

Xavi wants football war

Barcelona playmaker Xavi said on Sunday that he was ready for a "football war" with Real Madrid, but not a war of words with their outspoken coach Jose Mourinho. "We won't get into a war of words," said Xavi, after inspiring Barca to a 5-0 thrashing of Sevilla on his return from injury on Saturday. "We want a football war on the pitch." Xavi added that he felt almost fully recovered from his knee tendinitis, which had kept him on the sidelines for two matches.



Cricketers get deserved pay rise

SPORTS REPORTER

The technical committee of Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) has recommended a fifteen percent salary increase for all contracted players.

Top order batsman Jahurul Islam and all-rounder Sohrawordi Shuvo have been brought under the rookie grade while left-arm spinner Enamul Haque and Mehrib Hossain have not been offered new contracts.

The new contract period will be from December 1 this year to November 30 2011.

Mashrafe Bin Mortaza, Shakib Al Hasan, Mohammad Ashraful, Abdur Razzak, Mushfiqur Rahim and Tamim Iqbal have been placed in the top grade (Grade A+) while Shahadat Hossain, Junaed Siddiqui and Mahmudullah Riyad are in grade A.

Grade B comprises Syed Rasel, Rokibul Hassan, Nazmul Hossain, Naem Islam, Imrul Kayes and Rubel Hossain while pacer Shafiqul Islam is only the player in Grade C.

"The increased salary of the players was overdue and we also considered the recent performance of the players before recommending the fifteen percent increase. The grade has been determined on the basis of the number of matches that has been played by the players," said BCB's media committee chairman Jalal Yunus, who is also a member of the technical committee.

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DON'T COUNT ME OUT: Injured Bangladesh captain Mashrafe Bin Mortaza (L) talks with Shakib Al Hasan during the Bangladesh cricket team's first practice session at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday. The Tigers enjoyed a four-day break after their stunning 4-0 whitewash of New Zealand last month. Shakib led the team from the front following Mashrafe's freakish injury in the first game.

Siddikur might face Tiger Woods

Golf

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh's new sensation Siddikur Rahman may have a chance to rub shoulders with golfing luminaries like Tiger Woods and Phil Mickelson when he leaves for Shanghai today to take part in the US dollar 7 million HSBC World Golf Championship to be held from November 4-7.

After a hugely successful tournament in Malaysia, Siddikur is set to continue his astronomical rise in the game if he gets a chance to swing his club in the top class tournament to be held at the eastern China city.

Unfortunately, his participation is not guaranteed since he is not pencilled in as a scheduled starter but only placed first on the waiting list.

Siddikur however saw no reason to be downbeat. "I am very confident and I look forward to meet and gain experience from renowned golfers around the world."

"I ask everyone to pray for my success," he continued.

After the World Golf Championship Siddikur will also participate in the Barclays Singapore Open from 11-14 November (USD 6 million purse) and the UBS Hong Kong Open from 18-21 November (USD 2.5 million purse).

Both of these tournaments are co-sanctioned by the European & Asian Tour.

National b'ball qualifiers from today

SPORTS REPORTER

The Citycell 24th National Basketball Championship gets underway at the Dhanmondi Wooden Floor Gymnasium today with 16 teams fighting it out in the qualifying round.

Later, the top teams from four groups will join Bangladesh Army, Bangladesh Navy, Bangladesh Rifles and Khulna DSA, top four teams from the last edition of the meet, in the final round which will be played in two groups, informed the organisers at a press conference at the Bangladesh Olympic Association Bhawan yesterday.

PARTICIPANTS
GROUP A: Bangladesh Police, Jessore, Rajshahi and

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Tigers opt for training

Cricket

SPORTS REPORTER

It is a commonly held belief that there is nothing better for preparation than playing competitive games, but the Bangladesh think-tank was thinking outside the box when they opted for hard training instead of letting the national players participate in the latter rounds of the National Cricket League.

Following their memorable 4-0 whitewash of New Zealand, the Tigers got back to the business yesterday at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur with a target to keep up the momentum against Zimbabwe in the five-match one-day series in December this year.

The good news for coach Jamie Siddons was that the national players, particularly those who had desperately needed to get back among the runs ahead of the series, played some good knocks in the National League. This will give the

national selectors food for thought when they pick the final team from the 20-member preliminary squad.

"The players are going well; the batsman in particular. Some of the bowlers are also doing well and they have been training hard. It proves they are getting better as they are dominating the national league now and that's what I wanted them to do," said an excited Siddons, who just returned from Australia after a happy break.

"It proves that the result against Zealand wasn't a fluke as they are the best players in the competition," he added.

There has been a sentiment that it would be better for the players if they can play a few more rounds in the ongoing competition but Mashrafe Bin Mortaza, who is all set to bowl after seven days, termed it a good decision.

"I think tiredness was an issue for the players after a gruelling series against New Zealand. And then they got almost no break before the national league. So, it's a good decision to take a break from play-

ing matches especially when we must be concerned about picking up injuries. The players have to travel extensively for the national league matches and that's why it's not always an easy task for them," said Mashrafe, who hopefully will be fully fit and pushing for selection for the Zimbabwe tour.

The pace spearhead, who is likely to lead the team in the next series if he can play, said that the players are very much focused on the next assignment despite the historic series victory against the Black Caps.

"It's nice to watch some of our players get back their rhythm in the national league which strengthens the squad obviously. It's really fantastic when almost all the players are in-form in the team. The players are ready to continue their hard work to maintain their good form also against Zimbabwe. We must ensure the consistency in our performance," said Mashrafe.

"In my opinion Zimbabwe will play

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Razzmatazz of Razzaq

Cricket

CRICINFO, Abu Dhabi

There are match-winning centuries and there are Match-winning Centuries. You will travel far and wide, maybe even go back in time, but you will struggle to find a more remarkable game-stealing hundred than the one Sheikh Zayed Stadium in Abu Dhabi saw Sunday night. An outrageous 72-ball 109 from Abdul Razzaq dragged Pakistan to a series-leveling target of 287 against South Africa, one ball and one wicket left.

Earlier, South Africa had scored 287 for the loss of eight wickets in their allotment of 50 overs in the day-night second one-day international. The Proteas won the first ODI on October 29 by eight wickets. It was scarcely-scriptable

and only when Razzaq hit his tenth six in the last over, slogging Albie Morkel over midwicket to climax an unimaginable orgy of power-hitting, was a Pakistan win even worth contemplating; until then he had played to a backdrop of impending, imminent doom. To even get to that point needing 14 was a feat because for 99 overs Pakistan looked a distant second best; a solid, now-to-be-forgotten century from Colin Ingram, hands from Hashim Amla and JP Duminy and the continuing refusal of Pakistan's top order to turn up, the distinct story till then.

Shahid Afridi and Fawad Alam had tried gamely to make something of the disaster of 70 for 4 in the 19th over. The spinners were on, Afridi was around so inevitably some fun was had. When Afridi went in the 30th, the

score at 136, still the best they could hope for was an honourablescrap. Razzaq began quietly, expressive as a stone, and even a dance-down six off Robin Peterson four overs after Afridi left felt decorative. Alam, meanwhile, was getting bogged down by his own inability to clear a field. But South Africa relaxed, the pair stuck at it. Alam suddenly got going and Razzaq smoked a couple more sixes. By the 40th over, at 200 for 5, theoretically it looked possible -- in this age of Twenty20 at least -- even if, in reality, it didn't feel gettable. But for once, Pakistan timed their Powerplay right and when Johan Botha was taken for 11 in the very first, a little tension crept in. Only a little though, for Alam went soon, Morne Morkel bowled two fine overs, there was the

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Members of the Bangladesh football team train at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday as part of their preparation for the 17th Asian Games to be held in the Chinese city of Guangzhou from November 12.

PHOTO: STAR

Rubcic's injury concern

Football

SPORTS REPORTER

After a five-week break for the Federation Cup, the national camp for the upcoming Asian Games resumed yesterday but coach Robert Rubcic was left sweating over injuries and fever to some of his players.

Both left-backs Atiqur Rahman Meshu and Wali Faisal are suffering from hamstring injuries, while midfielder Shahedul Alam is suffering from tendon injury. Defender Mamun Miah, striker Zahid Hasan Emily and winger Zahid Hossain have caught fever after the Federation Cup final that was played on October 30.

Zahid and Emily were absent from the opening day's light practice while Meshu, Wali, and Mamun watched from sidelines and Shahed jogged at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday. Shahed has been making good recovery after missing most of the Federation Cup through injury.

Physio Dolilur Rahman said they were not aware of players' injuries earlier and assessed the state of the injuries yesterday.

However, it was learnt that Meshu and Wali may miss the Asian Games as they need at least two weeks to recover from the injuries.

If Meshu and Wali fail to recover from their injuries before the first match against Uzbekistan on November 7, it will pose a big cause for concern for Rubcic, who would apparently have no other options and will have to think about playing central defender Rezaul Karim or Mintu Sheikh as left-back.

"Yes, it is a real concern if Meshu and Wali can't get well soon. Besides, there is a problem up front with Emily struggling to find the target," said Rubcic after a light training session.

Considering the performances in the Federation Cup, Rubcic has praised strikers Enamul Haq, Towhidul Alam Sabuj and winger Zahid Hossain for their tireless effort on the pitch.

"Leaving the injured and fever-hit players, I only have 15 players with six days in hand and I think it will be tough to do well in the Asiad," said the coach.

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Division I cricket

SPORTS REPORTER

Agrani Bank, Bangladesh Boys and Khelaghar Samaj Kalyan Samity won their respective matches of the First Division Cricket League yesterday.

Agrani Bank beat Young Pegasus by 68 runs at the Dhanmondi Cricket Stadium, courtesy of a century from Raisul Islam. Raisul scored 104 runs off 115 deliveries with two sixes and 10 boundaries to set up a 236-run total for Agrani Bank. In reply, Young Pegasus got bowled out for 168 runs in 44.4 overs where Raisul took one wicket.

Bangladesh Boys (205/6) defeated Uttara Sporting (161/10) by 44 runs while Khelaghar (147/4) beat Gopibagh Friends Association (145/10) by 6 wickets.

Zia takes solo lead

SPORTS REPORTER

Grand Master Ziaur Rahman took solo lead in the Berger Six Seasons Grandmasters Chess Tournament with maximum two points at close of the second round at the Tulip Lounge of Uttara Club yesterday.

FM Minhazuddin Ahmed Sagar and Indian FM Sayantan Das jointly followed the leader with 1.5 points each.

In yesterday's matches, Zia beat fellow GM Niaz Murshed, Sagar drew with FM Abu Sufian Shakil, Sayantan drew with FM Mehdi Hasan Parag, IM Sahaj Grover beat FM Yee Soon Wei and GM Vakhidov Tair drew with Bitan Banerjee.



MAGNUM OPUS: Pakistan batsman Abdul Razzaq jumps for joy after single-handedly completing an improbable victory with a magnificent unbeaten 109 off 72 balls in the second day-night one-dayer against South Africa at the Abu Dhabi Cricket Stadium on Sunday.

Razzaq's 10 sixes in the innings moved him into joint third position among batsmen to hit the most sixes in an ODI innings behind Xavier Marshall (12), and Sanath Jayasuriya and Shahid Afridi (both 11). MS Dhoni, Mark Boucher, Matthew Hayden and Brendon McCullum are other batsmen to 10 sixes.

Razzaq finished with a strike rate of 151.38, which is the second-highest among 100-plus scores in ODIs against South Africa, next only to Ricky Ponting's 164 off 105 balls in Johannesburg in 2006 (strike rate 156.19).

This was Razzaq's first 50-plus ODI score in more than four years, and his first century since September 2004.