

Tricky schedule ahead

Cricket

SPORTS REPORTER

The first three months of 2010 had the Tigers playing five Test matches and ten one-dayers against four different opponents in varying conditions at home and abroad.

As they board a flight to Sharjah to play in the Port City League, the national cricketers will have to make quick adjustments to their game as they prepare to play three Twenty20 tournaments in the space of forty days after two gruelling Test matches against England. The delayed PCL will now end on April 4 and seven days later the national cricketers will turn up for six different franchises in the newly designed National Cricket League Twenty20s.

The tournament was brought ahead of the NCL one-dayers since it would be a perfect tune-up for the national players ahead of the World Twenty20 Championships. The Tigers fly off to the West Indies on April 25, five days after the local tournament ends.

In the Caribbean, the Tigers play two first round matches against defending champions Pakistan (May 1) and Australia (May 5). Three weeks later, Bangladesh will turn up at Lord's to play the first of two Tests against England.

The muddled schedule is nothing new in international cricket but it will take a huge toll on the already overworked Tigers, who have pushed some of the Test matches this year into the fifth day. Add to that the shift in mindset between two modes of cricket and it makes for tough reading.

But according to chief selector Rafiqul Alam, it comes with the territory of playing top-level cricket.

"It is difficult to move from Twenty20s, ODIs and Tests but everybody is doing it. The international calendar was written up a while back and it is all about adjustment in international level," said Rafiqul.

He said the preparation for the World Twenty20s would be smooth with the Tigers playing the PCL and NCL. "The batsman will have no problem to play in the World Twenty20s as by then, they would have played enough Twenty20 games to make the necessary adjust-

ments," said the former national cricketer.

But the real challenge would be to adjust from the Twenty20s to the Tests, that too in England. If the Tigers do not qualify to the Super 8s of the competition, they play two three-day matches against Hampshire and Essex and a four-day game against the England Lions.

It might get tricky if they qualify in the top eight but realistically, they have three weeks and three practice matches to prepare for a stern test.

Rafiqul believes the preparation that is scheduled would be enough for the Tigers. "We have three longer-version matches in England (before the Tests) and I think it will be good enough," he said.

With tricky times ahead, Bangladesh would dearly want their key players in the forefront. And the good news from the chief selector was the re-emergence of Mashrafe Bin Mortaza in the spotlight soon enough.

"The latest I have on Mashrafe is that he has been practicing hard for the Kolkata Knight Riders. He has full fitness now," informed Rafiqul.

NEW ZEALAND V AUSTRALIA 2ND TEST, HAMILTON

Vettori relishes 100th Test

Cricket

CRICINFO, undated

Daniel Vettori is keen to put his 100th Test celebrations behind him early on Saturday and switch his focus to beating Australia. Vettori will become the second New Zealander to reach the milestone after Stephen Fleming -- he will do it at his home ground in Hamilton -- but finishing the home summer on a high is the captain's No. 1 priority.

"It's exciting but it's almost got to the stage where I just want to get it out of the way," Vettori said. "It's a big Test for us, the last Test of the summer, and fortunately it's my 100th and it's in front of family and friends. But the bigger issue is about us trying to win and it's going to take a monumental effort from where we were at the Basin to turn it around here."

Even so, Vettori will take some time to savour the achievement, which is being brought up at the venue where he made his first-class debut 14 years ago as a 17-year-old. Vettori's parents will be at the ground on Saturday and his brother-in-law has set up a Facebook page to mark the 100th Test.

"We actually played together before I met his sister so he obviously didn't hold it against me," Vettori said. "Those sorts of people have been a huge support in my life and I'm pleased that I can play it in Hamilton and a lot of friends and family can make an easy trip to the ground."

Few teams around the world are more reliant on one player than New Zealand are on Vettori and his opposing

captain Ricky Ponting paid tribute to the man who will become the 50th to appear in 100 Tests. Ponting first faced Vettori in the 1997-98 Test series in Australia and was impressed at how Vettori had developed into an allrounder.

"He's always been a very good bowler and a very good competitor," Ponting said. "The last couple of years he's really brought his batting on and

become a high-class allrounder at international level. For someone to play 100 Test matches I think is a great feat."

"I know when I brought up that milestone it was one of the things I was most proud of in my career, to have the longevity and stay in the game that long. Once he finishes he'll be one of the great servants of New Zealand cricket for sure."



DANIEL VETTORI

India pick Vinay for T20 WC

Cricket

AFP, New Delhi

India's cricket selectors on Friday named promising right-arm seamer Vinay Kumar in a 15-man squad for next month's World Twenty20 tournament in the Caribbean.

Kumar, 26, a regular first-class cricketer for Karnataka since 2004, has been impressive with the Bangalore Royal Challengers in the ongoing T20 Indian Premier League.

The selectors also found a place for 21-year-old leg-spinner Piyush Chawla, who has played two Tests and 21 one-dayers, but has yet to appear in a T20 international.

Chawla, who last represented India in 2008, will join off-spinner Harbhajan Singh and left-arm Ravindra Jadeja in a three-man spin attack for the April 30-May 16 tournament.

Mahendra Singh Dhoni will lead the squad and aggressive opener Virender Sehwag will be his deputy, the Board of Control for Cricket in



VINAY KUMAR

India said in a statement.

Record-breaking batsman Sachin Tendulkar was not picked due to his reluctance to play T20 internationals despite his prime form in recent Test and one-day matches.

Tendulkar, who turns 37 next month, hit one-day cricket's first double-century in February.

The selectors gambled by including opening batsman Gautam Gambhir and left-arm seamer Ashish Nehra even though the Delhi duo has missed recent IPL matches because of injury.

But chief selector Krishnamachari Srikkanth said he was not worried since both Gambhir and Nehra had submitted fitness certificates. "There is still a month to go before the tournament starts and all the players are raring to go," the former Test opener said.

"This is the best team we could have picked and I am confident we will do well. The wickets in the Caribbean are similar to what we get in India and will suit our batsmen and bowlers." India won the inaugural World Twenty20 in South Africa in 2007, but failed to reach the semifinals in the second edition in England last year, which Pakistan won.

Dhoni's men are drawn alongside South Africa and surprise qualifiers Afghanistan in one of the four preliminary league groups.

Two teams from each group will qualify for the Super Eights round.

SQUAD

Mahendra Singh Dhoni (captain), Virender Sehwag (vice-captain), Gautam Gambhir, Suresh Raina, Yuvraj Singh, Yusuf Pathan, Dinesh Karthik, Rohit Sharma, Harbhajan Singh, Ravindra Jadeja, Piyush Chawla, Zaheer Khan, Praveen Kumar, Ashish Nehra, Vinay Kumar.

BANGLADESH LEAGUE

Uneventful mid-term transfers

SPORTS REPORTER

Abahani, Muktijoddha Sangsad, Chittagong Mohammedan and Rahmatganj MFS registered a number of players on Friday during the mid-term players' transfer for the Bangladesh League.

League leaders Abahani retained Mohammad Awal and Sherif Deen Mohammed while Chittagong Mohammedan roped in two new players--Markson F Gray (former club Invincible Eleven 2007), James Paul Mulbah (from Mohammedan) and retained Mohammad Sohel, Abdus Sabur and Mosharraf Hossain.

Nizam Majumdar, Khairul Hasan Titoo, Atiqul Islam Tareq, Firoz Mahmud Titoo, Arup Kumar Baidhya, Mahmudul Hasan, Amit Hasan Shuvro, Ashraf Hossain, Sujon, Rubel, Prodip Kumar Poddar, Rasel, Ansari, Jalaluddin Jalal, Azmol Hossain Biddut, Tajul Islam, Rony Islam, Monwar Hossain, Amin Rana, Sahajuddin Tipu, Rokonzaman Kanchan, Walid Khan, Saifur Rahman Moni, Fuad Ali, Promis, Euzene Gray continued their service while Rafael Sagno joined from Rahmatganj.

Rahmatganj retained twenty-two players--Himel, Nehal, Jahangir, Sohel Rana, Shamel, Rajib, Sweet, Biplob, Rasel, Rimon, Hamid Sheikh, Michael, Kabir, Zakir, Rony, Pashbon, Choumrin, Pritom, Shahed, Felix, Idris and Mamun.

Pathan blows Deccan away

SPORTS REPORTER

An amazing display of hitting from Yusuf Pathan propelled Rajasthan Royals to a massive 8 wicket win over Deccan Chargers in their IPL clash at the Sardar Patel Stadium in Ahmedabad yesterday.

Pathan scored an amazing 73 from 34 balls with 8 sixes, the last of which bought up the winning runs in just the 16th over.

Pathan was ably supported by Michael Lumb, as the Englishman chipped in with a swift 45 to give Rajasthan a comprehensive victory.

The level of hitting from Pathan provided for spectacular viewing as the right-hander flayed all and sundry for strike after strike over the ropes.

Pathan also hit two boundaries as Rajasthan reached 151 for the loss of just two wickets to complete a hat-trick of wins in the third edition of the IPL and leaving the team in third place in the league.

Earlier, Deccan Chargers were restricted to 148 for 9 off their 20 overs with Rohit Sharma scoring the highest 35 ball 49 with 3 sixes and 2 fours.

But Sharma's only means of support came from Herschelle Gibbs who put up a brisk 25 and the Australian Andrew Symonds with 22.

Fellow Australian Shaun Tait was the wrecker in chief for Rajasthan Royals with 3 for

SEE PAGE 18 COL 3



PHOTO: COURTESY

Bangladesh sprinter Afdal Hossain shows the medal after winning the 400m hurdles gold in the Indo-Bangladesh Bangla Games at the Yuba Bharati Krirangan in Kolkata yesterday.

Real back on top

AFP, Madrid



Madrid went back to the top of the Spanish League with a 4-2 win at Getafe on Thursday, replacing Barcelona on goal difference.

It was a 10th successive league victory for Real with three goals in the first 23 minutes wrapping up the game as the Madrid giants steamrolled their neighbours.

Ronaldo opened the scoring in the 13th minute, curling in a superb free-kick from close range before Argentine striker Higuain marked a century of games with a double inside three minutes to take his season's tally to 22.

Portuguese star Ronaldo grabbed his second, and 17th of the season, on 37 minutes to make it 4-0 before Real old boy Daniel Parejo pulled a goal back for the hosts in a goal-packed first period.

The Coliseum had been a difficult venue for Real over the years, losing 3-1 there last season.

But there was no chance of a repeat horror show when Real surged into a four-goal first half lead.

"It was a good result at a ground that had not been good to us in the past and we are now back at the top," said Real coach Manuel Pellegrini.

"We reduced our level of intensity in the second half due to the proximity of the derby (on Sunday) and to avoid yellow cards."

Atletico Madrid warmed up for Sunday's derby with a 2-0 home win over Athletic Bilbao to boost their chances of sneaking into Europe.

Jose Llorente rattled the post in the ninth minute for Bilbao but Atletico rode their luck and Diego Forlan netted his 14th goal of the season early in the second half before Sergio "Kun" Agüero scored a second late on.

Atletico move up to eighth and close to within five points of sixth-placed Bilbao and the final European spot.

"We are still in the cup and the Europa League as well as fighting for Europe in the league so it is not all bad," said Forlan.

Stopping free-scoring Real is Atletico's next task with Ronaldo and Higuain

Getafe 2 (Parejo 38, Leon 80) Real Madrid 4 (Ronaldo 13, 37, Higuain 20, 23) Atletico Madrid 2 (Forlan 54, Agüero 86) Athletic Bilbao 0

averaging a goal a game this season.

A foul right on the edge of the area gave Ronaldo a sight on goal and the former Manchester United man planted a pinpoint free-kick into the corner for a 13th minute opener.

Higuain then got himself on the scoresheet latching on to a Rafael van der Vaart pass before finishing smartly on 20 minutes.

Getafe were shocked when the Argentine scored again three minutes later for his 22nd goal of the season, three goals behind Barcelona's Lionel Messi in the goalscoring charts.

Esteban Granero and Sergio Ramos spurned chances for Real before Ronaldo scored an individual goal with several step-overs before rifling a shot into the net although goalkeeper Oscar Ustari should have done better.

At 4-0 the game was up although Getafe pulled a goal back a minute later through Parejo following a mistake from Iker Casillas.

Casillas flapped at the ball and tried to atone for his mistake by racing out of his goal but Parejo slid to take the ball and leave the Spanish international goalkeeper in pain on the floor.

Parejo slopped the ball in despite pleas to put the ball out with Casillas on the ground injured.

The Spain captain was furious and refused to accept Parejo's hand of apology after the goal.

Predictably the second half failed to match the excitement of the action-packed first period with Getafe raising their game after a dreadful first 45 minutes while Real went off the boil.

The hosts pulled a second goal back on 80 minutes when a deflected shot fell to Pedro Leon who made no mistake from close range.

Barcelona made hard work of beating Osasuna at Camp Nou on Wednesday needing late goals from Zlatan Ibrahimovic and Bojan Krkic.

"We have 71 points and that shows we have done well," said Brazilian defender Maxwell. "At this stage of the season we can't drop points."

"If Madrid drop points then all the better but we have to keep focusing on ourselves."



PHOTO: AFP

Real Madrid star Cristiano Ronaldo celebrates his opening goal against Getafe during their Primera Liga match at the Alfonso Perez stadium on Thursday.

BANGLA GAMES

Bangladesh lead WB

SPORTS REPORTS

Bangladesh edge West Bengal by 26 to 22 goal at the end of second day's play of the Indo-Bangladesh Bangla Games in Kolkata yesterday. Bangladesh hold a total of 76 medals including 26 gold, as many silver and 24 bronze while West Bengal have 63 medals in all.

Bangladeshi swimmers had another excellent day but athletes were dominated by their cross-boarder counterparts while shooters had it fairly shared on the second day of competitions in the Games in Kolkata yesterday, as per the results provided from Bangladesh Olympic association.

Bangladeshi swimmers bagged five gold, four silver and two bronze from seven events at the Beliaghata swimming pool on Friday.

Shahjahan Ali, Doly Akhter, Sonia Akhter, Jewel Ahmed won individual gold while Bangladesh won the 4x100m freestyle gold as well.

The athletics track at the Yuba Bharati Krirangan, local athletes grabbed six gold to Bangladesh's three. Bangladeshi athletes also bagged 4 silver and 4 bronze from eight events.

In the three shooting events

SEE PAGE 18 COL 3

Independence Day table tennis

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Table Tennis Players Association has arranged "Independence Day Eaton Open Table Tennis Tournament 2010". The tournament will today and will proceed till the 29th in the wooden floor gymnasium. Amongst the events are the men's and boy's team event, singles for men, women, boys (U-18 & U-12). A total of 130 players from 12 local teams and 10 districts are taking in the tournament.

State Minister for youth and sports, Ahad Ali Sarker will inaugurate the tournament today as chief guest with.



SuperSport3
Primera Liga
Mallorca v Barcelona
Live from 1:00am (Sunday)
Zaragoza v Valencia
Live from 3:00am (Sunday)

SuperSport2
Indian Premier League
Kings XI Punjab v Kolkata Knight Riders
Live from 8:30pm
New Zealand v Australia
Second Test, Day 2
Live from 3:30am (Sunday)

ESPN
English Premier League
Chelsea v Aston Villa
Live from 8:55pm
Bolton Wanderers v Man United
Live from 11:25pm

STAR Sports
English Premier League
Birmingham City v Arsenal
Live from 8:55pm