

SPORT

DHAKA WEDNESDAY DECEMBER 1, 2010, E-MAIL: sports@thedailystar.net

Higuain may need surgery

Real Madrid's Argentine striker Gonzalo Higuain may be suffering from more than just a simple back muscle injury and may need to go under surgery, Spanish media reported Tuesday. The 22-year-old has not played since he picked up the injury during Real's 5-1 thrashing of Athletic Bilbao on November 20. "Club doctors fear that it is more than simple lower back pain," Catalan sports daily Mundo Deportivo reported. "Higuain may be operated on," added Madrid-based sports daily Marca. The reports said the player may be suffering from a herniated disc.



Winning the only option

SPORTS REPORTER

When Bangladesh kick off their five-match one-day series against Zimbabwe today there would be only one expectation: maintain the purple patch leading upto next year's World Cup. The Tigers are buoyant after their recent 4-0 drubbing of New Zealand and go into the first one-dayer at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur with the tag of 'favourites', but refreshingly there has been a common sentiment among the players that the job would not be so easy as they dubbed Zimbabwe "a better side" in this conditions than the Kiwis. In one sense pressure would be on Shakib Al Hasan's men to keep the momentum going as well as grab the opportunity to improve on the ICC ODI rankings. A 5-0 series win over the visitors would see Bangladesh move up to eighth place, pushing West Indies to ninth. Another interesting fact is that Bangladesh lost the first game against the Africans in the last three series, so it would be another challenge for Jamie Siddons' boys to break the jinx this time around, but most importantly it's Bangladesh's last international engagement before the showcase event and that's why anything other than victory would be a setback for them. "I think this is their [Zimbabweans'] second home ground because Zimbabwe visited this country more often than others and they are all familiar with the conditions here. Zimbabwe are a very experienced side because these players have been playing together for long time. And they have a very good spin attack," said Mashrafe Bin Mortaza, who is all set to make a comeback to international cricket after twisting his ankle in the first match of the New Zealand series as the team think-tank announced the playing eleven leaving pacers Rubel Hossain, Nazmul Hossain, Rokibul Hasan and Naeem Islam out. "Our main focus should be on sticking to the basics rather than trying something extraordinary. I believe everybody is focused on this series because we will not get the chance to play international cricket before the World Cup," he added. Opener Tamim Iqbal, who will also make his comeback after



Tamim Iqbal (L), Shakib Al Hasan (C) and Sohrawardi Shuvo (2nd from R) stretch during a practice session at the Sher-e-Bangla National Cricket Stadium yesterday. The return of stalwarts like Iqbal and Mashrafe Bin Mortaza is expected to bolster the balance of the side for the Zimbabwe series starting today.

INTERESTING FACTS

- Highest Scorers:** Elton Chigumbura (846 runs in 34 matches).
- Highest Wicket-Taker:** Mashrafe Bin Mortaza (43 wickets from 25 matches).
- Biggest winning margin (by runs):** Zimbabwe won by 192 runs in Nairobi, 1997
- Biggest winning margin (by balls):** Bangladesh won with 229 balls to spare in Chittagong, 2009
- Most hundreds:** Shahriar Nafees (3)
- Most fifties:** Shahriar Nafees (6)
- Most sixes:** Elton Chigumbura (31)
- Most ducks:** Grant Flower, Tatenda Taibu, Khaled Mashud, Habibul Bashar Elton Chigumbura (3 each)
- Highest score:** Charles Coventry (194*)
- Best bowling figures:** Bryan Strang (6-20)

HEAD-TO-HEAD (For Tigers)

M	W	L	T/N	R
Overall	47	25	22	0
At home	24	14	10	0
Last five matches				
Bangladesh: L.W.W.W.W				
Zimbabwe: W.L.L.L.L				

ICC CRICKET WORLD CUP HISTORY

A thrilling start

From the viewers' perspective, the 1987 World Cup can lay claim to being the most thrilling. A large number of matches, including the final, were close with the result not clear till the last over. For sheer drama and late twists, the match of the tournament probably was the one between hosts India and eventual champions Australia at the Chepauk in Madras on October 9. The ground was the site of only the second tied Test in history, also between India and Australia, played a little over a year before their World Cup match, so it is perhaps no surprise that they locked horns for another classic. It was the first match of the Cup for both the participants. Australia captain Allan Border elected to bat after winning the toss and the openers Geoff Marsh and David Boon gave them a good start with a 110-run stand. Boon was first out, trapped in front by Ravi Shastri's left arm spin. Marsh played the anchor role, while at the other end Dean Jones at first-drop punished the bowlers with a 35-ball 39 before falling to Maninder Singh, with the score reading 174 for two. Marsh then combined with Border till the latter was dismissed at 228, and Marsh himself went nine runs later for a well-compiled 110 (seven 4s, one six). Steve Waugh then took over with an unbeaten 19 from 17 balls, to take the score to 268 for 6. With the way the match ended the most important event was probably unfolding in the dressing room between innings. When Jones was at the crease, he charged a Maninder Singh delivery and hit it over the bowler's head to long-off where the

Battle of spinners

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Rival coaches predicted spin bowling to be the deciding factor in the five-match one-day series between Bangladesh and Zimbabwe. Today's series opener, on the slow surface of the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium, will be as much a battle between Shakib Al Hasan and Ray Price as it will be for the batsmen of both sides to tackle the spinners. Bangladesh's head coach Jamie Siddons and his Zimbabwean counterpart Alan Butcher were of the same opinion about spin bowlers being their strengths, with the Australian coining the term "battle of the spinners". "We have to stick to our strength which is spin bowling. They got good spinners as well. I think it will be a battle of the spinners," Siddons told the media yesterday. "We got more left-arm spinners and they have a few right-handed batsmen so that will work for us," he added. Butcher, who took over the coaching duties for Zimbabwe in February this year, said that his team would rely heavily on the likes of Graeme Cremer, Prosper Utseya and Price. "Spin is our main strength. We also have some talented batsmen like [Brendan] Taylor and [Tatenda] Taibu. Plus we are a good fielding side as well," said Butcher, adding that the

Tigers would be firm favourites. While Shakib has taken 36 wickets from the 25 matches he played against Zimbabwe, Abdur Razzak has clearly troubled the tourists in the past. In 21 games, the left-arm spinner has taken 40 wickets, with his career-best 5 for 29 also coming against the southern Africans. Sohrawardi Shuvo, who made his debut earlier this year, is another left-arm proposition with Mahmudullah Riyad also providing some balance with his off-breaks. Add to that, the Zimbabweans succumbed to the second-string spinners of the country in their only practice match on Monday, when the BCB XI beat them by 29 runs at BKSP. Although left-arm spin played little part in the game, the tourists found it tough to handle the slow bowlers. "It wasn't so much the spin as it was the confidence. I think we lacked belief and confidence [in the practice match] and couple of the senior players got in and then got out. I hope they get the big scores tomorrow [Wednesday]," said Butcher. It would still not be wise to count Zimbabwe out as they surprised Bangladesh a year back by winning the first match. Siddons pointed out that the Tigers will have to play "great cricket" to beat them. "Zimbabwe are here full of bubble, full of confidence and they are ready to win the series. We have to knock them backwards in the first game, keep a foot on them and push



Zimbabwe coach Heath Streak (R) imparts some words of wisdom to his young all-rounder Keegan Meth during practice at Mirpur yesterday. Streak, who played during better times for Zimbabwe cricket, will be hoping his presence as coach inspires his charges to creditable performances in their one-day series against Bangladesh.

Bangladesh League starts end of Dec

SPORTS REPORTER
The fourth edition of the Bangladesh League will start in the last week of December at the Birshreshtha Shaheed Mostafa Kamal Stadium while the second edition of the Super Cup will be held in April next year at the Bangabandhu National Stadium after the conclusion of the ICC Cricket World Cup. The decision was taken at a Bangladesh League committee meeting at the BFF House yesterday. "The meeting has decided to start the professional football league from December 27 and finish its first-leg in the first week of March and keep the second-leg on suspension following Bangladesh's international commitment in the AFC Challenge Cup as well as the mid-term transfer window of the Bangladesh League," said Bangladesh Football Federation general secretary

BHF an 'old town mafia'

SPORTS REPORTER
Gerhard Peter Rach, Bangladesh's temperamental hockey coach, blasted the hockey federation branding it 'old town mafia' for its mismanagement in his Asian Games report to the Bangladesh Olympic Association. In the report, the German claimed that he was not responsible for the debacle in the Guangzhou Asiad saying that he was not a part of the selection panel. Bangladesh finished eighth after winning only one of their matches while losing the other six. Rach signed a four-month



Ad-hoc spending on BNS

ANISUR RAHMAN and QUAZI ZULQUARNAIN ISLAM
The recent government approval of an additional Tk 4 crore to facilitate renovation work at the Bangabandhu National Stadium means that the total cost of reconstruction has moved up to a staggering Tk 35 crore to just host the opening ceremony of the 2011 World Cup. Cricket's showpiece event will be held for the first time in Bangladesh, jointly with Sri Lanka and India, and it seems that no expense is being spared to spruce up the country's most recognised venue for the visit of luminaries on February 17, 2011. The Big Bowl has always held a special place in the heart of cricket lovers across and beyond the country, but this coveted status has often meant that a lot of money has been spent on the stadium without significant planning or any thought of returns. The stadium, built during the Pakistani regime in the 1950s, has in the last twelve years alone consumed upwards of Tk 70 crore for renovation, modernisation or strengthening work. The same amount could have easily built 35 grounds or ten stadiums across the country. True, the venue is a national obsession and has played host to anything and everything whenever a big occasion came up. But it has never turned into a centre for sporting excellence or a venue people can refer to as "state of the art" because it

has always proved the go-to place in case of any event. To assist this, reconstruction and renovations to the stadium were made on an as-and-when-required basis with no specific long-term planning. The latest change has seen the BNS get an almost complete overhaul with the venue being converted into an all-seater for the first time. Along with that, a revamped VIP stand is being built as well as a two-storied refreshment stand, three new entrances, a special parking area and an additional giant screen along with the existing one, which was put up during the South Asian Games earlier this year. While most of the changes are generally positive, the question remains of the feasibility of shelling out so much money on renovating the venue for an event that will last just a few hours. BNS is a multi-purpose national stadium although it has mostly been used for football. Hence, the biggest question mark is about the move to an all-seater stadium as per International Cricket Council (ICC) directive, which will see the BNS be reduced to a 28,000 capacity stadium from its previous 40,000. All-seaters are a rarity in this part of the world, but the move begets even more question marks when one takes into account Sports Minister Ahad Ali Sarker's recently stated wish of converting the BNS into a 50,000 capacity stadium in the near future. What, then, will be done with the

newly installed chairs? There are also questions about the new giant screen, which has been reportedly installed at a cost of Tk 5 crore, despite a similar screen that was installed for a cost of Tk 2 crore last January. The older screen has been used sparingly since and the fear is that the same fate will befall the new one in a venue where events of international magnitude are few and far between. But such lavish and short-sighted spending on the BNS is not a new phenomenon. During the ICC Mini World Cup in 1998, over six crore were spent on renovating the BNS. In the 2003-04 and 2004-05 fiscal years, upto Tk 24 crore was spent on strengthening projects. And an additional six crore were used to renovate the venue ahead of the SA Games. This is in addition to the budgeted yearly expenditure for the venue's maintenance. There are also whispers in the National Sports Council (NSC) that the renovation works in 2003-04, 2004-05 periods were not done properly as the pillars that hold up the stadium were only recast instead of reconstructed. The biggest fear, however is that the initiatives taken by sports ministers of both the BNP and AL-led governments showed that they are only interested to constantly renovate this multi-purpose venue rather than create additional venues in and around the city. The AL-led government in their last

SPORTS POLL
WEEKLY QUESTION
Do you think the selectors were too harsh on Shahriar Nafees?
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