

Adriano suffers thigh strain

AS Roma's Brazilian forward Adriano has suffered a thigh strain, his club said Thursday. The 28-year-old former Inter Milan star was injured in training on Wednesday and underwent tests on Thursday. Roma did not reveal how much time he would be out but the Italian press claimed he could face a month on the sidelines for such an injury. If that was the case he will miss Roma's first four Serie A matches of the season and at least one Champions League game.



PHOTO: STAR

TRY NOT TO FIND THE MID-WICKET FIELDER: Mohammad Ashraful shows Tamim Iqbal the slog sweep during the Tigers' centre-wicket practice session at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.

Preparations smooth

SPORTS REPORTER



The local organising committee (LOC) of the 2011 World Cup is confident that everything will fall into place before the deadline.

Bangladesh is going to host a big tournament like the World Cup for the first time as one of co-hosts along with India and Sri Lanka, and they have been given eight matches including two quarterfinals beside the opening ceremony.

The venues including the Bangabandhu National Stadium, where the grand opening ceremony will take place on February 17 next year, are now under constructions by the supervision of National Sports Council (NSC).

"We are happy with the progress and we are hopeful that we can hand over the venues to the ICC (International Cricket Council) on time," said Ali Ahsan Babu, host tournament director, adding that they have to complete everything within November this year.

"We are getting tremendous support from all quarters. Everything is running smoothly. The ICC team will start their inspection from November 15 and Bangladesh will be their last destination. We had organised a knockout tournament involving all the major cricketing nations (1998 Mini World Cup) but we have never hosted tournament of this magnitude, so many things are new to us," he added.

"ICC delegates already expressed their satisfaction over the preparations of the pitches and grounds," said Babu.

Bangladesh government has allocated Tk 256 crore for the infrastructural development of the venues.

A total of six matches including two quarterfinals and the opening match between Bangladesh and India will be held at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium while the remaining two games will take place at the Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium in the port city. The Fatullah Cricket Stadium and Khulna Stadium have been chosen as alternative venues.

"We are in touch with the NSC officials regarding the progress and we are monitoring everything. As per our observation everything is in the right place. LOC officials recently visited the Chittagong venue and met with the new mayor (Manzur Alam)," informed Babu.

"We have already decided about the hotels. There was supposed to be a new hotel in the port city but finally we had to decide on Hotel Peninsula where five teams can reside at a time," he added.

Ali Ahsan informed that for the opening ceremony, ten foreign companies will put on their presentations on August 30 and 31 and the respective committee will finalise one to assign for the grand show.

"There is a big plan with the opening ceremony. You know, ICC allocated 1.5 million dollars for the opening ceremony while Bangladesh government also allocated the same amount of money," he said.

Security is another major issue for the tournament and Babu said that the concerned authorities have been carrying out random meeting to make sure of the highest security during the World Cup.

"The concerned authority has been carrying out meetings regularly. We already sent the security plan to the ICC. Now we have to send specific security plan for the respective venues," informed Babu.

Rain ruins Tigers' preps match

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Rain played foul with the Tigers as the first preparation match was stopped only after nine overs at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.

The players, split into two groups, were taking part in the match before heavy rain stopped play but the players later practiced in the central wicket.

Captain Mashrafe Bin Mortaza was absent yesterday for a family commitment. The cricketers will be back to business on Sunday after a two-day break.

A total of 26 cricketers have been selected for the upcoming five-match home series against New Zealand who are now practicing under Jamie Siddons.

New Zealand is likely to arrive in the capital on September 29.

Puma women's soccer sponsor

SPORTS REPORTER

Leading sport conglomerate Puma is all set to sponsor the Bangladesh national women's football team in the upcoming SAFF Women's Championship in December.

"Puma has agreed in principle to sponsor Bangladesh's women's football team for the SAFF Women's Championship. Under the agreement they will provide jerseys, balls, trousers, socks and different other practice equipments worth

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England 39 for 1

Cricket

AFP, London

Pakistan saw off Andrew Strauss but missed a glaring chance to dismiss the England captain's opening partner, Alastair Cook, on the first day of the fourth and final Test at Lord's here on Thursday.

England were 39 for one for at tea after rain had washed out the entire morning session before bad light then stopped the match in only the 13th over.

Cook, dropped on one, was 10 not out and Jonathan Trott eight not out with England 2-1 up in this series after Pakistan's four-wicket win across London at The Oval last week.

It was no surprise when Pakistan captain Salman Butt opted to field first in after winning the toss in the kind of overcast conditions that have troubled batsmen on both sides all series.

Poor catching has hampered Pakistan throughout this series and their 18th dropped effort in four Tests -- a remark-

able and damning statistic by international standards -- was one of their worst.

England were on seven in the third over, when Cook was drawn into a defensive edge outside off-stump by left-arm quick Mohammad Aamer only for third slip Umar Akmal to drop the seemingly straightforward two-handed chance, much to the teenage bowler's evident and understandable disgust.

Next ball Cook added to Aamer's frustrations by edging him unconvincingly through the slip cordon for four.

Pakistan thought they had Cook caught behind off Aamer for nine, with England on 25.

Billy Bowden eventually gave Cook only for the Essex batsman, fresh from a century at The Oval to refer the decision.

Bowden, after replays indicated Cook had missed the ball, reversed his original verdict.

But Pakistan had the wicket their new-ball pair deserved when Mohammad Asif produced a superb full-length delivery that swung in a touch to bowl left-hander Strauss for 13 and leave England 31 for one in the 12th over.

Strauss has now gone over a year without a Test century and he may only have one more chance to end that run, should England bat again at Lord's, before England begin their defence of the Ashes in Australia starting in November.

Although the Lord's floodlights were on, Bowden and fellow New Zealand umpire Tony Hill halted the match midway through the 13th over after it appeared players were

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PHOTO: INTERNET

Pakistan pacer Mohammad Asif celebrates with teammates after dismissing England opener Andrew Strauss on the first day of the fourth and final Test at Lord's yesterday.

Curtain falls on Youth Olympics

AFP, Singapore

The inaugural Youth Olympics officially closed on Thursday amid glowing praise, bringing the curtain down on 12 days of sporting competition and cultural and educational activities for athletes.

International Olympic Committee president Jacques Rogge, who nurtured the event, hailed the Games for exceeding all expectations with medals won by 93 of the 205 nations and territories taking part.

The Singapore organising committee chose not to keep an official medal table in line with the Games being about education as much as competition, but independent counts put China on top, ahead of Russia.

"Congratulations Singapore for a job superbly done. You rose brilliantly to the challenge of combining elite sport, education and culture," Rogge said in ending the Games during a colourful ceremony at Marina Bay.

The event featured athletes aged 14 to 18 competing in all 26 Olympic sports.

The next summer Youth Games are in Nanjing in 2014 with Innsbruck hosting the first Youth Winter Olympics in 2012.

Hockey players off to Europe

SPORTS REPORTER

Hockey players will leave here for Germany on Sunday to take part in the Germany second division hockey league for different clubs as a part of their preparation for the upcoming 16th Asian Games in Guangzhou in November.

"After getting visas to the players from the German embassy, we yesterday confirmed Gulf Air tickets and the players leave on August 29," said Anvir Adil, member of Bangladesh Hockey Federation yesterday.

Of the 29-member preliminary squad, the top 18 players will be touring Germany and Austria for seven weeks before returning home in the third week of October and continue the practice at home before leaving for China.

Striker Russell Mahmud Jimmy would leave the country later as he has been accompanying his ill father, though Adil could not make it clear.

German coach Gerhard Peter Rach already left Bangladesh for the arrangement of the players. So far ten players will play in a single club and the rest -- two each at two

different clubs in Bonn and the remaining four in Austria -- will play in separate clubs.

The German coach has also plans to bring his charges staying in Germany in a practice session twice a week and then arrange practice matches against different German clubs.

As a part of the SA Games, the hockey players were also taken to Europe last year for different clubs. But on their return the players alleged that German coach Rach did not take much care of them and they had to sweat over managing themselves before each exhibition match since they were scattered across different clubs.

However, this time the German coach has promised not to repeat mistakes and the game's governing body also ensured the matter through signing an official deal with him for four months.

After the departure of 18 players, the hockey federation would call a trial with 25 players in quest of picking up 14 players, who will join remaining 11 of the preliminary squad and continue the practice at home.

Chief selector Mamunur Rashid again confirmed they must consider those players

staying at home before picking the final squad for the Asian Games.

Those who will be traveling to Germany are Zahid Hossain, Manwar Hossain Rasel, Moshir Rahman Biplob, Mamunur Rahman Chayan, Imran Hasan Pintu, Tapash Barman, Enamul Kabir Turja, Rasel Mahmud Jimmy, Sheikh Mohammad Nannu, Hasan Jubair Niloy, Kamruzzaman Rana, Pushkor Khisha Mimo, Krishna Kumar, Maksud Alam Habul, Iqbal Nader Prince, Al Mashur Rahman Firoz, Hosne Mobarak Sumon and Shamsul Alam Sujana.

Abahani rope in Iranian coach

SPORTS REPORTER

Three-time Bangladesh League champions Abahani will sign Iranian coach Ali Akbar on a six-month contract with an option to extend further based on his performances in the upcoming season.

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Ricky targets Eng cracks

Cricket

AFP, London

Australia captain Ricky Ponting believes his side can take advantage of the "cracks" in England's top-order during the upcoming Ashes series.

Ponting has been trying to rile England with a series of bullish statements from his squad's pre-India tour training camp in Queensland, including a suggestion Australia could repeat their 5-0 Ashes rout of 2006-07 in the forthcoming Ashes, which get underway in Brisbane in November.

England have not won a Test series in Australia since 1986-87 and Ponting turned his attention Thursday to their top-order batting.

Andrew Strauss's men have collapsed several times in their ongoing series against Pakistan, notably at The Oval last week where the tourists won by four wickets to reduce England's lead to 2-1 ahead of the fourth and final Test starting at Lord's here on Thursday.

Strauss, Kevin Pietersen and Paul

Collingwood are all averaging under 20 against Pakistan and Ponting told Sky Sports on Thursday: "There are probably a few little cracks starting to open up with England, particularly with the batting side of things."

England have an Australian bowling coach in David Saker but Ponting added: "You can have all the coaching you want -- it is what you do on the field that wins you matches."

Meanwhile senior Australia batsman Michael Hussey said Ponting's remarks concerning a whitewash had been misinterpreted and that the team could regain the Ashes without retired bowling greats Shane Warne and Glenn McGrath.

"We go into every Test trying to win. That's what Ricky means," Hussey told reporters in a teleconference on Thursday.

"I don't think he's making any claims were going to win 5-0..."

"But our aim is to win every Test."

Hussey added: "A lot of legends left the team a few years ago, but we've been able to keep a core group of players together for a good couple of years now and we've been slowly building.

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PHOTO: AFP

Fireworks light up the night sky over the stadium in Singapore during the spectacular closing ceremony of the Youth Olympic Games yesterday.

SPORTS POLL

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