

'Adriano wanted to commit suicide'

The mother of AS Roma forward Adriano has claimed her son wanted to commit suicide during the depths of his depression. "The source of his depression has always been the death of his father which he has never overcome," she told Thursday's Gazzetta dello Sport. "One day, he rang me and said he didn't want to go on, he wanted to stop playing football. "He confessed that he was thinking of committing suicide and I told him to react with his heart because nothing is more important than his happiness and that if to obtain it he had to give up football, then no problem."



The Kiwis (L), seen here balancing the ball, are aware that they will have to face a lot of Shakib Al Hasan (R), who is pictured above lining up a throw during practice at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.

PHOTOS: ANISUR RAHMAN

The Daily Star reach final

SPORTS REPORTER

Destiny was against The Daily Star. But it is destiny that has taken The Daily Star to battle a team they famously won against ten years ago.

The final of the DRU Rapid Securities six-a-side football, a fun tournament involving the print and electronic media of the country, on Friday will be a rematch between The Daily Star and Daily Jugantor since the two media houses' enterprising clash in 2000.

Ten years is a long time and a lot has changed. The Daily Star produced a young brigade that started the tournament with a low profile but now they have come tantalisingly close to emulating the feat of their predecessors when they defeated Destiny, a Bengali daily, 2-1 in the second semifinal after Jugantor beat The Daily Janakantha by the same margin in the first semifinals at the green top of the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

Abul Kalam Azad scored the first goal while Najmul Alam Nobin, the fleet-footed striker who could have easily taken football as career at a time when Bangladesh seriously lack quality marksman, hammered the defender after the Destiny equaliser. Both scored to prove a point.

Azad was sitting on the bench for a long time and he obviously did not like it. So when he came on, he scored with his first touch of the ball, a scorching grounder through the hedges of the Destiny defence.

Nobin took the challenge of manager Pinaki Roy in his stride by hammering the winner, a couple of minutes after the manager had promised that The Daily Star canteen would be free for him for one full month if he could score a goal.

The manager might have lost a bet, but he would love to lose another today when the final takes place at the Handball Stadium.

Rain ruins 1st practice game

Cricket

SPORTS REPORTER

Today's first limited-over warm-up match between the visiting New Zealand and BCB XI was called off due to wet outfield at the BKSP in Savar following incessant rain over the last few days.

"The pitch is okay but the outfield condition is unplayable as it's soggy, soft and still water-soaked. It would be risky for the players to play in this kind of condition and that's why after inspecting the ground the match was called off," informed match referee Raquibul Hassan yesterday.

The late monsoon is in full flow at the moment and after the downpour in the last few days it was impossible for the groundsmen to make the ground match-fit. And there is serious doubt over the second and final practice match, which is scheduled for Sunday at the same venue, as another downpour in the area within the next two days may keep the condition the same.

"The second match is still on.

Actually we even tried to play a 20-over-a-side match tomorrow but the condition was so bad that the ground's man was not confident about taking a risk. There were also two representatives from the New Zealand side (performance director Roger Mortimer and coach Shane Jurgensen) during the visit and they were also not ready to take a risk," said Raquibul.

The former national skipper however informed that New Zealand expressed their desire to play the match tomorrow at Mirpur and organising secretary Gazi Ashraf Hossain said that they would look into the matter.

"We have to check many things before taking a decision regarding the issue. We get back to them after checking everything," said Ashraf.

The focus would definitely have been on former national skipper Mohammad Ashraful but the batsman who was dropped for the five-match series, was not focusing on the warm-up matches but instead was looking forward to the domestic competition to recover his form.

"It's nice that I got a chance to play the warm-up match but I'm not focus-

ing too much on it. My main target is to score runs in the domestic competition. I will try my best to return to form when I play ten innings in the national league," said Ashraful, who was captain of the BCB XI for the first match.

"This is not a good situation for me as I was out of the team when there is a one-day series at home ahead of the World Cup but I have to accept the reality. I was out of the team because of my poor performance which has been lingering this time," he added.

Ashraful however said that he was not frustrated rather he was confident about comeback to the national side.

"There is hardly any problem with my batting but the fact is that I was not getting runs. I need some good innings to emerge from the vicious circle and I am hopeful because still I am young and I have to long way to go," said a confident Ashraful.

"I don't believe there is any psychological problem behind the poor run of form. Once again I need some good innings and that's why I am looking forward to the domestic competition where I want to play some big knocks," he added.

Transfers open today

No new moves on the radar

Football

SPORTS REPORTER

The players' transfer for the 2010-11 football season begins today with very little expectations of the usual last-minute drama, with most of the excitement centered around the emergence of a new force and the reinvention of a former champion.

Sheikh Jamal Dhanmondi Club and Muktiyoddha Sangsad have challenged the power of Abahani and Mohammedan Sporting Club by signing most of their big name players, a long time before the official players transfer.

Despite that, the headquarters of Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) will become slightly busier on the opening day of the transfers that will last a week for the local footballers and 15 days for the foreign brigade. The transfers will officially kick off at 3pm but only a few smaller clubs will probably show up to confirm their players on the first day.

Sheikh Jamal Dhanmondi Club, a new brand name for club that has been in existence since 1962, has taken all the headlines since July. They have roped in as many as sixteen national team players.

In a ceremony earlier this month, the new faces of the club paraded its acquisitions that

include Aminul Haque, Zahid Hasan Emily, Enamul Haq, Wali Faisal, Mohammad Sujan, Mamunul Islam, Atiqur Rahman Mishu, Zahid Hossain, Nasiruddin, Komol and Shabed, all poached from the two Dhaka giants.

In the same vein, Muktiyoddha have renewed hope of a title push this season as they have revamped their entire squad. They have roped in some 19 players, many of them top stars from giants Abahani and Mohammedan.

Muktiyoddha have confirmed the services of goalkeeper Biplob, defenders Firoz Mahmud Titu, Obaidur Rahman, Yeamin Munna midfielders Motiur Munna, Enamul Haq Sharif, Arman Aziz, Azmal Hossain Biddut, Alamgir Kabir Rana, strikers Rokonzaman Kanchan and Mithun Chowdhury.

To counter the exodus, the league authorities have confirmed yesterday that five foreign players (with the fifth being the goalkeeper) can be part of the starting eleven of all the teams.

But that factor won't confirm success and Abahani have confirmed the services of Mehdi Hasan Ujjal, Nazrul Islam, Abul Hossain, Mohammad Robin, Pranotosh Kumar, goalkeeper Zia, veteran striker Alfaz Ahmed, defender Amit Khan Shuvro, defenders Arup Kumar Baddya and Monayem Khan Jitu.

Mohammedan, who disappointed in last season's Bangladesh League, have lost the most

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Harbhajan doubtful

First India-Aus Test starts today

Cricket

AFP, Mohali

Indian star off-spinner Harbhajan Singh is doubtful for Friday's opening Test against Australia in Mohali due to a leg injury.

"We will decide on Harbhajan tomorrow morning," India skipper Mahendra Singh Dhoni told reporters on Thursday.

Harbhajan has been a constant menace to Australia since leading India to a stunning 2-1 series victory over Steve Waugh's team with a 32-wicket haul in three home matches in 2001.

He has taken 79 wickets in 14 Tests against Australia.

"He has been our main spinner since Anil Kumble left cricket (in 2008). He has been well-supported by (spinners) Amit Mishra and Pragnan Ojha, but the main attack has always revolved around him," said Dhoni.

"It is a bit of a concern, but you can't control cricketing injuries. We're just hoping he'll be available for selection, but if he's not we'll have to make use of the available resources in the best possible manner."

Harbhajan's loss would be a major blow to India as he is the most experienced spinner in the squad, with 357 wickets in 85 Tests.

The Indian skipper said his team were not under pressure because of their number-one Test ranking, but were keen on playing competitive cricket and winning "more sessions" than the opposition.

"You are expected to win if you are playing at home. Your ranking doesn't matter much," said Dhoni.

"In a five-day match, it's all about winning more sessions. The team which wins more sessions will generally win the match."

"In India, the last two days will be crucial because there will more turn for spinners and fast bowlers get the ball to reverse swing."

Dhoni also said his team were expecting a tough challenge from Ricky Ponting's Australians despite their number-four ranking.

"They are aggressive and look for results. They always come up with good plans and they'll be up for the challenge. But we know which areas we need to improve," said Dhoni.

"It's always good to play against top teams because there's a fierce competition on the field and at the same time you see where you are at that moment as far as form and talent are concerned. It will be a good series."

"They are a good side, a balanced side. They've been to India

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India off-spinner Harbhajan Singh prepares to bowl in the nets during a training session in Mohali yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

Text opens door for Bennett

Cricket

SPORTS REPORTER

Earlier this month, Hamish Bennett said how shocked he was when coach Mark Greatbatch texted him and asked if he would like to tour Bangladesh.

"You're not going to say no to that, are you?" Bennett, the 23-year-old fast bowler from Canterbury, told NZPA at the time.

Bennett has been a steady if not spectacular domestic performer, with 24 one-day wickets at 37.29. He is in line for an international debut after making the 15-man squad, which does not include Martin Guptill or the injured Scott Styris from the recent tri-nations series in Sri Lanka.

This is Bennett's first tour with the Black Caps and understandably, the excitement would not be dampened despite the conditions being so unsuitable for a hit-the-deck bowler like him.

"Any place you are supposed to make your debut, it is challenging and I'm looking forward to it," said Bennett while talking to reporters at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium yesterday.

"Obviously coming to the sub-continent, people think wickets are not ideal for fast bowling. But I am going to take the challenge and try to bowl well," he added.

Despite his lack of success in Australia this winter where he failed to take a wicket in any of his two one-day games and two Twenty20s, Bennett has been part of the New Zealand Emerging Players side for the past four years. And even more so, captain Daniel Vettori has placed a lot of faith in him.

"It's always nice to hear. I just get to go, get some energy, try to take the momentum in our favour, face the challenge. If I can do that, I will be happy," he said.

Bennett has 91 first-class wickets from 33 matches with the best of 7-50, which he took to help Canterbury win the State Championship in 2008. But he mentioned how he struggled in his initial days. "I played first-class cricket when I was very young. My first season was pretty rough but I have learnt a lot in the last couple of seasons to make it to this point of my career," said Bennett.

The tall fast bowler knows Rubel Hossain through their stint at the MRF Academy in Chennai but he knows little about his first opponents in international cricket.

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HAMISH BENNETT

SPORTS POLL
TODAY'S QUESTION
 Which team is favourite to win the India-Australia Test series?
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