



PHOTO: AFP

COACHING HIS SON! Coach Gary Kirsten bats in the nets while his son Joshua watches during India's practice session in Nagpur yesterday. India are preparing to meet South Africa in the second Test in Kolkata from Sunday.

Kazi Mohsin no more

SPORTS REPORTER

Kazi Mohsin Ahmed, a former wicketkeeper-batsman, died on Monday after suffering a brain stroke. He was 90.

The country's first wicketkeeper-batsman, Mohsin had represented Pakistan XI from 1952 and played against India in 1955 in Chittagong. He had also visited Myanmar, the then Burma, with the Pakistan team.

And apart from playing for Kolkata Mohammedan, he also was a member of Dhaka Mohammedan, East Pakistan Gymkhana, Wari and Wanderers in the Dhaka Cricket League.



His qulkhani will be held on Friday at his residence at 19/2/A Faridabad Lane in Faridabad in the city.

Fan gets 14 yrs for murder

AFP, Rome

A teenage football fan has been sentenced to 14 years imprisonment for the murder of a police officer in Catania in 2007.

Antonio Speziale was sentenced by a court for minors in Catania because he was not yet 18 when he killed 38-year-old officer Filippo Raciti during crowd violence ahead of the Sicilian derby between Palermo and Catania.

Confusion

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"To keep him here, we also need help from Zoran and we are not saying that it is impossible to keep him until 2014 but we need some time because the president [Kazi Salahuddin] is outside the country at the moment," said the former national booter.

The Bangladesh Football Federation also declared a 20-member squad for the AFC Challenge Cup keeping inform striker Enamul Haque out of the squad.

Roy informed that they has just revealed the squad that was provided by Zoran.

The players to be seen asked to report to the BFF House at 11:00am today.

Meanwhile, Bangladesh were drawn in Group A along with Myanmar, Sri Lanka and Tajikistan and they will play their first match against Tajikistan on February 16.

SQUAD

Aminul Haque, Nasir, Wali Faisal, Mintu Sheikh, Rezaul Karim, Atiqur Rahman Mishu, Abdul Baten Komol, Mamunul Islam, Touhidul Alam Sabuz, Zahid Hasan Emily, Shakil Ahmed, Biplob Bhattacharya, Nasiruddin Chowdhury, Rokonzaman Kanchan, Intiaz Sultan Jitu, Mobarak Hossain, Zahid Hossain, Mamun Mia, Alamgir Kabir Rana and Mithun Chowdhury.

Laxman fit for 2nd Test

Cricket

CricketInfo, undated

Kris Srikkanth, the chairman of India's selection committee, has said VVS Laxman will definitely play in the second Test against South Africa in Kolkata starting Sunday. He also said he was willing to take the blame for the mess involving the selection of India's middle-order but it was the result of a 'freakish' incident.

"Laxman is going to be back in the Kolkata Test match," Srikkanth told CNN-IBN. "He has said he is 100 per cent fit. [His] capability will bolster the Indian batting." Laxman was one of the three first-choice middle-order batsmen who missed the first Test, which India lost by an innings and six runs.

Srikkanth and his panel are under fire for not picking a reserve batsman in the original squad for the first Test, defeat in which has left India needing a win at the Eden Gardens to retain their No. 1 ranking. Rohit Sharma, who was part of a Board President's XI team that played a warm-up match against South Africa, was included in the national squad a day before the first Test but he too injured himself minutes before the start, forcing India to hand reserve wicketkeeper Wriddhiman Saha a debut as a specialist batsman.

The chief selector said he was willing to take the blame for picking a player who was not fully fit (VVS Laxman) but insisted there would have been no controversy had it not been for the unanticipated last-minute injury to Rohit. "Whatever happened on the morning of the Test match was absolutely unfortunate and freakish," he said. "That's what they have in this contract called 'force majeure situations'. Imagine if a player is unfit just 15 minutes before the toss and that too a standby player -- Rohit Sharma wasn't even in the original 15 -- just before the toss, I don't think anybody can be blamed for it."

Saha was dismissed for a duck in the first innings and made a dogged 36 the second time round, but has been left out of the squad for the second Test, with Dinesh Karthik returning after two big hundreds in the Duleep Trophy final. "They all [critics] feel that Wriddhiman Saha is not a genuine batsman but a wicketkeeper who can bat. But in all fairness, Saha proved that he can bat pretty decently."

The original pool for the first Test had included four fast bowlers, though India rarely pick more than two quicks in home matches. "Generally we have an opener, a middle order batsman, a spinner and a seamer in the reserves," Srikkanth said. "But in this Test match alone we thought we would encourage two more fast bowlers. But to our bad luck, you had one batsman walking out."

Smith's analysis

Cricket

CricketInfo, undated

South Africa captain Graeme Smith feels India's 'conservative approach' in Nagpur cost them dearly and has said that playing an extra bowler in place of the untested Wriddhiman Saha would have been a more favourable option.

"I guess there are two ways to look at it: you [could] take the more confident approach and play the extra bowler," Smith said, reasoning that both Harbhajan Singh and Zaheer Khan had decent records as tailenders. "They went for a more conservative approach and picked Saha at No.7. Maybe they are regretting that now."

Smith was pleased with the way that the team had maintained its focus despite the rumbles before the series, when long-time coach Mickey Arthur stepped down and Cricket South Africa sacked the entire selection panel.

"There were a lot of shifts and changes and everyone was just trying to find their feet," Smith said. "It helped that there was a lot of honesty around the group and the credit must go to their maturity. Corrie [van Zyl] has created a good working environment for the players and as the weeks have gone on, we have settled down and focussed more and more on our cricket."

"We have been very clinical. It is important to come here, adapt but play our style of cricket. I

think we did that every well throughout the game and used our bowlers in short spells."

Not just the bowlers, he also credited Hashim Amla for his fantastic double-century which took them to a commanding position earlier in the Test match. "Amla's double century was great to watch," Smith said. "At No.3 he is becoming the glue. It's terrific to have him there. Hashim is one of the hardest working guys and knows his strength is his mental strength."

"He has got great hands and he scores very quickly. He sticks to his game plans and most of the times he had to battle through some periods in this innings but at other times he is a difficult guy to control. He has provided us a lot of stability. More than his 250, he has been involved in some key partnerships along the way."

Smith has maintained that winning a series in India was a box that remained to be ticked. In 2008, South Africa came close after another Dale Steyn burst had given them a 1-0 lead in Ahmedabad. However, they were welcomed with a rank turner in the final Test in Kanpur, where a combination of a dubious pitch, and dogged half-centuries from Sourav Ganguly and VVS Laxman secured India a series-levelling win.

Smith had not forgotten the incident, and when asked if he was ready for a similar fate, he quipped, "So are you telling me there's a guy with a rake at the Eden Gardens? India have more control over the conditions. We need to focus on the specifics...prepare and execute our gameplans."

Chappell's no

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have no problems in looking outside for a coach.

It was then announced that Intikhab would not be accompanying Pakistan to Dubai where they take on England in two T20Is on February 19 and 20. Aaqib Javed, the assistant coach, is not travelling with the side either. Instead, Ijaz Ahmed, coach of the Pakistan Under-19 side that finished runners-up at the recent World Cup, will be with the team as a batting and fielding coach; he is already in the UAE with the Pakistan 'A' side.

Bari played down the move, saying it wasn't unusual for a coach to not travel with the side, especially on such a short tour. He refused to say definitively whether Intikhab, in his third stint as coach with the senior team, was being removed and also denied that contact had been made with Chappell.

CricketInfo understands that the board, perhaps surprisingly, has yet to make any

contact with Intikhab over the decision to not send him to Dubai, or over his future beyond that, a lack of communication those close to Intikhab say has disappointed him. Intikhab was appointed by the board in October 2008, as a replacement for Geoff Lawson, on a two-year contract. At the time the board was keen to go for a local option. He was at the helm as Pakistan won the ICC World Twenty20 in June last year, but has also seen Pakistan go through all of last year having failed to win a single ODI or Test series.

He is due to appear before a board inquiry committee, headed by Bari, on February 13 to explain the reasons behind Pakistan's performance in Australia. His tour report has already been handed in. The board insists that any final decision on the future of the coach, a new captain and any other appointments, will only be taken once the committee has presented its findings.

Lazio appoint Reja

AFP, Rome

Lazio confirmed Wednesday that veteran Eddy Reja has taken over as coach of the Italian club from fellow Italian Davide Ballardini, sacked this week after the club slipped into the relegation zone.

Reja, 64, has been in charge of several Italian clubs in the past and took Napoli from the third division into the Serie A in three years after taking over the club in 2004.

He was fired by Napoli in March 2009 and joined Croatian Club Hajduk Split as coach the following August.

Ballardini took over at Lazio at the start of the season but was forced out after the club dropped to 18th in the table following the 0-1 home defeat to Catania on Sunday.

Lazio were forced to train indoors on Tuesday after between 300 and 400 protesting fans scaled a fence and entered their training complex.

Haas to marry American actress

AFP, Berlin

German tennis star Tommy Haas is to marry American actress Sara Foster this summer, Bunte magazine's website reported on Wednesday.

"We are planning the marriage for May or during the summer, nothing huge - just something for the families and friends," Haas told the publication.

Haas, who recently obtained US citizenship, said that 27-year-old Foster, whom he has been with for three years "encourages me in my sport and looks after my health."

The 31-year-old former world No.4, whose career has been blighted by a succession of injuries, said he would continue playing "as long as I can pose problems for the best players in the world."

Haas also spoke of his post-career plans saying that he would be interested in taking acting lessons and would keep his options open for entering politics.

Only pride

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with his lower-order efforts. His fire-fighting skills were on display in Dunedin as well, where he made a gutsy 86 after the team was floundering at 46 for 6.

TEAMS

NEW ZEALAND (probable): Brendon McCullum, Peter Ingram, Martin Gupthill, Ross Taylor, James Franklin, Neil Broom, Jacob Oram, Daniel Vettori (captain), Tim Southee, Ian Butler and Andy McKay.

BANGLADESH: Tamim Iqbal, Imrul Kayes, Mohammad Ashraf, Aftab Ahmed, Shakib Al Hasan (captain), Mahmudullah Riyad, Mushfiqur Rahim, Nayem Islam, Shahadat Hossain, Shafiqul Islam and Rubel Hossain.

Kiwis call up 3 rookies for Bangladesh Test

Cricket

CricketInfo, undated

New Zealand could field up to three Test debutants in the one-off match against Bangladesh after calling up the opener Peter Ingram, the batsman Neil Broom and the fast bowler Andy McKay. The trio is part of a 13-man squad that does not feature the out-of-form Daniel Flynn, who has been dropped for the Hamilton Test that starts on Monday.

Grant Elliott and Jesse Ryder were unavailable due to injuries, while Iain O'Brien was also out of contention from New Zealand's most recent Test side having retired from international cricket. The coach and selector Mark Greatbatch said the three new faces had forced their way in thanks to strong domestic performances.

"Peter Ingram has been picked based on the form he has shown in the longer versions of the game over the last three years of domestic cricket," Greatbatch said. "We always had an eye

on him for the Test matches, and this is his chance to step up. The top order is an important area where we need to improve and we want to see how Peter goes at the next level.

"Neil Broom has been picked on the weight of domestic runs he has scored. We have moved Martin Gupthill down the order. We feel that this is a more natural position for him and he is better suited there. He is a quality young player and he needs a chance to play longer innings.

"Andy McKay has been a big improver this year with Wellington. He took his opportunities in the ODI games he played against Bangladesh and in all formats of the game for Wellington, so now he has a chance to prove himself the Test arena. Andy has some good pace and can move the ball around, which is always going to bother even the best of players."

SQUAD

Tim McIntosh, BJ Watling, Peter Ingram, Ross Taylor, Martin Gupthill, Neil Broom, Daniel Vettori (captain), Brendon McCullum, Tim Southee, Daryl Tuffey, Andy McKay, Jeetan Patel, Chris Martin.

Yousuf points at one player

Cricket

CricketInfo, undated

Mohammad Yousuf, Pakistan's Test and ODI captain for the New Zealand and Australia tours, has targeted one player in the aftermath of the disastrous tour for being a particularly disruptive influence. Though he gave broad hints during a lengthy TV interview, he stopped short of revealing the name of the player.

"There is no doubt there is only one player in the team who is disturbing team unity and other players. I spoke to coach Intikhab Alam and other management about it and they agreed with me," Yousuf told Geo Super. "I will only disclose his name to the chairman of the board, Jaz Butt."

"Intikhab Alam [coach], Abdur Raqeeb [manager] and [Shahid] Afridi know who the player is and we discussed it as well several times," Yousuf added. "From New Zealand onwards Intikhab was telling me to be wary of him, but I wanted to see for myself. I saw in Australia how his body language was and we dropped him from the Tests. We decided in Australia during a meeting that we had to do something about him."

Pakistan lost the Test series 3-0 in Australia, were whitewashed 5-0 in the ODIs for only the second time in history, and lost the final game of the tour as well -- a Twenty20 international at the Melbourne Cricket Ground.

Though Yousuf was widely appreciated as a leader of the group off the field, his on-field captaincy came in for much criticism, in particular from the last day of the Sydney Test onwards. His cause wasn't helped by a statement from the board chairman midway through the tour -- denied eventually -- that the captaincy would change hands once the tour ended.

Yousuf said the statement had an effect on the side. "I don't know when the statement was made, but when it was, suddenly everyone in the team changed. Six or seven players started to see themselves as captains all of a sudden. At the start of the tour in New Zealand, the players were cooperating with me, but as the tour went on I felt they weren't because they knew I wouldn't be captain in the next series."

Yousuf defended his leadership, arguing that nobody wanted the job when the toughest challenges presented themselves. "I don't have natural leadership qualities in me but I have tried hard to do a good job of the responsibility given to me," he said. "It is unfair to compare me with Ricky Ponting as far as captaincy is concerned because he is far more experienced. I accepted the captaincy in the best interest of my country."

"If you look around the world every country's top performing player is the captain. If in Pakistan a youngster becomes the top performing player in the side by all means make him captain. I did it at a difficult time when nobody was prepared to do it."

Mirza loses in Pattaya

Tennis

AFP, Pattaya

India's Sania Mirza was beaten in the first round of the Pattaya Open on Wednesday, slumping 3-6, 6-4, 6-3 to Tatjana Malek of Germany.

Mirza, who last year finished as runner-up to Vera Zvonareva, made a confident start and broke serve in the opening game.

Malek's aggressive baseline play allowed her to level at 2-2, but then Mirza took control by dropping just three points in the last four games.

But, instead of solidifying her advantage in the second set, Mirza allowed several opportunities to slip away.

She failed to take a 2-0 lead after holding three break points, and she also failed to convert a fourth break point at 2-1.

Sixth-seeded Mirza finally broke to lead 4-2 when Malek netted a backhand, but instead

of riding that advantage to victory she claimed just four of the next 16 points as Malek recovered to level the match.

Final sets break to start the third set left Malek leading 2-1, and although she failed to serve out the match at 5-2, she broke Mirza once more at 5-3 to secure her victory.

Fifth seed Sybille Bammer fared better, but had to battle hard to overcome New Zealand's Marina Erakovic 7-6 (10-8), 7-5.

The Austrian left-hander broke for 3-2 but was unable to serve out the set at 5-4, and she needed four set points before winning the tiebreak.

Roles were reversed in the second set when Erakovic failed to serve out the set after breaking to lead 5-4, and after Bammer had held serve to lead 6-5 she broke her opponent to claim victory on her third match point.

Third seed Vera Dushevina of Russia had an easier task in overcoming Kazak Galina

Voskoboeva 6-4, 6-2, but seventh seed Kimiko Date Krumm of Japan was forced to retire with an left ankle injury when trailing Australia's Anastasia Rodionova 6-1, 1-0.

Domo Arigato

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will win more gold in future. It will also help Bangladesh to show other nations that they are good in karate," said Kagawa. He also emphasised the need of holding more competitions in a bid to attract the youngsters to come into karate and the media had a great role in it.

Kagawa also suggested including young players through talent hunt programme across the country and it would help produce quality players in future.

Meanwhile, JICA's chief representative Dr Takao Tado promised to help Bangladesh Karate Federation further for the improvement of the game.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

Crossword puzzle grid with clues for Across and Down. Includes a solution time of 24 mins and a grid of letters for the solution.

Cryptoquip puzzle grid with letters and numbers. Includes the clue: Saturday's Cryptoquip: UPON HANDING THE DESK EDITOR MY ROUGHLY WRITTEN NEWS PIECE, I PROCLAIMED "MARK MY WORDS!"

Today's Cryptoquip Clue: N equals Y