

Victoria survive crash scare

Victoria's squad was forced into the brace position to prepare for a possible crash landing when its plane had problems on the descent into Adelaide on Monday. The 17 players were coming back from a Twenty20 tournament in Darwin when told the pilots were unsure if the front wheels of the landing gear had come down. "Very nerve racking!" Andrew McDonald tweeted. "Just got down safely! Very shaken! Fire engines on run way." It was a bumpy landing but the players were home in Melbourne by the end of the night.

- CRICINFO



Klusener unlikely as bowling coach

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) are yet to get any response from Lance Klusener who is supposed to join the national cricket team in the first week of September as a specialist bowling coach.

Apparently there is hardly any chance that the BCB could make the deal with the former South Africa all-rounder.

"We must go for other options if didn't get any response from him (Lance Klusener) by today. As far as we know, he has some family problems," said BCB's media committee chairman Jalal Yunus.

"We will consider Andy Caddick and Venkatesh Prasad for the position as we had him in our list previously," added Yunus.

Three weeks back Yunus however had informed after his president AFM Mustafa Kamal confirmed the appointment of Klusener as bowling coach and Julian Fountain as fielding coach that they were very close to the deal.

Fountain already joined the team but now Klusener has almost no chance to join the team.

Cyclist, officials appeal against bans

SPORTS REPORTER

Seven organizers and cyclist Chingby Marma have appealed for the exemption of the punishments given to them by the Bangladesh Cycling Federation last month after the federation found all guilty for aiding Marma during the 50-Km road race of the 11th South Asian Games.

"So far all of the punished organizers and players have appealed for the exemption of the punishment," said BCF ad-hoc committee general secretary Intiaz Khan Babul, who is also member of the appeal committee.

Following the incident, that damaged the image of the host nation, Marma was declared disqualified for the competition.

The National Sports Council (NSC) dissolved the BCF after the Games and the ad-hoc committee launched a probe committee and they finally took the decision in light of the reports of the probe committees of BCF, NSC and BOA.

The then general secretary Parvez Alam was given a lifetime ban; judge Ruhul Amin was suspended for three years, while joint-secretary and manager of the women's cycling team Jobaira Rahman Linu, former general secretary Walid Hossain and judges Golam Mostafa and Abdul Kuddus were given a one-year suspension each.

Cyclist Chingby Marma was handed a three-month suspension and the punished were allowed to appeal against the decision in one month as the BCF executive committee took that decision on July 31.



World number two Swiss superstar Roger Federer serves to Argentina's Brian Dabul during their US Open first round match at Flushing Meadows in New York on Monday.

Magical Federer

REUTERS, New York

One magical point from Roger Federer capped an exhilarating first day at the US Open on Monday as a host of former champions each took their turn in the Flushing Meadows spotlight.

Former champions were on court playing matches while Martina Navratilova was the guest of honour during a glitzy opening night celebration recognising people who had overcome adversity.

Andy Roddick joined Federer by winning their first round matches at Arthur Ashe Stadium in straight sets.

It was a stifling hot day in New York but they all made light work of their opponents with Federer stealing the show with an outrageous winner during his 6-1, 6-4, 6-2 romp against Argentine baseliner Brian Dabul.

Reminiscent of his shot against Novak Djokovic in last year's semifinals, the miraculous winner not only brought the capacity crowd to their feet but served as proof that his quest for a 17th grand slam title is back on course.

"I've only hit a few in my life and two on centre court in night session play here in New York," the five-time winner told his audience. "It's amazing to share this moment with you guys. Thanks for the ovation and I love it."

Only one former champion failed to make it past the first day. Australia's Lleyton Hewitt fell to unheralded Frenchman Paul-Henri Mathieu 6-3, 6-4, 5-7, 4-6, 6-1 at the Louis Armstrong stadium.

Hewitt won the US Open title in 2001 when

he toppled Pete Sampras but his best days appear long past even though he had no plans to retire.

"I still believe I can improve as a player," said the former world number one, who was seeded 32nd.

Monday also marked a return of sorts for Roddick who has both been battling nagging injuries for the past two months.

Roddick claimed his only grand slam title at Flushing Meadows in 2003.

They may not move as fast as he once did but he can still wallop the ball and he knows how to scratch out a win, Roddick celebrating his 28th birthday by blasting aside France's Stephane Robert 6-3, 6-2, 6-2.

The opening day's skirmishes produced no real surprises. Apart from Hewitt, seeded 32nd, the only other seed to make an early exit in a day played under brilliant blue skies and baking temperatures was Chile's Fernando Gonzalez, the 2007 Australian Open runner-up.

He retired from his match with Croatian qualifier Ivan Dodig because of a long-term knee injury that has left him contemplating his future in the sport.

"I'm not thinking about retirement quite yet but I've had a really bad six months and, if this was to go on for longer, maybe two years, then I would have to see," he said.

Sweden's two-time French Open finalist Robin Soderling was lucky not to lose to another qualifier before he regained his composure to beat Austria's Andreas Haider-Maurer 7-5, 6-3, 6-7, 5-7, 6-4 and remain on course to meet Federer in the quarterfinals.

Abahani appeal for penalty withdrawal

SPORTS REPORTER

Abahani have recently appealed for withdrawal of the \$5000 penalty imposed upon them by the Asian Football Confederation (AFC) for violating the AFC code of conduct during the AFC President's Cup in Bangladesh in May.

The AFC disciplinary committee took the decision based on the match referee's report where the Jordanian match referee stated that someone threw a piece of brick soon after the match between Abahani and Hasus NTCPE of Chinese Taipei, although no one was hurt.

"We have appealed for an exemption of the penalty through the Bangladesh Football Federation. It seems to us that the decision was a harsh one as the attempt by an unknown person did not hurt anyone," said Abahani manager Satyajit Das Rupu.

The former national footballer also hinted that they might not stage any AFC competition under the supervision if Asia's football regulatory body did not reconsider the punishment decision.

After the successful completion of the group-stage matches of the AFC President's Cup in 2009, Abahani were awarded the 2010 group A qualifiers comprising of Dordoi of Kyrgyzstan, Abahani, Hasus NTCPE of Chinese Taipei and New Road Team of Nepal.

On an August 13 meeting, the AFC disciplinary committee also fined ITTU of Turkmenistan \$10,000 for their failure to appoint a team media officer against Drukstars of Bhutan and Yadanarbon in the same competition. It also found FC Vakhsah assistant coach Ergasheve Mubin guilty of violating disciplinary code in the match against Nagaor FC of Cambodia and suspended him for four matches.

BFF rejigs tournament committee

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Football Federation reshuffled its competition committee after bringing vice-president Manzur Hossain Malu in place of Harun-ur Rashed.

Azfaruzzaman Sohrab and Mahfuza Akhter Kiron have been made deputy chairman of the committee while BFF members Shafiquzzaman, Amirul Islam Babu, councilors Yousuf Jamil Babu, Abdullah AL Fuad Reduan, Imtiaz Ahmed Kislul, Shahabuddin Shamim, Ahsan Ahmed Amit, Khaza Hayat Hiru and BFF general secretary Al Musabbir Sadi have named in the 12-member committee.

Lorgat wants the tour to continue



AFP, London

International Cricket Council (ICC) chief executive Haroon Lorgat urged the world game not to give up on Pakistan after several of their players were embroiled in spot-fixing allegations.

"I'm extremely disappointed to say the least," Lorgat told AFP in a telephone interview. "I don't have too many words, it's not something I ever wanted to read about."

England and Pakistan are now due to play two Twenty20 internationals in Cardiff, the first this coming Sunday, and five one-day fixtures.

But many observers have questioned how Pakistan's tour, which continues with a warm-up match against Somerset in Taunton on Thursday, can proceed in the current climate.

However, Lorgat said: "My understanding at the moment is that the England and Wales Cricket Board and the Pakistan Cricket Board will continue with the one-day series."

"We've got to keep things in perspective. It would be unfair if a couple of unsavoury individuals tarnished the reputation of the rest of the team and certainly Pakistan as a country."

Another game in the spotlight is January's second Test between Australia and Pakistan in Sydney, in which Australia overcame a 206-run

first innings deficit to achieve a stunning win.

Lorgat said the ICC's anti-corruption and security unit (ACSU), now headed by former Northern Ireland police chief Sir Ronnie Flanagan, had been looking into that match.

"You'll remember Lord [Paul] Condon [the ex ACSU boss and the former chief of Scotland Yard] said a few months ago it [the Sydney Test] was still open for investigation."

"But with the limited powers at their disposal, it often takes a period of time for the ACSU to join the dots together that would make a case watertight."

Former England captain Michael Vaughan, writing in the Daily Telegraph on Monday, questioned the ACSU's effectiveness by saying: "Why has it taken a British newspaper sting to bring it out in the open?"

"What has the ACSU been doing?" But Lorgat said: "It hasn't got the powers of the police or the ability of a newspaper to mount a 'sting' operation."

He added: "I can assure you, and it is well accepted ICC policy, that we adopt a zero tolerance approach to corruption. If these allegations are proven, action will be taken in a severe manner. It depends on what is proven."

As for the issue of spot-fixing, Lorgat said: "I don't think, as Lord Condon said, you can ever rule it out completely. But you can curtail it and act against it."

UK boss's apprehension



CRICINFO

The chairman of a UK commission set up to investigate the threat of gambling-related corruption in sport has told Cricinfo he believes there will be insufficient evidence for police to press charges against Mazhar Majeed, the alleged fixer who was caught on camera accepting money from an undercover reporter in a News of the World sting.

Rick Parry, the former chief executive of Liverpool Football Club, told Cricinfo that, despite a dossier of apparently damning evidence -- including video footage of Majeed appearing to correctly predict the timing of three no-balls bowled by Mohammad Asif and Mohammad Aamer during the first two days of the Lord's Test -- the case was likely to flounder unless evidence of illegal betting activity was found to back up the claims.

"I don't think [the case] has any evidence at all," said Parry. "Unless the News of the World placed a bet -- which would be highly unlikely because in so doing they would have carried out a criminal act -- then there doesn't appear to be any betting activity at all associated with these particular allegations. It places the ball, to pardon the pun, squarely back into the hands of

the cricket authorities."

Under the provisions of the Gambling Act 2005, which made cheating in sport for financial gain a criminal activity in the UK, it had been hoped that the very fact that these latest allegations had taken place in the country would help to carry them forward into the courts, and lead to a high-profile case that could act as a deterrent to others who might be tempted into similar wrongdoing.

However, Parry said that until such time that further evidence was unearthed, the greater onus would have to fall on cricket's governing bodies to live up to their promise, reiterated by the ICC's chief executive, Haroon Lorgat, on Monday, to take "prompt and decisive action" against anyone found guilty of match-fixing.

"The ICC is very much in the spotlight on this one, and so it can't afford not to [act]," he said. "When you see the publicity like we've had over the last couple of days, there can't be a single reason not to take the right action, because it's the reputation of the sport at stake, and nothing can be more important than that. Everyone connected with sport -- participants and spectators -- have a basic right to believe that sport is clean and that everyone is doing their best, because that goes right to the root of what's good about sport."

Parry did, however, credit the ICC for taking

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Trio has to meet Butt



CRICINFO

Salman Butt, Mohammad Asif and Mohammad Aamer, the three Pakistan players at the centre of spot-fixing allegations, will travel to London on Wednesday for meetings with Pakistan Cricket Board chairman Ijaz Butt as pressure -- from the ICC and ECB, among others -- grows for the trio to be excluded from selection for the two-Twenty20 and five-ODI series against England that gets underway in Cardiff on Sunday.

The three players haven't travelled with the squad to train at the County Ground in what will be a closed-door session with the venue in lockdown. "They have some work to do at the hotel," Yawar Saeed, the team manager told Cricinfo, "but they might join later."

Cricinfo understands the PCB was asked by the ICC and ECB, during an emergency teleconference on Monday, to ensure that the players alleged by the News of the World to be involved in spot-fixing do not play any part in the upcoming series. Ijaz Butt insisted to Cricinfo later on Monday that the three players would not be

suspended though he said their selection remained an internal matter.

However, unless they call up replacement players that decision leaves them with 13 men to choose from. If they decide to leave out Kamran Akmal, whose name was mentioned in the newspaper report but who has not been questioned so far or had his mobile phone confiscated, the squad will be without a wicketkeeper.

The ICC president Sharad Pawar said after the teleconference that it was difficult for the Pakistan board to take action given that investigations were still underway. "ICC is waiting for the British police to complete investigation. ACSU is also looking into the details. It is also preparing a report in two to three days. The report by British Police and ACSU will give us a proper picture."

An official familiar with the meetings, however, told Cricinfo that "something stronger than a suggestion" was made to Pakistan to "not just not select them, but suspend them." The push for the sterner option, Cricinfo was told, was fuelled by the need to ensure that the series -- and cricket's -- commercial value is not harmed. "If you have tainted players taking part in an ODI or Twenty20 it might lead to people not coming to watch the matches and that has knock-on effects for sponsors and marketers. Suspending them will send a message that the game is trying to be kept clean."

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Kim, Venus get going

AFP, New York

Defending champion and second seed Kim Clijsters survived a second-set wobble to reach the second round of the US Open on Monday by defeating Greta Arn of Hungary 6-0, 7-5.

There were wins also for third seed Venus Williams, fifth seed Samantha Stosur of Australia and the woman who beat her in the French Open final, sixth seed Francesca Schiavone of Italy.

But former world number one Dinaara Safina suffered more heartache as she attempts to return to her best form after a crippling back injury.

A year on from her stunning win at Flushing Meadows when she stepped out of retirement and motherhood to lift her second US Open crown, Clijsters was again in a dominant mood on the Arthur Ashe Stadium Court.

She sped through a one-sided first set in just 18 minutes, but allowed the 30-year-old Arn, ranked 104th in the world, to play her way back into the match with two breaks of serve for a 4-0

lead in the second set.

Whether it was over-confidence after the first set romp, lethargy brought on by the sultry conditions, or the lingering effects of the right thigh injury that hampered her in Montreal, Clijsters looked suddenly very uncomfortable.

She battled back to 4-3 down, but Arn served for the set two games later only to be broken by a resurgent Clijsters.

The Belgian held for a 6-5 lead and then broke Arn again to move through in 62 minutes. The 27-year-old Belgian second seed will next play 19-year-old Australian qualifier Sally Peers, who impressed in a 6-1, 6-0 win over Aleksandra Wozniak of Canada.

"I felt I was hitting the ball well, but I lost my position and footing a bit on court at the start of the second set and wasn't aggressive enough and she started going forward a little more with some risks and put the pressure on me," Clijsters said.

"I just tried to change a few little things just with myself -- take smaller steps and make sure those feet keep moving."

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Pakistan coach Waqar Younis (C) is surrounded by television crew as he walks out of the team hotel in Taunton yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

SPORTS POLL
TODAY'S QUESTION
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