



PHOTO: STAR

Footballers are out to impress the selectors at the Birshreshtha Mostafa Kamal Stadium during a selection trial for Bangladesh's pre-Olympics Qualifying team yesterday.

**Rubcic picking his own team**

SPORTS REPORTER

Football's Croatian coach Robert Rubcic has come close to picking his 'own' squad for the Olympic pre-qualifiers against Kuwait as a one-day trial of 56 players was held at the Birshreshtha Mostafa Kamal Stadium at Kamalapur yesterday.

"I am happy and satisfied with the performance the players put up in the trial matches because there are many talented players and we have to nurture them to bring the best out of them," said Rubcic after the session, adding that he would announce a 25-member preliminary squad in a couple of days after studying the performances of these players.

Among the 56, only six players have experience of playing for the national team at different times and it is a common phenomenon for a new coach to choose his own young team.

After picking the preliminary squad, Rubcic will conduct a six-day camp at the BKSP from December 19 and play two practice matches against Muktiyoddha Sangsad, on December 19, and Mohammedan, on December 23.

Before taking on Kuwait in the away match on February 19, Rubcic wants his side to play eight practice matches. Bangladesh will host Kuwait on March 5.

**A bittersweet**

FROM PAGE 17  
above all the fundamentals of organising a global sporting competition. As the glamorising of the Indian and Pakistani cricketers reached new and absurd heights, so too did the unshakable belief of the masses in their invincibility.

This frenzy whipped up by the media also manifested itself when India beat Pakistan in the quarterfinal. Wasim Akram's home was stoned and a Pakistani fan committed suicide.

It was a bittersweet Cup, with some glaring instances of mismanagement and corporate greed mixed in with some brilliant cricketing moments, particularly from its champions. It all ended on a sweet note as a thoroughly deserving underdog lifted the trophy.

**He may return only if**



SHANE WARNE

INTERNET, Melbourne

More than the million dollars, it is Australia's captaincy which can pull spin legend Shane Warne out of retirement to rescue the team's floundering Ashes campaign, claims cricket-turned-commentator Dean Jones.

The 41-year-old Warne has been offered a million dollars to come out of retirement by a group of businessmen here which has created a media frenzy around his possible return after Australia lost the second Ashes Test to be 0-1 down in the five-match series.

The flamboyant leg-spinner has chosen to

remain mum on the issue but Jones said Warne would definitely consider a comeback if he is handed the captaincy for the next two years.

"Warnie, without doubt, no joke, could actually come back," Jones told '3AW' -- a radio station here.

"He's the Rolls-Royce. He can do anything he really wants in that regard. He just has to get himself fit. But I'll say this, categorically, because I want everyone to understand it, if Cricket Australia walked up to Shane Warne and said 'Would you come out of retirement and we'll give you the captaincy for two years?', I know for a fact he would take it. He would play," he added.

Jones said all the talk about Warne being unprepared for the grind after three years of retirement means nothing as the legendary spinner remains a magician with the ball.

"With bells on, he'd be running out of his house right now putting on his cricket shoes and putting on the runners to get himself fit," Jones said of the bowler who grabbed 708 Test wickets during his 15-year career.

"He makes out that it's really, really difficult to bowl leg-spin and do all that type of stuff.

"But really, he just walks in off three feet and bowls the ball. So it's not too hard. Let me tell you, he's the Rolls-Royce. He can do anything he really wants in that regard. He just has to get himself fit," he added.

**WOMEN'S HANDBALL  
Ansars begin with big wins**

SPORTS REPORTER

The Exim Bank 21st National Women's Handball Championship got underway yesterday at two different venues with champions Bangladesh Ansar beginning their campaign with two successive victories.

Ansar first beat Kurigram 32-5 and then defeated Noagoan 26-2 at the Handball Stadium adjacent to the Bangladesh National Stadium where BJMC also recorded two wins, handing 28-2 defeat to Magura and 33-0 defeat to Lalmonirhat.

At the same venue, Dhaka overwhelmed Sirajganj 25-1 while Dhaka University registered a 19-2 win over Satkhira, who also suffered a 15-13 defeat to Rangamati in their second match.

At Mirpur Suhrawardi Indoor Stadium, Jessore blanked Jhalakathi 16-0, Dinajpur beat Chuadanga 18-8, Rajshahi beat Narail 12-0, Kishoreganj defeated Narsingdi 10-5.

However, Narsingdi beat Panchagargh 12-1 in their second match while Joypurhat edged Narail 8-7.

**Call for BHF**

FROM PAGE 17  
held at the ground of Maulana Bhasani National Hockey Stadium where some 30 former players, organisers, councillors and current joint secretary Abdur Rashid Shikdar and league committee chairman Anvir Adil were present.

"We thought that the executive committee would resign following the national team's failure in the Asian Games where Bangladesh finished eighth, but they did not do that. So we urge the sports minister to dissolve the committee to form an ad-hoc committee comprising those who are devoted, experienced and honest," said Sajeed AA Adel, hockey secretary of Mohammedan Sporting Club and former general secretary of the BHF.

**A year**

FROM PAGE 17  
Zimbabwe great Heath Streak said he was impressed by what he has seen so far. "I think it is great for Bangladesh cricket. For a short guy, he generates good pace and I think if he can keep himself fit, he can do well," said Streak, now here with the Zimbabwe team as the bowling coach.

"He will be vital for Bangladesh in foreign conditions," added the former captain.

Shafiu has dismissed Brendon McCullum three times already, in addition to Kumar Sangakkara and Eoin Morgan who got out twice to Shafiu, although the England batsman carved the paceman at a crucial stage last March.

In the other two departments of the game though, there is mixed reviews. While he's a livewire in the field, Shafiu hasn't done anything significant (other than a six as his first scoring shot in Test cricket) with the bat. "I'm not getting enough chances with the bat. We are not told anything special for Powerplay, but to rotate the strike when a proper batsman is at the other end," he said.

But his fielding has been eye-catching, particularly two catches this year. "I like to take tough catches when I'm fielding. I always dreamt of taking a catch like that (in the NCL final earlier this year) and then the Vettori catch in the last series (in the fifth ODI). I always want to do something in the field to change the match," said Shafiu.

**Prism of shame**

FROM PAGE 17  
when the prisms fell. It was quite natural for the inspection team members, some of whom were seen taking pictures of the ground from the second floor VIP box, to take a curious look at the clamour.

While it didn't injure any of the groundsman, it was another wound to the reputation of the ground that is already being slated for the slow construction work of the stands and poor drainage system of the field. If ever there had to be a symbol of incompetence, especially for Chittagong's World Cup venue, that is definitely it, and that too at the wrong time.

**Aussies' Beer gamble**

Cricket

AFP, Sydney

Australia dropped three players on Friday and gambled on left-arm spinner Michael Beer after just five first-class games for next week's crucial third Ashes Test against England in Perth.

Marcus North, Xavier Doherty and Doug Bollinger paid the price for Australia's crushing innings and 71-run defeat to England in this week's second Adelaide Test, while opener Simon Katich was forced out with injury.

Beer, 26, who is playing his first Sheffield Shield season with Western Australia, gets a surprise call-up in Australia's hour of need ahead of former first choice Nathan Hauritz.

Selectors admitted they were taking a huge gamble on unheralded spinner Beer, who was last season playing club cricket, for the make-or-break Test against England.

Beer -- along with Phillip Hughes and all-rounder Steve Smith -- were summoned for the Perth Test starting on Thursday.

But there was no place for spin legend Shane Warne, with some fans and media calling for the 41-year-old to make a sensational -- albeit unlikely -- return.

"The reality is, he's got no international experience and it's a big call from us to throw him into this position," Australian chairman of selectors Andrew Hilditch said of Beer's call-up.

"But everything we get back is [the] someone who is going to handle that pressure, which is critical."

Hilditch denied Beer's selection, the biggest stunner since Peter Taylor was given a baggy green cap against England in 1986/87, was desperate.

"We think a left-arm orthodox spinner is the right thing both for the Ashes but also for our future," said Hilditch, adding Beer would play in the third Test.



MICHAEL BEER

"Michael Beer has, I suppose, come from nowhere.

"But he has had a good start to the domestic season, someone we were very interested in even before the season started with some really good feedback

from our talent management system and people in WA."

Beer played against England in their tour opener last month, taking 3-108 and 2-99.

His first-class average is a modest 16 wickets at an average of 39.93, with all his games coming since crossing to Western Australia from Melbourne.

Smith replaces the out-of-form North at number six in the batting order, while Mitchell Johnson and Ben Hilfenhaus, discarded for the second Test, come back into Test reckoning ahead of Bollinger.

Bollinger struggled after taking the early wicket of Andrew Strauss in the England first innings to finish the Adelaide Test with figures of 1-130.

Hughes will replace Katich, who will miss the rest of the Ashes series with a torn Achilles tendon.

Hilditch said Smith will replace North after scores of 1, 26 and 22 in the first two Tests.

"This is obviously disappointing for Marcus, who has played some outstanding Test innings for Australia but it was felt to be the right time to bring the exciting prospect Steve Smith into the Test team," he said.

"Steve has already had success at international level and will also add to the bowling depth with his leg spin bowling and dynamic fielding."

**SQUAD**

Ricky Ponting (captain), Michael Clarke (vice-captain), Michael Beer, Brad Haddin, Ryan Harris, Phillip Hughes, Ben Hilfenhaus, Mike Hussey, Mitchell Johnson, Peter Siddle, Steven Smith, Shane Watson.

**PCB, BCCI at loggerheads**

PTI, Karachi

The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) and the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) are at loggerheads over the ICC's new Future Tours Programme as the PCB claims that the Indian board is reluctant to give definite time frames for upcoming series.

Sources in the PCB aware of the discussions at the ICC chief executives meeting held recently in Dubai to discuss the 2012-2020 FTP confirmed that India had agreed to play against Pakistan in this period but has not given specific dates.

"The PCB's biggest issue is that India has said it would play twice against Pakistan at neutral venues but has given no dates. Secondly they are not willing to give enough time to Pakistan to play a full series," one source said.

**'Ponting should go'**

Cricket

INTERNET, Melbourne

Australian cricket is in a "mess", says former England captain Mike Gatting, who feels an out-of-form Ricky Ponting should step down as captain to ensure that his batting does not suffer.

"If you took the captaincy off him, or he walks, Ricky might be a better player without having to worry about the trials and tribulations of a captain," Gatting was quoted as saying by The Daily Telegraph.

Gatting was the last English captain to clinch the Ashes in Australia when he led the team in the 1986-87 series.

The flamboyant former batsman said Ponting needs to rediscover himself and giving up captaincy would give him that space.

"All of a sudden, that might re-invent Ricky Ponting for three or four years which would be great for Australian cricket.

"Australia needs to decide what to do with him. It's not Ricky's fault, it's the players' fault collectively. The issue will be whether Ricky can just go back to being a player and a batsman in his own right," he said.

Ponting has scored just one hundred from his past 33 Test innings and has just 70 runs at 23.33 in two Tests this summer. Under him, the Aussies are trailing 0-1 in the ongoing Ashes series after losing the second Test in Adelaide.

Gatting, however, conceded that Australia does not have too many candidates to replace Ponting.

"It says a bit about why Australia are in a mess at the moment. There's no standout candidate to replace him as captain, other than Clarke," Gatting said.

"Does Australia have a better option than Ricky? Maybe not, but they might decide they need a fresh outlook to get the team and Ricky going again."

**Women's**

FROM PAGE 17  
one-and-a-half hours opening ceremony will take place at the new-look stadium which was given a facelift for this multi-country event.

Swedish women's footballer Johanna Frisk is also here to inspire the subcontinent's female footballers, who are all set to compete to establish their supremacy for the first time though their male counterparts have been competing in the subcontinental battle since 1993.

SAFF and BFF president Kazi Salahuddin, SAFF vice-president and FIFA development officer Maniail Fernando and general secretary Alberto Colaco will also be present.

Both Nepal and Maldives had their final practices yesterday ahead of the opening game and were upbeat to start their campaign on a winning note.

Bangladesh start their campaign taking on Sri Lanka in one of tomorrow's two matches as favourites India face Bhutan in the first game.

**Afridi has one last ambition**

Cricket

INTERNET

Pakistan's one-day international captain Shahid Afridi on Friday said that he is left with only one ambition in his cricketing career and that is to end his playing days by winning the World Cup for his country.

Afridi told the media in Lahore that he had a burning ambition to see Pakistan win the World Cup.

"Part of that ambition was fulfilled last year when we won the ICC World Twenty20 in England but as captain I would love to end my career having led the side to the World Cup title next year in the sub-continent," he said.

Afridi pointed out that 2010 had been a

very demanding year for Pakistan cricket and he wanted to see the team start off on a winning note in 2011.

"In the new year we will try to give Pakistan cricket the place it deserves," said Afridi.

The skipper also clarified that he had never said that the national team was not on the right track as far as preparations for the World Cup is concerned.

"I think I was misunderstood in what I wanted to say. I was talking about settling on a 100 per cent combination but I believe that we have already accomplished 90 per cent of the task in finalising our squad for the World Cup," Afridi said.

The flamboyant all-rounder said that the upcoming tour to New Zealand would help the team prepare for the World Cup.

"I am sure that this tour will enhance

the confidence of our players and that would reflect in the World Cup. Playing in difficult batting conditions in New Zealand and then on the sub-continental pitches in the World Cup will be something our players will relish."

He pointed out that both Pakistan and New Zealand are searching for victories and to hit the right form before the World Cup. And that is why the forthcoming series would be intensive and interesting.

"If we can take advantage of the pressure the Kiwis are feeling right now after being beaten by Bangladesh and India, then I am sure our players will go into the World Cup as a confident lot."

On the presence of former captain Javed Miandad in the training camp as batting consultant, Afridi said it was definitely a positive move.

**CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer**

- ACROSS**
- 1 Use a teaspoon
  - 5 That woman
  - 8 Wound cover
  - 12 One of LBJ's daughters
  - 13 Candle material
  - 14 Jason's ship
  - 15 Cute story
  - 17 Bound
  - 18 Package
  - 19 Helicopter blades
  - 21 Under the weather
  - 22 Anything but
  - 23 Scenery chaser
  - 26 Journey segment
  - 28 Sleep soundly?
  - 31 Final notice
  - 33 -- de plume
  - 35 List-ending abbr.
  - 36 Mexican money
- DOWN**
- 1 Hit open-handedly
  - 2 Albacore, e.g.
  - 3 Bakery employee
  - 4 Actress Christina
  - 5 Distended
  - 6 Chapeau
  - 7 Put forth, as
  - 8 Cracker type
  - 9 Wood preservative
  - 10 Culture medium
  - 11 Conks on the noggin
  - 16 Computer brand
  - 20 Surprise cries
  - 23 Go like a bunny
  - 24 Copper head?
  - 25 Inter-vie-ewe's worry
  - 27 Moo -- gai pan
  - 29 Scooted
  - 30 Days of yore, once
  - 32 U.S. Open, e.g.
  - 34 Unwillingness to boast
  - 37 One of the kin
  - 39 Lofty
  - 42 Eitice
  - 44 Video-game hedgehog
  - 45 'Li'l Abner' creator
  - 46 Finished
  - 48 Tittle
  - 49 Staircase part
  - 50 "Note to self" note
  - 53 Atmosphere
- Solution time: 21 mins.**
- LAMP DEB COWS  
OLIO OVA OBIE  
CORDELIA ROSA  
HUE ALL ADEPT  
CRY THO  
FUTON QUININE  
AFAR GET IRIS  
TODDLED KNELT  
ISM BUG  
BROAD SIR AFT  
EARL CORDUROY  
ETAL ARC REAP  
RELY NTH NAME

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
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57						58			59	

**CRYPTOQUIP**

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DTVH UBNTGX UGVDJBH,  
KNTDX CNT HUC OUBBEJ  
LEHZJB OUBBEJH LEHZJBH?  
Yesterday's Cryptoquip: SINCE SHE WANTED NOBODY TO WALK BY HER HAIR, THE WACKY GIRL PUT UP A SIGN: "NO TRESS PASSING."  
Today's Cryptoquip Clue: C equals Y

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