



AS IF THE AUSSIES AREN'T ENOUGH: BCB XI batsman Rokibul Hasan had enough on his plate keeping the touring Australians at bay, without having to worry about shooing away stray dogs as he is seen doing here during his innings in the warm-up match at Fatullah yesterday.

IPL BEGINS TODAY

Chennai v Kolkata opener

INTERNET, Chennai



It will be a classic case of 'friends turning into foes' when Mahendra Singh Dhoni's Chennai Super Kings (CSK) clash with Gautam Gambhir-led Kolkata Knight Riders (KKR) in the opening match of the IPL on Friday, less than a week after the duo guided India to their historic World Cup triumph in Mumbai.

As the cash-rich Twenty20 cricketing extravaganza gets underway at the MA Chidambaram Stadium, it will be the beginning of a new era sans Lalit Modi, who was the face of the event during the first three editions.

Also this will be the first time that the league will feature 10 teams with the inclusion of Pune Warriors and Kochi Tuskers Kerala.

It will be there for all to see how the BCCI organises an event where Modi used to have a final say in every aspect. The former IPL commissioner and vice-president of BCCI has since then been suspended and now has taken refuge in London after the cricket board pressed numerous charges of corruption against him.

After a hugely successful Players' Auction which saw some of the young Indian players

commanding astronomical prices, the Chirayu Amin-led IPL governing council will now look to capitalise on India's World Cup triumph which has definitely upped the stakes by manifold.

Coming back to tournament, defending champions CSK will certainly start as the overwhelming favourites against a team that hasn't been able to cash in on its enormous fan following across India, thanks to its principal owner Shah Rukh Khan.

After having failed to make it to the semi-finals during the last three editions, the KKR management led by SRK and co-owner Jay Mehta have gone for a revamped side with Gautam Gambhir at the helm and T20 specialist Yusuf Pathan as one of the marquee players.

With Kolkata's favourite son Sourav Ganguly no longer a part of the team, it will be a big challenge for Gambhir and his boys to start winning and get the cricket crazy Kolkata rooting for them.

The bigger challenge will be to get past CSK who have arguably been the most consistent team during the last three editions with one championship, one runners-up and a last four finish. The biggest strength for CSK has been their ability to retain the most of their core players save Muttiah Muralidaran who will don the Kochi jersey.

Another Barca

FROM PAGE 16

also causing problems for themselves. A careless back pass from M y k o l a Ishchenko allowed in Messi, whose finishing for once let him down and his attempted lob was caught by the keeper.

Barca did double the lead when Alves timed his run to perfection to keep on side and collect an Iniesta pass before finishing in an empty net.

After the break Shakhtar were rueing their misfortune when a Pique shot from a corner went in after striking Rakitskiy and wrongfooting the keeper.

Rakitskiy made amends at the other end by flicking a free-kick passed keeper Victor Valdes but any hope of a comeback was short-lived. From the restart Barca attacked and Messi found Keita in oceans of space and he powered a shot into the roof of the net from the edge of the area.

There was to be no joy for Adriano as he hit the inside of the post for Shakhtar and then in the final minutes Xavi was left unmarked to convert a Dani Alves cross and put Barca on the verge of the semifinals.

Easy win for Wozniacki



AFP, Charleston

World number one Caroline Wozniacki cruised into the third round of the Charleston WTA on Wednesday, as she fought to banish memories of last year's injury disappointment.

"I'm feeling good on clay, so it's exciting. It's always exciting to start here," top-seed Wozniacki said after dispatching American qualifier Irina Falconi 6-1, 6-1.

At last year's tournament Wozniacki was forced to retire during her semi-final match against Russia's Vera Zvonareva when she hurt her ankle sliding on the green clay court.

"You think about it sometimes, a little bit sometimes, especially when you go after drop shots," she said.

"But on the other hand, this is a tournament that I've always enjoyed playing and center court is so cozy."

Wozniacki, winner of titles this year in Dubai and Indian Wells, encountered little resistance from the 128th-ranked Falconi, who had never before faced a number one player.

The Dane took a 5-0 lead, and won the last six games to win the match.

"She was playing good, but I felt like I could put that extra step into the ball," Wozniacki, 20, said. "I made the winners at the right chances."

Wozniacki is one of three top-10 players in the field.

World number five Samantha Stosur, the defending champion and second seed, defeated Austrian Patricia Mayr-Achleitner 6-1, 6-2.

Stosur said her status as defending champion gave her a boost.

"I think it definitely, maybe, lifts your shoulders up a little bit and puts a smile on your face," she said.

World number eight Jelena Jankovic, the third seed and winner here in 2007, also advanced, beating Austrian Tamira Paszek 6-2, 6-3.

Independence Day Cup from April 10

SPORTS REPORTER

The club representatives of the professional football league decided to take part in the Independence Day Cup as the Bangladesh Football Federation promised to give them monetary benefit along with their due payments by the middle of next month.

"The meeting was on the development of football. We talked on how to work together and how to make the game regular. We shared each other's problems and discussed how to solve those," BFF president Kazi Salahuddin told reporters after the meeting.

Initially there was no schedule for the Independence Day Cup tournament in this year's BFF calendar and most of the clubs refused to take part in the tournament citing the ongoing Bangladesh League as they have been struggling to pay their foreign recruits because of the lengthy league, which remained halted for one month due to the mid-term players' transfer window.

The BFF president also declared that they would hold the Independence Day Cup on a regular basis along with season's curtain-raiser Federation Cup, Bangladesh League and Super Cup, which was held only once after its introduction in 2009.

"The president has promised us to pay half of the participation money of the ongoing league and Tk 2 lakh each for the 12 teams by May 15 and clear all other dues before the completion of the Bangladesh League," said Brothers Union football manager Amer Khan adding that they would now be preparing for the tournament, starting from April 10 at the Bangabandhu National Stadium.

Meanwhile the Independence Day football tournament was last held in 2005. Amer however alleged that there was a lack of co-ordination between the clubs and the Bangladesh League committee, which takes decisions unilaterally.

Sadaf in for Aizaz

AFP, Karachi

Pakistan's cricket selectors were on Thursday overruled by a medical panel that declared fast bowler Aizaz Cheema unfit after he was included in the squad for the upcoming West Indies tour.

The 31-year-old Cheema was among the 16-man squad announced Wednesday for one Twenty20 international and five one-day matches on Pakistan's tour to the Caribbean starting later this month.

But only a day later, the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) said its medical panel had ruled Cheema unfit.

"Cheema who was included in the T20 and ODI squad has been declared unfit by doctors and is being replaced by Sadaf Hussain," the PCB said, without detailing the extent of Cheema's injury.

Pace in poor

FROM PAGE 16

Alaudin Babu and Abul Hasan Raju could have been bloodied but someone like Mahbubul regularly gets picked for these side games, though he was irregular in this season's Premier League and has taken just 11 wickets from five first-class games.

Pace bowlers are rare in Bangladesh but since the emergence of Mashrafe and the ensuing pacer hunts till a few years ago, youngsters have taken up bowling quick. But the ones on show at the Fatullah Cricket Stadium probably represent the actual state of pace bowling in the country, and it doesn't look too good.

Politics a distraction for players: Bayliss



AFP, Colombo

Sri Lanka's outgoing coach Trevor Bayliss on Thursday said the country needed a strong and stable cricket administration to allow players to focus only on the game and not be distracted by politics.

"On the field, we've done pretty well for past 18 months," Bayliss said in an interview with AFP. "Getting to the World Cup final itself is an achievement, though we lost (to India)."

But off the field, Australian-born Bayliss said, Sri Lanka could improve the way the game was being run in the country.

"Good teams like Australia usually have got strong or good management backing the team up. That's an area we can improve here."

Sri Lanka Cricket has been run by an interim committee appointed by the sports minister since 2005. The minister picks the selectors, who also keep changing.

"I am constantly amazed how well the players do (on the field), with all the distractions put in front of them. It seems to be the sub-continent way. That's a skill in itself," said Bayliss, 48.

Bayliss brought the curtains down on his four-year stint after the World Cup defeat in Mumbai last week. His tenure also saw the team make it to the World Twenty20 final and climb to number three in both one-day and Test rankings.

The World Cup defeat was also followed by resignations

from skipper Kumar Sangakkara, his deputy Mahela Jayawardene and a three-member selection committee led by former batting star Aravinda de Silva.

Bayliss said the resignations of Sangakkara and Jayawardene were regrettable.

"I think it's a shame. They are the best two guys to take Sri Lanka forward. They probably had enough of putting up with distractions," he said.

"These days the role of a captain has to deal with issues that sometimes have got nothing to do with cricket. They have done a great service to Sri Lanka. Guess, they deserve a break."

Bayliss picked young all-rounder Angelo Mathews as a future skipper.

"I think 23-year-old Mathews could be a future captain of Sri Lanka. Maybe a couple of years for him at the international level would do well to get some confidence first, before adding on the responsibility as captain," he said.

Bayliss was not sure if he could look back at his stint with total satisfaction as he did not achieve his goal of taking the team to their second World Cup triumph.

Sri Lanka won their only World Cup in 1996 under coach Dav Whatmore, a former Australian player.

"Have I achieved everything? I don't know," said Bayliss.

"Cricket is a learning process. In my journey, cricket continues to be a learning experience."

Bayliss joins New South Wales as a coach, a position he held before taking up the job in Sri Lanka.

Former Australian batsman Stuart Law, an assistant to Bayliss, has been promoted as the chief coach on an interim basis.



TREVOR BAYLISS

Samuels recalled for T20



CRICINFO

West Indies have announced a new-look squad for their one-off Twenty20 international against Pakistan in St Lucia on April 21, featuring four new caps and recalls for Lendl Simmons and Marlon Samuels, who is once again eligible for selection after serving a two-year ban for his alleged involvement with illegal bookmakers.

The match will be West Indies' first since Pakistan eliminated them at the quarterfinal stage of the World Cup, and true to the intentions of their coach, Ottis Gibson, the team is the first step towards a new era for Caribbean cricket, as it features few of the elder statesmen who were sent packing from the tournament with a humiliating ten-wicket defeat in Dhaka.

Though Chris Gayle, Dwayne Bravo and Kieron Pollard are not eligible for selection because they did not play in the Caribbean T20 earlier this year, there is no place either for Shivnarine Chanderpaul, Ramnaresh Sarwan or Sulieman Benn. Darren Sammy retains his place as captain, with Devendra Bishoo and Andre Russell, two young players who made good impressions at the World Cup, both included.

The uncapped inclusions are Danza Hyatt, a powerful Jamaican right-hander; Christopher Barnwell, an all-rounder from Guyana; Ashley Nurse, an off-spinner from Barbados, and left-arm seamer Krishmar Santokie, also from Jamaica. Simmons, the nephew of the Ireland coach, Phil, is back in the squad for the first time since the tour of Australia in 2010.

Clyde Butts, the chairman of selectors, said: "The squad includes players who have performed well in the Caribbean T20. We are looking to expose players as we build towards the next ICC World T20 Tournament next year. Samuels and Simmons have both played at this level before and performed consistently in the Caribbean T20. We believe they will be key members of this team."

"Hyatt, Santokie and Nurse played in the West Indies A Team against Pakistan A and they did well. We have decided to give them the opportunity in the senior West Indies team and we believe they will make the transition to the higher level. Barnwell also did well in the Caribbean T20 and he also had exposure for Guyana in the Champions League last year. He is a lively and enthusiastic cricketer and we expect good things from him as well."

"Hyatt is a hard-hitting batsman who has demonstrated his ability to be a match-winner when he played against Pakistan A. Santokie has been exceptional in the Caribbean T20 using the new ball for Jamaica. Nurse is a clever bowler, a hard worker and has the ability to make vital runs in the lower order as well."

Samuels last played for West Indies in April 2008 before his career ran into a road-block after he received a two-year ban from official cricket for links with an Indian bookmaker. Having served the ban, Samuels was offered a place in the West Indies World Cup squad, but declined it on the grounds that he was "not 100% ready" for one-day cricket. This time, however, he was pleased to be selected.

SQUAD

Darren Sammy (captain), Christopher Barnwell, Devendra Bishoo, Darren Bravo, Andre Fletcher, Danza Hyatt, Ashley Nurse, Ravi Rampaul, Kemar Roach, Andre Russell, Marlon Samuels, Krishmar Santokie, Lendl Simmons.

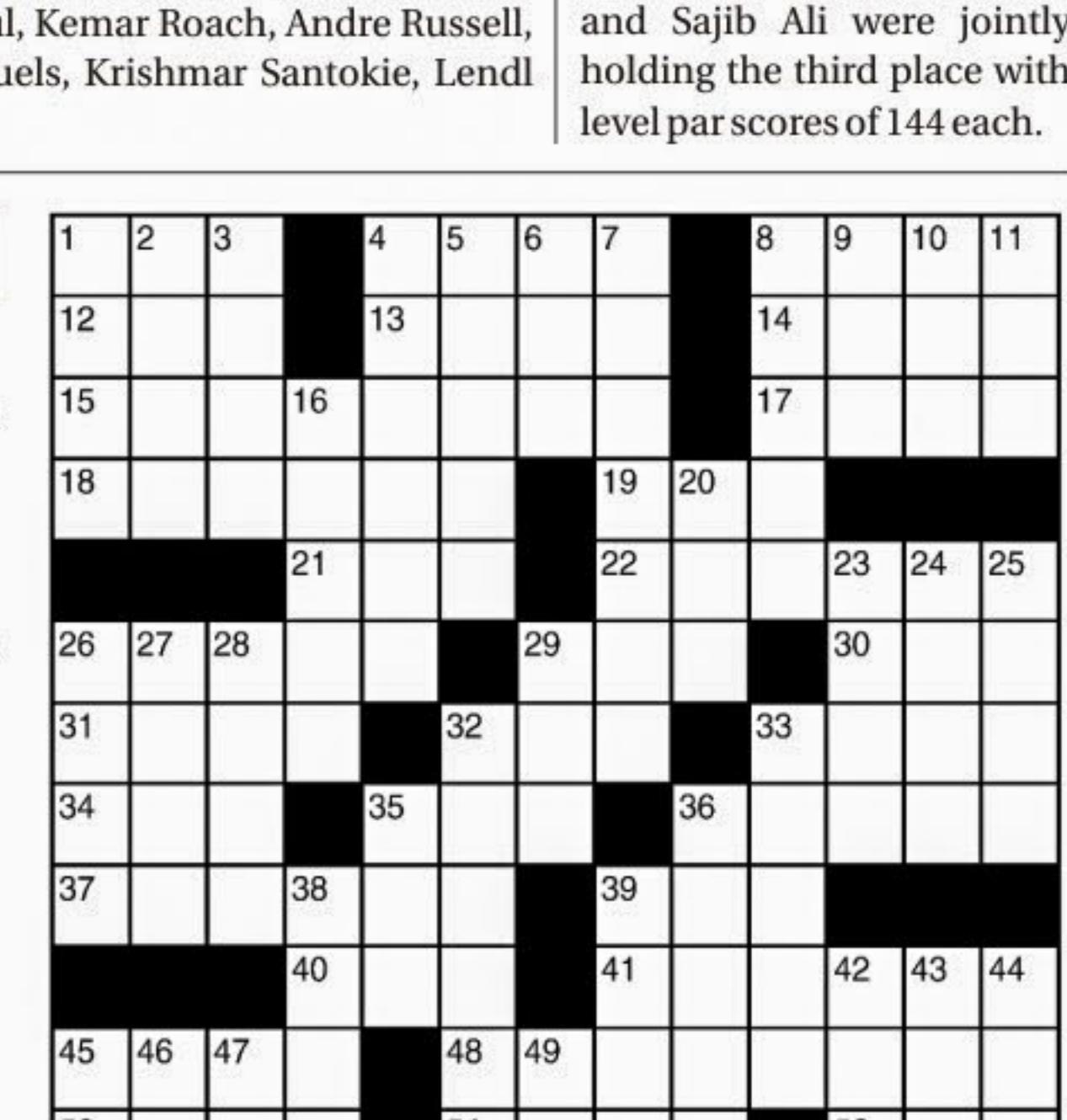
SOLUTION

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS 1 Dandy, 4 Thrash, 8 Injury, 12 Flightless bird, 13 Wash, 14 Diva's showstopper, 15 Secular, 16 Cincinnatian, 18 Not digital, 19 Mimic, 21 Hubbub, 22 Entices, 23 Wash, 24 Work at the keyboard, 25 Burn somewhat, 26 Ultimate, 27 Farm fraction, 28 Part of TWIMC, 29 Binge, 32 Guest, 33 Student, 35 PETA no-no, 36 Pass by Chaplain, 38 Ready for battle, 42 Benefit, 43 Two-some, 44 Tide variety, 45 Recipe meas., 46 Shad product, 47 Chic no more, 48 Shamus, 49 Yale grad.

DOWN 55 Charlemagne, for ex., 37 "fugit", 39 Mountain, 40 "Entourage" role, 41 Grape that's seen better days?, 45 Walked (on), 48 Pattern, 50 Tart, 51 Bullring cheers, 52 Mauna —, 53 Sampras of tennis, 54 Carousel, e.g., 56 Eggs, 57 Glutinous matter, 58 Sultan's wives, 59 Exist, 60 Disembark, 61 More (Sp.), 62 Wood-smoothing tool, 63 Pasty, 64 Shredded, 65 Ebb, 66 Ave., 67 Sabe, 68 Stew, 69 Bllear, 70 Shambu, 71 Fiasco, 72 Hap, 73 Paper moon, 74 Orel, 75 Elan, 76 Alou, 77 Per, 78 Ness, 79 Tasty, 80 Ah, 81 Shamus, 82 Fiasco, 83 Hap, 84 Paper moon, 85 Orel, 86 Elan, 87 Alou, 88 Per, 89 Ness, 90 Shambu, 91 Fiasco, 92 Hap, 93 Paper moon, 94 Orel, 95 Elan, 96 Alou, 97 Per, 98 Ness, 99 Shambu, 100 Fiasco, 101 Hap, 102 Paper moon, 103 Orel, 104 Elan, 105 Alou, 106 Per, 107 Ness, 108 Shambu, 109 Fiasco, 110 Hap, 111 Paper moon.

Solution time: 25 mins.



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