

Japan 2-0 up against Argentina

AFP, Kobe

Up-and-coming Misaki Doi gave Japan a perfect start as they led 2-0 against Argentina on the first day of the Fed Cup World Group II play-off on Saturday.

The 20-year-old, who reached the third round at Wimbledon at her first attempt, whitewashed Maria Irigoyen 6-0, 6-0 in the opener of the best-of-five contest in the Japanese city of Kobe.

Ayumi Morita followed her with a solid 6-2, 6-3 victory over Mailen Auroux in the second singles.

After reverse singles matches on Sunday, Rika Fujiwara and Kurumi Nara will play the doubles against Irigoyen and Auroux.

The World Group II play-off was originally scheduled for April but the earthquake and tsunami and ensuing nuclear emergency in northern Japan forced its postponement.

The two countries have an even 3-3 record but Argentina have won the last three times. The winners will be promoted to World Group II along with Belarus, Slovenia and Switzerland next year.

KP the X-factor

IANS, London

Former England captain Michael Vaughan and Australian spin legend Shane Warne feel that maverick all-rounder Kevin Pietersen will be England's x-factor in the forthcoming Test series against India.

Pietersen had a quiet Test series against Sri Lanka, scoring just 162 runs from three matches. But his valuable knock of 227 runs in the second Ashes Test helped England win the series Down Under.

Vaughan feels that former England captain Pietersen's form will be important for the team against India.

"His Test form is not a massive worry. In an x-factor series against India, which will bring big crowds and a buzz, I think he will perform," Vaughan was quoted as saying by the Daily Telegraph.

Warne feels that Pietersen can provide the thrust if England want to snatch the No.1 Test crown from India.

"If Kevin Pietersen finds his form again and provides that x-factor, then there is no reason why England can't become the No.1 team," said Warne.

Pietersen had admitted that the draw of luck hasn't particularly helped him recently. But he was looking forward to a big knock.

"I feel 100% that I'm on the brink of a big score. I've felt better and better. But the way that I play, looking to score and be aggressive and take the attack to the opposition, you are going to have good days and bad days. I've just got to keep playing the way I play and, if the way I'm playing at the moment is anything to go by, I'm very happy," he said.

Sanctions

FROM PAGE 16 offering 'sweets' of enormous amount (Tk 3.5 lac) to Salahuddin Kala if his team resisted Sheikh Jamal.

The probe body was formed after Rahmatganj dubiously threw away a 2-0 lead to eventually lose 5-2 against eventual Bangladesh League champions Sheikh Jamal. The League's by-laws provide for the annulment of a team or teams if found guilty of fixing matches.

"Because of a lack of sufficient information, we are not able to impose the maximum penalty, though we had a hunch that there was foul-play involved. The fines will have to be paid before the start of the next season of the League," said Abdus Salam Murshey after yesterday's meeting.



PHOTO: COURTESY

Shipping Minister Shahjahan Khan (2nd From R), who is also the president of Bangladesh Wrestling Federation, addresses a press conference in connection with the third Asian Zerkhaneh Sports & Koshti Pehlevani Championship at the Conference Room of the National Sports Council yesterday. The championship involving 26 countries will be held at the Wooden-floor Gymnasium on July 23-30.

Strauss back on track

Cricket

AFP, Taunton

England Test captain Andrew Strauss warmed up for next week's first Test against India by scoring a quick-fire 78 as Somerset reached 329-2 against the tourists at Taunton on Friday.

Strauss has made a brief loan move to Somerset from Middlesex in the hope of rediscovering his form after a miserable run during England's recent Test series win over Sri Lanka.

The switch paid dividends as Strauss shared a 101-run partnership with Arul Suppiah before the opener was dismissed by Amit Mishra shortly before lunch on the opening day of the three-day match.

Strauss scored just 27 runs in three Tests against Sri Lanka and, with Middlesex's fixtures offering little chance for first-class action, he decided to take the risk of giving India's bowlers a chance to dent his morale ahead of the start of the first Test at Lord's.

He struck 11 boundaries and brought up his half century from just 63 balls, although he did survive an lbw appeal from Indian seamer Zaheer Khan when he had scored only 20.

Strauss escaped again on 64 when Wriddhiman Saha, the reserve wicketkeeper playing in place of the rested MS Dhoni,

dropped an edge off Mishra.

However, Saha took the next chance when an edge bobbed off the pad, ending Strauss's innings on 78 from 98 balls.

India's bowlers found it hard going during 75 overs of action on a rain-interrupted day at Taunton and Somerset look on course to score a huge first innings total.

Suppiah was India's chief tormentor and finished the day on 145 not out after hitting 14 fours and one six.

Nick Compton also weighed in with 88 before India's Suresh Raina had him caught by Yuvraj Singh just before the close with the score on 324.

Zaheer is the only one of the India attack taking on Somerset who is certain to play at Lord's, with Ishant Sharma and Praveen Kumar rested following their workload in the recent Test series against the West Indies.

Although bowlers Shanthakumaran Sreesanth and Munaf Patel failed to stake a claim to start at Lord's, a strong Indian batting line-up featuring Sachin Tendulkar and Rahul Dravid will fancy their chances of responding with a big total of their own.

Score from the first day of the three-day match between Somerset and India at Taunton on Friday:

BRIEF SCORES

SOMERSET: First innings 329 for 2 (Suppiah 154 not out, Compton 88, Strauss 78; Raina 1-42)

Few outcomes in marathon

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whether a selector will be a part of the touring party as the board initially was not ready to send any selector although it was a common practice for a selector to accompany the team besides the support staff. Finally it was decided that a member of the national selection panel will tour Zimbabwe with the national team. Manzur also informed that BCB director Shafiqur Rahman Munna will accompany the team as a head of delegation.

SELECTION OUT OF TECHNICAL COMMITTEE'S HAND

The board has decided that the technical committee will not be involved in the team selection process to avoid recent controversy. The alleged interference of the team selection created a chaos in team selection in recent times and recently chief selector Akram Khan also voiced his concern over the involvement of the technical committee in the selection procedure.

INTERNATIONAL CRICKET IN SYLHET

It has been decided that initiatives will be taken to make the Sylhet Divisional Stadium the next international cricket venue in the country. In the presence of Finance Minister AMA Muhith, State Minister for Youth and Sports Ahad Ali Sarker, other local dignitaries and the BCB high-ups, the decision has been taken in the view-exchange meeting. "Tk 64 crore has been already allocated for upgrading the stadium. We hope it will be a beautiful stadium with all modern facilities. You know Sylhet has all the facilities to fulfill the international demands," said Yunus.

APPOINTMENT OF COACHES AND

SUPPORTING STAFFS APPROVED

The board confirmed the appointment of South African Vaibhav Singh as the new physiotherapist of the national team and also approved the appointments of head coach Stuart Law and fielding coach Jason Swift. National team analyst Nasir Ahmed's contract has been renewed up to June 2012.

DISAGREEMENT ON THE BPL COMMITTEE

It was learned that there had been a heated discussion over the formation of the committee to arrange the proposed BPL. BCB vice-president Ahmed Sajjadul Alam has been given the responsibility to run the show and accordingly he formed a committee which got the nod from the BCB president AHM Mustafa Kamal. But an influential director raised his voice against the committee and ultimately the board didn't approve it.

MATCH FEE FOR THE "A" TEAM PLAYERS

The board has decided that "A" team players will be brought under the board's salary structure. Sources said that an influential director questioned the salary structure for the A team players and he found no reason to give the players a handsome amount. Many were surprised by his unprofessional attitude regarding the issue. Besides, BCB will form an anti-corruption unit for domestic cricket as per ICC guideline while they will send delegations to India, England and Australia to discuss bilateral cricket series within the next FTP cycle. Finally, it was also decided that the GP-BCB National Academy will tour South Africa from August 3 to August 22.

L'pool triumph in a sea of red

FROM PAGE 16

already settled for in their first warm-up game in China, until the injury time's play as Rodriguez added another while Dirk Kuyt too put his name on the score sheet two minutes into added time.

The Reds are in Malaysia as part of their second pre-season tour of Asia in three years. In the first game of the three-match tour, they edged past China's Guangzhou province's little-known Guangdong Sunray Cave 4-3 on July 13. They now move on to Singapore for the final practice game today.

Liverpool had previously visited Thailand and Singapore in 2009. This is the first time they came to China and Malaysia and this Asia trip has been facilitated by the team's

sponsors Standard Chartered Bank.

Back in KL, it was already electric inside the Bukit Jalil Stadium in Kuala Lumpur on Saturday afternoon, well ahead of the 5:45 pm kick-off. The 90,000-capacity arena was full to every inch. And it virtually was a Red Sea. The beating of drums, cacophony of the Malaysia editions of vuvuzelas and loud music on the PA system made the atmosphere inside far too deafening.

Fans from all corners of the posh metropolis of Kuala Lumpur started thronging the stadium on the outskirts of the city from as early as 2:00 pm, fearing severe traffic congestion on the KL-Selangor Expressway. Many of them had to leave their cars on the streets two miles away from the venue.

Warne predicts 1-0 for England

Cricket

PTI, London

Australian spin legend Shane Warne foresees England beating India 1-0 in the upcoming four-Test series as he feels Andrew Strauss' men will manage to do just enough to upset their world number one rivals.

Warne said England are a good side capable of coming out triumphant against Mahendra Singh Dhoni's men in the series starting July 21 but the hosts would do their reputation some good by being more attacking in their approach.

"It is important England nail teams if they get them on the ropes. Make it more entertaining and be more aggressive. If you do that then it is fun for the players and that comes across to the crowd. To summarise I think we all believe England are a good side. They have variety in their attack," Warne told 'Daily Telegraph'.

"They have great top order batting, for them to make the next step and stay there it will be about how they play the game. If they just stick to process and wear oppositions down they will not win series by whitewashes. They are just going to do enough and win 1-0. Strauss needs to put them in a situation where it is win at all costs," he added.

Former England captain Michael Vaughan agreed and said explosive batsman Kevin Pietersen will have a huge role to play in making the series engrossing.

"His Test form is not a massive worry. In an x-factor series against India, which will bring big crowds and a buzz, I think he will perform," he said.

Warne said England have the requisite balance in their team.

"If you put (Ian) Bell in form, (Alastair) Cook, (Jonathan) Trott, Strauss, Pietersen with the x-factor and (Eoin) Morgan's variety together then suddenly you have got a hell of a top six," Warne said.

"Throw in Chris Tremlett with his height and steep bounce, James Anderson's skill of swinging the ball and Graeme Swann as the best spinner in the game and it all looks good. England just need to find the right person to fit in the third seamer's role and then there will be no weak spot in the team," he said.

Vaughan compared India with Australia and said like the former world champions, Dhoni's men will also soon be in a transitional phase after greats such as Sachin Tendulkar retire.

"We are not playing in an era when we have a great team like Australia who have dominated for so long. They were so much better than the rest of the world. India are a good team but you can certainly see England within a year or so getting there," he explained.

Sehwag to miss first two Tests

Cricket

INTERNET

Influential opener Virender Sehwag is set to miss the opening two Tests against England, but India remain hopeful that he will be fit for the final two games.

Sehwag skipped the latter stages of the Indian Premier League as well as India's tour to the West Indies after undergoing surgery on his right shoulder. He was initially expected to be fit for the first Test against England starting at Lord's next Thursday, but his recovery is taking longer than expected and he has been all but ruled out of the first two Tests.

India captain Mahendra Singh Dhoni admits Sehwag will be a big loss, but backed Abhinav Mukund, who opened with Murali Vijay during the Windies Test series, to form a good partnership with Gautam Gambhir at the top.

"We are a side that relies on our openers quite a bit," Dhoni said. "If we get off to a good start then we can really capitalise with the middle order we have."

"As far as Virender Sehwag is concerned, there aren't many cricketers in the world who can have the impact he can. Of course we'll miss him, but the good thing for Indian cricket is it gives a chance to a youngster like Mukund who can have a look at international cricket and see what areas he needs to improve. Viru will be back at some point, but it's good to have Gautam back as well."

Dhoni isn't the only one who can't quite pinpoint Sehwag's return date as coach Duncan Fletcher also admitted they are not quite sure when the right-hander will be available for selection again.

"We've heard that he'll be over here for maybe the third and fourth Test, so we're crossing our fingers for that," Fletcher is quoted by Cricinfo as saying.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS	37	Accom-	2	Met	23	— Mahal
1 King or queen	38	Inhibit	3	Tear apart	24	Rd.
5 — Na Na	41	With 42-	4	Old man	25	Claiborne
8 On the rocks	10	Across, "Little"	5	Bo-Peep's	26	canto
12 Neighborhood	11	storybook character	6	Informal	27	Important
13 With it	42	See 41-Across	7	greeting	28	Part of DJIA
14 Challenge	45	Places	8	Mimic	29	New England cape
15 Visual memory	46	Psych-out tactic	9	Scoundrels	31	Shriner's chapeau
17 Valhalla VIP	48	"Once — a time, ..."	10	Great Lake	34	Jazz style
18 Tablet	49	Foolish one	11	Fender bender	35	Legendary pirate captain
19 Mauna —	50	Hodge-podge	12	Vail gear	37	Thick
20 Beginning	21	Pinch	13	Rowing need	38	Organization
21 Vanna's cohort	22	Wanna's cohort	14	Forget it"	39	Lasso
22 Island whose capital is Hamilton	23	Stories	15	Church seat	40	PC picture
23 Tel —	24	31 Not many	16	Solution time: 21 mins.	41	Get up
24 Part of the loop	25	32 Part of the loop	17		42	Head light?
25 Wicked woman of the Bible	26	33 Wicked woman of the Bible	18		43	Eastern potentate
26 Island whose capital is Hamilton	27	34 Familiar				