

SPORT

DHAKA SUNDAY DECEMBER 26, 2010, E-MAIL: sports@thedailystar.net

Cork to shake legs on ice

He was never known for twinkling elegance on the field, but Dominic Cork is following in the footsteps of other former England cricketers Darren Gough, Mark Ramprakash and Phil Tufnell in signing up for a dancing-themed reality TV show. Cork, 39, who still plays for Hampshire, has been confirmed as a participant in the new season of *Dancing on Ice* on ITV1. The only sportsman in a diverse line-up, Cork will be joined by 90s pop-rap sensation Vanilla Ice among others. The series starts on January 9.



FIT AND FIRING: England's pace spearhead James Anderson coils up to bowl during a nets session at the Melbourne Cricket Stadium yesterday. The Ashes battle continues with the Boxing Day Test match with the series level on 1-1. PHOTO: AFP

Mash could be back in four weeks' time



SPORTS REPORTER

The good news for Bangladesh and the country's cricket lovers is that pace bowler Mashrafe Bin Mortaza may return to the sport as early as three weeks. But while he is expected to start batting in the nets by this time, it may take another week for him to go back to his bowling mark.

Dr. David Young, orthopaedic surgeon of Melbourne Orthopaedic Group, and the local medical team expressed this optimism after a review of the injured right knee of the country's premier paceman was done yesterday at the Apollo Hospitals Dhaka.

After the review Dr. M Ali, a consultant orthopaedic surgeon and knee specialist at Apollo Hospitals, and Bangladesh Cricket Board's (BCB) sports physician Dr. Manirul Amin decided on the line of treatment for Mashrafe as per the guidance of Dr. Young.

"The medical team will press on with conservative treatment with further review on December 30. Based on the response from the treatment the cricketer may start strengthening and proprioceptive work from December 31 which would include bike, squats, skipping, stepping, walking, etc. The gym based weight exercises could begin from January 5," said a statement from the BCB.

It was learnt that there has been an effort to make the pace spearhead of the country match

fit before the 2011 World Cup and the treatment is being given out on this line. The bowler himself also expressed his optimism about playing in the showcase event that begins with the Bangladesh-India match at Mirpur on February 19 next year.



Mashrafe sustained injury on his right knee during a Premier Division Cricket League match last Tuesday at BKSP. On the other hand, BCB stated that Junaid Siddiqui has a strain on his left Achilles tendon but is expected to return to match fitness shortly.

Match of Ricky's career

Crucial MCG Test starts today



AFP, Melbourne

Australia captain Ricky Ponting declared himself fit for the all-important fourth Ashes Test after a strong training session Saturday, saying it could be the match of his career.

Ponting broke the little finger of his left hand while attempting a slips catch during Australia's series-levelling win in Perth last weekend, putting him in doubt for the must-win Melbourne Test.

But the 36-year-old skipper said his injury was on the mend and he was all but certain of taking the pitch Sunday, expressing surprise at how well he had been able to train.

"I've batted a lot in the last two days and I took part in all the fielding stuff out there and just made sure I caught a few balls, just to get used to the feeling of it," Ponting said after three hours' training at the MCG, the first compulsory Christmas Day session in his career.

"Something pretty strange is going to have to happen today for me not to play tomorrow." Ponting said he would not take his usual spot at second slip but would "find somewhere where I can keep myself in the game," likely mid-off. His fitness means uncapped understudy Usman Khawaja is not likely to be required.

Vice-captain Michael Clarke said the mood in the Australian camp was upbeat ahead of the Test. "We're all hopeful and confident. Unless

they cut his finger off, it's going to be really hard to leave Punter [Ponting] out."

Australia have yet to name their squad for the much-hyped Melbourne Test, which they must win to remain in the series and which is expected to attract a record crowd of 91,000.

"We haven't finalised the 11 yet. We'll wait until the morning to see, one, what the weather's like and, two, if the wicket changes at all," said Ponting.

"It looks like it has got a bit of moisture in it again today from yesterday. It's a bit different than it was yesterday afternoon."

The veteran captain is under pressure to perform in the fourth Test, which he admitted could be the biggest match of his career.

"If we lose, probably yes," said Ponting, when asked about the showdown. "If we win, no one will probably talk about it."

"We understand where the series is at and we know what we have to do to play well and hopefully we can do it again," he added.

"We set ourselves new standards as far as Test cricket is concerned and we have to maintain those for the next couple of weeks," he added.

Ponting has a record of 1,186 runs at 62.42 in 13 matches at the MCG and has made four hundreds at the southern ground, though he has gone nine matches this year without a ton.

"It has been a little while between drinks as far as making hundreds is concerned. I know I have to start scoring heavily," said the right-hander.

"Not just for me but for the team."

Victoria victors

SPORTS REPORTER



A fighting unbeaten 91 from Myshukur Rahman toppled Mohammad Ashraf's Cricket Coaching School (CCS) in Victoria's three-wicket win in the Premier Cricket League at the Shaheed Chandu Stadium in Bogra yesterday.

In the battle of the promoted sides too there was an upset as Orient Sporting Club defeated Prime Doleshwar by four wickets in a last-ball finish at the BKSP.

At the Shaheed Kamruzzaman Stadium in Rajshahi, Shahadat Hossain's four-wicket haul was enough for Kalabagan CCS-VICTORIA to beat Old DOHS by 18 runs.

Ashraf and Suvogotom Chowdhury added 113 runs for the fifth wicket after CCS faltered to 93 for four in the 28th over.

Suvogotom struck seven boundaries and a six in his 59-ball 67 while Ashraf's 60 came off 64 balls, as CCS posted 241 from 49.5 overs.

Though Victoria's reply got off to a false start, losing Fazle Rabbi and Mohammad Sami in the first five overs, young Myshukur played a patient hand. He added 142 runs for the third wicket with Victoria's form batsman Mominul Haque as they got their chase back on track. Myshukur struck the winning runs off the third ball of the final over.

Waqas Ahmed took three expensive wickets while Ashraf, Taposh Ghosh and Biswanath Halder took a wicket each.

DOLESHWAR-ORIENT Bangladesh and Prime Doleshwar paceman Nazmul Hossain could not defend nine runs in the game's final over as Orient ran away with the win by hitting two boundaries, including the match-winning one off the last ball struck by Sadid Hossain.

Up until that point however, Nazmul was the best bowler on show, giving away just 10 runs from 7 overs for his three wickets.

Orient were never too far behind with their number three

SEE PAGE 17 COL 2

Sheikh Jamal, BU promoted

SPORTS REPORTER

Sheikh Jamal Dhanmondi Club and Brothers Union earned promotion to next season's Premier Cricket League although the latter lost to big-spending Sheikh Jamal in a Super League game yesterday.

Brothers return to the top flight after four years while it will be the maiden foray for Sheikh Jamal although Dhanmondi Club has previously played in the Premier League.

In the day's game at the new BKSP ground, Brothers batted first and posted 207-9 in 50 overs with Rony Hossain hitting 83 from 144 balls. Sheikh Jamal's Abdur Rahman took four wickets.

Their reply was true to form as Abdur Majid struck 116 off 129 balls and Mehdi Hasan remained unbeaten on 87 off 103 balls.

The result of the day's other game also confirmed the two teams' flight as Baridhara Dazzlers ended all hopes for Partex with a one-wicket victory at the Dhanmondi Cricket Stadium.

Iftekhhar Nayeem topped with 77 off 103 balls while Jubair Abedin made 59.

ICC CRICKET WORLD CUP HISTORY

Aussies score, Tigers impress



The exploits of teams and players will be fresh in viewers' minds as the 2007 World Cup in the West Indies was the most recent one. Many players now hailed as the future of cricket emerged during this tournament.

Bangladesh, after a horror 2003 campaign finally found their feet on the global stage. The world caught a glimpse of the rich talent that has now made the country proud. Abdur Razzak, Tamim Iqbal, Shakib Al Hasan and Mushfiqur Rahim all played their first World Cup and together with second-timers Mashrafe Mortaza and Mohammad Ashraf, formed the nucleus of Bangladesh's excellent showing.

The team served notice of its newfound belief at the first opportunity, with Mashrafe, Tamim, Mushfiqur and Shakib all turning in stellar performances to shock India. Ashraf also displayed his precocious talent by killing off South Africa with a sublime 83-ball 87 at the Super Eights stage. Abdur Razzak, the left-arm spinner, topped the team's wickets chart with 13 wickets from nine games. His best bowling figures of three for 25 came during the landmark victory against South Africa.

South Africa also had some new names to show to the world, most importantly their captain, Graeme Smith. He showed more than some glimpses of his talent with his tally of 443 runs, and also his leadership skills by taking South Africa to the semifinals. Also in the South African team was AB de Villiers, one of the best batsmen in the world today. He showcased his talent with a

SEE PAGE 17 COL 2

SPORTS POLL WEEKLY QUESTION

Which team you think will win the Bangladesh League this season?

Visit the sports page of www.thedailystar.net to cast vote

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What to WATCH

- STAR Cricket** Australia v England Fourth Test, Day 1 Live from 5:30am
- NEO Cricket** New Zealand v Pakistan First T20 International Live from 7:00am
- TEN Cricket** South Africa v India Second Test, Day 1 Live from 2:00pm
- ESPN** English Premier League Fulham v West Ham Live from 5:55pm
- Man United v Sunderland Live from 8:55pm
- Aston Villa v Tottenham Live from 11:25pm
- STAR Sports** English Premier League Blackpool v Liverpool Live from 8:55pm

SA look for series

2nd Test against India begins today



AFP, Durban

South Africa will be seeking to wrap up a series victory against India, the team ranked number one in Test cricket, in the second Test which starts at Kingsmead on Sunday.

South African captain Graeme Smith said his players wanted to carry on in the dominant form they showed in winning the first Test at Centurion by an innings and 25 runs on Monday.

Smith and his side will also be eyeing the prospect of taking over the number one ranking if they win all three Tests against India.

"We've taken a few steps forward and India have probably got a few doubts," said Smith, who highlighted two areas where second-ranked South Africa could still improve.

"We can always be a little more precise. One or two catches or a run-out can change a game."

"When you have number one playing number two these are things you have to be on top of things," he added, alluding to three catches and some run-out opportunities that his team fluffed during the first Test.

In recent years the Kingsmead pitch has suited fast bowling, with a reputation for having more pace and bounce than any other pitch in the country.

With fast bowlers Dale Steyn and Morne Morkel currently ranked first and third among the world's best Test bowlers, South Africa will be hoping for a significant advantage.

But rain has hampered the preparation of the Test match and there is uncertainty about how the pitch will play.

Rain could also interfere with the match itself, with the long range forecast indicating

that the first and fifth days in particular could be affected.

And, although South Africa have won 12 out of 18 post-isolation Tests at Kingsmead, they have lost their two most recent Tests there by significant margins, 175 runs against Australia in 2008/09 and an innings and 98 runs against England last season.

It will be India's third Test at the ground. They earned a draw in 1992/93 in what was the first home Test played by South Africa since the end of political isolation but lost by 328 runs in 1996/97, when Allan Donald and Shaun Pollock bowled them out for 100 and 66, and by 174 runs in 2006/07.

Indian captain Mahendra Singh Dhoni admitted that India had performed below their best in the first Test, but the bowling a particular cause for concern. But he was confident the return of left-arm fast bowler Zaheer Khan would make a significant difference to the attack.

"Zaheer is a key player," said Dhoni. "With all the experience he has, he always comes up with new plans and changes his plans during the course of a game."

Although Dhoni did not speculate about likely changes to the batting line-up, the place of left-hander Suresh Raina is under threat after two poor innings at Centurion, where he seemed ill-equipped to deal with the pace and bounce of the South African bowlers.

Either Cheteshwar Pujara or Murali Vijay could come into the side.

SQUADS SOUTH AFRICA (from): Graeme Smith (captain), Alviro Petersen, Hashim Amla, Jacques Kallis, AB de Villiers, Ashwell Prince, Mark Boucher, Dale Steyn, Paul Harris, Morne

SEE PAGE 17 COL 8



PHOTO: INTERNET

IN OR OUT? India opener Gautam Gambhir lines up a throw during a training session in Durban yesterday. The left-handed opener is in doubt for a hand injury he picked up in the first Test because worse.

Gambhir scare

CRICINFO, Durban

Gautam Gambhir is not a sure starter for the crucial Boxing Day Test in Durban. He was hit on his left hand, around the knuckles area, and it has swollen a bit. He had batted in the nets all three days of India's training leading into the Test. What is a concerning bit of news for India, though, is that the swelling seems to have grown on the match eve, and Gambhir spent a long time in the nets sitting on an ice box, with an icepack on his left hand.

If Gambhir doesn't make it, M Vijay will be his natural replacement. Looking at the contingency, India chose to give Vijay a long hit in the nets on the eve of the match. Vijay has done well in the past as a back-up opener, even when he has been called up on short notice. His last effort as replacement opener was 139 against Australia in Bangalore, which contributed to India's 2-0 series win. For somebody who always gets called up on short notice, Vijay has a healthy average of 42.41 in eight Tests. If he gets picked, though, this will be Vijay's biggest Test, on a green, rock-solid pitch, with overhead conditions likely to contribute to swing and seam movement.

India trail 1-0, and South Africa are looking to close out this series before they enter the next year.