

Riera falls victim to burglars

Olympiakos's Spanish winger Albert Riera has fallen victim to burglars who stole cash, jewellery and two cars, Greek press reports said Wednesday. According to the reports, confirmed by a club official, the burglary occurred in the early hours of Wednesday morning while former Liverpool player Riera, his wife and his brother Sito -- who plays for Greek club Panionios -- were sleeping. The thieves took 2,000 euros in cash, 800 pounds sterling, four cell phones, a laptop computer, a number of pieces of jewellery and two expensive cars from the garage.



Ashraf, Riyadh gone?

Second Tigers-Zim ODI today

SPORTS REPORTER

Mohammad Ashraf and Mahmudullah Riyadh are likely to be dropped for the Tigers' second one-dayer against Zimbabwe at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium today.

The exclusion of Ashraf means the 'automatic choice' over the past decade has become surplus to requirements, especially after he flopped in the first game of the series that the Tigers lost by nine runs. Ashraf scored only six, but again his dismissal begged the question of his state of mind. The right-hander scored a couple of hundreds in domestic cricket recently, but it is clear that such runs would not guarantee a place in the national team.

Ashraf will be replaced by Rokibul Hasan, another right-hander who adds his good fielding to the side. Rokibul is also not among the runs in international arena, scoring only 51 runs in the New Zealand series, but the batsman who hails from Jamalpur would be hard-pressed to beef up the middle-order that has in reality not done well even in the 4-0 whitewash last month.

Jamie Siddons however is not in favour of changes, the head coach preferring to field the same side.

"I am reluctant to changes on the team. I think everyone should get a second chance," said Siddons while talking to reporters yesterday. "A lot of the players didn't play well so you can't change the whole team. I'm not sure there will be any changes," he added.

Like Ashraf, Riyadh was also benched ahead of the crucial second one-dayer, Naeem Islam being his replacement and chief selector Rafiqul Alam said that Riyadh's form off-late has not been satisfactory.

"Riyad has not been playing well for the last six months, so we decided to bring Naeem [Islam] in," said Rafiqul.

Riyad's last ODI fifty came in January this year although he usually bats as low as number seven and never above number five in the batting order. Naeem, on the other hand, recently played an important innings in the Asian Games final against Afghanistan when Bangladesh were in trouble of embarrassment.

Siddons, the 46-year-old Australian, was disappointed with the Tigers' performance in the first game.

"We had a bad game. We batted badly, we bowled bad and we didn't field well. Lots of areas to work on but one bad game doesn't make that much difference. Our record is now four out of five," he said.

Grant Flower, the visitors' batting coach, was also of the opinion that Bangladesh needed to improve if they were to level the series.

"I am not sure about their [Bangladesh's] game plan. They have to improve and so does Zimbabwe.

"They have to get better in various areas. So it will be a good game," said one half of the famous Flower brothers.

He arrived in town after the first one-dayer which Zimbabwe won but Flower believes they have a good bowling attack for these conditions.

"It won't be a high-scoring game, as the past suggests. The team that handles pressure will do well," said Flower, who recently made a comeback for the South Africa ODI series before retiring from the top level.

As for team news, Flower said Hamilton Masakadza could very well sit out the second match in the series. "I wasn't involved in the selection process but I think they wanted to give young Regis [Chakabva] a go and the lad did well. I am not sure if Hamilton will play tomorrow [Friday]," said Flower.



Mohammad Ashraf (L) is leading the pack during the national team's practice session at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium yesterday. Ironically he may be the one left behind for today's second one-dayer against Zimbabwe after his indifferent performance in the first match on Wednesday.

PHOTO: STAR

Zaheer, Praveen recalled

CRICINFO

Zaheer Khan, the India fast bowler, has been included in the squad for the remaining three ODIs against New Zealand after he missed the third Test and the first two ODIs with a groin strain.

Praveen Kumar, who missed the first two ODIs with a fever, also made a comeback.

The Indian selectors also gave Suresh Raina a break for the rest of the series following comments by Mahendra Singh Dhoni saying the batsman needed a rest. Sreesanth, too, didn't feature in the squad. Both of them will presumably leave for South Africa early to prepare for the Test series, which begins on December 16.

Rohit Sharma, the Mumbai batsman who was dropped after the tri-series in Sri Lanka in August, is part of the squad for the fourth and fifth ODIs. Rohit is currently representing Mumbai in a Ranji Trophy game against Gujarat in Valsad, which won't finish before the third ODI that will be played in Vadodara on

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Shakib sins, what did they?

BISHWAJIT ROY



Everybody was curious to know yesterday how the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) would react to Shakib Al Hasan's post-match outburst after Wednesday's nine-run defeat to Zimbabwe.

The way the young Bangladesh skipper spoke at the press briefing after the defeat was understandably a violation of the code of conduct, regardless of those being valid points or not. So the focus was on how the game's governing body acts in response to this on disciplinary grounds. For any professional organisation, it is a must to ensure discipline in all its activities and make sure that nobody is bigger than the game. It will set a bad precedent if rules are not followed.

Things turn more complicated when the authorities themselves display the same lack of responsibility as the captain. The issue of everyone talking left and right without being guided by the book was demonstrated by some of the high-ups, from BCB president AHM Mustafa Kamal to coach Jamie Siddons, did not make the situation any better.

It only proves that there is a lack of professionalism in the board activities because there must be someone designated to speak on this kind of issues rather than many confusing voices.

It was hard to understand yesterday what was the stand of BCB against Shakib's statement and sometimes raised the questions about who actually told the truth. There was definitely a lack of coordination.

The words of the organisation's chief hold weight but it can also become pointless at times.

"He [Shakib] was right, especially after the way four batsmen were run out. The captain can pick anybody, even from outside the 15-member squad, in the home series," was Kamal's stunning revelation to a few journalists in the Academy House.

He also added: "I don't know why he said like that. It could be out of frustration."

However the BCB boss did not say whether his own statement was also out of frustration.

BCB's cricket operations committee chairman Enayet Hossain Siraj had a long chat with coach Siddons and captain

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THINGS TO PONDER: Bangladesh coach Jamie Siddons (R) is in conversation with captain Shakib Al Hasan during a practice session yesterday. It is time for the captain to cool down and regain focus after his seething remarks following the 9-run loss to Zimbabwe on Wednesday.

PHOTO: STAR

BCB comes up to celebrate 10-years of Test status

SPORTS REPORTER

The Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) will hold a concert as well as a fireworks show at the Bangabandhu National Stadium (BNS) to celebrate Bangladesh's 10 years in Test cricket this month.

The game's governing body initially did not think of any programme to celebrate the decade of Test status although all former Test captains of Bangladesh had gathered to commemorate November 10.

The National Sports Council, on condition, has already allotted the BNS to the BCB for the December 13 programme.

However, a BCB official informed that the concert and fireworks might be shifted to December 17 because of the Victory Day programmes on the 16th at the said venue.

ICC CRICKET WORLD CUP HISTORY

Cup facts

The 1987 World Cup was the fourth cricket World Cup, and the first to be held in the Indian subcontinent.

Neighbours India and Pakistan were the co-hosts of the tournament, which was spread over 21 venues across the two countries.

The format was the same as in 1983: two groups of four with teams playing each other twice in the group stage. The top two from each group would progress to the semifinals.

Group A was made up by Australia, India, New Zealand and Zimbabwe, while West Indies, Pakistan, England and Sri Lanka made up Group B.

Zimbabwe were the only non-Test playing country in the tournament, having qualified through a separate tournament between the Associate nations.

West Indies' score of 360 for 4 against Sri Lanka at Karachi on October 13 was the highest team total in international one-day cricket at the time.

Viv Richards' score of 181 (125 balls, sixteen 4s, seven 6s) in the same match became the highest individual score in international one-day cricket, eclipsing Kapil Dev's 175 against Zimbabwe in the last edition of the World Cup. The Master Blaster's third-wicket partnership of 182 with opener Desmond Haynes in the match was the highest for any wicket in the 1987 World Cup.

Graham Gooch, the England opener, finished the Cup top of the run charts with 471 runs with one 100 and three 50s.

Australian fast bowler Craig McDermott walked away from

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China keen to host 2012 Asia Cup

CRICINFO

China is making a bid to host its first major international cricket event by showing interest in staging the 2012 Asia Cup in Guangzhou, the venue that hosted the first-ever Asian Games cricket tournament in November.

The Asian Cricket Council (ACC) chief executive, Syed Ashraf Huq, told ESPNcricinfo that one of the upshots of the Asian Games was that the Chinese Cricket Association had "expressed its interest" in hosting the 2012 Asia Cup. "If our ACC board agrees, China will have its first full-fledged, major international tournament," he said.

The ACC board will meet on December 12 in Dhaka to decide on the venue for the Asia Cup. The choice is among Guangzhou, Dhaka and either Dubai or Abu Dhabi. "If you ask me where it should go, I don't know, my board would

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No Price on learning

MOHAMMAD ISAM

A third tour of Bangladesh in the space of two years has begun well for Ray Price. The left-arm spinner picked up two wickets in another economical 10-over spell that was pivotal in Zimbabwe's nine-run win in the first one-dayer.



Zimbabwe spinner Ray Price (L) and Wednesday's man-of-the-match Chris Mpofu taking a breather during their practice session at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

"Our fielding was really good yesterday [Wednesday]. We got four run-outs and Christopher Mpofu bowled really well up front. It just set up the game for us and made it difficult for them to come back," said Price after practice at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium yesterday.

"We did alright in South Africa but

before that, we did very well against India so it is nice to carry that on," he added.

Wednesday's game was the 80th in Price's one-day career and in his eighth year of international cricket, the 34-year-old remains ever the enthusiast. Apart from the business of bowling a tight spell with his simple action, Price also uses the art of talking very well.

So when Mohammad Ashraf walked out to bat in the 21st over, Price went about exchanging niceties with the under-fire batsman. "I really enjoyed that, it was fantastic. Full points to Ashy for playing that as well because I was hoping he was going to miss it, but he didn't," a jovial Price said, referring to Ashraf's first-ball boundary.

"That's what cricket is all about, you have to enjoy it as well as you can. I was telling him 'good morning, how are you doing, haven't seen you for a while' but nothing nasty, it was just talk. I was just trying to get him to play a bad shot."

"Obviously we read it in the news that he is under pressure. We read that he's dying to make the World Cup squad but everyone else is too," he added.

Price has dismissed Ashraf three times in the past and in 18 one-dayers against Bangladesh, the left-arm spinner has picked up 26 wickets, 16 in this country.

"It's like a second home for us. I think Elton [Chigumbura] has played 36-37 games and I've already played almost 20 against Bangladesh. We are

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SAFF WOMEN'S FOOTBALL BD, India in same group

SPORTS REPORTER

Favourites India and hosts Bangladesh will start their SAFF Women's Football Championship campaign in the same group after the lots were drawn for the first of its kind regional tournament yesterday at the Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF).

Apart from the SA Games women's football gold medalists India, Bangladesh will also have to put up with the challenges of Sri Lanka and Bhutan in Group A while Group B consists of SA Games silver medalists Nepal, Pakistan, Afghanistan and the Maldives.

All eight members of the South Asian Football Federation have put forward their women's team to play the first-ever tournament under the SAFF banner at Cox's Bazar, although five nations -- India, Nepal, Bangladesh, Pakistan and Sri Lanka took part during the SA Games earlier this year.

The top two teams from each group will qualify for the semifinals, scheduled for December 20 and 21 while the final is slated for December 23.

"As no SAFF women's football championship was held earlier, so we have considered the teams' performance of the South Asian Games. Champions India and runners-up Nepal have been kept in two separate groups while third and fourth place

finishers Bangladesh and Pakistan have also been kept apart," said Sirajul Islam Bachchu, deputy chairman of the local organising committee of the championship.

In the draw, singer Akhi Alamgir picked Sri Lanka, national coach Robert Rubcic then chose Afghanistan, Akku Chowdhury, executive director of KFC, singled out Bhutan while Syed Faruque Ahmed, chairman of aamra networks, picked the last choice of Maldives, all through lotteries.

India are expected to face Bhutan in the opening match on December 12 though the final schedule has not yet been fixed, said Bachchu.

"The SAFF Women's Football Championship is going to be held for the first time because of the sincere efforts from new SAFF president Kazi Salahuddin, who is also the chief of BFF, and we have chosen Cox's Bazar to introduce the world's longest sea beach to the guests," said BFF vice-president Shawkat Ali Khan Jahangir.

Apart from the drawing ceremony, the local organising committee has also signed agreements with KFC and aamra networks as the official partners. KFC will provide 15,000 dollars while aamra networks will provide internet services during the championship.