

## It is a privilege, remember that

**Cricket**

NADER RAHMAN

December is a month that holds a special place in the hearts of all Bangladeshis, it is a month in which we remember all those who fought and gave their lives for this country. It is a month that stirs nationalistic feelings even amongst those who tend to forget. It is also a month where one must remember that the privilege to represent ones country should be cherished and treasured, it is a gift whose true worth few people understand. This month a host of players who turned their backs on the country for the lure of money were reintegrated into our national cricket team and many patriotic Bangladeshis have been overheard saying, "We're better off without them."

Whether that is the truth or not is debatable, but the sentiment is one that is understood and has been echoed around the country. But where does one go from here? At any given time the best 11 players must represent Bangladesh on the playing field, but what qualities are we measuring them by? The players returning from the ICL have opened up a completely new debate about the basis of selection that no one can look away from. Before they came back with their tails between their legs the

only criteria for selection was a player's performance on the field.

But since their return that selection criteria has been questioned, can runs, wickets and catches alone be the yardstick to select a player? What about dedication, commitment and love for ones country, shouldn't those be thought of before a player is selected? If that is the case then reintegration for the ICL players will be a lot more difficult than they think.

To select them a few months after they infamously left their country in the lurch would be an abomination. It would be a slap in the face of every cricketer who toils away day after day in the hope that one day he might represent his nation on the field of play. Those who left for the ICL took that feeling for granted, they took their nation for granted and now they want to continue as if nothing ever happened. In international cricket there have been numerous difficult cricketers, they have been drunks, womanisers and liars but selectors continued to stick with them because after everything was said and done they would have died on the field for their respective countries.

When the selectors look at the ICL players can they honestly say the same thing? Do they think that the players that defected (we are calling them defected cricketers because they have resigned en masse from the national team which has

not been the case with any other country) not so long ago have all of a sudden turned over a new leaf and are now willing to give everything for their country? It would take a brave man to say yes.

Runs, wickets and catches should of course be the primary criteria for selection, but without commitment and a love for ones country, there is no way a player will be able to represent it properly.

A few weeks ago when Bangladesh took on Zimbabwe at home, Shahriar Nafees was spotted at an ice cream parlour in Banani. He walked in, pony tail, beard and all looking like a desi version of Robin Hood. As he entered a tall strapping man well known to cricketing community in Bangladesh greeted him with a pat on the back, he asked him what he'd like to eat, but Nafees politely declined, instead paying for his ice cream himself. They stood and chatted idly and as it so happened that day Bangladesh beat Zimbabwe in Mirpur, with Shakib blitzing a century of 70 odd balls. The tall man asked him if he saw the game and the match-winning century, to which Nafees replied nonchalantly, "I didn't even know there was a game on." With that dismissive reply he bid his adieu and left. If that is how he feels about the national team he was once part of and now seems set to join again then all one can say is, "we're better off without them."

## SAFF earns Tk 30 lakh

**SPORTS REPORTER**

Bangladesh Football Federation have earned a revenue of Tk 30 lakh from the just-concluded Bangabandhu Sixth SAFF Championship, informed BFF finance committee head Anwarul Haq Helal.

A huge number of spectators turned up to watch the semifinal match between hosts Bangladesh and India, which was followed by the first semifinal between Maldives and Sri Lanka. BFF earned Tk 14 lakh, almost half of the total revenue, from the sale of 35 thousand gallery tickets for that day.

Revenues could have been higher if Bangladesh had moved into the final of the regional football extravaganza. The turnout for the final match between India and Maldives was hardly 15 thousand.

## Victory Day hockey

**SPORTS REPORTER**

Victory Day Hockey tournament gets underway today at the Maulana Bhasani National Hockey Stadium with two matches on the opening day.

Six teams -- Sonali Bank, Bangladesh Army, Bangladesh Krira Shikkha Protisthan, Bangladesh Hockey Federation XI and Bangladesh Police -- will first play the round-robin league and then top two teams will play in the final on December 25.

On the opening day, BKSP will take on Biman Bangladesh at 1.30pm while Sonali Bank face Bangladesh Police in the second match at 3.30.

## FRIENDLY VOLLEYBALL BDR down BSF

**UNB, Sherpur**

Bangladesh Rifles beat Indian Border Security Force (BSF) by 2-1 set in a friendly volleyball match at Dhalu Stadium in Indian state of Meghalaya on Monday.

A 50-member team led by Mymensingh BDR sector commander Col Mahub visited Meghalaya at the invitation of his BSF counterpart of Tura Sector to play the friendly match. DIG of BSF G.S. Chowdhury greeted the BDR team.

BDR team won the match 16-25, 25-16 and 25-19 at Dhalu Stadium across the Sherpur border. The match was followed by a cultural function. BDR team returned home last night.

## Ind-SL venue shifted

**AFP, New Delhi**

India's cricket chiefs on Monday changed the venue of the second one-day international against Sri Lanka due to political tension in the coastal city of Visakhapatnam.

The match will now take place on Friday in Nagpur, which had hosted a Twenty20 international between India and Sri Lanka last week.

Visakhapatnam, in the south-eastern state of Andhra Pradesh, has been gripped by demonstrations over the federal government's decision to create a separate state of Telangana.

The match on Friday at the Vidarbha Cricket Association ground in Nagpur will be a day-night game, the Indian cricket board said in a statement.

Sri Lanka begin a five-match one-day series against India on Tuesday in the western city of Rajkot. The remaining matches will be played in Nagpur (December 18), Cuttack (December 21), Kolkata (December 24) and New Delhi (December 27).

Sri Lanka lost the preceding Test series 2-0 and both teams won a Twenty20 match each.

## Ashfaq a la Baggio

**Football**

**SPORTS REPORTER**

Much like their Bangladeshi counterparts the Maldives footballers also passed a sleepless night after going down 3-1 in a tiebreaker against India in the final of SAFF Championship on Sunday.

Their only consolation for the ex-champions, at this point, is the fact that they have been unbeaten throughout the entire tournament.

And the man suffering more than others is undoubtedly star Ashfaq Ali. With India 3-1 up in the shootout, Maldives captain Ashfaq came in to take the fourth shot and the 23-year old striker drove his left-footer wide of the post from the 12-yard spot to relinquish the title to India.

"After having seen that the Indian goalkeeper (Arindam Bhattacharja) save the previous two shots at full-stretch, I wanted to send the ball just next to the sidepost, but it went wide," Ashfaq Ali told reporters after he was awarded the best player of the tournament by the Bangladesh Sports Writers Association (BSWA) yesterday.

Ashfaq informed that it was his second miss from the spot kick in his football career after he squandered a 12-yard spot kick in domestic football in 2006.

Talking about the final, Ashfaq said, "Actually we were unlucky in the final though we had a better chance to win the trophy. See we struck 11 goals

in the previous four matches while India netted only three and we also came close to taking lead in the final. But we could not and it should not be an excuse and the truth was that we lost the match in the tiebreaker."

"At the same time, it is also

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Maldives star Ashfaq Ali (L), adjudged best player of the Bangabandhu SAFF Championship by the Bangladesh Sports Writers Association (BSWA), receives his memento from the association's general secretary Rafiqul Islam at a city hotel yesterday.

## Djordjevic enjoyed Bangladesh trip

**Football**

**SPORTS REPORTER**

Serbian football coach Zoran Djordjevic left Dhaka yesterday morning with a positive impression of the popularity of the game in Bangladesh.

Djordjevic had been in preliminary talks with the Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) over a coaching job but he said that nothing concrete or definitive had been discussed.

"We really haven't had a serious conversation yet. I am here to help and the challenge of coaching Bangladesh is something that every coach will be willing to take," stated the 57-year old.

"There is a strong football culture in Bangladesh and the spectators are wonderful," he stated while speaking to The Daily Star over phone.

Djordjevic was until recently the coach of Indian league side Churchill Brothers where he led the un-fancied side to a shock I-League triumph.

Djordjevic believed that the SAFF Championship was a landmark tournament for Bangladesh and it could propel them into the international stage. But he said it was upsetting that Bangladesh did not manage to make it into the final.

"The team played without high motivation or spirit, against India, which is why they lost," he observed.

Ironically, four of his Churchill Brother's crew performed heroically for India in that match and in the whole tournament with goalkeeper Arindam Bhattacharja and free-kick specialist Robert Lalhamuana especially

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ZORAN DJORDJEVIC

## India-SL 1st ODI today

**Cricket**

**CRICINFO, undated**

India's fielding and bowling remain the focus for their captain MS Dhoni as they embark on the final leg of Sri Lanka's tour, a five-match one-day series starting in Rajkot today. India's one-day fortunes have dipped in the last few months and Dhoni, while confident of their chances in the series, was keen to iron out the chinks that threaten to turn into gaping holes.

"We want to win the series that's what we are supposed to do, (but) at the same time not being overconfident is also important," he said. "We have to be in that phase of mind where you are very confident but at the same time not to cross that line. We are taking care of the things

we need to do, including fielding and death bowling. We have quite a few areas we need to improve and are focusing on that. At the same time whatever our strong point is we need to be up there throughout."

Mike Young, formerly with the Australian team, has been appointed India's fielding consultant for the limited-overs series but the team's catching was abysmal in the two Twenty20 fixtures. "Since Mike has joined us we are laying emphasis on fielding... he also needs a few specific sessions as coach," said Dhoni. "It's a very important aspect of any format of the game. If you can see the impact (of Young joining) in three days that will be great."

According to Dhoni, the results would be seen over a period of time. "We need to get our basics right and fielding is an area where if you

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India cricketers (L-R) Sachin Tendulkar, Praveen Kumar, Harbhajan Singh, Virender Sehwag and Gautam Gambhir warm-up during a practice session in Rajkot yesterday. India play first ODI against Sri Lanka today.

## Pakistan forge ahead

**Cricket**

**CRICINFO, undated**

This chameleon game changed character yet again late on the fourth day of the Napier Test between New Zealand and Pakistan. Mohammad Yousuf was serenely moving towards what seemed an inevitable hundred when he fell to crack open the game to several thrilling possibilities. New Zealand hold the advantage and are the frontrunners to pull off something special in Napier, but with its frail batting line-up pitted against the mercurial Pakistan bowling, who knows what can happen if the target is around 200.

On a stop-start day, interrupted constantly by rain, Pakistan had threatened to shoot themselves in the foot by gifting wickets to Martin Guphill, before they rallied through a 128-run stand between Yousuf and Faisal Iqbal. The sun kept peeping in and out of the clouds, Faisal alternated between nervous edginess and flamboyance, but Yousuf draped an elegantly solid hue on proceedings. His innings appeared to have seemingly pushed Pakistan towards safety when he fell to make matters more interesting.

Though the morning's play was filled with drama it was freakish in nature, and it was in the afternoon that the real contest between bat and ball began. Iain O'Brien and Daniel Vettori bowled as well as they could on a flat pitch but Yousuf stood firm. The caressed square-drives on a stretched front foot, the stylish flicks and the authoritative punches off the back foot were

all showcased against the seamers but it was his battle with Vettori that stood out.

There was one piece of action which perfectly caught the spirit of the contest between the two: Yousuf came down the track but Vettori cleverly slowed the pace and shortened the length. However, Yousuf waited to adjust to the lack of pace, and though he couldn't reach the pitch of the ball, he didn't panic or lunge out; instead he almost nonchalantly waited through the line and found

enough power and timing to lift it over long-on. Vettori used the crease well, varied his pace and utilised the arm-ball intelligently but Yousuf handled him with aplomb. He moved forward or back as the length demanded and picked the arm ball on most occasions.

Faisal was nowhere near as solid as Yousuf but he fought on to score a valuable fifty. His iffy footwork meant he was caught on the crease a few times and was forward when

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Pakistan skipper Mohammad Yousuf hoists one over long-on on the fourth day of the third Test against New Zealand at McLean Park in Napier yesterday.

## Roach doesn't scare Aus

**Cricket**

**CRICINFO, undated**

A West Indian fast man hitting the WACA surface in the mid-150kph region is a prospect that once upon a time would have given Australian batsmen nightmares. And possibly a few broken bones. But Brad Haddin said the idea of facing up to Kemar Roach, who reached impressive speeds at Adelaide Oval last week, was not keeping the locals awake at night.

That is in part because the fast and bouncy WACA surfaces of the 1980s are a thing of the past; the pitches haven't been any quicker than those elsewhere in Australia over the past few years. The ground's reputation can also lure fast bowlers into an over-aggressive approach, which can backfire on a surface where runs tend to become easier to score as the match wears on.

"I don't think our approach to Roach will be any different to the first few Tests," Haddin said. "He obviously can get the speed up on the radar gun but we have seen on this ground with some of the fast bowlers it's been their downfall with trying to bowl

too quick and too short. The next thing you look up on the board and they have gone for six or seven an over. It can sometimes be a pretty ruthless place to bowl for a fast bowler."

Australia's captain Ricky Ponting said after the Adelaide Test that Roach, who is easily the fastest of the West Indies attack, would be a handful in Perth. But this is the same Ponting who a year ago was bemoaning the fact that the WACA no longer possessed its trademark speed and carry, and who would no doubt love to see Roach over-attack and leak runs.

The West Indies manager Joel Garner remembers the WACA as a venue where he and his fast-bowling colleagues rattled the Australians regularly. From 1975 to 1993, West Indies played four Tests in Perth and won them all, including three innings victories. Australia have lost their past two encounters at the WACA but Garner said his players would be cautious of the hosts despite their indifferent history at the venue.

"I don't really look at the records too much because you tend to get carried away," Garner said. "You have to play in the framework of what you've got going. I know Australia will also want to play to the best of their ability because they want to continue in the winning mode. We'll be very wary of them."

Garner said the key for Roach and the rest of the West Indies attack was not to get carried away

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### Did U Know?

The longest Wimbledon career, spanning 55 years, is that of Jean Borotra of France. He competed in the men's singles competition 35 times between 1922 and 1964, then in the veterans' men's doubles and mixed doubles from 1965 to 1977.



**Neo Cricket & SuperSport5**  
India v Sri Lanka  
First ODI  
Live from 10:30am

**TEN Sports**  
New Zealand v Pakistan  
Third Test, Day 5  
Live from 6:00am

**ESPN**  
Sportscenter India  
Sports News  
Live at 9:30pm

**English Premier League**  
Man United v Wolves  
Live from 3:00am (Wednesday)



**Premier Super League**  
Mohammedan v Biman  
Venue: Sher-e-Bangla National Cricket Stadium  
Abahani v Kalabagan  
Venue: Fatullah Cricket Stadium  
Victoria v CCS  
Venue: BKSP-2



Yuvraj Singh

(India batsman)  
"He is the best coach that I have ever played under. He understands the game and the pressure."  
On coach Gary Kirsten.