



PHOTO: AFP

World and Olympic triple gold medalist Jamaican Usain Bolt celebrates after winning the 100-metre gold in the Daegu Pre-Championships Meeting in South Korea yesterday. Bolt won with a time of 9.86 seconds.

Bolt sets early pace

Athletics

AFP, Daegu, South Korea

World and Olympic triple gold medalist Usain Bolt got his 100-metre season underway in a respectable 9.86 seconds at the Daegu Pre-Championships Meeting on Wednesday. Bolt, who owns the world record of 9.58, was the only man under the 10-second barrier, with fellow Jamaican Michael Frater finishing second in 10.15 ahead of American Mike Rodgers in 10.18. Another American Travis Padgett, who clocked 9.92 in the windy Doha Diamond League meet last week, could only manage fifth in 10.30, as the athletes got a feel for the stadium that will host the world championships next year. Starting in the fifth lane, Bolt took the lead at the 30-metre mark after a sluggish opening before easing across the finish line.

close to his record in the first outing of the season. His time contrasted to key rival Asafa Powell's 9.81 at Doha, where he was powered by a gusting desert wind. Both Powell and American Tyson Gay have made clear they are eyeing Bolt's world record this year. In the men's 110m hurdles, Beijing Olympic bronze medalist David Oliver from the United States came first at 13.11 to beat Beijing gold medalist Dayron Robles of Cuba by 0.15. American Ryan Bailey won the men's 200m in 20.58, and his compatriot Angelo Taylor finished first in the men's 400m with 45.21. Another American, Carmelita Jeter, who ran with the best time of 10.64 last year, won the women's 100m in 11 seconds flat, nudging Beijing Olympic gold medalist Veronica Campbell-Brown of Jamaica into second. Bianca Knight of the United States took out the women's 200m, while Russia's Julia Golubchikova jumped 4.65m to claim the women's pole vault.

PAKISTAN'S DISCIPLINARY CRISIS Teammates, coach slam Malik

Cricket

CRICINFO

A video of the PCB's inquiry committee investigations into the ill-fated Australia tour has revealed the level of infighting and disunity within the Pakistan side. The video -- leaked to a leading channel in Pakistan -- confirms speculation surrounding the startling level of distrust and discord between senior members of the side. Former Pakistan captain Shoaib Malik is at the centre of it, accused by teammates and coaches of being a negative influence in the team. In the video, Malik is ultimately described by a committee member as a "termite", with broader criticism of his role ranging from backbiting against players to politicking within the team. The PCB took action against seven players, including Malik, after the committee concluded its investigations, though they never made public the report. Mohammad Yousuf and Younus Khan were banned indefinitely, Malik and Navedul Hasan were banned for a year while Shahid Afridi and the Akmal brothers were fined and placed on probation for six months for specific incidents of indiscipline. "He (Malik) is a negative person and he creates problems. I wanted him to be sent back home," former coach Intikhab Alam told the committee members. Intikhab also said that Malik had initially agreed to bat at No.3 but shied away

during the tour of New Zealand, which preceded the Australia series. He also accuses him of deliberately sitting out of the second Test at Sydney. Predictably, the most scathing criticism comes from the Pakistan side. Yousuf, with whom Malik has had a public feud almost from the moment he became captain in 2007, after a disastrous World Cup in the Caribbean. Younus held Malik and the selection committee of the time responsible for his ouster from the team for the 2007 World Twenty20 and subsequent series. Both made public statements against each other while Yousuf was away from the team, till his return last year during the tour of Sri Lanka. However, their feud picked up again after Australia, where Yousuf was the captain. Yousuf was slammed by the media and former players for his defensive approach during the Sydney Test, and after the tour concluded, was even accused of "infighting" and having a "negative influence", similar to the charges laid against Malik. "He played politics all the time. Former chairman Dr Nasim Ashraf made a big blunder and hurt Pakistan cricket when he appointed Malik captain in 2007 when his place in the side was also not confirmed," Yousuf told the committee. "This led to other players also believing they could become captain, it set a wrong precedent in Pakistan cricket." Malik responded by criticising Yousuf's captaincy

during the tour to the committee, where they failed to win a single match. "I went out during water break in the Sydney Test on the final day and told him to attack Mike Hussey but he didn't listen," Malik said. "His captaincy in Australia was pathetic, he has no confidence to take decisions." Malik found no support from another captain and senior player, Shahid Afridi, who accused him of backbiting. "I told him clearly on his face that if he continues this practice of his double standards he will not survive in the team for too long and I will not have him in the team if I am made captain," Afridi said. Afridi is currently the Twenty20 captain and Malik is still serving his one-year ban. His appeal is set for May 22. Intikhab is also critical of the players' behaviour and manner away from the field, questioning their education levels and upbringing, their mental aptitude and ultimately concluding that they "seem to be mentally retarded." He suggests, as remedial measures, that Malik, Misbahul Haq, Yousuf and Younus be removed from the team, though he says of Younus that "he is not a troublemaker but he has other issues." Parts of the interaction of Rana with the committee are also on the video. Rana talks at length about the players' unhappiness with Younus when he was captain last year, admitting that he was part of a concerted movement to try and remove him.

The immortals

FROM PAGE 17 low drive drilled past Albertosi into the Italian goal. As a sign off for a great side, it has never been surpassed, just as the Brazilian team of 1970 is unlikely to ever be surpassed.

of cricket that we played in the Twenty20 is something we have to keep trying to improve. It has been successful in this tournament but we have to adapt it to different conditions now. "We have a World Cup coming up now on the sub-continent and so I'm pretty certain that Strauss and Flower will want us to continue with that same brand of cricket. It's only another 30 overs on top of what we have been playing in the last few weeks so I'm sure that if we can go out with the same mentality we will go out and score a lot of sides with the way we play."

Flower hints at rotation

FROM PAGE 17 "Andrew Strauss is obviously our captain in the one-day format and in the Test format," said Collingwood. "He's a fantastic leader, and a lot of this kind of success we've had over the last few weeks can go down to a lot of the values he and Andy Flower have installed in us over the past year. The team ethic has certainly helped the team gel together and become a strong unit."

"The players are desperate to continue this kind of form and this brand of cricket and hopefully that will take us on to win a lot of silverware in the future," he added. "The brand

Wimbledon gets its first official poet

AFP, London

Wimbledon on Wednesday appointed its first official poet, a tennis enthusiast who will be holding court every day during the tournament next month.

Matt Harvey will aim to capture a flavour of the event in southwest London with verses published online and in podcasts on everything from volleys and backhands, to the inevitable rain. "It's an honour, and I'm acutely conscious it's the only time I'll come first in anything at Wimbledon, unless you count the queue for strawberries," he said. "Quite simply I'm delighted, with a little bit of healthy anxiety thrown in."

He has already penned his first poem as Championships Poet 2010, called "Grandest of Slams," which starts: "Excuse me. I'm sorry. I speak as an Englishman. For the game of lawn tennis there's no better symbol than Wimbledon." Harvey -- whose role at Wimbledon was created by one of Britain's flagship poetry organisations, The Poetry Trust -- will keep a blog and perform his work to the queues waiting to enter the ground.

The websites of both the Trust and Wimbledon -- thepoetrytrust.org and wimbledon.org -- will feature his poems. The All-England Club tournament runs from June 21 to July 4.

Div I cricket

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Manikganj

Kulfa Goshthi earned an easy 10-wicket win over Dashara Nabajagan Sangsad in the Colonel (ret) Malek Smriti First Division Cricket League at the Shaheed Miraz-Tapan Stadium here yesterday. Kulfa Goshthi reached 93 runs in only 8.3 overs with Saikat Ali smashing 47 off 30 balls. Earlier Nabajagan Sangsad were all out for only 90 in 25.3 overs.

Kulfa now have four wins from five matches under their belt while Dashara suffered their second loss in five games.

FESTIVAL OF FOOTBALL BD U-14s lose ties

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh U-14 football team suffered defeats in both matches on the opening day of the AFC U-14 Festival of Football in Iran yesterday. The Bangladesh side went down 3-1 against Nepal in the first match before conceding a 4-0 loss to Afghanistan in the second. Bangladesh were scheduled to take on Sri Lanka in the day's third match at 6:10pm local time, said a Bangladesh Football Federation press release.

BCB beating

FROM PAGE 17 Not those professionals who earn their bread and butter through this game. Last time we checked, most of them made up the NCL one-day teams and not the top cricketers.

Debate over Maradona

AFP, Buenos Aires



A veritable living god as a player, Diego Maradona has yet to inspire the same fervour as Argentina national coach after a laborious and controversial World Cup qualifying campaign.

Argentina's struggles to reach South Africa mean many fans are sceptical about his chances of leading the country to a third World Cup triumph.

Maradona, the inspirational captain of Argentina's 1986 World Cup-winning side, was named national boss in November 2008 after a disappointing start to the qualifying campaign brought Alfio Basile's tenure as coach to an end.

Fourteen years after he left the 1994 World Cup in disgrace following a positive drug test, Maradona returned to the Albiceleste with a two-pronged objective: take Argentina to the World Cup, and do it in style.

Over a year later, the first mission has been accomplished thanks to a 1-0 win over Uruguay on the last day of the qualification campaign, but not the second.

"We have to think about improving. Everything and in every sector," said veteran

midfielder and Maradona favourite Juan Sebastian Veron.

"We have to perform a deep analysis, as there are lots of things that didn't work well."

Cesar Menotti, coach of the Argentina team that secured the country's first World Cup in 1978, was forthright in his criticism, saying: "Argentina seemed to have no ideas, they're confused and disorganised."

Menotti's words echo those of the Argentine media that, since a humiliating 6-1 defeat in Bolivia, have scorned Maradona for calling up over 100 players during his time in charge and meddling with his tactical systems.

Maradona responded vehemently in the wake of qualification.

"To all those who didn't believe in us, and I apologise to the women, you can suck it and keep sucking," he cried.

His words provoked a scandal and prompted FIFA's disciplinary committee to issue a two-month suspension from all footballing activities, forcing him to miss the World Cup draw in Cape Town in December last year.

Maradona used the time off to heal a rift with team manager Carlos Bilardo that had polluted the atmosphere surrounding the team over a period of months.

The 49-year-old caught the headlines

again when he required stitches after being bitten in the face by one of his dogs, but 2010 began in encouraging fashion on the pitch with an impressive 1-0 friendly win in Germany in March.

"The most important conclusion is that the team appears to have a defined playing philosophy. Debatable, certainly, but defined," said Argentine sporting daily Ole.

Maradona had opted for "a defensive scheme based on pressing in many areas and individuality on the counter-attack," remarked La Nacion.

It was a system that recalled the hard-working Argentina side that reached the 1990 World Cup final in Italy, where they lost 1-0 to West Germany.

Optimistic observers were also quick to recall that criticism had played the national side prior to their departure for the 1986 World Cup, but that team included a certain Diego Maradona.

"(Lionel) Messi is my Maradona," says Maradona himself, but the Barcelona genius and 2009 European Footballer of the Year has to date struggled to recapture his Barca form in a blue and white shirt.

And the naysayers remain convinced that without an in-form Messi, Maradona will struggle to work miracles in South Africa.

Gallas's fitness a doubt

AFP, Tignes



Raymond Domenech revealed on Tuesday that his biggest concern surrounding the France squad prior to the beginning of the World Cup was the fitness of centre-back William Gallas.

The 32-year-old Arsenal defender has been sidelined since aggravating a left calf injury on March 31 and was the first player to arrive at France's pre-World Cup training camp in the Alps here on Saturday.

He has been training individually with Les Bleus' physical trainer Robert Duverne and Domenech said he was enthused by his progress.

"He seems to be doing well, he's eating asparagus, avocado," joked the France coach at a press conference.

"He's doing well at the moment, he's happy to be here, he's training again this (Tuesday) afternoon and then again tomorrow. Each training session is a challenge and a test. Either it holds or it breaks."

Domenech joked that he would only make a decision on Gallas's inclusion in his

final 23-man World Cup squad "as soon as he breaks down", but conceded: "My biggest question mark is over Gallas."

Should Gallas fail to prove his fitness in time, one option available to Domenech would be to move Jeremy Toulalan from defensive midfield into central defence, where he has played with distinction for Lyon this season.

"In our discussions, it's an option. He's shown his capacity to do it," said Domenech on the subject.

"Central defence is a position that needs to be defined quickly, to be put in place, so I'm looking forward to finding out about William."

Domenech would only admit that it was "possible" that Toulalan could be asked to play in central defence in one of France's pre-tournament friendlies and used the same word when asked if playmaker Yoann Gourcuff could be deployed in a deeper midfield role in front of the defence.

France's first friendly game against Costa Rica in Lens takes place on May 26. The World Cup begins on June 11.

Domenech on Monday whittled his squad down to 24 players, having originally named a provisional squad of 30, but

he will have to leave out another player before submitting his final 23-man squad to FIFA by June 1.

"When will the 24th player leave us? It depends," said Domenech.

"It depends on William. Above all. And afterwards on me."

Domenech added that Gallas was France's only injury concern but conceded that captain and talisman Thierry Henry was low on confidence after an underwhelming season at Barcelona.

The Catalan giants retained the Spanish title on Sunday but Henry, 32, made just 15 starts in the league and scored only four goals.

"His pride is hurt and we have to re-establish it," said the France boss, who will step down after the tournament.

Asked by a journalist if Henry - the last remaining member of the 1998 World Cup-winning squad still on the international scene - would accept not being in the starting XI, Domenech replied: "We're 24, we will be 23. Those that remain will have to accept being among the 12 (substitutes) and not among the 11.

"Anything can happen according to the seasons that each player has had. Nothing is guaranteed."

Afridi pleads for support

Cricket

AFP, Karachi

Pakistan captain Shahid Afridi on Wednesday urged fans to back the team after the defending champions' semifinal finish in the World Twenty20, saying public support would spur the squad on.

"I am proud of the team, which played as a unit," said Afridi, who led Pakistan in the competition won by England.

"I would request fans to support us because we have seen difficult times in cricket and only unity can help us," said Afridi upon the team's return from the West Indies.

Australia, set a daunting 192 to win the semifinal in St. Lucia on Friday, snatched an improbable win courtesy of a superb 24-ball 60 by Michael Hussey, who hit 18 in the final over bowled by Pakistani spinner Saeed Ajmal.

"We didn't do well in initial matches but were back in rhythm with our Super Eight win against South Africa and that's why the semifinal defeat hurt us," Afridi told reporters.

"Had we won against Australia and lost the final it would have been acceptable.

"But I am satisfied with the overall perfor-

mance of the team and whoever becomes captain the most important thing should be unity of the team and the support of the fans," said Afridi, captain only of the Twenty20 side.

He bowed off-spinner Ajmal.

"I know a lot of people criticise the decision to bowl Ajmal in the last over, but I still maintain that he is a match-winner and bowled us to victory in the last over against South Africa a match earlier," said Afridi.

"I would request fans to accept this result and support the team because we are coming out of difficult times in our cricket."

Pakistan is still reeling from the aftermath of a disastrous tour in Australia that led to bans and fines for seven top players, including Afridi and former captains Younus Khan, Mohammad Yousuf and Shoaib Malik.

Yousuf retired from cricket in protest. Appeals from Younus and Malik are pending with a one-man tribunal of the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB).

Pakistan now feature in the four-nation Asia Cup in Sri Lanka from June 15-24, before playing two Twenty20 and two Tests against Australia and four Tests and five one-day matches against England -- all in England.

PCB said it will announce the captain and squad for the Asia Cup and tour of England in the next couple of days.

Tigers stoop

FROM PAGE 17 for a while before the well-known middle-order collapse nailed the Tigers.

Paceman Steve Kirby removed the left-handed Junaed for 30, and it was 136 for three in the 35th over.

Mohammad Ashraf, who showed glimpses of good form in the two previous practice matches, edged the same bowler and stand-in skipper Mushfiqur Rahim followed Ashraf back to the pavilion. Both batsmen made one each. Jahurul, on 21, was removed by Plunkett and it was 153 for six.

Mahmudullah Riyad revived the innings somewhat with an aggressive 40 off 50 balls that had five boundaries and a couple of sixes. Along with Shafiqul Islam, the pair added 47 for the eighth wicket but Riyad gave his wicket away to the occasional medium-pace of Bopara, who cleaned up the tail to have incredible figures of three for nine from 3.2 overs as the Tigers were bowled out at the stroke of tea.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

Crossword puzzle grid with clues and solution time: 27 mins.

CRYPTOQUIP puzzle grid with letters E X J R X M E L O Y W L Q J C O V L K I O C U Y Z V L C I J C I M L O R M L K A L J M J Z K O K Z U X O A Z W V J B Z Y Z O C U ? U J W C Z P U B J W C Z P U.

Yesterday's Cryptoquip: BECAUSE I AM TOTALLY FOND OF THIS FINE EMBROIDERY YARN, WOULD YOU SAY I'M CREWEL-HEARTED? Today's Cryptoquip Clue: E equals W