



Recently-retired former Pakistan captain Shahid Afridi waves to a large contingent of fans who greeted him upon his return to Karachi yesterday. PHOTO: AFP

Afridi to duck PCB hearing

Cricket
AFP, Karachi

Retired cricket star Shahid Afridi will not appear as summoned before a Pakistani disciplinary committee on June 8 to face charges of violating a code of conduct, his lawyer said Monday.

The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) told Afridi to appear before a three-man disciplinary committee, after the former one-day captain abruptly decided to retire from international cricket last week.

"The process followed by the PCB does not conform with the law as even under Pakistan's constitution there is a right given to everyone to be heard before a case is decided," Afridi's lawyer Syed Ali Zafar told a news conference.

The PCB said Afridi violated the players' code of conduct in announcing his retirement and suspended his central contract and revoked all no-objection certificates (NOCs) that would have allowed him to play abroad.

The move prevents him from playing for Hampshire in the Twenty20 league in England and in next month's Sri Lankan Premier League.

Afridi had developed differences with coach Waqar Younis over selection matters during last month's tour of the West Indies and his public criticism saw the PCB replace him as captain.

The star also levelled serious allegations of mistreatment against the PCB, saying he would not play under the current board set-up, headed by Ijaz Butt.

When asked if Afridi might take legal steps should the PCB committee take action in his absence, Zafar said: "all the options are open. We will knock (on) the door of justice and that we have repeated all through this case."

Zafar said the PCB had taken strict steps without giving Afridi a chance to tell his side of the story.

"The PCB served the first show-cause notice on May 18 and then suddenly Afridi's NOCs were revoked and his central contract was suspended, which was against the law," said Zafar, speaking in English.

Afridi, who returned from England to a rousing welcome from fans on Sunday, said the PCB should have given him a chance to air his views.

"The PCB chairman took a decision based on whatever management told him. He should have given me a chance to speak over happenings in the West Indies," Afridi told the news conference.

Afridi also disagreed with the process of the disciplinary action.

"The committee belongs to PCB employees and they have to take a decision on the same day. I can't understand the process," said Afridi of the committee comprising of Shafiq Ahmed, Sultan Rana and Usman Wahla.

"I have never cared about the captaincy. I have played under a number of players and even if Umar Akmal is made captain I am ready to play under him," said Afridi.

"A lot of other senior players also feel humiliated by treatment from the PCB but they can't stand and fight because of the central contract and many other things, but for me personal honour comes first," said Afridi.

Rhetoric

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about without anything being finalised either.

Isn't it always funnier when the boss gets it wrong?

Kamal tends to throw about names and provide shock value. Last year he all but confirmed that former South Africa all-rounder Lance Klusener would be the bowling coach but it was a premature declaration. Zulu never showed up.

His promises for grassroots development are becoming mythical by the day while claims of decentralisation has so far only amounted to the announcement of holding board meetings in divisional headquarters (Sylhet and Rajshahi).

His fondness for making promises at the drop of a hat is a major cause for concern and as the coach hunt intensifies, Kamal's grandstanding is unravelling a basic lack of professionalism in the cricket board.

More than anything, the new coach is already aware of this problem and would tread carefully before making any further moves.

Maybe Kamal is preparing an even bigger surprise but someone has to remind him that this is not a party and nobody plans to be amused.

Sk Jamal's

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Despite crucial victories, Farashganj, with 18 points from 19 games and Chittagong Mohammedan with 16 points from 19 matches, are still in danger of relegation along with Feni Soccer Club, who are second from bottom with 14 points from 19 matches. Chittagong Abahani have all but confirmed relegation as they stay at the bottom with five points from 19 games.

Rafa honoured by Borg comparison

Tennis
AFP, Paris

Rafael Nadal said he was honoured to be compared to Bjorn Borg after equalling the great Swede's record of six French Open titles with his 7-5, 7-6 (7/3), 5-7, 6-1 win over Roger Federer on Sunday.

But the Spaniard ruled out suggestions that he was now to be regarded as the greatest player of all time.

"It's very special to equal the six French Opens of Bjorn Borg, but the most important thing is to win Roland Garros," said the world number one.

"I have worked hard to be here and to play here another time. It's an honour to be compared to Borg."

Nadal now has 10 Grand Slam titles made up of six French, two Wimbledon and

one each at the US and Australian Opens.

Federer still leads the way with 16 majors, but with Nadal almost five years' the Swiss star's junior, expectations are high that the Spaniard will race past that total.

However, he was keen to play down the hype.

"I'm not the best player in the history of tennis but I'm amongst the best and that's enough for me," he said.

Nadal's coach and uncle Toni Nadal said Sunday's win was the most difficult of all his nephew's six wins in the French capital.

"It was the most complicated. He played really badly in the first three rounds," said Toni Nadal.

"For Roger it was important for him to try and win another Grand Slam and for us it was crucial that Rafa did not lose as he wouldn't then be the best player on clay."

Nadal needed five sets to

see off John Isner of the United States in the first round in Paris and complained that he didn't feel as if he was playing well enough to win the title.

Toni Nadal said he had needed to have a pep talk with his nephew.

England

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Dilshan had made a Test-best 193 on Sunday -- the highest individual score by a Sri Lankan in a Lord's Test.

Mahela Jayawardene's previous two Tests at Lord's had both yielded hundreds.

But Finn, recalled in place of Anderson, squared him up on 49 with a good length ball that he edged to third slip where Alastair Cook, who'd dropped opener Tharanga Paranavitana in the same position, held the catch.

Then, two balls later, 394 for four became 394 for five when Samaraweera, flat-footedly drove at Chris Tremlett, the tallest of England's 6ft 5in plus seam trio, and nicked to wicketkeeper Matt Prior.

Stuart Broad then struck with his sixth ball Monday when Farveez Maharoof was lbw.

But Prasanna Jayawardene drove Broad straight for four before hoisting Swann for six.

He was out when well caught by diving second slip Swann off Finn.

SCORES IN BRIEF
ENGLAND: First innings 486 (Prior 126, Cook 96, Morgan 79, Broad 54; C Welegedara 4-122, SLakmal 3-126)
SRI LANKA: First Innings (Dilshan 193, Paranavitana 65, Jayawardene 49; Finn 4-108, Swann 3-101)
ENGLAND: Second innings 18 for 1 (Cook 11 not out; Welegedara 1-12)

Mushfiqur unfazed

FROM PAGE 16
enough for him to have earned a call-up to the pre-season camp. Sahagir Hossain, as usual, was there as a back-up wicketkeeper.

Anamul might not have got the nod but he has the potential to challenge Mushfiqur, who has averaged 27.14 in 23 Tests and 24.51 in 93 ODIs.

However, the 22-year old Mushfiqur, who made his Test debut in May 2005 at Lord's, did not feel any pressure.

"It's always good when someone is in the pipeline to push me. The back-up wicketkeeper-batsmen were always there and it's nothing new for me," said a confident Mushfiqur while speaking to reporters at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur in April this year.

"I think we have some good wicketkeeper-batsmen as back-up which is really good," said Mushfiqur, who showed some sort of batting form by making an unbeaten 44 and 81 - his first fifty in ten innings -- against Australia in the Tigers' most recent one-day series in Mirpur in April this year.

"I'm competing with myself. I am thinking about whether I am giving my hundred percent effort or not," added Mushfiqur, who had also one half-century in last ten Test innings.

Who's the best-ever?

Tennis
AFP, Paris

Rafael Nadal's win over Roger Federer in the French Open final on Sunday will reignite the age-old debate about who is the greatest player of all time.

Both men are scathing of any such comparisons, but that will not stop the arguments which are set to escalate as Federer, approaching 30, enters the twilight of his career and 25-year-old Nadal, fitness permitting, enters the prime of his.

The Spaniard's thrilling four sets win at Roland Garros means he now has 10 Grand Slam titles, with six French Opens, two Wimbledon, and one apiece at the US and Australian Opens.

He is now in sixth equal place on the all-time list level with 1920s American star Bill Tilden and just one behind legends Rod Laver and Bjorn Borg.

More pertinently he is now just six Grand Slam titles shy of the record currently held by Federer, who is five years older.

Having proved that he can play well and win on all surfaces, Nadal looks set to at least match Federer's total which would give him a statistical argument to claim he is the best player ever.

Not that it seems to matter much to the player himself.

"When you talk about these statistics, when you try and make these comparisons, really it's not very interesting to me," he said.

"I'm very happy with what I have, with who I am. I'm not the best player in the history of tennis. I think I'm amongst the best. That's true. That's enough for me."

Sentiments echoed by Federer, who long laid siege to Pete Sampras' record of 14 Grand Slam titles which he equalled with his crucial win in the 2009 French Open and then followed up by winning at Wimbledon the same year and at the Australian Open in 2010.

"Who cares where you stand," he said.

"It's when it's over that you can't do anything any longer, that's when you're proud of what you accomplished."

"That's why I'm happy for him (Nadal) that he's won these Grand Slams and these tournaments. He can prove to people that he can play a good type of tennis. This is what counts."

If both men are unwilling to enter the debate, they certainly are acutely aware of the intensity of their rivalry, one of the greatest in the history of any sport.

To date the two have met an incredible 25 times, 14 of these on clay, since a

teenage Nadal shocked Federer in straight sets on the Miami hardcourts in early 2004.

The Swiss star grabbed his first win over the Spaniard at the same tournament the following year when he bounced back from two sets to love down to win.

But since then it is Nadal who has dominated their head-to-heads and he now stands at 17-8 with a Grand Slam finals record of 6-2 against his arch-rival.

Despite the arrival of Novak Djokovic, Andy Murray and Juan Martin del Potro at the topmost level of the sport, Nadal and Federer both agree that in any tournament their greatest adversary is the other.

That rivalry will now switch over to London where Nadal will try to defend his Wimbledon crown with six-times former winner Federer desperate to equal the seven titles won by his great idol Sampras.

"That's obviously the huge priority right now, to win Wimbledon in a few weeks' time. That's always, for me, the number one goal in the season," Federer said.

"This is where it all started for me back in 2003; or even with Sampras earlier in '01. So that's why I always really enjoy coming back."

Li leads a leeway

Tennis
AFP, Singapore

Li Na's stunning French Open victory barged down yet another door for sport in Asia, whose athletes are enjoying a growing presence on the world stage.

From tennis to golf, football and the Olympics, sportsmen and women from the diverse and increasingly wealthy region are showing they can not only mix it with European and American stars, but win -- and do so repeatedly.

So when Li, 29, collapsed in celebration on to the red clay of Roland Garros, it was with relief more than surprise after a success that had an air of inevitability following her Grand Slam final debut in January.

"This win is truly a breakthrough in a sport that has been dominated mainly by players from Europe, Australia and the Americas," said Chinese tennis chief Sun Jinfang.

With her straight-sets win over defending champion Francesca Schiavone, Li became the first Grand Slam singles champion from Asia, a continent that has previously provided only a fitful challenge.

Li won China's first singles title in 2004, became its first Grand Slam quarter-finalist in 2006 and its first top 10 player this year after reaching the Australian Open final. She now advances to

world number four, equaling Kimiko Date-Krumm's Asian record.

In the men's game, great things are expected of Japan's Kei Nishikori, 21, Asia's hottest talent since Thailand's Paradorn Srichaphan broke the top 10 in 2003.

In golf, South Korea's Yang Yong-Eun re-wrote the record books in 2009, when he became Asia's first major-winner at the PGA Championship -- fending off a strong challenge from the part-Thai Tiger Woods.

The victory confirmed the growing stature of Asia's golfers, led by thick-set Korean K.J. Choi and featuring a burgeoning contingent of young talent including Japan's Ryo Ishikawa.

China dominated the 2008 Beijing Olympics to such an extent that their victory on the medals table was confirmed before the Games even finished, ending a 12-year reign by the United States.

Their final tally of 51 golds came despite the injury withdrawal of 110m hurdles superstar Liu Xiang, who scooped China's first Olympic track gold with a landmark win in Athens four years earlier.

In 2001, seven-foot (2.13 metres) Wang Zhizhi broke through a forest of red tape to join the Dallas Mavericks, becoming the US National Basketball Association's first Chinese player.

He was soon followed by Shanghai's towering, seven-

foot-six-inches Yao Ming, whose signing by the Houston Rockets triggered a new wave of basketball fever across China.

South Korea's Park Ji-Sung has been horribly unlucky not to become the first Asian player to lift football's glittering European Cup, after being dropped for Manchester United's 2008 win and being on the losing side in 2009 and 2011.

But the hard-running midfielder, 30, has won over an army of fans in the English Premier League, putting him among the pick of Asian exports to European football.

Deadly free-kick taker Shunsuke Nakamura was the darling of Scotland's Celtic before departing in 2009, while Sun Jihai provided tenacious service during six years at Manchester City.

Nearly half of Japan's current national squad is based in Europe, including Inter Milan's Yuto Nagatomo, while German giants Bayern Munich are reportedly interested in signing teen sensation Takashi Usami.

But the crowning glory for Asian football remains South Korea's fairytale run to the 2002 World Cup semi-finals, beating Spain, Italy and Portugal along the way.

In badminton, dominant China provides two of the top five men's players and three of the women's top five, and it's a similar story in table tennis, where the giant nation has long set the standard.

Ding Junhui lit the

Two Butts in one show

PTI, Karachi

Pakistan Cricket Board chairman Ijaz Butt has landed in yet another controversy after giving a telephonic interview to a TV show which featured banned former captain Salman Butt as a panelist.

On Sunday evening, Butt came on the telephone line in a show that featured Salman Butt, who has been banned for 10 years for being involved in spot-fixing, and national selector Moha-mmud Illyas, a target of some scathing attacks by sacked ODI captain Shahid Afridi.

Butt also had some harsh words for former captain Wasim Akram advising him to concentrate on his commentary assignments in India.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

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CRYPTOQUIP

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W B D U R Y Q N J B Z F R P T H
N O C C R Z Y Z O C A T F U O C A T F .

Yesterday's Cryptoquip: WHEN A SERIOUS ALERT IS ISSUED TO THE WHOLE WORLD, I GUESS THAT WOULD BE GLOBAL WARNING.
Today's Cryptoquip Clue: B equals O