

Benjeni quits int'l football

Zimbabwe team captain Benjeni Mwarurari told state media Tuesday that he has quit international football to concentrate on his career in England's Premier League. The 32-year-old forward, who signed a one-year deal with Blackburn Rovers in August, announced his decision just days after Zimbabwe were held to a goalless draw by Cape Verde. "After the game I went to speak with (team coach) Norman (Mapeza) and thanked him for giving me a chance to play in the game against Cape Verde and that I was sorry we couldn't do enough to win the game and get maximum points," Mwarurari said in the Herald newspaper.



PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

TRYING SOMETHING DIFFERENT TO TURN THINGS AROUND: New Zealand wicketkeeper-batsman Brendon McCullum plays a shot while captain Daniel Vettori (L) looks on during a fun game with the students of UCEP IT Technical Training Centre, an institute founded by great New Zealander Lindsay Allan Cheyne way back in 1972, in Mirpur yesterday.

'We're just thinking about winning series'

SPORTS REPORTER



The scenario was totally different yesterday after Shakib Al Hasan's men took the unbeatable 2-0 lead in the five-match one-day series on Monday. Usually the Bangladesh cricket team found it hard to practice after their opponents dominated the preceding but things have changed this time following the Tigers' brave show in the series which has created an opportunity for them to win the series against top-flight opponents for the first time.

When the Tigers passed the day in a relaxed mood, as it was optional practice day for them, their New Zealand counterparts turned to the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur and had a full-fledged training session.

The Black Caps will desperately try to bounce back in the series to at least salvage their pride but there was no shortage of confidence from the volte-faced Tigers on a first-ever series victory against top-ranked and full-strength opponents.

"The atmosphere is fantastic in the team after the 2-0 lead. We are not thinking of anything other than winning the series after the way we played in the first two games," said wicketkeeper-batsman Mushfiqur Rahim, who along with middle-order batsman Rokibul Hassan came to Mirpur for a knock at the middle.

"We want to take the momentum into the next two games. There is an optional training session for us and that's why few of us came to

the gym and we came here for some batting practice.

"I think New Zealand had a full training session as they are now down 0-2 in the series and that's why they definitely try to cope up with conditions especially as the World Cup matches will be held here (in the sub-continent)," added Mushfiqur.

It seems that the whole team has been reverberating with the same mantra: improving performance match-by-match.

"As Jamie (Siddons) said, we have set a target to improve match-by-match and that's our ultimate target in the series.

"And we know the success will automatically come if we can improve our performances," Mushfiqur echoed the sentiment of his coach Siddons and captain Shakib.

"Our bowling was not good in the first ten overs in the first match but we didn't make the same mistake in the second match. We however didn't bowl well in the Powerplay of the second game, so we have to be careful in the next games.

"There are lots of areas we can still improve and we are really focusing on it," he added.

He also said that they were looking for consistency in their performance and like his captain he also believes that this Bangladesh team is not dependent on any particular player rather there are several performers in the team.

"You can't expect only one player to win a match for you. The team was depended on Ash [Mohammad Ashraful] and Mash [Mashrafe Bin Mortaza] previously but now there are a

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Pakistanis feeling at home

ANISUR RAHMAN from New Delhi



On October 3 at Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium in New Delhi, the Pakistan contingent was the 51st team among 71 participating nations to enter pitch in the opening ceremony of the XIX Commonwealth Games and got tremendous applause from the crowd.

That moment apparently indicated that despite the bitter political rivalry between the two neighbouring nations since their birth in 1947, there is friendliness between the people of the two nations. Pakistan contingent's chef de mission Mohamed Ali Shah believes the Games would work as a bridge to develop the relation between two nations at state level.

After the Mumbai blast in 2008, the relationship between the two rival nations deteriorated seriously. Pakistani athletes were reportedly denied Indian visa and Pakistani cricketers were terminated from their respective Indian Premier League (IPL) franchises.

It was also reported that India lost their interest about hosting the SAFF Football

Championship last year because of the participation of Pakistan and as a result Bangladesh hosted the regional football championship.

"I think the expulsion of Pakistani cricketers from IPL was a temporary step, and I believe the players from Pakistan will not face any obstacle in future," said Shah yesterday over the phone.

The chef de mission also praised India's arrangements for the games.

"The preparation for the Games as well as the village condition are excellent. India have proved that they can stage such big events as the Commonwealth Games," said Shah, who was also overwhelmed by the applause from the spectators at the gala ceremony.

Like the chef de mission, Pakistani shooter Tanzeem Abbasi, the lone female athlete in the 48-member contingent, was also ecstatic about being in India for the Games.

"I am delighted to be here because it feels just like home. I don't feel like I am away from home at all and everybody in the team feels the same way too," said Tanzeem.

Nasar Iqbal, a journalist from Daily Jung covering the Games in Delhi, said that the

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Sheikh Jamal start campaign today

Muktis Maul Navy

SPORTS REPORTER

The star-studded cast of Sheikh Jamal Dhanmondi Club will take to the field for the first time in the Grameenphone Federation Cup at the Birshreshtha Shaheed Sepoy Mostafa Kamal Stadium today. The newly formed club, with 16 players who play for the national side, are expected to dazzle the Federation Cup which has been pretty much drab so far.

The Dhanmondi Club have brought stars like Aminul Haque, Zahid Hasan Emily, Enamul Haq, Wali Faisal, Mohammad Sujon, Mamunul Islam under their umbrella and had a week-long training camp to gel the stars from different clubs at their camp in BKSP. So, all eyes will be on the new powerhouse in local football when they take on

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Aussies still in game

Tendulkar goes on to hit 6th double ton



AFP, Bangalore

Australia captain Ricky Ponting defied India's bowlers with a spirited half-century as his team fought a grim battle for survival in the final Test on Tuesday.

After Sachin Tendulkar had made 214 to give India a slender 17-run lead, the Aussies slumped to 131-5 in their second innings before recovering to post 202-7 by stumps on the fourth day.

Ponting made 72, his second half-century of the match, when seamer Zaheer Khan trapped him leg-before towards the end of the day's play to put India on top.

Australia, seeking a series-levelling win after losing the first Test in Mohali by one wicket, start the final day's play 185 runs ahead with three wickets in hand.

India's spin twins, Harbhajan Singh and Pragyan Ojha, wrecked Australia's top-order on a wearing wicket at the Chinnaswamy Stadium in Bangalore that assisted turn.

Openers Shane Watson and Simon Katich put on 58, before both fell in the space of four deliveries without a run being added.

Watson was trapped leg-

before by left-arm spinner Ojha, while Katich edged a catch to wicketkeeper Mahendra Singh Dhoni in off-spinner Harbhajan's next over.

Seven runs later, Michael Clarke was stumped by Dhoni off Ojha to reduce the tourists to 65-3, barely 48 runs ahead.

Michael Hussey put on 61 for the fourth wicket with Ponting, before he was leg-

before to Ojha for 20 and first-innings centurion Marcus

North was bowled by Harbhajan for three.

Tim Paine (23) added 50 with Ponting and when play ended Mitchell Johnson was on seven and Nathan Hauritz was on eight.

Earlier, India took their overnight score of 435-5 to 495 before they were all out at the stroke of lunch in reply to Australia's 478.

Tendulkar's dismissal at 486-5 triggered a lower order collapse in which the last five

Indian wickets fell for nine runs.

Tendulkar, who was on 191 overnight, reached his double century 25 minutes after the start with a quick single off Ben Hilfenhaus.

It was the world batting record holder's sixth double-century and his second in four Tests, having made 203 against Sri Lanka at the Sinhalese Sports Club in Colombo in July.

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India left-arm spinner Pragyan Ojha is in his delivery stride during the fourth day of the second Test against Australia at the Chinnaswamy Stadium in Bangalore yesterday. Ojha rocked the Aussie second innings with three for 57.

PHOTO: AFP

Test on knife's edge



AFP, Bangalore

India's Sachin Tendulkar on Tuesday predicted a close finish in the second and final cricket Test against Australia after scoring a brilliant double century.

"This match is at a critical stage and it is all about how we handle pressure on the last day," Tendulkar told reporters after the fourth day's play at the Chinnaswamy Stadium in Bangalore.

After Tendulkar had made 214 to give India a slender 17-run lead, the Aussies slumped to 131-5 in their second innings before recovering to post 202-7 by stumps.

Australian captain Ricky Ponting thwarted India's charge with a fluent 72, his second half-century of the match, before he was dismissed by seamer Zaheer Khan towards the close.

Australia, seeking a series-levelling win after losing the first Test in Mohali by one wicket, start the final day's play 185 runs ahead with three wickets in hand.

Tendulkar said it was important to end Australia's innings early because any target would be tough on the wearing fifth day pitch.

"The wicket has slowed down and the cracks have

widened," he said. "It will not be an easy track to bat on tomorrow."

India took their overnight score of 435-5 to 495 before they were all out at the stroke of lunch in reply to Australia's 478.

Tendulkar's dismissal at 486-5 triggered a lower order collapse in which the last five Indian wickets fell for nine runs.

"It was very disappointing to lose five wickets so quickly,

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Master batsman Sachin Tendulkar of India walks back to the dressing room after scoring a magnificent 214, his sixth double hundred, on the fourth day of the second Test against Australia at the Chinnaswamy Stadium in Bangalore yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

DELHI DIARY

SPORTS REPORTER from New Delhi

True that there was no hope of clinching a shooting medal after the frustrating performances from Asif Hossain Khan and Sharmin Akhter Ratna, but other Bangladeshi shooters comparatively performed well to stay in the middle on the final standings at the Dr Karni Singh Shooting Range here yesterday.

Iqbal Hossain finished ninth out of 29 competitors in the men's singles skeet event with a total score of 140 -- 70 from qualification and 70 from shoot-off -- as Cypriot shooter Andreas Chasikos won the gold firing 150.

In the men's 50m rifle team event, Ramjan Ali and Abdullah Hel Baki became ninth with a total score of 1,162 as Ramjan fired 582 and Baki scored 580.

Sabrina Sultana finished 12th out of 21 as she scored 584 in the 50m rifle prone event where Scotland's Jen McIntosh won the gold scoring 592.

Changes afoot in local cricket

SPORTS REPORTER

Major changes in the country's domestic cricket calendar are afoot after rain played havoc with the start of the cricket season.

The National Cricket League (NCL) one-day competition will now be brought forward by three weeks after the first phase of the four-dayers had to be scrapped, due to the depression at the Bay of Bengal that brought incessant rain to all parts of the country.

The weather meant the venues weren't in playable condition and considering the importance of the next round of matches, the BCB had no other option but to postpone.

The first round of matches saw three drawn games after rain ruined the fourth day of all three games in Jessore, Rajshahi and Bogra.

The shift to the NCL one-day schedule would mean the country's only first-class competition would be shunted back to February and March next year during the World Cup, when the second phase will also be held.

"We will try to fit it around the Bangladesh matches of the World Cup," said Gazi Ashraf

Hossain, tournament committee chairman of the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB).

According to the former national captain, the limited overs competition will be held sometime later this month.

"The one-day tournament will be held in the third week of October. We are just waiting for approval from the cricket operations committee," said Gazi Ashraf.

It is safe to say that the change had to be made to keep the schedule of the Dhaka Premier League intact because most of the national players are set to be available for the most important one-day competition in the country.

If the NCL one-dayers are held after the ongoing New Zealand series, the Tigers would also be able to play in that competition, adding a large number of limited overs matches under their belt ahead of the World Cup.

The change from four-day to one-day also means the six divisions will have to alter their gameplan and the players themselves have to quickly adjust their mindset.

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SPORTS POLL
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 India v Australia
 Second Test, Day 5
 Live from 10:00am
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 Sportscentre India
 Sports News
 Live at 8:30pm

DAY'S EVENT
GP Federation Cup
 Arambagh v BKSP
 Time: 3:30pm
 Sheikh Jamal Dhanmondi Club v Youngmen's Club
 Time: 5:45pm
 Venue: Kamalapur Stadium