**

CRICINFO, undated

India are a loss away from just their third bilateral one-day series defeat since 2006, but captain Mahendra Singh Dhoni was not letting the pressure get to him. India surrendered a 3-2 series lead in Hyderabad, where they fell three runs short of a target of 351, to arrive in Guwahati needing to win to prevent their first bilateral series defeat since Australia toured two years ago.

"It [the Hyderabad loss] was hurting and disappointing. But we have left everything in the dressing room," said Dhoni. "We have two more games to go and that's what count now. Whatever has happened has happened. You cannot change much about it. It's important to concentrate on what lies ahead and stay fresh mentally."

"Every game was a pressure game in the

series and the remaining two games also. Our first priority is to be in the series, so we have to win the next game and not looking too far ahead."

India's middle order has not produced a lot of runs over the last two matches and that was a major factor in their current series position. As he most always does, Dhoni patted back criticism of two bad outings from the middle order, himself included. "We rely on a good start but every now and then your openers don't score and the pressure comes to the middle order," said Dhoni. "This is one of the series where the middle order has not performed consistently."

"It's not a worrying thing. But of course it's good if we get a good start so that the middle order and lower order capitalise on that."

The young all-rounder Ravindra Jadeja has bowled decently in the series as support to Harbhajan Singh but has not done much with

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## Kiwis stage U-turn

**Cricket**

AFP, Abu Dhabi

Brendon McCullum hit a return-to-form hundred and Scott Styris took three wickets in two overs as New Zealand beat Pakistan by 64 runs in the second day-night international here on Friday.

McCullum notched 131 to help the Black Caps post a challenging 303-8 on a flat Abu Dhabi Stadium pitch before Styris (3-23) triggered a middle-order collapse which saw Pakistan bowled out for 239, leaving the three-match series level at 1-1.

Pakistan won the first match by 138 runs on Tuesday. The final match will be played here on Monday.

Chasing a daunting target, Pakistan got off to a solid start of 77 with Khalid Latif (45) and Salman Butt (59) setting the tempo. Even after Latif fell leg-before to New Zealand skipper Daniel Vettori in the 17th over, Pakistan were well on course.

Butt and Younus (19) added another 47 for the second wicket before Styris struck three times in ten balls to turn the match in his team's favour.

Bowling for the first time in 13 months, Styris had Younus smartly caught at short mid-wicket by a diving Ross Taylor and then next ball induced Shahid Afridi (0) to play into the same

fielder's hands.

In his next over, Styris had Kamran Akmal (four) caught at short cover before Butt was run out after being sent back by Mohammad Yousuf.

Vettori then trapped Yousuf (18) to push Pakistan to the brink of defeat.

Although Shoaib Malik (26) and Abdul Razzaq (35) resisted, it was too little too late against a professional New Zealand.

Earlier, New Zealand had McCullum to thank for repairing the innings through a second wicket stand of 126 with Martin Gupthill (62).

Stripped of the vice-captaincy to allow him to concentrate on batting last month, McCullum steadied the innings, driving and cutting with authority during his 129-ball knock. He hit 14 boundaries and three sixes.

Gupthill hit five boundaries and two sixes during his 70-ball knock before holing out to paceman Razaq.

McCullum also added 44 for the fifth wicket with Vettori (30) before Razaq returned for his second spell to have the New Zealand captain caught behind off a miscued hit.

McCullum reached the three-figure mark off 108 deliveries. He was finally dismissed in the 47th over, bowled off an inside edge by paceman Umar Gul.

He also added 56 for the seventh wicket with Jacob Oram who made 33 not out.

Pakistan brought back Malik after resting

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## Hussey wants it here, now

PTI, Guwahati

Leading 3-2 in the ongoing seven-match ODI series against India, Australian vice-captain Michael Hussey said the visitors are determined to pocket the rubber in the sixth one-dayer here today.

Predicting that Sunday's day affair will witness a close finish, Hussey said they were backing themselves up with the motivation of sealing the issue instead of leaving it for last game in Mumbai.

"I guess it will be a tight match here again but our motivation now is that we can have the series in our hands on Sunday. We are still recovering from the thrilling win [in Hyderabad] and hope to take the series here," Hussey told reporters on the eve of the match at the Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium here.



Nazmul Hossain

(Bangladesh paceman)

"I just kept my eyes on the ball and flew."

Explaining how he pulled off a blinder at point to dismiss Zimbabwe's Malcolm Waller in the fourth ODI in Chittagong on November 3.



Neo Cricket &

SuperSport5

India v Australia

Sixth ODI

Live from 10:00am

SuperSport2

South Africa v Zimbabwe

First ODI

Live from 3:00pm

ESPN

English Premiership

Hull City v Stoke City

Live from 8:25pm

Chelsea v Man United

Live from 10:55pm

STAR Sports

English Premiership

West Ham v Everton

Live from 9:55pm

SuperSport7

Primera Liga

Valencia v Zaragoza

Live from 1:25am (Monday)

Sevilla v Villarreal

Live from 3:25am (Monday)

SuperSport3

Serie A

Inter Milan v Roma

Live from 3:10am (Monday)