

Britain's youngest cricket umpire

Ethan Peel, a 15-year-old schoolboy from Oxfordshire, has entered the record books by becoming Britain's youngest qualified umpire. Peel was studying for an intermediate certificate in umpiring at Oxford Brookes University, part of an initiative by the International Institute of Cricket Umpiring and Scoring (IICUS) to recruit youngsters. On Saturday, he completed the final phase of qualification when he independently umpired a friendly match between Tiddington and the Nomads. 'You never know, I may become the next Dickie Bird!' exclaimed the youngster.



SORRY, I WILL HAVE TO WATCH YOU GUYS FROM THE STANDS: Dashing Bangladesh opener Tamim Iqbal (R) shows his plastered left wrist to wicketkeeper-batsman Mushfiqur Rahim during the break of the Tigers' practice session at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday. Advised to take rest for another six weeks, Tamim will miss Bangladesh's five ODIs against New Zealand next month.

Tamim finally anxiety free

Cricket

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh opener Tamim Iqbal yesterday confessed that the anxiety over his injury had finally subsided and he was confident of making a timely return to playing.

"I am feeling good now after the operation and improving day by day. I am really confident that I can make my return within two months. Two weeks have already passed and after another two weeks I can start batting with the soft ball," said a confident Tamim while talking to reporters at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.

The dashing left-hander, who returned home on Sunday night, also said that the mental pressure over the operation had finally passed.

"I had discomfort with the injury because there was lingering pain. It's like a pebble inside your shoe. But I am now tension free and looking forward to recover as early as possible," he said adding that he might miss the coming New Zealand series, but this operation would help him come back strongly.

BCB sports physician Dr. Debashish Chowdhury, who visited Australia to consult about the rehabilitation program with the Australian physicians and is looking after the

rehabilitation program of the leading Bangladesh batsman, expressed his satisfaction over Tamim's progress.

"We are really satisfied with the progress in two weeks time. We are hopeful about his return to cricket within two months time. Everything however will depend on the rehabilitation program. We have a composite plan with the program," said Debashish.

When asked about whether there is chance for recurring of the pain despite the operation, Debashish said: "The main focus of the operation was to ensure a complication free wrist and that's why the bone fragments were removed. There might be some residual pain but the chances of that are very slim. For professional sportsmen it might happen that he continues his career with minor level of pain."

"We didn't have any example of this kind of operation in our country and that's why it's better for a key player like Tamim to perform the operation in the best possible place. We got a guideline from the Australian physician about the rehabilitation program and definitely it will be helpful for us," he added.

Tamim had traveled to Australia at the beginning of the month for a specialist medical review of his injury as the dashing left-hander had been experiencing lingering pain on the injury he had suffered while playing against India earlier this year.

Kiwis arrive in capital tonight

SPORTS REPORTER

The New Zealand cricket team will arrive in Dhaka tonight to play a five-match one-day series against the Tigers at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur.

The Kiwis will play two warm-up matches against a BCB XI on October 1 and October 3 at the BKSP before the start of the five-match series on October 5.

It will be the third visit for New Zealand to Bangladesh after 2004 and 2008. There were two Tests and three one-day matches in the original schedule but later both countries agreed on a five-match one-day series with one eye on the 2011 World Cup preparations.

Bangladesh have so far played 17 one-day internationals against the Kiwis where they only won one match in the last tour at Mirpur.

NEW ZEALAND SQUAD: Daniel Vettori (captain), Hamish Bennett, Grant Elliott, Brendon McCullum (wicketkeeper), Nathan McCullum, Andy McKay, Kyle Mills, Jesse Ryder, Aaron Redmond, Tim Southee, Shanan Stewart, Ross Taylor, Daryl Tuffey, BJ Watling, Kane Williamson.

ITINERARY

October 5: 1st ODI, Mirpur
October 8: 2nd ODI, Mirpur
October 11: 3rd ODI, Mirpur
October 14: 4th ODI, Mirpur
October 17: 5th ODI, Mirpur

Chennai the Super Kings

AFP, Johannesburg

The Chennai Super Kings crushed the Eastern Cape Warriors by eight wickets in the final of the Champions League Twenty20 tournament at the Wanderers Stadium on Sunday. Spin bowlers Ravichandran Ashwin and Muttiah Muralidaran set up the win as the Warriors were restricted to 128 for seven in 20 overs.

Chennai opening batsmen Mike Hussey and Murali Vijay put on 103 for the first wicket without needing to take any risks.

The result was never in any real doubt although there were only six balls to spare when captain Mahendra Singh Dhoni hit the winning runs.

The win earned Chennai a 2.5-million dollar jackpot and completed a notable double after they won the Indian Premier League earlier this year. The Warriors took home 1.3-million dollars.

Dhoni said the Chennai Super Kings' eight-wicket win over the Eastern Cape Warriors in the final of the Champions League Twenty20 tournament

Rajshahi: United for one last time

Cricket

MOHAMMAD ISAM

Rajshahi left-arm spinner Sanjamul Islam was talking to this reporter several months ago about his impending big-money move in the Premier League. It was a happy conversation but when it unavoidably shifted to the certainty of Rangpur's participating in the National Cricket League, the normally jovial Sanjamul's mood shifted to sadness.

As you may know, Rangpur became the seventh division in the country earlier this year and at the time of the conversation, it was imminent that the northern-most division would have a team in the competition.

Sanjamul, who played only one first-class game last season but became a revelation in the struggling Surjo Tarun side as well as in the NCL T20s, rued the change as it would mean the divide of a successful Rajshahi team. Surprisingly, he went on and on about how he would miss his teammates though his position was not certain (Rajshahi or Rangpur) in any of the teams.

Naturally when the Rangpur team is formed, players like Naeem Islam (from Gaibandha district), Dhiman Ghosh (Dinajpur) and Sohrawardi Shuvo (Rangpur) would automatically qualify for the new division. Players from the other districts under the newly-created division -- Kurigram, Nilphamari, Panchagarh, Thakurgaon and Lalmonirhat would also have to do the shift.

But late in August, Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) confirmed that no such thing will happen this season and so, one can safely say that Rajshahi are firm

favourites to complete a hat-trick of titles in first-class cricket.

It could be the first time that a team completes the feat in this competition though Dhaka came close in 2005-06, incidentally the same year when Rajshahi won their maiden first-class trophy.

But the last two seasons have been completely dominated by the northwestern division, be it first-class, one-day or Twenty20. Rajshahi players have dominated so much that it was claimed after the 2008-09 season by a senior cricketer that players from the region racked up close to Tk 3 crore in earnings from different clubs in the Dhaka leagues.

That figure, though disputed in some quarters, is a reflection of how cricket has emerged as one of the top career choices in the sleepy town. Academies are sprouting in every field available and that has made sure of a healthy pipeline for players.

The path to the top for these youngsters is well marked out as they have several tournaments and leagues in the region throughout the year. The next step would be the Dhaka leagues and a good showing here would mean a call-up to the several camps run by former Bangladesh captain Khales Mashud during the off-season in his academy. Show the right attitude and the ability to work hard and you have raw talents like leg-spinning all-rounder Sabbir Rahman Rumman making it big.

Here's a stat: out of the 59 Test cricketers in Bangladesh, ten are from the Rajshahi division.

One might wonder why this tournament preview has gone back to the grassroots but in writing about Rajshahi, one has to explore that deep.

Rajshahi is no Barisal, where talent is hired and sent by national selectors, nor is

it like Dhaka, which is lucky to have districts like Faridpur, Mymensingh, Narayanganj and Jamalpur.

Rajshahi has made it this far on its own (a statement that normally rings true for great players overcoming adversity).

They took some time to become championship material but once they cracked it in 2006, they knew what it would take to dominate the longer-version.

Last season, they were in their elements again. Their tactic to make sure of a first-innings lead and then go for the kill is perceived as negative by some because they won just three games out of eight (runners-up Chittagong won five), but it won them the title with the same plan in the final (they won on the first-innings lead).

Jahurul Islam, who struck a ton in that final and was immediately called up to the national team, was the top run-scorer with a staggering 965 runs that included four centuries.

He will be sorely missed due to his commitment with the Tigers, but Farhad Hossain (797 runs at an average of 56.92) could make up for the loss along with the veteran Anisur Rahman and batting all-rounders Nasir Hossain and Forhad Reza.

Farhad has come of age as a gritty professional, preferred by most Premier League clubs in Dhaka. His batting provides stability and though he's not lightning in the field, his accurate off-spin makes up for it.

Rajshahi's bowling overall is strong too, with left-arm spinners Saqlain and Sanjamul along with youngster Suvashish Roy, Delwar Hossain, Monwar Hossain, the leg-spinner Sabbir and the above-mentioned all-rounders.

Apart from a balanced team, they have the crudely put "gang-mentality" that

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Rubicic still crafting starting eleven

Football

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh national football coach Robert Rubic professed himself impressed by the calm environment at the Bangladesh Krira Shikha Protisthan in Savar, but confessed that the players still had a long way to go to impress him at the end of a 12-day training camp at the country's lone sporting institute.

The Croat has reportedly shortlisted a 20 man squad for the Asia Games in November, late on Monday, with five players as standby. Sources said that the three senior players who made the list are goalkeeper Aminul Haque, striker Enamul Haque and left-back Wali Faisal.

But of the 32 players originally picked for the preliminary camp, the Croatian coach stated that only seven players had impressed him enough to force their way into his starting eleven. The rest of the spots, he says, are up for grabs.

"My first objective is to form a good eleven and then ensure an alternative for every position. I have already chosen seven players for the starting eleven and I am trying to pick up the remaining four to complete the lineup," said Rubic at the BFF House yesterday. The Croat however declined to disclose the names of the seven players who had impressed him.

The national footballers were released on

Saturday for club duties ahead of the Federation Cup and Rubic was supposed to visit both Abahani and Mohammedan yesterday to run an eye over training sessions.

Unfortunately both giants skipped the afternoon training session and the coach instead spent some time at the football headquarters.

The Croatian hinted that he was a fan of energetic players who had enough stamina to last throughout the 90 minutes game and could show good off-the-ball movement.

"I need such players who have good running and can play untiringly for the entire game," said Rubic. "Because, you will be unable to achieve something until you can fight from first to last."

Rubic also said that he would have to work on the players' mind in a bid to make them more competitive on the pitch and he thinks that one-year is not a good enough time to build up a strong national team.

The soft-spoken coach is also thinking of forming a strong B team comprising of the young players, who are between 19 to 22 years in age as he believes Bangladesh have talented players.

Rubic, who only came to Dhaka on September 8, took charge of the players after the Eid vacation and has so far spent just 12 days with them. With club commitments beckoning, he will now have to keep a keen eye on club training sessions and maintain significant liaison with the club coaches.

Ashraful to lead BCB XI

SPORTS REPORTER

National discard Mohammad Ashraful will lead the BCB XI for the first warm-up match against New Zealand to be held on October 1 at BKSP.

Middle-order batsman Shamsur Rahman has been named vice-captain.

The visiting New Zealand will play their second and final warm-up match also against BCB XI on October 3 at the same venue.

The selected players has been asked to report to team manager Sabbir Khan at the Sher-e-Bangla National Cricket Stadium in Mirpur at

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Members of the Scottish team play a game of table football in the recreational area at the Commonwealth Games village in New Delhi yesterday. Athletes have already started arriving in the Indian capital for the showpiece event that starts on October 3.

Is it Charles or Patil?

AFP, New Delhi

Hundreds of athletes moved into the Commonwealth Games village in New Delhi on Monday, as a row loomed over the role of Prince Charles at the opening ceremony just six days away.

Despite warnings that work would not be finished at the much-criticised village until Wednesday, athletes and support staff from nations including England, South Africa, Australia and Canada arrived during the day.

Problems plaguing the crisis-hit Games range from shabby accommodation to security fears, an outbreak of dengue fever, and doubts about public safety after the collapse of a new footbridge next to the main stadium.

In a desperate bid to finish work on time, an army of manual workers was drafted in to tackle uncompleted apartments, dirty toilets

and heaps of builders' rubbish at the village. The latest challenge facing India was to choose who will open the Games at the grand ceremony on Sunday evening, with officials admitting that the role of Britain's Prince Charles had still not been decided.

Queen Elizabeth, who would normally open the Games as head of the Commonwealth, in May said she would not travel to India due to her hectic schedule and instead sent Prince Charles, her son and heir.

The move, which drew criticism in India, has led organisers to discuss whether the Indian President Pratibha Patil should instead open the Games.

"The decision is yet to be taken," Archana Datta, the secretary to the Indian president, told AFP after reports of a spat between London and New Delhi.

A spokesman for the British embassy in New Delhi denied any friction over the opening

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Chennai Super Kings players celebrate after being crowned as Champions League Twenty20 champions with an eight-wicket triumph over the Warriors in the final at the Wanderers Stadium in Johannesburg on Sunday.

PHOTO: AFP

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