



PHOTO: STAR

Organisers and sponsors speak at a press conference yesterday at the BTI Center in Gulshan announcing the BTI Professional Golf Championship which starts at Kurmitola Golf Club today.

BTI Golf C'ship from today

SPORTS REPORTER

The four-day BTI Professional Golf Championship starts at the Kurmitola Golf Club today. Sponsored by Buildin Technology and Ideas Ltd, one of the prominent real estate developers of the country, and organised by Bangladesh professional Golfers' Association (BPGA), this event is expected to draw a number of young, up and coming as well as professional golfers of the country.

A press conference in this connection was held at the corporate headquarters of BTI in Gulshan yesterday where members BPGA and the company were present. The media partners for the event are The Daily Star, ATN Bangla, and Radio Foorti.

HOPMAN CUP Henin back and wins

AFP, Perth

Former world number one Justine Henin made a winning start in her latest comeback on Saturday but the Belgian could not prevent her team losing to Australia at the mixed-teams Hopman Cup.

In her first match since suffering a serious elbow injury when losing to compatriot Kim Clijsters at Wimbledon last June, the world number 12 was too good for the 129th-ranked Alicia Molik, winning their women's singles match 6-4, 6-4.

The result gave Belgium a 1-0 lead in the tournament's opening Group A tie, but local favourite Lleyton Hewitt, in his first match since September, levelled the clash with a 6-4, 6-3 win over the 178th-ranked Ruben Bemelmans.

Newlands beckons history

Third & final India-SA Test starts today

Cricket

AFP, Cape Town

South Africa will be hoping for a repeat of history when they take on India in a series-deciding third and final Test at Newlands on Sunday.

Four years ago, South Africa beat India by five wickets at Newlands after the series had been locked at one-all as is the case in the current series.

Looking ahead to the decider after India's 87-run win in the second Test in Durban, Indian captain Mahendra Singh Dhoni recalled: "We had a brilliant first innings. The second innings was a bit disappointing, because of which we lost the Test match. It's very important to be at our best in all three departments."

South African captain Graeme Smith took solace from his team's proud record at Newlands, where the host country have won 14 out of 21 Test matches since 1993, with only three defeats, all by Australia.

"India are a very experienced team," said Smith. "We expected

them to bounce back and they have. They played well and it builds up for a big Test match at Newlands. It's always great to play in a New Year Test match in Cape Town and it's going to be even bigger now."

India led on the first innings four years ago after scoring 414 but collapsed to 169 all out in their second innings, enabling South Africa to snatch victory despite a weather delay on the final day.

Eight of the probable South African team played in that match, together with six of the current Indian team.

India's win in Durban, which followed an innings defeat in the first Test, ensured they would remain ahead of South Africa as the number one ranked Test team, irrespective of what happens at Newlands. More importantly, perhaps, they showed in Durban that they are a far more resilient team than most previous Indian touring sides in South Africa.

Any complacency in the South African camp following their win by an innings and 25 runs in the first

Test in Centurion would have been swept away by India's convincing win in Durban and Smith said South Africa were determined to play better at Newlands.

Although the Durban Test ended a day early, both teams had to wait until Friday to assemble in Cape Town because of a shortage of flight and hotel rooms during South Africa's peak holiday season.

Gautam Gambhir, who missed the second Test because of injury, is expected to return to the Indian team in place of Murali Vijay.

SQUADS

SOUTH AFRICA (probable): Graeme Smith (captain), Alviro Petersen, Hashim Amla, Jacques Kallis, AB de Villiers, Ashwell Prince, Mark Boucher (wkt), Dale Steyn, Paul Harris, Morne Morkel, Lonwabo Tsotsobe
INDIA (probable): Mahendra Singh Dhoni (captain), Gautam Gambhir, Virender Sehwag, Rahul Dravid, Sachin Tendulkar, VVS Laxman, Cheteshwar Pujara, Harbhajan Singh, Zaheer Khan, Ishant Sharma, Sree Sreesanth.

Akram bats for India

Cricket

ANI, Lahore

India are no longer a one-man team, and are capable of winning matches without batting maestro Sachin Tendulkar's contribution, former Pakistan cricket captain Wasim Akram has said.

After losing the series opener against South Africa in Centurion by an innings and 25 runs, India came back strongly to beat the Proteas by 87 runs in the second Test at Kingsmead on Wednesday.

"Even on a wicket like Durban, India performed exceptionally well. The team played like a unit. It's a team that does not rely on the services of one particular player," The Daily Times quoted Akram, as saying.

"I remember, in our times, it was Sachin Tendulkar all the time. Ten years back whenever we would get Sachin out, it was all over for India. But now, the scenario is different. The opposition team has to make sure that they get all the batsmen before breathing easy," he added.

Akram also said with the Durban win, India had justified their number one status in world cricket.

"I feel India have got the vital ingredients like character, leadership, consistency and self belief. India are on top of the world. They are the No. 1 Test team and they justified it in Durban. Many, including me believed that India would struggle in South Africa. But they have certainly proved

everyone wrong," the cricketer-turned-commentator told a sports channel.

Akram was also full of praise for Zaheer Khan, who after missing the first Test, returned to the team in Durban and spearheaded India's bowling to bundle out South Africa for 131 and 215 in the first and second innings respectively.

"Zaheer's presence certainly lifts the morale of the team. I have always believed that Zaheer is the best bowler in world cricket today. He is out-and-out a wicket-taking bowler... Zaheer is on a par with the best in the business like Dale Steyn and Morne Morkel," he said.

Akram also hailed man-of-the-match VVS Laxman's contribution, and said the stylish Hyderabad batsman showed why he was India's best bet on foreign soil with his match-winning knocks of 38 and 96 in Durban.

"Laxman is certainly a class apart... And the best part is that he performs when it matters. His track record reveals he always scores when the team is in trouble," he said.

With India languishing at 148 for seven, Laxman stitched a vital 70-run eighth-wicket stand with Zaheer in the second innings to help the visitors set a challenging target of 303 runs.

"Not only can he (Laxman) play well in the middle-order but also sticks it out with the tail-enders. He is at the prime of his batting. According to me, Laxman certainly falls in the list of top four batsmen in the world," said Akram.

No decision yet on Pak WC squad

AFP, Lahore

Question marks over several key players forced Pakistani selectors Friday to defer the announcement of a preliminary squad for the World Cup and a team for the six-match one-day series against New Zealand.

The International Cricket Council (ICC) has extended the deadline of announcing the preliminary squad from December 19 to January 5 only for Pakistan as they needed to seek clearance of some players who are under suspicion of match-fixing.

Shoib Malik, Kamran Akmal and Danish Kaneria were not selected for the recent series against South Africa and for the current tour of New Zealand after they were alleged of involvement in match-fixing. The three players appeared before a Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) integrity committee on Thursday for interrogation over the allegations. The committee was formed following a directive from the ICC.

R'ganj make

FROM PAGE 16

the net after being only half-stopped by goalie Mostafizur Rahman.

Arambagh staged a few attacks towards the end, and one of them resulted in a goal when Benjamin found the easiest tap-in after being set up by substitute Syed Rasel Turjo. Benjamin created another glorious opportunity in injury time, but could not get his head on the end of a cross with the goal at his mercy, which meant the Motijheel tent left empty handed.

For a cherished ticket

FROM PAGE 16

thing is transparent here. I met you to clear the confusion regarding availability of tickets. I apologise to those who ultimately will fail to get a ticket," said Kamal.

"There has been no complimentary tickets rather the BCB has bought tickets for the dignitaries like ministers and MPs," he said, adding that the BCB directors will each get two free tickets and are allocated 14 more tickets which they have to buy.

As per his latest breakdown for the 25,167-capacity Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur where six matches including two quarterfinals will take place, 1,900 seats will be unused for sight-screen adjustment while the ICC will get 1270 tickets free of cost and on payment there would be 2000 tickets for the governing body, 1,740 for the various

Dhaka clubs and 2,130 for district and divisional associations.

A total of 15,127 tickets will be available for public consumption but it was not clear from where the tickets for the dignitaries will come from.

It is similar for the 17800-capacity Zohur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium in Chittagong and the 18,000-capacity Fatullah Cricket Stadium, where only two practices matches will be held.

The BCB boss also expressed his helplessness for the inability to increase capacity of the existing stadiums, as the structure doesn't permit it.

But it hardly stops anyone from standing in line to buy the tickets and as the Imrans and Azmals have said, the reality might be harsh for the cricket lover but they won't stop trying.

An unforgettable

FROM PAGE 16

were different. It was soft, there was swing in the air. But it was a great tour as the Bangladeshis living there were always supportive of us.

DSS: When Bangladesh were in trouble against Scotland, was the dressing room nervous?

SHB: I didn't feel we would win at that stage. Nothing was in our favour and I thought we would lose. But Nannu bhai

played so well. DSS: And then the game against Pakistan...

SHB: It was a great game. Our fielding was superb and we took early wickets.

DSS: What was your fondest memory?

SHB: On the field the cricket we played was good but my favourite memory was meeting Queen Elizabeth. She hosted all twelve teams for a lunch at Buckingham Palace and I got to shake hands with her. It was a superb time.

Riding on a lenient law

FROM PAGE 16

umpires are fearful of taking the right decision against big clubs, though the other side of the story is obvious: if the umpires are strict enough, the players and officials remain within the law.

In the same vein however, the lenient law itself is creating a lot of confusion among the match officials.

According to a source, the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) has no such code of conduct which is often mentioned. Rather, said the source, the ICC's code of conduct should be mentioned when handing out fines and bans so that it remains concrete.

"In the last IPL (Indian Premier League), Saurav Ganguly was fined up to 88,000 dollars for over rates.

I think the fine in the Dhaka Premier League has to be Tk 50,000, large enough to make the clubs come to a realization," said the umpire who talked to The Daily Star Sport.

KP wanted Warne as coach

PTI, London

Former captain Kevin Pietersen had wanted Australian spin legend Shane Warne as coach of England after the sacking of Peter Moores in 2009 but ECB scuppered his plans after finding that the players were against it, a report said today.

One of the sharpest brains in world cricket, Warne's appointment would have plugged the gap in Pietersen's tactical knowledge but the prospect of such a volatile pair running England would have sent waves of panic through the ECB, a report in 'Daily Telegraph' said.

It was only when the England and Wales Cricket Board consulted the other players and discovered there was no solid support for Pietersen's blueprint that he began to lose his grip on the captaincy, the report said.

Hussey eyes to level series

Cricket

AFP, Sydney

Winning next week's final Test to square the Ashes series with England would be a boost for the demoralised Australians, senior batsman Mike Hussey said on Saturday.

Australian cricket plunged to the depths of despair after England pummeled the national side by an innings and 157 runs in this week's fourth Melbourne Test to retain the Ashes.

Australia, trailing 2-1, can still draw the five-match series if they can fight back and win Monday's fifth Test at the Sydney Cricket Ground

under new skipper Michael Clarke, who replaces injured Ricky Ponting.

Hussey said the task of regeneration now lay ahead for a dressing room unsettled by numerous team changes.

"(We need) to try to start the rise again, getting back to where we want to be -- getting a team together we believe in and sticking with them and hoping to build our way back up," Hussey told reporters.

"We'd like to be number one in the world, it's going to take time, but it can start now."

With the Ashes gone, Hussey said he was doubtful if a series-levelling victory in Sydney would totally erase the shame of their huge defeat at the Melbourne Cricket Ground.

"I don't know about saving face, but we do feel it'll be great and a real moral victory for us if we can get it back to two-all," Hussey said.

"That would give the guys a great feeling, and a lot of confidence going into the next year.

"But it hurts a lot, because we came in with such high expectations and belief that we could win the Ashes."

Hussey has witnessed a great deal of change during the series, from the exit of Marcus North and off-spinner Nathan Hauritz, to the spinning experiments with Xavier Doherty and Michael Beer and now the introduction of batsman Usman Khawaja.

Hussey said it was time for greater continuity in team selections.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

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CRYPTOQUIP

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Yesterday's Cryptoquip: BECAUSE THE OLD SWAMI IS EVER HOPEFUL FOR THE VERY BEST OUTCOME, I WOULD SAY HE'S OPTI-MYSTIC.
Today's Cryptoquip Clue: C equals S