

Bowyer sorry for foul-mouthed rant

Lee Bowyer launched a foul-mouthed tirade at West Brom fans during Birmingham's 3-1 defeat at the Hawthorns on Saturday, but "apologised profusely" for the incident soon after according to Baggies officials. West Brom supporter Sandra Cox, who was watching the game with her seven-year-old grandson, claimed Bowyer insulted her during a heated exchange that led to her reporting the former West Ham and Newcastle midfielder to the matchday stewards. The incident occurred moments after Bowyer escaped with just a yellow card following a dangerous tackle on Gabriel Tamas.

- SOCCERNET



A CELEBRATION THAT DIDN'T LAST LONG: Bangladesh Under-19 women's team players converge to congratulate Sabina Khatun who has just scored a goal against Jordan at the Birshreshtha Mostafa Kamal Stadium in Kamalapur yesterday. The home side however lost their opening encounter 6-1.

PHOTO: STAR

Hosts suffer heavy defeat

SPORTS REPORTER



Hosts Bangladesh and neighbours India made disastrous start in the AFC U-19 Women's Football Championship when they were thrashed by their middle-eastern counterparts at the Birshreshtha Mostafa Kamal Stadium in Kamalapur yesterday. Bangladesh were humiliated by Jordan with a 1-6 drubbing, thanks to a hat-trick from Shahnaz Yaseen after India were outplayed by Iran 2-4, courtesy of a Farhadhikah Parvin hat-trick.

It looked like a fairy tale start for Bangladesh when Sabina Khatun gave her side a surprise lead in the ninth minute of the match under floodlights. But since then it all went downhill for the hosts as the physically more powerful Jordanians stamped their authority as the game went on.

Jordan captain Ayah Faisal equalised from a spot kick in the 35th before Shahnaz Yaseen made it 2-1 with a grounder in the 38th minute.

Shahnaz increased the margin in the 65th minute before striker Shatha Wahbi made it 4-1 in the 75th and Maysam Muhseen struck the

fifth in the 88th minute. Shahnaz, playing in the right wing, completed her treble and rout in the stoppage time.

Earlier in the day, the qualifiers kicked off with the game between India and Iran. More than the game itself, the spectators eager to watch how the girls from an Islamic Republic clad under hijab would fare.

And they were amused to find the girls who had been

playing the game for no more than four years show sublime skills mixed with their towering physical presence to dominate their south Asian counterparts.

The Iranians came within a whisker of an opener in the fourth minute of the game when midfielder Tanin Naraghi entered the Indian danger zone from the right and unleashed a fierce drive that the Indian goalkeeper Sita Sharma thwarted out for a

throw-in.

Naraghi, however, kept the Indian defenders busy releasing one cross after another from the right wing before being ruled out through an injury at a latter stage of the game.

Maryam Rahimi, nucleus of the Iranian midfield, along with captain Zahra Ghanbari, Naraghi and Ghashieh Samaneh led Iran to enjoy

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The Iranian U-19 players had plenty to cheer about at the Birshreshtha Mostafa Kamal Stadium in Kamalapur yesterday. Here they celebrate their 4-2 mauling of India in the opening match of the AFC U-19 qualifiers.

PHOTO: STAR

Razzaq lifts Pakistan

AFP, London

Abdul Razzaq's rapid unbeaten 44 helped Pakistan recover to 265 for seven against England in the fourth one-day international at Lord's here on Monday as the ongoing 'fixing' row escalated. Pakistan had been 155 for five, with off-spinner Graeme Swann taking four for 37 in his maximum 10 overs.

But Pakistan captain Shahid Afridi made 37, including a straight six off Swann, in 22 balls.

And the big-hitting Razzaq, who launched seamer James Anderson for a huge six, made his runs in just 20 balls including eight fours.

Opener Mohammad Hafeez top-scored with 64 as Pakistan looked to level this five-match series at 2-2.

There were doubts though as to whether this series would continue at all after Pakistan Cricket Board chairman Ijaz Butt accused England of corruption.

Swann struck fifth ball when he clean bowled Asad Shafiq (11) with a sharply turning off-break to leave Pakistan, 86 for two.

And, on the day he was shortlisted for the ICC player-of-the-year award, Swann

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Sidebottom bids bye to int'l cricket

REUTERS, London

England left-arm pace bowler Ryan Sidebottom has retired from international cricket, the player said in a statement on Monday.

The Nottinghamshire swing bowler, 32, played 22 Tests, taking 79 wickets after making his England debut in 2001.

"I have had a truly fantastic period of my life with England but now it is time to hand over the ball to those a little younger," he said on his county's website.

"I have been fortunate enough to live the dream with England. It has been a fantastic time but I have no doubts that now is the right time to announce my retirement."

Sidebottom achieved career-best figures of seven for 47 against New Zealand in 2008, which included a hat-trick.

Mahmud may stay

Cricket

SPORTS REPORTER

Khaled Mahmud might be persuaded to change his decision of stepping down from the post of assistant coach of the national cricket team after the high-ups of the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) met him yesterday.

BCB's cricket operations committee chairman Enayet Hossain Siraj and newly appointed CEO Manzur Ahmed talked with Mahmud and head coach Jamie Siddons to solve the problem during a practice session at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.

A former national skipper Mahmud, who tender his resignation few days ago saying that he was not enjoying the job, has apparently retreated from his stubborn stance.

"Yes, they [Siraj and Manzur] talked with me and advised me to continue with my job. I will think about everything before reconsidering my position," said Mahmud.

Siraj however was confident that Mahmud would continue as an assistant coach.

"We need his services and we believe that it is a great opportunity for him to learn many things. I spoke with the coach (Siddons) and he has also said that he needed Mahmud's services. I think everything will be okay," said Siraj.

Manzur was also confident about a positive outcome and he wanted to give a long look at the local coach's issues.

"We want to respect everyone's opinion. I am hopeful about a positive outcome. In fact, we must have a long-term strategy for the local coaches so that we can get some high quality coaches," opined Manzur.

Mahmud has however already signed a deal with Abahani as a coach but BCB's media committee chairman Jalal Yunus, who is also vice-chairman of Abahani's cricket committee, said that it would not be a problem.

"National interest comes first for us. It would not be a problem if he [Mahmud] stays with the national team. [Aminul Islam] Bulbul may join Abahani as a coach," said Yunus.

Butt kicks up a row

Cricket

AFP, London

Pakistan cricket chief Ijaz Butt denied accusing England players of match-fixing on Monday after earlier suggesting they may have thrown a one-day international for "enormous" sums of cash.

In an interview with BBC Radio Five Live, the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) chairman said he had merely been relaying information from bookmakers relating to England's one-day defeat to Pakistan at The Oval on Friday.

"I have never said this. If you listen to the full tape of the NDTV interview, the bookies are saying this. I am not saying this," Butt said.

Asked about mounting calls for the remaining two matches in the series -- at Lord's on Monday and Southampton on Wednesday -- to be cancelled, Butt said he wanted the games to go ahead.

"If they [the England and Wales Cricket Board] want to scrap it they can scrap it, we will go ahead with it," Butt told the BBC.

But triggered uproar late Sunday in an interview with the NDTV news channel where he linked England's cricketers to match-fixing.

"There is loud and clear talk in bookie circles that some English players were paid enormous amounts of money to lose the [Oval] match,"

Butt said. "No wonder there was total collapse of the English side."

Butt's comments came after fresh corruption claims against Pakistan emerged on Saturday, with Britain's Sun tabloid claiming to have been made aware of details of Pakistan's innings before Friday's match had got underway.

The paper tipped off the ICC, which then watched as scoring patterns in two suspect overs emerged as predicted, the Sun said. But the overall result of the match was not believed to be fixed, the report added.

An England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) spokesman told AFP the organisation was making no comment about Butt's charges.

However his remarks are certain to infuriate England's players, who have seen their own achievements in the Test series victory over Pakistan diminished by the corruption scandal embroiling the tourists.

Commentators in England were dismissive of Butt's comments Monday. Test legend Ian Botham, writing in a column in the Daily Mirror, questioned how Butt could be aware of chatter amongst illegal bookmakers.

"Nice try on deflecting attention away from your team, but the question is what are you doing in bookies circles?" Botham wrote.

ICC chief executive Haroon Lorgat said the new allegations raised by the Sun -- which

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Strauss fuming

Cricket

AFP, London

England captain Andrew Strauss voiced his "outrage" at comments made by Pakistan cricket chief Ijaz Butt accusing his side of corruption as it was confirmed the two remaining one-day internationals between the countries would go ahead as scheduled.

Strauss's comments came after Butt had fanned the flames of the corruption allegations overshadowing the series by accusing England players of match-fixing in the third one-dayer across London at The Oval on Friday.

Butt's comments were branded "wholly irresponsible and without foundation" by a separate England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) statement.

Strauss, speaking on behalf of the England team, threatened Butt with possible legal action, in a statement that said: "We would like to express our surprise, dismay and outrage at the comments made by Mr. Butt yesterday [Sunday]."

"We are deeply concerned and disappointed that our integrity as cricketers has been brought into question. We refute these allegations completely and will be working closely with the ECB to explore all legal options open to us."

"Under the circumstances, we have strong misgivings about continuing to play the last two games of the current series and urge the Pakistani team and management to distance themselves from Mr. Butt's allegations."

"We do, however, recognise our responsibilities to the game of cricket, and in particular to the cricket-loving public in this country, and will therefore endeavour to fulfil these fixtures to the best of our ability," he added.

Strauss's statement was made public shortly before the toss in the fourth one-day international here at Lord's and ahead of the series finale at Hampshire's Rose Bowl ground on Wednesday.

The opening batsman, speaking after the toss at Lord's, told Sky Sports: "It's been a difficult 24 hours for us, there's no doubt about that."

Asked if Butt's remarks soured relations between the teams, Strauss added: "I don't know about that."

"It's one of those situations where everything is a bit raw and emotional and there is a responsibility on all 22 players that it's the cricket that does the talking."

However, Sky reported there had been an altercation in the Lord's nets between England batsman Jonathan Trott and Pakistan seamer Wahab Riaz -- one of four Pakistan players interviewed by British police.

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Axe falls on Yuvraj

Cricket

AFP, New Delhi

India's cricket selectors on Monday dropped left-hand batsman Yuvraj Singh from the squad for the two Test matches against Australia starting on October 1.

The 15-man squad, described by chairman of selectors Krish Srikanth as one which "selected itself", restored the tried and trusted combination that has lifted India to the top of the Test rankings.

India were bolstered by the return of pace spearheads Zaheer Khan and Shanthakumar Sreesanth, star spinner Harbhajan Singh and prolific opening batsman Gautam Gambhir.

All four missed India's last Test match, against Sri Lanka at the P. Sara Oval in August, which Mahendra Singh Dhoni's men won to draw the three-match series.

Yuvraj, 28, skipped the second Test of that series due to illness, but was kept out of the decider after his replacement, Suresh Raina, hit a century on debut.

"This is the best team we could have picked, in fact it selected itself," Srikanth told reporters after the selection committee

meeting in Chennai.

"There are no surprise inclusions, and no surprise exclusions either. Weightage has been given to performance, talent and fitness."

Yuvraj, who has scored 1,639 runs in 34 Tests at 35.63, gets a chance to prove his form when he leads the Rest of India squad against Mumbai in the Irani Cup match on October 1.

Top order batsman Cheteshwar Pujara, who represents Saurashtra in domestic cricket, is the only new face in the squad after a string of impressive scores in first-class matches.

Pujara has scored 3,925 runs in 49 first-class matches at an average of 60.38 with an unbeaten 302 the best of his 14 centuries.

Pujara, however, is unlikely to get an immediate break in the powerful batting line-up that has Virender Sehwag, Gambhir, Rahul Dravid, Sachin Tendulkar, Venkatsai Laxman and Raina in the top six.

Australia, who arrived in India on Monday, begin the month-long tour with a three-day practice match against the Indian Board President's XI in Chandigarh on October 25.

The two Tests in Mohali (October 1-5) and Bangalore (October 9-13) will be followed by three one-day internationals in Kochi (October 17,

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SPORTS POLL
TODAY'S QUESTION
 Can Shahriar Nafees cement a place in the national team?
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What to WATCH
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 Live from 9:20pm
ESPN
 Sportscentre India
 Sports News
 Live at 8:30pm



PHOTO: STAR

Bangladesh coach Jamie Siddons gives some catching practice to his charges at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday. The Tigers are preparing for the home series against New Zealand that starts next month.