

SPORT

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Balotelli, Boateng trade blows

Controversial Italian striker Mario Balotelli and Manchester City teammate Jerome Boateng were involved in a training ground bust-up, it was claimed on Friday. The Manchester Evening News released pictures of the confrontation between the duo, which allegedly came about after Balotelli reacted angrily to a tackle from Boateng. Balotelli, who joined Roberto Mancini's team from Inter Milan in the summer, was later seen making up with former Hamburg star Boateng after being separated by teammates. Mancini has had to regularly play down reports of disharmony in his expensively-assembled Eastlands



Mashrafe Bin Mortaza takes questions during a press conference at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday. INSET: The paceman is stretching during practice yesterday. The form of the fast bowlers, and Mashrafe's in particular is a cause for concern as the Narail Express strives to regain rhythm and fitness ahead of the third ODI against Zimbabwe on Monday. PHOTOS: STAR



Fingers crossed for Mashrafe

SPORTS REPORTER

In the past, whenever Mashrafe Bin Mortaza had made a return from injury he came back with more verve. But this is not the case for the country's leading paceman this time around. There has been hardly any indication that the right-arm paceman got back his rhythm although he bowled only nine overs in two matches without any success against the Zimbabweans as the spinners dictated terms so far. As there has been whisperings about him not playing the third game, Mashrafe faced the uncomfortable question yesterday if he was playing the next game. "I don't know," was his plain response. Mashrafe however admitted that pace bowlers failed to give good start in the first two games. Another new ball bowler Shafiqul Islam also got only nine overs in two games to take one wicket. "True it's not an ideal condition for pace bowlers, but still we could not bowl on the right areas. Actually our bowling is totally spin-oriented in the series as the Zimbabwean batsmen have weakness against the slower," explained Mashrafe. "You know I hardly got any chance to play in the

last seventeen months due to injuries one after another, so I need some time to get my rhythm back and I believe things will get better only if I keep playing matches. I'm very much confident about my comeback," he added. The pace-bowling weaknesses might go unnoticed against a team like Zimbabwe, but the think-tank must concentrate on this area because things will be totally different when the Tigers play spinners India, who are their opponents in the World Cup opener on February 19 next year. "I also believe that the scenario will be totally different when we play against the big teams because you can't depend only on the spinners against them," Mashrafe advised. In Mashrafe's case it seems that everybody including captain Shakib Al Hasan is in favour of giving him more time. "He was rusty and looked a bit down. He could not bowl according to his capability and I think he needs some more matches. He will come back," said coach Jamie Siddons. Bowling coach Ian Pont spoke highly of Mashrafe and said he firmly believed that the country's leading paceman would return to form sooner rather than later. "Spin bowling is very good. But seam bowling, fast

bowling; we're still working very hard. We only have four fast bowlers in the squad, and they've been bowling really well in practice. In the nets, everything looks good; but in matches, it's not so," said Pont. "Well, sometimes bowlers lose their rhythm, they lose their timing. Mashrafe is coming back from an injury. He's had two games back. The first game was not so good, but the second was better, and hopefully he will improve as he goes along. But it's always difficult, because as a fast bowler you lose your rhythm and timing, sometimes you lose a bit of confidence, and you can have two thousand nets, but that does not always mean that you will do well in the middle," added the Englishman. "I think Mash will be disappointed with himself. I think he's admitted that he is a bit disappointed. But he will come back strong, he's been a great bowler for Bangladesh, and he has a lot of talent, he's very clever, and he's one of our better fast bowlers," Pont continued. The bowling coach also had high praises for the Bangladeshi spinners and was confident that they would continue their surge against the Zimbabwe batsmen under lights. Monday's third one-day match at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium will be a day-night match.



(Mahbub Alam: 1975-2010)

A sprint cut short

SPORTS REPORTER

In his prime, he was the man who could run faster than anyone in the country. Off the track, Mahbub Alam remained humble despite all his achievements and was equally loved by his fellow athletes and coaches. The country lost this glorious man in a road accident yesterday. A gold medalist sprinter in the South Asian Games and two-time national champion, Mahbub met his tragic demise at the age of 35 when a microbus carrying him and a friend crushed onto a stationary truck on the Dhaka-Chittagong highway near Kanchpur. He died on the spot while the driver, who lost control of the microbus, injured himself early yesterday morning on the highway. This accident, as tragic as it can be, is sadly not the first time a sportsman has died on the road. Twice fastest man of South Asia Shah Alam lost his life in a motorbike accident on the Kushtia highway in 1989 while national cricketer Manjarul Islam Rana was killed in a motorbike accident on the Jessore highway in 2007. The late Mahbub, a member of the executive committee of Bangladesh Athletics Federation (BAF), had accompanied his former coach and long-time friend Mohammad Yahya to the latter's Comilla residence on the previous night. SEE PAGE 18 COL 2



Mother of Mahbub Alam, the country's fastest runner and SAF Games gold medalist, breaks down with grief upon reaching the Bangabandhu National Stadium to see her son's body. Alam was tragically killed in a road accident early yesterday morning. PHOTO: STAR

Lord's for memory, guts in Manchester

Before Tamim Iqbal, a procession of wickets was guaranteed. But for the last two years, Bangladesh have been given a good start with the bat. This year, in particular, the left-hander has scored 837 runs nearly at an average of 60 in Tests and some more in ODIs. More than the runs, Tamim has added a much-needed stability. The Daily Star Sport's Mohammad Isam met him yesterday at the team hotel.

Daily Star Sport (DSS): How has the progress been in the series so far? Tamim Iqbal (TI): I'm quite happy. I wanted to get back to the rhythm I had before my injury so in the first match, I tried to stay at the crease as long as possible without focusing on the runs. I was batting comfortably but I got a bad decision; these things happen. The last game could have been a bigger innings but it wasn't to be. I was stroking the ball quite well until I got out. DSS: How much have you recovered from the wrist injury? TI: By God's grace, there is no problem now. I played for a year with the injury so when I batted for a while, my hand would go weak. But now I'm fine. DSS: In terms of Test cricket, 2010 has been a great year for you... TI: It has been great, to be honest. There were some innings like 85 and 86 against England at home and if I hadn't been run out on 103 at Lord's and turned those into bigger scores, it would have been a much special year. But yes, in terms of Test cricket, it has been my best year so far. DSS: What was your favourite innings this year? TI: In terms of memory, it was Lord's. I heard about the place and its history from my father and the moment I went inside the dressing-room I looked at the honours board and the balcony. Pete (the Lord's dressing-room attendant) told me that I would get a hundred after I made 53 in the first innings. When I reached 97, I was as nervous as I was in my debut game. But I had planned the celebration when I was in the 80s (laughs). That hundred



made me very happy. But if you consider from a batting point of view, it has to be the one at Old Trafford as it is the fastest and most difficult wicket in England. Funnily, Kevin Pietersen commented during my 86 in Chittagong that, "Cricket is so easy for you, right? You go to Old Trafford, then you will see." And I went on to get a hundred there, so it was really fantastic. DSS: Did he tell you anything during the Manchester Test? TI: I looked at him and I saw him clapping (after reaching the century). DSS: Was anything said during your 151 against India? TI: Nothing in particular, but I really didn't like Virender Sehwag's comments (calling Bangladesh 'ordinary'). A player like him should always encourage us, he's a role model. The hundred against India was also great because Junaed and I played well and we managed to take a slim lead. DSS: Unlike Tests, you have not done that well in one-day cricket. TI: Look at it this way: I have played almost the identical number of ODI and Test innings this year so you add five not-outs and my one-day average will go up to 33-35. I get few chances to stay not out but the times that I did get them, I wasn't capable to do so. I always get a start, but you must remember that I was terrible in my first 20-25, playing just one or two good knocks. I think if I do very well in one series, I can get the average up to 33-34. SEE PAGE 18 COL 1

No practice under lights

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh will play Monday's scheduled third day-night one-dayer against Zimbabwe at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium without any practice under lights. It was learnt that the Tigers had a tentative schedule of practising under lights yesterday, but it did not take place due to some technical reasons owing to the newly installed floodlight system. Bangladesh team's operations manager Tanjib Ahsan Saad confirmed that there would also be no practice under lights for the Tigers today but Zimbabwe are likely to practise under lights if the technical problem is solved. The Bangladesh Cricket Board was however yet to confirm whether there was any possibility of ruling out a day-nighter altogether.

Premier Div from Dec 14

SPORTS REPORTER

The Cricket Committee of Dhaka Metropolitan (CCDM) yesterday confirmed that the Premier Division League would start on December 14. National players will be available for the most coveted limited-overs domestic competition as the last one-dayer against the visiting Zimbabwe will be held on December 12 in Chittagong. The CCDM has already decided not to hold the Premier T20 cricket. SEE PAGE 18 COL 1

ICC CRICKET WORLD CUP HISTORY

Sachin, Lara and others

The 1992 World Cup was the first appearance on the global stage of players who are well-known to today's generation, and some who have since been idolised and elevated to the status of all-time greats and geniuses. Two of the greatest names in batsmanship, Brian Charles Lara of West Indies and Sachin Ramesh Tendulkar of India, played their first World Cup in this time. Both showed enough for audiences to sit up and take notice of two phenomenal talents. Lara opened the innings in those days, scoring 333 runs in the tournament to finish fifth on the run-charts, the highlight being a seminal 88 retired hurt against Pakistan in a league game at the MCG against Wasim Akram, Imran Khan, Aaqib Javed and Mushtaq Ahmed. As they closed in on the target Wasim crushed Lara's toes with a fierce inswinging yorker, leaving him to hobble off the field -- head held high. Tendulkar finished with 283 runs with three fifties including a brilliant 62-ball 54 against arch-rivals Pakistan in Sydney. Pakistan's best batsman since Javed Miandad, the burly Inzamam-ul-Haq was an unknown commodity when the Cup started, but he soon let the world know of his ability and big-match temperament with a blazing, match-turning 37-ball 60 against New Zealand in the semifinals. Pakistan also saw the emergence of an excellent young leg-spinner in Mushtaq Ahmed, who served them well in the final by claiming three wickets and speeding England's demise. Of course, the world was witness to a new team entering the fray as South Africa, back into international cricket after twenty years of exile due to apartheid, gave the world some stars to celebrate. Allan 'White Lightning' Donald was the typical ferocious fast bowler, and then at the peak of his pace as he struck fear in batsmen's hearts with his thunderbolts. Finishing with 13 wickets, he sat fourth in the tournament's wickets column. He was matched for brilliance by teammate Jonty Rhodes, who revolutionised modern fielding and proved that a player could make invaluable and, in his case, indispensable contributions to the team cause as a fielder. His airborne demolition of the stumps to send Inzamam packing in their match at Brisbane, is a part of World Cup lore and considered by many to be the best display of athleticism on a cricket field. SEE PAGE 18 COL 2

SPORTS POLL
WEEKLY QUESTION
Do you think the selectors were too harsh on Shafiqul Islam?
Visit the sports page of www.thedailystar.net to cast vote
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What to WATCH

STAR Cricket
Australia v England
Second Test, Day 3
Live from 6:00am

TEN Cricket
Sri Lanka v West Indies
Third Test, Day 5
Live from 10:30am

ESPN
English Premiership
West Brom v Newcastle
Live from 7:25pm

TEN Action
Primera Liga
Villarreal v Sevilla
Live from 11:55pm

TEN Sports
Serie A
Catania v Juventus
Live from 1:40am (Monday)