

Star SPORT

DHAKA SUNDAY SEPTEMBER 11, 2011, E-MAIL: sports@thedailystar.net

Gattuso taken to hospital

Gennaro Gattuso was taken to hospital following a collision with AC Milan teammate Alessandro Nesta during Friday night's 2-2 draw with Lazio at the San Siro. Gattuso was forced off after just 20 minutes, to be replaced by Mark van Bommel, before being taken to the Fatebenefratelli hospital in Milan, Italian news agency Ansa said. Prior to the game he'd been suffering from double vision for a couple of days but tests showed there was nothing wrong. "Gattuso's head is spinning a little but he's basically fine," said coach Massimiliano Allegri.



What about BCB captain?

Cricket

MOHAMMAD ISAM

It has almost been a week since Manic Monday when Bangladesh Cricket Board directors gathered to depose the captain of the national team at an abnormally dizzying speed; a decision that has left the Tigers with a leadership vacuum.

The verdict, especially the manner in which it was taken, can be described as an act of Nero and has revealed how poorly the BCB itself is led.

The meeting on September 5 was not scheduled to discuss the captaincy. Among the several agendas were the four tour reports, compiled individually by the coach, manager, chief of delegations and selector. How these reports were turned into such an important decision soon became well known, like every other classified information within the cricket board.

It is suggested that a clique of directors planned the move and raised the topic of Shakib Al Hasan's removal as captain (and Tamim Iqbal's as the deputy) for

failing to lead on and off the field, their disciplinary indiscretions being the major talking point. But it was down to just one person with the authority to put a stop to this sudden move and take sensible strides.

AHM Mustafa Kamal, the BCB chief, could have easily told his colleagues to calm down and discuss the issue, maybe fine and suspend the duo before making such a drastic decision, since it was bound to be taken at some point.

Let alone take that route or order a full inquiry into the matter, Kamal took the easiest option: he sided with the impetuous directors and did as they pleased.

He decided to paper over the cracks, sideline the other important major issues. Rather than finding out why the national team was so inadequately prepared for the Zimbabwe tour or why the pitches across the country are dead or why the country's first-class tournament is termed picnic or why Shakib and Tamim were never brought under the law, Kamal took his favourite route: showboating, staying in the headlines, etc.

It was not much of a surprise, and it would not be a surprise if Shakib is all of a sudden reinstated. It could happen, for this cricket board is in the phase of its worst presidential cycle.

Never before has any BCB chief taken the country's cricket so many steps in the opposite direction. His actions have not been proactive and for the last two years, Kamal has been the most unpopular president in the board's history. So much so, his words which should have been honoured and cherished, is not taken seriously by anyone in the fear of a publicity stunt.

Without going into too many examples, two of his latest ones would be good enough to illustrate the aforementioned statement. On August 18, Kamal categorically said that the board should be investigated rather than the players after the Tigers had conceded the ODI series to Zimbabwe. "Players are not the main problem," he said just 23 days ago.

A month or so earlier, Kamal's handling of the ICC presidency matter was questionable to say the least and if

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PHOTO: AFP

NEXT IN LINE? Bangladesh wicketkeeper Mushfiqur Rahim talks to reporters after the Tigers' practice session at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium yesterday. After Shakib Al Hasan's removal from the captaincy, the man from Bogra could be next in line to take over the reins.

Football diplomacy

SPORTS REPORTER

When political diplomacy fails, sport can become an ice-breaker, it has been proved time and again. The business leaders of Bangladesh and India are planning football diplomacy to soften the political differences by organising a friendly football match between Bangladesh League champions Sheikh Jamal Dhanmondi Club and Mohun Bagan of Kolkata. "We are discussing a plan about arranging a friendly football match between Sheikh Jamal and Mohun Bagan club in Dhaka even though the plan is at the initial stage," said Abdul Matlub Ahmed, president of India Bangladesh Chamber of Commerce and Industry (IBCCI) at a press meet at the Ruposhi Bangla hotel yesterday. Matlub also informed that they have a plan to invite Mamata Banerjee, the Chief Minister of West Bengal and Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina to witness the match.

It may be mentioned here that Mamata opted out from Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's recent tour party to Dhaka, postponing the signing of Teesta Water Sharing Treaty, and dealing a blow to the diplomatic relationships between the two countries.

The hosting of the match, although at a very nascent stage, can be seen as an effort to bringing the two leaders closer.

Meanwhile, Manzur Kader, president of the Sheikh Jamal Dhanmondi Club, said they were prepared to take part in the match, when contacted over phone.

"We have heard about the proposal from the IBCCI and we are interested to play either against Mohun Bagan or East Bengal as both those clubs are very famous in the subcontinent.

"Even though the proposal is at the initial stage, we are prepared to play the match any time in Dhaka," hoped Kader.

Mike, Shaun grind SL

Cricket

AFP, Pallekele

Michael Hussey hit a 14th Test century and debutant Shaun Marsh his maiden ton before rain halted Australia's progress in the second Test against Sri Lanka on Saturday.

The two left-handers put on 258 for the fourth wicket as the tourists moved to 411-7 in their first innings by stumps on the third day, a lead of 237 runs with three wickets in hand.

Marsh made 141 and Hussey scored 142, his second big knock in the series after a match-winning 95 in the first Test in Galle last week. Just 40.3 overs were bowled in the day as heavy rain washed out play soon after lunch at the Pallekele International Stadium.

With more rain forecast over the remaining two days, Australian captain Michael Clarke may be forced to make an early declaration to bid for a series-clinching victory.

Hussey and Marsh, who resumed at 264-3, stayed together till 10 minutes before lunch when Hussey holed out to the cover fence against part-time spinner Thilan Samaraweera.

Their partnership was the highest ever against Sri Lanka for the fourth

wicket, surpassing the 256 by Sachin Tendulkar and Sourav Ganguly for India in Mumbai in 1997.

The pair had joined forces on Friday morning when Sri Lanka grabbed three quick wickets to reduce Australia to 116-3 in reply to their own 174.

"It's very surreal at the moment, a very proud day," said a delighted Marsh.

"I still can't believe it. Just to be even playing Test cricket and to go there and get a hundred in my first innings. You dream of that sort of stuff.

"There were a few nerves when I first went out there. I relaxed a little bit when I got off the mark, and today was pretty nerve-wracking. I just tried to forget what score I was on."

Marsh had come into the Test side in place of former captain Ricky Ponting, who had to return home after Galle for the birth of his second child.

The century will help the left-hander secure his place in the team even when Ponting returns for the third final Test in Colombo from September 16.

For Australian opener Geoff Marsh applauded

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PHOTO: AFP

DEBUT DAZZLE: Australia batsman Shaun Marsh acknowledges the cheers upon reaching his hundred on debut during the 3rd day of the second Test against Sri Lanka at the Pallekele International Cricket Stadium yesterday.

'Shakib was alright'

Cricket

SPORTS REPORTER

After the hurriedly taken decision of sacking Shakib Al Hasan and Tamim Iqbal from the posts of captain and vice-captain, the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) has been facing a dilemma in choosing their successors with the next home series against West Indies knocking at the door.

It's now all but clear that the board has taken the decision whimsically, not only without examining in detail the reasons behind the Zimbabwe tour debacle, but also without having given any thought about what would happen next.

Except wicketkeeper-batsman Mushfiqur Rahim none can be considered for the hot seat as the places of senior players like Mohammad Ashraf, Shahriar Nafees and Abdur Razzak are not even assured in the playing eleven.

So, the man from Bogra is the most likely candidate for the captaincy.

Interestingly the little man lost the vice-captaincy reportedly for the same reason for which Shakib and Tamim have been removed -- an attitude problem.

And under these circumstances Mushfiqur's words took special significance when he talked to the media yesterday at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur. Mushfiqur echoed the sentiments of his coach, Stuart Law, while talking about discipline in the team and Shakib's captaincy, apparently raising questions about the merit of the board's decision.

Mushfiqur showered praises on captain Shakib. "He [Shakib] is our key player and it's always an advantage for a performer to lead the team. He was excellent as a captain and performed with the bat, ball and also he was superb in his fielding. He always motivated us as a captain," said Mushfiqur.

The young man, whose batting was one of the few positives in an otherwise disastrous Zimbabwe tour, threw a challenge when asked about the issue of indiscipline in the team by saying, "You can understand how disciplined we are

as a team if you travel with the other teams in the world. As our coach said we are the most disciplined side both on and off the field."

From his position it was not possible for him to comment on the board's decision and that's why he said: "It was a board decision [to remove Shakib and Tamim] and we have to respect it. But as we repeatedly said we have been playing good cricket for the last two years, but we could not perform well in Zimbabwe."

Mushfiqur was however clear about the reasons behind the poor showing in Zimbabwe despite the fact that the board made Shakib and Tamim the scapegoat for the failure.

"Our batting and fielding was poor and that was the reason behind the failure in Zimbabwe and I don't think there was anything else other than that behind the debacle. There were some individual performances but as a team we could not perform well in the last tour, so our main target would be to perform well as a team against the West

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Top four in last four

AFP, New York



Defending champion Rafael Nadal and world number four Andy Murray guaranteed a US Open Super

Saturday line-up on Friday, completing an all-star, top-four lockout of the semifinal places.

Second seed Nadal cruised past 2003 champion Andy Roddick, the American 21st seed, 6-2, 6-1, 6-3 and will tackle Murray for a place in Monday's final.

Murray, the fourth seed, became just the seventh man to feature in all four Grand Slam semifinals in the same year when he thwarted big-serving American John Isner, the 28th seed, 7-5, 6-4, 3-6, 7-6 (7/2).

Top seed Novak Djokovic, who will also be playing in his fourth Grand Slam semifinal of 2011, will face five-time champion Roger Federer, the third seed, in Saturday's other semifinal.

Nadal pulled off his seventh win in 10 meetings against Roddick and was untroubled as the 29-year-old American was slowed by a left thigh injury which twice needed treatment and the all-court dominance of the Spaniard.

Nadal, who became the youngest man to complete a career Grand Slam when he won here last year, will be playing in his fourth successive US Open semifinal and will be buoyed by having defeated Murray in the semifinals at the French Open and Wimbledon.

"It's always a pleasure to face Andy Murray. He is one of the most talented players on the tour. He beat me here in 2008 when he reached the final. It'll be an exciting match and a big challenge," said Nadal, who has yet to drop a set on his way to the semifinals. Murray, who is vying to become the first

British man since 1936 to win a Grand Slam title, said he thinks he can contend on the Flushing Meadows hardcourts despite trailing Nadal 12-4 in career meetings.

"I think on the American hard courts it's a close, close matchup," he said.

Djokovic, who has already won the Australian Open and Wimbledon titles this year, made sure of his semifinal place on Thursday when Serbian teammate Janko Tipsarevic quit with an injury with the top seed 7-6 (7/2), 6-7 (3/7), 6-0, 3-0 to the good.

Federer eased past Jo-Wilfried Tsonga 6-4, 6-3, 6-3 to gain revenge for his shock Wimbledon quarterfinal defeat to the Frenchman.

The 30-year-old Federer, who holds a record 16 Grand Slam titles, has every right to be confident going into Saturday's showdown.

His French Open semifinal victory over Djokovic in June brought an end to the Serb's stunning 43-match winning run, a streak which stretched back to December 2010 when he led his country to a maiden Davis Cup.

Despite Djokovic having lost just one further time, the Swiss star believes he has the weapons to repeat his Roland Garros heroics.

"It's pretty straightforward. I think we're both going to play aggressive. He's moving well. He's probably taken his game up to a higher level, but mostly in terms of confidence," said Federer.

"But I think when we do play against each other it's always exciting. We have great rallies. I like playing against him because it's a battle of the baseline.

"He's been having an amazing season, so it's a challenge right now in the men's game. That's what I like, who I like to play against."

Federer holds a 14-9 winning record over Djokovic and Saturday's semifinal will be the

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Pakistan look for foreign coach

REUTERS, Karachi

Pakistan will consider appointing a foreign coach to replace Waqar Younis despite the nation's security situation, the cricket board head told Reuters as the search officially got underway on Friday.

The board has placed an advertisement on its website and contacted other Test nations and the International Cricket Council (ICC) in its hunt for a coach after Waqar announced he was quitting for medical reasons after this month's tour of Zimbabwe.

"For the time being we have kept no eligibility factor for the post and anyone inside and outside Pakistan can apply for the position," Subhan Ahmad said.

Pakistan has changed coach 15 times since 1998 with the late Bob Woolmer having the longest term between 2004 and 2007.

A four-member committee headed by ex-Test captain Intikhab Alam and including former players Zaheer Abbas, Ramiz Raja and Naushad Ali will short list and recommend the new coach.

"We want the process to be a transparent one and we

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