

**Abahani
demand
punishment**

SPORTS REPORTER

Defending champions Abahani demanded punitive punishment to the referee and assistant referees and anyone else involved in conducting their Bangladesh League fixture against Rahmatganj MFS.

A two-page letter signed by Abahani's director in charge, Lt Colonel (retd) Kazi Shahed Ahmed was sent to the league committee chairman demanding punishment of those within seven days.

Blaming referee Abdul Hannan Miron and assistant referees Harun-or-Rashid and Toffazal Hossain for partisanship during their 1-0 defeat against Rahmatganj on Monday, the letter said, "We demand punishment of the referee, assistant referees and those who are conspiring to stop Abahani within seven days or else Abahani will withdraw from the league. Bangladesh Football Federation will have to bear all responsibility if any such unwanted scenario occurs."

Meanwhile, the BFF disciplinary committee will sit today to look into Monday's incident at the Bangabandhu National Stadium.

**Roddick
in doubt**

AFP, Nice

America's three-time Wimbledon finalist Andy Roddick is a doubt for the French Open after he was forced to withdraw from the ATP tournament in Nice on Tuesday because of a shoulder injury.

The 28-year-old had been hoping to get a much-needed confidence boost after first-round exits on clay at both the Madrid and Rome Masters, but he conceded defeat and decided he would not be able to play his singles match on Wednesday against Romania's Victor Hănescu.

"I was already injured last week in Rome and I had to withdraw from the men's doubles final," said Roddick, whose best performance at Roland Garros was a fourth-round showing in 2009.

Mizan propels

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their opponents to come back into the match as they shared 140 runs in the opening stand before Asif was dismissed for 51 off 72 balls that featured five boundaries.

Mizanur was not out with 105 balls. He smote thirteen boundaries and three sixes during his 113-ball knock while Isharul Islam made unbeaten 24 off 36 balls with the help of five fours as Rajshahi scored 197 for three in 41.2 overs.

Besides Sanjamul, Kamrul Hasan took two wickets conceding 41 runs in ten overs. Earlier Sylhet won the toss and decided to bat first but the made a disaster start losing two quick wickets with the scoreboard reading four. Golam Mabud joined Toufiq Khan to repair the early damage associating 46 runs in the third wicket stand but again Sylhet lost three more wickets to reach 78 for five.

Ejaz Ahmed and Ayub Ullah added 95 runs in the sixth wicket stand to give Sylhet a respectable total.

Ejaz was the top scorer with a 71-ball 65 that contained three fours and as many sixes while Ayub added 36 off 69 balls with two boundaries.

BRIEF SCORES

SYLHET: 196 all out in 49 overs (Toufiq 38, Mabud 21, Ejaz 65, Ayub 36, Azad 14 not out, extras 17; Shamsul 1-25, Shahriar 1-38, Sanjamul 4-33, Kamrul 2-41, Rezaul 1-27).

RAJSHAHI: 197 for 3 in 41.2 overs (Mizanur 105 not out, Asif 51, Isharul 24 not out, extras 12; Sadiqur 1-35, Ayub 2-40).

Result: Rajshahi won by seven wickets.



Chennai Super Kings batsman Michael Hussey plays the pull during their IPL match against Kochi Tuskers Kerala at the MA Chidambaram Stadium in Chennai yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

Zim focus on speed

Cricket

CRICINFO

Zimbabwe are re-adjusting the focus of their bowling attack from spin to seam in preparation for their return to Test cricket against Bangladesh in August. Spinners have increasingly become Zimbabwe's mainstay in limited-overs cricket, but national coach Alan Butcher believes that in order to be successful in Tests good fast bowlers are a necessity.

"We are working with about 14 fast and medium-fast bowlers hoping that they will be fine-tuned to get them ready for the Test matches," Butcher told The Independent in Zimbabwe. "In the limited-over games we would get away with playing three or four spinners and one fast bowler but for the Tests we will need more of the fast bowlers.

"We have a number of young bowlers that we have brought in and we will have to fast-track some of them so that they are ready for our first Test against Bangladesh. It is a big challenge and Test matches are more challenging but we are confident we can get them ready well in time."

Before the series against Bangladesh, Zimbabwe will face Australia A in two four-day matches and one-day tri-series also involving South Africa. Butcher pointed to the first-class games, in particular, as being vital to Zimbabwe's preparations for home Tests against Bangladesh, New Zealand and Pakistan.

"If we win those matches then it means we will be well ready for the Bangladesh Challenge. They [Australia] selected a very strong squad, never mind the 'A' tag, and if we can win against such a team I am sure we will be able to beat Bangladesh. We will also play a triangular 50-over series that will include South Africa and it will be important

that we compete because these are two very strong teams that we will be facing."

Chris Mpofu, Shingi Masakadza and Ed Rainsford are Zimbabwe's senior fast bowlers, but they were away on national duty for much of last season and in their absence a younger crop of largely untested seamers has come to the fore, some of whom could well feature in Zimbabwe's Test plans.

Tendai Chatara, a 20-year-old seamer with both pace and movement at his disposal, topped the Logan Cup wicket tables with 55 scalps at 17.69. Chatara has already played for Zimbabwe - in a Twenty20 against India last year - but it is his commendable first-class record that will grab the selectors' attention.

Also in the running for a Test debut is Matabeleland Tuskers allrounder Keegan Meth, who does not have Chatara's pace but whose control and ability to move the ball brought him 54 wickets at the eye-catching average of 13.31 in nine first-class games last season, culminating in the extraordinary match figures of 13 for 109 in the Logan Cup final, won by Tuskers.

Ian Nicolson, probably one of the fastest bowlers in the country, appeared out of his depth against South Africa in October but had a strong domestic first-class season. Tuskers' Njabulo Ncube has developed into a skiddy, attacking fast bowler and, though he did not play any first-class cricket last season, Kyle Jarvis could yet force his way back into national reckoning. Jarvis, 22, bowled with impressive pace before picking up a stress fracture in his back before Zimbabwe's trip to the Caribbean early last year. After a lengthy rehabilitation, Jarvis secured a club contract with Burwell in the East Anglian Premier League and was then picked up by Essex to play in their Second XI, starting impressively against MCC's Young Cricketers.

"Playing cricket has given me many opportunities in life and I feel by continuing to play club cricket I am giving something back to the game."

"The Sydney Sixers is now my professional focus, however."

Clark, who captained New South Wales in Simon Katich's absence last summer, also played in 39 one-dayers, taking 53 wickets at 27.86.

Sylhet: Draws deliver

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very important for us. His 103 against Barisal helped us draw that game when we were 104 runs behind in the first innings.

"He batted for two days to save the game for us, something that gave the team a lot of confidence," he said of the man who made 569 runs including two centuries.

"Rajin bhai is all about hard work and dedication and this year, his academy (South Surma Cricket Academy) also played a role in his good form. He spends a lot of time with the trainees there and bats 2-3 hours everyday.

"We also found a capable batsman of Rajin bhai's quality and temperament in Tasamul. We mostly have aggressive batsmen but this guy plays out a lot of balls and makes sure he doesn't give up his wicket cheaply."

"Shaker too bowled very well. I think he is one of the best left-arm spinners in the country now," said Nabil.

Sylhet's seven drawn games is also astounding, especially for a divisional team. "I think if you look at it positively, it doesn't sound too bad," said Nabil.

"In some of the games, we were behind the opposition but we fought back and in one of the games against Dhaka, we actually declared and gave them a competitive target. (Shamsur Rahman) Shuvo was telling me that if it was Rajshahi, they would have made Dhaka toil in the field!"

Nabil has been a regular in the Sylhet side for eight years now and though he has the record for two of the best bowling figures (innings) for the side, the increasing competition means he cannot stop performing. "I think there is more competition for my place. Of course we have Enamul Haque Jr and Shaker but also a new guy Nasum Ahmed, who is a left-arm spinner and has impressed me this season," he said.

Tk 11.4 lakh

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who is currently receiving treatment at the city's Square Hospital, was carried in every newspaper of the country on Thursday and generated enormous response from everywhere. Already a number of organisations and many individuals have expressed their desire to join the 'save Sadi' fund-raising campaign.

Nat'l camp

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"We will consider the performers for the camp, especially the national league performance will come under consideration. But we will focus on those players who have a chance to play for the national and A team," said Akram.

Shakib Al Hasan's men will play one Test and five one-day internationals during their month-long tour in Zimbabwe.

Decision on Haider soon

AFP, Karachi

Pakistan said Tuesday it will soon decide whether former wicket-keeper Zulqarnain Haider, who left the national team last year amid allegations of death threats, can restart his international career.

The 25-year-old Haider fled from the team hotel in Dubai for London in November saying he had received death threats from unknown people to fix a one-day match in the series against South Africa.

He applied for political asylum in UK and announced his retirement from international cricket.

But after assurances from Pakistan government over his, and his family's, safety, Haider returned home last month and reversed his retirement decision.

The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) on Tuesday said it has received Haider's reply to a letter it sent last year asking him to explain his actions.

The PCB has now formed a three-member disciplinary committee to deal with the case, the body said in a statement.

The committee will start its proceedings when the Pakistan team and officials from the tour of the West Indies and Ireland early next month.

Clark calls it quits

AFP, Sydney

Australian seamer and former Test player Stuart Clark announced his retirement from international and state cricket on Wednesday.

The 35-year-old will instead focus on his new role as general manager of the Sydney Sixers in a new eight-team, city-based Twenty20 domestic competition starting this summer.

He will continue playing club cricket for Sydney University.

"I am going to continue playing club cricket as I still love playing the game, but more importantly I believe I can still help develop Australia's future talent," said Clark, who played 24 Tests, taking 94 wickets at 23.86.

"Playing cricket has given me many opportunities in life and I feel by continuing to play club cricket I am giving something back to the game."

"The Sydney Sixers is now my professional focus, however."

Clark, who captained New South Wales in Simon Katich's absence last summer, also played in 39 one-dayers, taking 53 wickets at 27.86.

Warne fined \$50,000

APP, New Delhi

The Indian cricket board on Wednesday slapped a 50,000 dollars fine on soon-to-retire bowling legend Shane Warne over a bust-up between the Australian and an official during this season's IPL.

The punishment casts a cloud over Warne's last game of professional cricket on Friday when his Rajasthan Royals take on the Mumbai Indians in the Indian Premier League.

The leg-spin maestro, captain of the Rajasthan team, was involved in an angry exchange with Sanjay Dixit, secretary of the Rajasthan state cricket association, following his team's defeat at home last week.

Warne was furious about his team being asked to play on a different wicket than one used in previous games, but he later apologised for "any distress" his action may have caused.

After a complaint by the Rajasthan cricket association, Warne and Dixit were summoned for a hearing before a disciplinary commission comprising IPL chairman Chirayu Amin and former player Ravi Shastri.

"The commission has decided to impose a fine of US 50,000 dollars upon Mr Warne," the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI), which runs Indian cricket, said in a statement.

It said the disciplinary commission "regards the public criticism of Mr. Dixit as being a serious breach by Mr. Warne of his

IPL playing contract".

"However, at the same time, the commission also recognises that Mr. Warne has apologised to Mr. Dixit, and that the incident occurred just after the match."

"In addition, the commission is cognizant of the contribution to the game of cricket in general, and to the Indian Premier League, which has been made by Mr. Warne."

The 41-year-old touched off controversy when he hinted at a conspiracy over the selection of a new wicket for a home match against Chennai Super Kings which Rajasthan's spin-heavy attack struggled to bowl on.

Sacked former IPL boss Lalit Modi, who is under investigation for alleged corruption, has implied that Chennai owner and BCCI secretary N Srinivasan used his influence to have the wicket changed.

Dixit claimed Warne had been putting pressure on him to provide a "suitable" pitch for Rajasthan's home matches.

Things came to a head when Warne walked up to Dixit following a second defeat against Bangalore on May 11 and exchanged angry words with him in full public view.

Rajasthan are already out of contention for an IPL play-off place after suffering seven defeats in 13 games.

A lacklustre Warne has taken 12 wickets from as many games in the Twenty20 competition so far.

His team's last game against debutants Kochi saw Rajasthan capitulate for just 97 and Warne did not even bother to bowl, uncharacteristic of the fiercely competitive sportsman.

Lillee was a bit of a fairy: Greig

Cricket

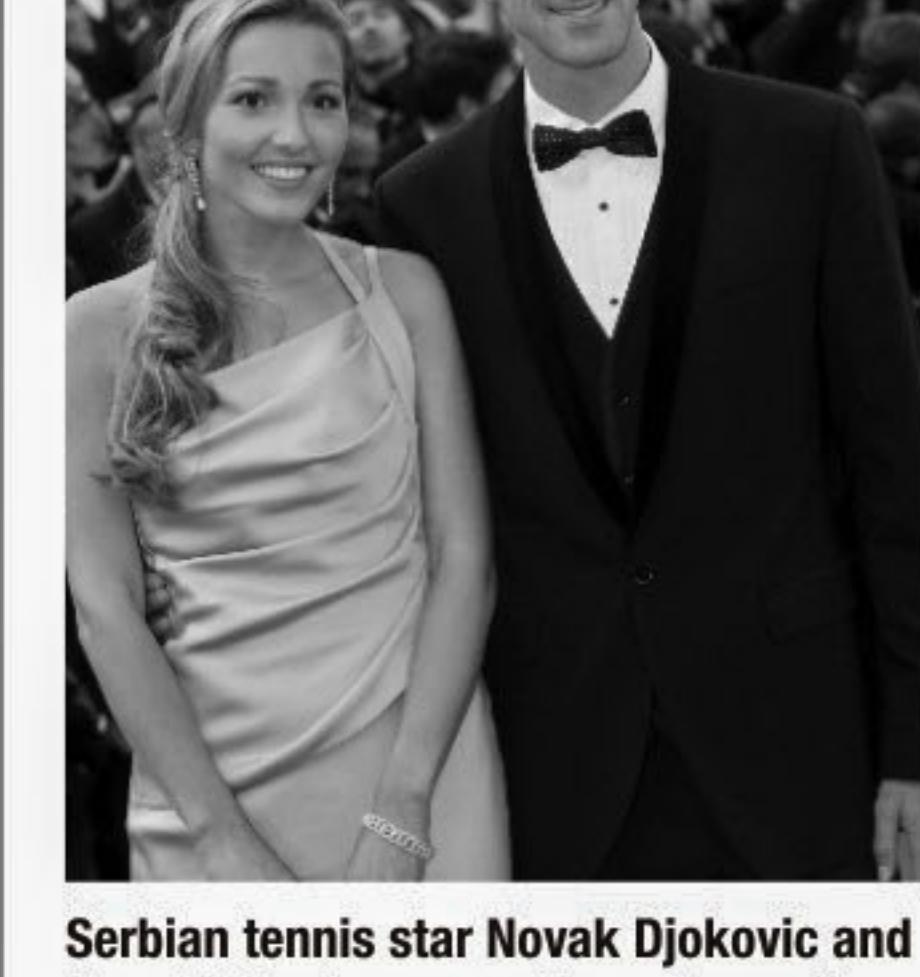
APP, London

Former England captain Tony Greig has risked fresh controversy by suggesting legendary Australia fast bowler Dennis Lillee was a "bit of a fairy" if he got hit himself.

Lillee, one of cricket's greatest bowlers, was at the height of his powers during the 1970s when Greig was playing for England.

But the South Africa-born all-rounder was a good enough batsman to score a Test hundred against Lillee and the fearsome Jeff Thomson at Brisbane in 1974.

Greig, 64, has spent the bulk of his life



Serbian tennis star Novak Djokovic and his girlfriend pose on the red carpet before the screening of "The Beaver" at the 64th Cannes Film Festival on Tuesday.

PHOTO: AFP

since retirement in Australia, where he has carved out a lengthy career as a television cricket commentator.

Many Australia fans have accused him of bias against their side and that opinion is unlikely to be softened by an interview he gave to the BBC to coincide with the publication of a new biography, "Tony Greig: A Reappraisal of English Cricket's Most Controversial Captain," by David Tossell.

"If you treated the Aussies in the way they treated everyone else, they found it a little bit foreign," Greig told the BBC.

"I think they thought they had some sort of exclusivity on it and they didn't like it. There were people like Dennis Lillee, who was a past master at letting people have it, but he was a bit of a fairy when he got hit himself."

"I must say I got a lot of pleasure out of that. I was an all-rounder so I could afford to dish it out, because I was going to get it anyhow."

"Having come from South Africa I was brought up in the same way as the Aussies," he explained.

However, Greig added: "Lillee was up there with the two best fast bowlers I have ever played against and Thomson was as quick as the quickest."