

Diego wants job back

Diego Maradona, axed two months ago as Argentina coach, said Friday he would give everything to be in charge of the national team once again. "I would give my life to be the coach again," Maradona told Fox TV in his first interview since losing his job following the 4-0 defeat to Germany in the World Cup quarterfinals. Maradona also repeated that he had been let down by the top officials at the Argentina Football Association, in particular AFA president Julio



An airborne Abahani forward is about to score during their United Oil Women's Handball League match against Mariner Youngs Club at the Handball Stadium yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

Dhaka: Onus on big names

Cricket

MOHAMMAD ISAM

In the brief history of first-class cricket in the country, Dhaka is the most successful divisional side through their four trophies. In the early days, they were the only team that could stride out in the middle and dominate proceedings simply by the strength of their big-name players.

It is still the case, says Mehrab Hossain. The left-handed batsman affirmed that Dhaka's biggest strength was its stars, eleven of whom (in the current preliminary squad) have played at the international level.

"Our strength is the team itself. We have a very strong side with really good players and importantly, most of them and someone like Shamsur Rahman are available," said Mehrab, who has played seven Tests and 18 one-dayers.

Out of the eleven players who were called up by the divisional sports association for this year's National Cricket League (NCL), nine of them are automatic choice in the starting line-up.

Mohammad Ashraf, the biggest of the Dhaka stars, is set to play from the opening game and barring an SOS during the New Zealand series, the diminutive right-hander will play all five first round matches.

The four-dayers would be handy for him after being dropped for the first

international home series of the winter. Spending some time in the middle could see him rushed back for the series against Zimbabwe. For that matter, a big innings early on could force the hands of the selectors for the New Zealand series. He has been known to do this through this competition.

Ashraf would be grateful to the NCL for it was in this tournament that he struck a robust 263 in Chittagong to return to the national team in 2006-07 when he was dropped ahead of a series against Zimbabwe at home.

But given his current form and state of mind, it would be wise not to expect too many too early and it would be wise to let him play all five games and then bring him back for the Tigers, if needed.

But Dhaka is not only about Ashraf, as last season's top-performers of the team showed. Shuvogoto Hom, the Kishoreganj-born batsman, topped the average with 60.10 in his seven innings with a top-score of 166 not out. Marshall Ayub, while averaging low, struck 427 runs with four fifties while Shamsur Rahman, Uttam Sarkar and Nadimuddin Mintu all made runs when needed.

Mehrab though, made just one big score in the 2009-10 tournament and was obviously, not at his best. "I hope to do well this year because from a personal point of view, I would like to get back into reckoning through some runs," he said, adding that he would be batting in the middle-order.

Mohammad Sharif, likely to be captain this time too, will also be relied upon heavily. He took 41 wickets at 19.82 while his new-ball partner Talha Jubair captured 30. Apart from these two, Dhaka probably has a world-record number of left-arm spinners at its disposal, with the evergreen Mohammad Rafique among the 30 named in the squad earlier this month. Arafat Sunny, Ilyas Sunny and Mosharraf Hossain are the better options with Rokibul Hasan Rocky and Nazmul Hossain Apu as back-ups. Mehrab too can provide the left-arm variety.

Despite the riches, Dhaka finished third last season and has not been champions since their double delight in 2006-07, and Mehrab knows what happens out in the centre counts more than being merely paper tigers.

"It would be important for us to do well out in the middle. We did not do well last year by our standards.

"We probably have the best team in the tournament and when we announce the team tomorrow, it would be difficult for us to cut it down, but we have to make it happen in the pitch and start well," he said.

Among the younger lot, much is expected from Anamul Haque Bijoy, Rony Talukdar and the promising leg-spinner Nur Hossain Munna. Bijoy, the wicketkeeper-batsman, is touted as an exciting talent by coaches while Munna was picked for the Bangladesh A team at the end of last season.

SEE PAGE 18 COL 1

Rubic happy with booters

SPORTS REPORTER

The one month camp of national footballers for the upcoming Asian Games to be held in November, concluded yesterday at BKSP.

The thirty-two players in the camp have been released for their club duties for the Federation Cup which starts on October 8. Robert Rubic, the newly-appointed Croatian coach of the Bangladesh national team, who came on the September 8 before taking charge of the players after the Eid vacation, said he has reasons to look forward with this crop of players.

"The players are happy with the camp and they have followed my instructions carefully. I am thinking long-term with this group of players," said the former assistant coach of Croatia national team.

The 47-year-old coach who said on his arrival that he was aiming to take Bangladesh 30 places higher in the FIFA rankings within one year, said that there are technicalities to work on and also scope for improvement for the players.

SEE PAGE 18 COL 1

Ashraf captain for Asiad?

Cricket

SPORTS REPORTER

Mohammad Ashraf is likely to lead the team in the Twenty20 competition of the XVI Asian Games in Guangzhou, China, to be held from November 12 to 27.

The Rafiqul Alam-led selection panel already submitted the 15-member squad for board approval and Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) is likely to announce the team within the next two days.

Ashraf will not be consid-

ered for the five-match one-day series against New Zealand at home in October.

The sources said that all-rounder Sohrawardi Shuvo, who got a place in the 14-member team for the five-match series against New Zealand, has been named as Ashraf's deputy.

BCB is going to send a strong team in the mega event as players like Shamsur Rahman, Nazimuddin, Faisal Hossain, Mohammad Mithun, Naem Islam, Dollar Mahmud, Shahadat Hossain, Nasir Hossain, Sabbir Rahman and Shuvagoto Hom are also included in the side.

Abahani make good start

SPORTS REPORTER

Abahani defeated Dhaka Mariner Youngs Club 14-11 in the United Oil Women's Handball League at the Handball Stadium yesterday.

They led the first half 7-5. In the day's other matches, Madaripur Handball Training Centre crushed Jatrabari 24-9 after dominating the first half 13-3, Royal Handball Club outplayed Gafur Baluch Smriti Sangsad 17-7 after leading the first half 8-3 and Azad Sporting Club beat Arambagh 24-10 after dominating the first half 13-3.

NCL delayed by six days

SPORTS REPORTER

The National Cricket League has been deferred by six days due to persistent rain and inclement weather across the country.

The longer-version will now start from October 4 instead of September 29.

"The grounds are not ready to hold the matches due to the rain. It also upset the teams' practice. Actually we took the chance as CCDM (Cricket Committee of Dhaka Metropolitan) has decided to start the Premier League T20 from December 2 instead of November 27," said BCB's tournament committee chairman Gazi Ashraf Hossain.

"But it will not be possible to delay the start of the league further if the weather condition continues like it is now," he added.

The tournament committee has decided to hold the first phase of the NCL first and after that, the players will be involved in the Premier League.

Suresh accepts responsibility

AGENCIES



Often the butt of criticism, Commonwealth Games Organising Committee Chairman Suresh Kalmadi on Saturday faced some tough questioning from journalists but he accepted moral responsibility for the mess ahead of the event.

"I am the chairman of Organising Committee and I will take all the responsibility. There is no issue. But I wish the venues were handed to us a little earlier," he told a press conference New Delhi.

He also admitted that Organising Committee Secretary General Lalit Bhanot's comments about hygienic standards between Indians and others were avoidable.

Kalmadi, who was seated along with Commonwealth Games Federation president Mike Fennell and CEO Mike Hooper, said still some work to be done but was "confident" that it will be done before the opening ceremony on October 3.

He also sidestepped the issue when he was questioned whether he feels that Fennell and CGF bosses are squarely putting the blame on the organising committee.

"I don't think he has pointed fingers at the OC. The developer

SEE PAGE 18 COL 2



PHOTO: AFP

Chennai Super Kings batsman Suresh Raina hammers a four during his blistering knock of 94 off 48 in the Champions League Twenty20 semifinal against the Royal Challengers Bangalore at Kingsmead in Durban on Friday.

Fed Cup with 18 clubs

SPORTS REPORTER

A total of eighteen teams will participate in the season's curtain-raising football tournament Federation Cup that starts on October 8.

This is due to Bangladesh Army and Wari Club failing to respond to the invitation of Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF).

Initially the idea was to involve twenty teams in the

SEE PAGE 18 COL 1

Chess teams getting better

SPORTS REPORTER

The Bangladesh men's and women's teams both won their respective fifth round games in the open section of the 39th World Chess Olympiad in Khanty-Mansiysk, Russia yesterday.

The men's team defeated Malawi 4-0 while the women's team beat International Committee of Silent Chess

SEE PAGE 18 COL 5

CSK storm into final

AFP, Durban



Suresh Raina slammed an unbeaten 94 off 48 balls as the Chennai Super Kings stormed past the Royal Challengers Bangalore in the Champions League Twenty20 semifinal at Kingsmead on Friday.

Raina propelled Chennai to 174 for four after rain reduced the match to 17 overs a side.

Facing an adjusted target of 176, Bangalore crumbled to 123 all out after losing their first three wickets for 12 runs.

Chennai won by 52 runs according to the Duckworth-Lewis method.

Chennai will meet the winners of Saturday's second semifinal between the South Australian Redbacks and the Eastern Cape Warriors in Centurion.

The final is in Johannesburg on Sunday. The left-handed Raina hit six sixes and five fours as he made the highest score of the tournament.

Raina took advantage of a weakened Bangalore attack after fast bowler Dale Steyn was injured while taking a catch to dismiss Mike Hussey.

Steyn ran backwards at speed after Hussey hit the ball over mid-off. He jumped to take the catch but landed heavily on his back and his head banged into the turf.

He had to go to hospital to be checked for back and head damage.

Steyn had been expected to be a key bowler for

Bangalore on a pitch which suited fast bowling.

"They put too many runs on the board," admitted Bangalore captain Anil Kumble. "But when Dale Steyn was injured was critical for us."

Faced with a daunting target, Bangalore's hopes were snuffed out by Chennai opening bowlers Albie Morkel and Doug Bollinger, who dismissed first three batsmen within the first 3.3 overs.

Chennai captain Mahendra Singh Dhoni praised Raina's innings.

"He made it look easy," he said.

But Dhoni agreed with Kumble that Steyn's injury was a blow to Bangalore.

"On this wicket raw pace can make a big difference and they were short of a bowler."

The overs were reduced after a rain break of two-and-a-half hours when Chennai were 15 for one after 2.5 overs.

Kumble said it had been a good campaign by his team.

"We did really well to get to the semifinals but it was a disappointing finish," he said.

SCORES IN BRIEF

CHENNAI SUPER KINGS: 174 for 4 in 17 overs (Vijay 41, Raina 94 not out; Vinay 2-28, Du Preez 1-32)

ROYAL CHALLENGERS BANGALORE: 123 all out in 16.2 overs (Pandey 52, Pravin 15; Bollinger 3-27, Muralidaran 2-38)

Result: Chennai Super Kings won by 52 runs (D/L method, target 176, match reduced to 17 overs a side)

Man-of-the-match: Suresh Raina.

What to WATCH

ESPN

English Premier League
Bolton v Man United
Live from 4:55pm
Wolves v Aston Villa
Live from 7:00pm
Newcastle v Stoke City
Live from 9:00pm

STAR Sports

F1 World Championship
Singapore Grand Prix
Live from 5:45pm
STAR Cricket

Champions League T20 Final
Chennai Super Kings v TBC
Live from 9:30pm

TEN Sports

Serie A
Sampdoria v Udinese
Live from 12:45am (Monday)



PHOTO: STAR

Former Australia Test player Brett Lee speaks during a press conference at the Westin Hotel in the city yesterday. The Aussie speedster is now in Dhaka as a brand ambassador of India's VH Group and its sister concern in Bangladesh Uttara Food and Feeds Limited.