

Zoran arrives here tonight

SPORTS REPORTER

Serbian coach Zoran Djordjevic is scheduled to arrive here tonight to take charge of the Bangladesh U-23 football team for the upcoming South Asian Games to be held in Bangladesh from January 29 to February 9.

Hosts Bangladesh have been drawn in Group A along with two-time champions Nepal, Maldives and Bhutan.

The Serbian coach will also be given the responsibility to guide the senior team for the AFC Challenge Cup finals to be held in Sri Lanka from February 16 to 27. Bangladesh will play against Tajikistan, Myanmar and hosts Sri Lanka in Group A while Group B consists of defending champions India, North Korea, Turkmenistan and Kyrgyzstan. The champions of the tournament will earn direct entry to the Asia Cup.

Djordjevic's two assistants are also scheduled to arrive with him, but Zoran Kraljedic, one of the assistants, is expected to arrive on Wednesday while the arrival of the other assistant, Berber Dabor, who is coming in place of Sasa Nikolic, who can't come following his family problem, depends on the receipt of his air-ticket which will be sent by Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF).

"We will strike a deal with Djordjevic as soon as possible

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NO STOPPING DILSHAN: Flamboyant Sri Lanka opener Tillakaratne Dilshan keeps on carrying his outstanding form in his first match of the New Year. Here the right-hander drives the ball in the opening match of the Idea Cup against Bangladesh at the floodlit Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

Straight Drive

SUNIL GAVASKAR

India had a pretty good 2009 if one doesn't take into account the two ICC tournaments that were played in the year. The defending champions in the T20 format did not even qualify for the knockout stage of the tournament in England and then in South Africa they again struggled to get through the first round. Apart from these hiccups they had a very good year in the bilateral tours and dominated those tours. They will thus be looking to begin 2010 in a similar fashion and winning the tri-nation tournament would be a good way to get the year off to a rocking start. Having just played Sri Lanka they know that even without the two J's, Jayasuriya and Jayawardene, the Lankans are a good outfit and are always tough opponents. The youngsters in the Lankan team especially the bowlers have shown in the one-day series in India that with a bit of experience they will be hard to get away. Lakmal, Welegedera, Randiv have bowled well in patches in the just concluded series in India and Sangakkara will be hoping that another confrontation with the Indians will give the finishing touches and make them better bowlers for the future. With Muralitharan not looking to go beyond 2011 the Lankans will need to look for bowlers who can pick wickets on any surface as the magician Murali used to do. They also are missing the canny bowling of Chaminda Vaas who swung the new ball and also used the slower delivery well in the limited overs format and was also pretty handy with the bat.

Like the Lankans the Indians too are without their most experienced player in limited overs cricket, Sachin Tendulkar, but they have the services of Yuvraj who was not fully fit for the series against Sri Lanka. The Indians still have a formidable batting line-up and in the bowling too they have lots of experience and wickets behind them in Zaheer, Nehra and Harbhajan Singh. It is their fielding that is the worry though with the likes of Yuvraj, Raina and Rohit Sharma in the squad it can be electrifying too.

The pitch at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium has some grass on it and with the winter having settled in there is scope for the new-ball bowlers to use the seam well whether it is bowling first or later under the lights. It won't be the flat

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Too cold for comfort?

ATIQUA ANAM

The eagerly anticipated Idea Cup tri-nation series kicked off yesterday at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium with hosts Bangladesh taking on Sri Lanka. But the amount of enthusiasm expected to be generated was not reflected in the crowd turnout. It was not a desired attendance, considering an international match.

There might be one good reason that it was a weekday and more importantly cricket fans might have opted to stay indoors to avoid the bite of the cold that has crippled the country.

However, the crowd that braved the chilly weather found reasons to cheer about in only a few phases of the Bangladesh innings.

It was surprising to see the stadium less-than-half full when the Tigers took to the field. It becomes more puzzling for the fact that Bangladesh is launching a New Year on a high after a very successful last season. Enthusiasm for the game is on such a high that the recently concluded Premier League and the T20 Leagues have drawn packed audiences at this very ground on a number of occasions.

Can the cold be the only reason behind this low turnout? Or the high price of gallery tickets would be attributed for this apparent apathy? It must be mentioned here that the ticket price has been a little too high for this tournament according to enthusiastic fans. This time the lowest

ticket price has been set at Tk. 200 which may ward off many school or college going cricket fans from watching the matches inside the stadium. Bangladesh Cricket Board, however, thinks the price of tickets are reasonable, rather

the cold is to be blamed for this low turnout.

"We have high expectations about the series. Two high profile teams, apart from Bangladesh, are featuring in the tournament. This is why

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PHOTO: STAR

IT'S REALLY COLD OUT IN THE MIDDLE: English umpire Ian Gould is putting on a jacket to shield him from the biting cold during the Bangladesh-Sri Lanka tri-series match at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium yesterday.

Bollinger looks for positives

CRICINFO, undated

Australia are praying their final-session surge of seven wickets will motivate the batsmen into a significantly improved performance as they battle to avoid giving up their series lead. Pakistan have dominated the first two days against a struggling home side and hold a 204-run advantage after finishing at a healthy 9 for 331.

Doug Bollinger, the left-arm fast bowler, led the Australian charge by snatching three victims with the second new ball in an action-packed conclusion, but whether the hosts can remain in the game depends on the batsmen. "It was a good fight-back by the guys," Bollinger said. "It was frustrating early, but they were two-for at tea and now they're nine down. We just need to try and get the last one tomorrow and then get our batting hats on for a certain amount of time and get something to bowl at in the second innings."

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Dew's to blame

Shakib's call to start matches early

BISHWAJIT ROY

Sri Lanka cruised to an easy sail when they handed a seven-wicket defeat to the Tigers chasing down the target of 261 runs in 44.5 overs in the opening match of the Idea Cup tri-nation one-day tournament at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.

It was however not any brilliant batting effort from the Lankans rather the conditions that came to spotlight after the match as both skippers agreed that it was difficult for the fielding side to keep control of the match in heavy dew.

So, Bangladesh captain Shakib Al Hasan pointed his finger at his coin luck which he believed had actually made the difference.

Praising his team's batting effort which enabled them to put up a descent total of 260 runs on the board, Shakib laid all the blame on the conditions and suggested to bring forward the timing of the match in the greater interest of the game.

"I'm happy with our batting effort. We

were probably only 10 to 15 runs short. But I think it would've been difficult to defend even over 300 under these conditions. The dew factor is what made the difference, not our batting or bowling.

"In the second half it was very difficult to grip the ball, the whole surface became unplayable."

The obvious question then came up whether winning the toss meant winning the game, Shakib emphatically said: "Yes, it all depends on the toss given the conditions."

"I will want to practise winning tosses if we have to win matches," mocked an ever-smiling Shakib.

"We may have to practise how to toss the coin rightly if we ultimately keep the same timing," the Tigers skipper joked.

About his team's chances against Sri Lanka, he said, "We can beat this Sri Lanka side. If their first few batsmen who are in great form can be removed early, it will become an easy job."

Shakib said that he has spoken with his Sri Lanka opposite number, Kumar Sangakkara, and the umpires about the

playing conditions and whether it was possible to start the games from 12pm instead of 2:30pm to reduce the impact of dew on deciding the outcome.

Sangakkara also echoed Shakib's sentiments about holding the matches early.

"Shakib made a very valid point. I do feel sorry for the team that fielded second. It is always difficult to play under lights with heavy dew around all over the surface."

"In this conditions, it is always a disadvantage to bowl second. So, the team winning the toss gets an unfair advantage."

"It would be good from the tournament's perspective if the games are brought forward."

The Sri Lanka skipper credited the Bangladesh team's batting effort. "They put on a great batting effort. Ashraf and Mahmudullah, in specific, batted brilliantly to set a challenging target. 260 was not a bad total at all."

Despite the victory, one cause for concern for the Lankan skipper is the injury to Tillakaratne Dilshan which may rule him out of today's match against India.

MSC's hard-fought win

SPORTS REPORTER

A second-half strike by forward Zahid Hasan Emily gave title contenders Mohammedan Sporting Club a hard-fought lone goal win over Farashganj Sporting Club in the Citycell Bangladesh League at the Birshreshtha Shaheed Mostafa Kamal Stadium in Kamalapur yesterday.

Mohammedan had to wait for their seventh straight win until the 47th minute when Emily, who has been involved in a healthy battle with Abahani striker Enamul Haque for the golden boot, fired home a grounder from inside the box. The ball kissed the side post before entering the net much to the relief of the Motijheel outfit.

With this win Mohammedan joined holders Abahani at the top of the table, both having maximum 21 points.

Incidentally it was Emily's sixth goal that also put him at the top with Enamul, who struck twice in Abahani's 3-1 win against Rahmatganj the other day.

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Sanath has to force his way back to team

CRICINFO, undated

Trevor Bayliss, the Sri Lanka coach, has said Sanath Jayasuriya is unlikely to be picked as a specialist opener and will have to force his way in as a spinning all-rounder if he is to play the 2011 World Cup.

"As Jayasuriya has himself said on record, he is a spinning all-rounder now," Bayliss said. "If he keeps performing and putting pressure on others, he can always get in. It's up to him and what pressure he can put on the others in the team."

Jayasuriya didn't make the cut for the tri-nation tournament in Bangladesh, beginning Monday, and in a recent interview to Cricinfo, he said the team management should send a clear message to him about his future.

"The biggest challenge is to play the 2011 World Cup," Jayasuriya said. "Obviously if the team management wants to send me a message they should be clear about that to me, as they have been in the past."

"I am only thinking of five ODIs at a time, and if I can perform in three out of those five, I'm right on track for the next World Cup."

The re-emergence of opener Upul Tharanga, it appears, has helped Sri Lanka firm up their plans for the World Cup. "Tharanga has played really well in the last series against India," Bayliss said. "His and Dilshan's opening partnership looks good for the World Cup."

Like Jayasuriya, Mahela Jayawardene too, hasn't been in great form in the ODIs, but Bayliss said it wasn't a bad

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Waugh enters Hall of Fame

PTI, Sydney

Former Australia captain Steve Waugh, along with four other cricket legends from down under, were inducted into the International Cricket Council's (ICC) Hall of Fame here on Monday.

Ray Lindwall, Keith Miller, Bill O'Reilly, Victor Trumper and Waugh were formally inducted into the ICC Cricket Hall of Fame during the tea interval on the second day of the second Australia-Pakistan Test at the Sydney Cricket Ground.

Commemorative caps were presented by ICC director and Cricket Australia chairman Jack Clarke to the families of the deceased legends as well as Waugh. Waugh was then driven around the outfield in an open-top car, accompanied by his three children, to allow the crowd to show its appreciation for the former captain.

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BD-SL SCOREBOARD

Scoreboard of the day-night first one-day international of the tri-nation Idea Cup between Bangladesh and Sri Lanka at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur on Monday:

BANGLADESH		R	B	4s	6s
Tamim c Lakmal b Dilshan		40	46	5	0
Imrul c Samaraweera b Kulasekara		23	37	2	0
Ashraf run out (Sangakkara)		75	94	6	0
Rokibul c Samaraweera b Lakmal		0	6	0	0
Shakib c Welegedera b Lakmal		1	7	0	0
Mushfiq lbw b Randiv		35	52	3	0
Mahmudullah lbw b Randiv		45	47	3	1
Naem not out		22	9	1	2
Razzak not out		1	2	0	0
Extras: (lb-3, w-15)		18			
Total: (For 7 wickets in 50 overs)		260			
Did not bat: Rubel, Shafiq					
Fall of wickets: 1-65, 2-71, 3-71, 4-74, 5-132, 6-227, 7-238					
Bowler		O	M	R	W
Kulasekara		10	1	46	1
Welegedera		8	0	39	0
Dilshan		3	0	16	1
Lakmal		9	1	63	2
Randiv		10	0	51	2
Kandamby		5	0	21	0
Pushpakumara		5	0	21	0
SRI LANKA		R	B	4s	6s
Tharanga c Mushfiq b Rubel		14	15	3	0
Dilshan c Naem b Mahmudullah		104	122	12	0
Sangakkara c Mushfiq b Shafiq		74	73	10	0
Samaraweera not out		41	54	5	0
Silva not out		4	7	0	0

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BTV & NEO Cricket

Sri Lanka v India
Second ODI, Idea Cup
Live from 2:30pm

TEN Sports
South Africa v England
Third Test, Day Three
Live from 2:30pm

ESPN

Sportscenter India
Sports News
Live from 8:30pm
English Premiership
Stoke City v Fulham
Live from 1:40am (Wednesday)

STAR Cricket

Australia v Pakistan
Second Test, Day Four
Live from 5:30am (Wednesday)

DAY'S EVENT

Idea Cup
Sri Lanka v India
Venue: Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium, Mirpur
Time: 2:30pm

Bangladesh League
Ctg Mohammedan v Sk Russel
Venue: Kamalapur Stadium
Time: 2:45pm

Beanibazar v Brothers Union
Venue: Sylhet Stadium
Time: 2:30pm