

## Zoran misses second day

Football

SPORTS REPORTER

Serbian coach Zoran Djordjevic skipped conducting the training of the national footballers for a second successive day though the booters have been gearing up for the AFC Challenge Cup finals in line with the training that he had outlined before the South Asian Games.

The Bangladesh Football Federation high-ups has kept on persuading Zoran to retain his service while Saiful Bari Titu, one of the two AFC's A-licence coaches in Bangladesh, has been passing a busy time with the players after Zoran declined to train the booters citing the drawing up of a new four-year deal after helping Bangladesh emerge unbeaten champions in the 11th South Asian Games on home soil.

BFF vice president and national team management committee chairman Badal Roy has kept in touch with Zoran and had a discussion yesterday to persuade him and it seemed to him that the Serbian coach has retracted a bit from his position.

"After talking to him today (Friday), it seemed to me that he has retracted from his ego and he has placed his long-term ideas and we will discuss it after the arrival of the BFF president tomorrow (Saturday)," Badal said. "Without the government assistance, the BFF has no ability to implement the ideas what Zoran has designed for Bangladesh because it is a ques-

tion of a big amount of money."

Roy again stressed to honour the first contract Zoran has signed. "He should respect the two-month contract that he has signed and then we will consider signing a new deal with him."

It is expected that the crisis may be over today after the discussion between Zoran and the BFF president Kazi Salahuddin, who is scheduled to return home from London today morning.

While the BFF officials is trying to persuade Zoran, the champion footballers have been getting ready for the next challenge through almost the same training that they undertook under the supervision of Zoran before the SA Games.

Local coach Titu was a part of that training and he is mainly following up with that training.

"May be coaches have different philosophies but the method and ingredients of the training are almost same and what I have been teaching is a continuation of Zoran's training as I was involved with the training when he had conducted it for two teams at BKSP," said Titu.

"Like Zoran, I am also trying to motivate the players to get maximum from them as they know it well that finally they have to perform on the field whether there is a good or bad coach with them," said Titu adding that modern training has a close similarity in each country whether it is Europe or Asia.

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Goalkeepers Aminul Haque and Biplob Bhattacharjee stretch during their training camp for the upcoming AFC Challenge Cup at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday. PHOTO: STAR

## All eyes on Eden

Cricket

AFP, Kolkata

A desperate India will look to hit back at South Africa in the decisive second and final Test starting on Sunday after suffering a humiliating defeat in the opening tie.

India's reputation as the number one Test side in the world took a massive blow after they lost the first Test in Nagpur by an innings and six runs to the second-ranked Proteas.

Mahendra Singh Dhoni's men need a series-levelling win at the Eden Gardens in Kolkata to stop South Africa from snatching the coveted ranking. India's hopes received a timely boost when key middle-order batsman Venkatesh Laxman was cleared to play after having recovered from a finger injury.

With star batsmen Rahul Dravid and Yuvraj Singh ruled out at the start of the series with injuries, Laxman was sorely missed in Nagpur as India crashed for 233 and 319 in reply to South Africa's 558-6 declared.

Laxman, 35, has scored 6,993 runs in 109 Tests at an average of 45.70 with 14 centuries.

India were forced to play rookie wicket-keeper Wriddhiman Saha as a specialist batsman in Nagpur after Rohit Sharma, the first-choice replacement for Laxman, got injured just before the toss.

"We definitely missed some important players due to injuries," said Dhoni after suffering his first Test defeat since taking over as captain in 2008.

"That pushed us to the back foot. Injuries can cause a bit of panic in the dressing room."

"It was a test of our bench strength. So I won't complain, I'll only say that we were completely outplayed by South Africa."

India's bowling attack also lacked firepower, with pace spearhead Zaheer Khan and frontline off-spinner Harbhajan Singh paling in comparison to their South African rivals, Dale Steyn and Paul Harris.

Steyn, with a match haul of 10-108, underlined his reputation as the leading fast bowler in the world, while left-arm spinner Harris proved effective with three vital wickets in the second innings.

During their last series in India in 2008, South Africa

won the second Test in Ahmedabad by an innings and 90 runs to take the lead in the three-match series after the first match was drawn.

India drew the series on an under-prepared wicket in Kanpur, raising fears that a similar ploy may be used at the Eden Gardens.

South Africa's coach Corrie van Zyl, however, said his team will not be intimidated, whatever the nature of the wicket.

"Mentally, the South African team is better prepared than they were in 2008,"

said van Zyl, who took over as interim coach from Mickey Arthur just before the start of the India tour.

"I won't say it will be a minefield, but I do expect something that will help the Indian team. We know that if the first Test was a challenge, then the second Test is going to be a bigger challenge."

The Kolkata Test will be followed by three one-day internationals in Jaipur (February 21), Gwalior (February 24) and Ahmedabad (February 27).



Sachin Tendulkar and Pragnan Ojha (L) chase a football during a practice session ahead of the second Test against South Africa at the Eden Gardens in Kolkata yesterday. PHOTO: AFP

## Dido all praise for booters

SPORTS REPORTER

Former Bangladesh national football team's Brazilian coach Edson Silva Dido hailed his ex-chargers for their triumph in the just concluded South Asian Games at home.

"I am genuinely happy, very happy for the players and the people of Bangladesh that in my point of view, both the young generation of players and the nation itself deserves so much joy," Dido said in an email to The Daily Star.

Dido also urged the authority concerned to hold and protect the magnificent new generation of the football players.

The Brazilian also said that the team, which retained most of the players he had discarded did not perform well in the SAFF Championships. However, the new coach [Zoran Djordjevic] had also opted to leave out most of the players Dido deemed unworthy and was rewarded for it with the gold medal in the SA Games.

Dido finally wrote that Bangladesh deserves the title of the regional sports carnival.

## Smith scare for SA

AFP, Kolkata

South African captain Graeme Smith suffered a finger injury on Friday, causing a scare in the tourists' camp ahead of a decisive Test match against India.

Smith hurt the little finger on his left hand during the team's fielding session at the Eden Gardens in Kolkata, where the second and final Test starts on Sunday.

X-rays did not reveal a fracture, but Smith was set to undergo an MRI scan to determine if the injury was more serious than a sprained ligament.

"There is no fracture, but we need an MRI scan done, to be sure it is not a serious injury," team spokesman Michael Owen-Smith told reporters.

"It looks to be some sort of a..."

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## Teammates back Strauss

Cricket

AFP, London

England stand-in captain Alastair Cook insists his team have given their support to regular skipper Andrew Strauss's decision to miss the forthcoming tour of Bangladesh.

Strauss was keen to rest ahead of a gruelling domestic campaign but the opener has been criticised by former teammate Steve Harmison and several ex-England captains, while Australia legend Shane Warne claimed the decision was disrespectful.

Cook, who will lead in England's Test and one-day sides on the trip, is adamant it was a call Strauss made in the long-term best interests of his squad.

"It's a decision he hasn't taken lightly at all," Cook said at Lord's on Friday.

"There's a huge amount of time and effort that has gone into that decision and it's a proactive move for him."

"He's looking ahead to what is a huge period for us over the next 18 months with the Ashes and the World Cup. He's decided he needs a break so he is fully refreshed and we are fully backing that decision. It gives opportunities for other players to step in and it gets a few more people used to international cricket."

"The amount of effort he and (coach) Andy Flower have put in over the last 12 months has taken a bit of a toll on him and he needs this break so he can have a full burst leading the side forward."

Essex batsman Cook, 25, can't wait to lead his country in battle, having previously captained England Under-19s in Bangladesh, and he believes his increased experience will benefit Strauss upon his return.

"I'm looking at this as a six-week block and not looking

too far ahead," he said.

"I'm very excited by the challenge and slightly nervous as well, but it's a great opportunity for me to learn about the role and give a good account of myself."

"Hopefully it will benefit me as a person and a cricketer. Creating more leaders in the English side will help Strauss when he comes back too, but to lead out my country will be thrilling and I will give it my all for six weeks."

"There have been a lot of phone calls to Andy Flower talking through our tactics and where we want this side to go."

"The Ashes and the two World Cups are our main priorities and this is a stepping stone of learning for this side on the subcontinent. It's a hugely important tour for us to do well in."

Although Cook has plenty of experienced players and coaches to turn to for advice,

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## Rain thwarts WI hopes

Cricket

CRICINFO, undated

West Indies had their best performance of the series cut short by the weather as they were allowed six balls in their chase before the third ODI was washed out. The desperate tourists, who now have to win the final two matches to level the five-game contest, were hopeful of victory after Ravi Rampaul's 4 for 61 restricted Australia to 225.

They had scored six runs when the rain came for a two-hour delay and it refused to leave for long enough to ensure a result. Play resumed at 9.20pm local time with West Indies facing a target of 151 off 24 overs, but the weather

closed in again after one delivery. The sides will head to Brisbane for the fourth fixture on Sunday, when Australia will attempt to wrap up the series and Chris Gayle's men will try to hold on.

Gayle gambled by bowling first at the SCG after losing Kemar Roach to injury, but his back-up men stood up in hot and humid conditions at the start and windy ones towards the end of the innings. Australia experienced a testing opening to be 2 for 30 and the batsmen were unable to find fluency while West Indies' medium pacers enjoyed a pitch offering seam and some inconsistent bounce.

Rampaul led the attack well in the absence of Roach -- he didn't deserve a late thrashing from Ryan Harris -- while

Dwayne Smith, the stand-in opener, had 3 for 45 as they regularly threatened the locals. Australia relied on late contributions from Michael Hussey, who struck 44 off 53, and Harris (21 off nine) as they built on Michael Clarke's 46 to post what should have been a challenging total.

Hussey, who came in just before a 20-minute rain break, worked hard while James Hopes chipped in with a valuable 30 before Harris arrived with some grunt. He hit Rampaul for three fours and a six in the 50th over before finding Kieron Pollard at long on as Australia were dismissed with a ball to go.

Australia had already lost four wickets in the Powerplay, which was taken in the 45th

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## PAKISTAN'S AUSSIE DEBACLE Report finds disciplinary faults

Cricket

AFP, Lahore

A team manager's report on Pakistan's disastrous tour of Australia blamed defensive captaincy by Mohammad Yousuf and discipline problems for the debacle.

Pakistan were whitewashed 3-0 in Tests and 5-0 in one-day matches before going down in the only Twenty20 match on their tour of Australia which ended on February 5.

The defeats forced chief selector Iqbal Qasim to resign from his post, while the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) formed a six-man evaluation committee to ascertain the reasons for the defeats.

Coach Intikhab Alam and wicket-keeper batsman Kamran Akmal were also

axed from the 14-man squad for two Twenty20 matches against England in Dubai on February 19 and 20.

The committee, minus Wasim Akram, who excused himself from attending for personal reasons, discussed tour manager Abdul Raqeeb's report on Friday, a copy of which was acquired by AFP.

"Yousuf, a world class player, failed as captain because of his defensive approach," said the report, which also mentioned two separate incidents when Yousuf disputed his axing from the team.

On the first occasion, Yousuf was dropped from the team for the third one-day international against New Zealand -- a series played in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) preceding the twin tours of New Zealand and Australia.

"Yousuf finding his name missing from the playing eleven started arguing with coach Alam that on what grounds 'I have

been dropped.' Alam replied that he has been dropped because of poor fielding."

Younus Khan led Pakistan in the UAE series before withdrawing from the New Zealand tour and Test series against Australia due to lack of form. Yousuf replaced Younus for the tour of New Zealand and Australia.

The other incident occurred before the fifth and final one-day against Australia when Yousuf initially withdrew but wanted to play later.

The report also mentioned a heated argument between pacemen Umar Gul and Mohammad Aamir during the second Test in Wellington.

"Since Gul is very experienced cricketer, Aamir should not have confronted him in the field. However, in my opinion both the players acted in an irresponsible manner. As such I have taken the action

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**What to WATCH**

**ESPN**  
2010 Olympic Winter Games Opening Ceremony  
Live from 8:00am  
**SuperSport3**  
FA Cup  
Man City v Stoke City  
Live from 11:00pm  
**Primera Liga**  
Villarreal v Athletic  
Live from 3:00am (Sunday)  
**SuperSport7**  
Primera Liga  
Xerez v Real Madrid  
Live from 1:00am (Sunday)



South Africa players skip during a practice session at the Eden Gardens Stadium in Kolkata yesterday ahead of the second Test against India that starts tomorrow. PHOTO: AFP