

Star SPORT

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Ballack removed from DFB site

Michael Ballack's removal from the website of the German Football Federation (DFB) is no slight on the former national team captain, DFB president Theo Zwanziger said Thursday. "I think this is a normal process," he told German daily Bild. "The same also applies to other officials at the DFB who are longer in office." On the DFB homepage, Ballack used to be seen leading a group of Germany's key players, but the image has now been changed with midfielder Bastian Schweinsteiger posing in the centre instead.



Ash fires Tigers

Cricket

SPORTS REPORTER

Mohammad Ashraful provided an 88-minute glimpse of his effervescent past in the national team's 36-run win over Bangladesh A in a BCB Cup match yesterday.

The Tigers, on the back of Ashraful's 83 and three other half-centuries, made it to a formidable 311-9 in 50 overs. Later, Naeem Islam's unbeaten century never really threatened the chase as the second string side made 234-8 from 39 overs after being set 271 to win following the rain break that lasted more than forty minutes in the afternoon.

A thousand or so spectators turned up at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium after Mahmudullah Riyad put the national team in to bat. Tamim Iqbal pounded the Bangladesh A seamers, hammering ten boundaries in his 67-ball 65 while his new opening partner Shahriar Nafees gave support with a half-century off 76 balls (7x4s, 1x6). The duo added 118 before Tamim missed a slog-sweep off Riyad in the 22nd over. Nafees was snared by the same off-spinner, making way for Ashraful and Mushfiqur Rahim.

The duo went on to add 130 for the third wicket, Mushfiqur imitating what Nafees did for Tamim as the skipper gave perfect sup-

port to Ashraful's refreshing approach.

Having replaced Imrul Kayes and sent to bat at No 3 with the customary pressure to retain his place in the national team, it was an all-too-familiar setting for the 27-year-old who didn't capitalise on his Test half-century against Zimbabwe by losing his place after two ODIs last month. But the A team bowlers were treated to a different Ashraful, one who took on the bowlers and belted them after he was set. He struck a dozen boundaries and a six during his 72-ball knock, before falling leg-before to Elias Sunny.

Mushfiqur stayed on a while longer as he made 63 off 61 balls with four boundaries and a six while the rest -- Shuvogoto Hom Chowdhury, Alok Kapali, Nasir Hossain, etc - threw their bat around for not many.

Sunny, the left-arm spinner, was impressive once again as he picked up three wickets while Riyad took four very expensive scalps.

Bangladesh A's reply was anything but aggressive as they lost Jahurul Islam and Rokibul Hasan early. Junaed and Naeem added 66 for the third wicket but the left-hander fell a few overs after the rain break. Riyad provided Naeem some more support but when he fell to Kapali for 30, it was all left to Naeem.

The right-hander struck seven boundaries and a couple of sixes in his 99-ball century, which he reached in the final over. It

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Mohammad Ashraful flicks on his way to 83 as Jahurul Islam looks on during the national team's BCB Cup match against Bangladesh A at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

India want SAFF C'ship in Oct

Football

SPORTS REPORTER

India are eager to host the SAFF Championship next month, according to a Times of India report, but Bangladesh would prefer to play the regional football extravaganza in December, when it was originally scheduled to take place.

"All India Football Federation is keen to organise the event (SAFF Championship) next month. Talks are on to hire the Nehru Stadium (Delhi), once the venue is available, the Federation (South Asian Football Federation) will go ahead with the tournament," SAFF secretary general Alberto Colaco was quoted by the Times of India as saying on Monday.

The Indian newspaper also hinted that the SAFF Championship is likely to take place in the Indian capital of Delhi instead of in Orissa, where the championship was originally supposed to be held.

"We want the championship to be held not before December and we will certainly request the SAFF to stick to its original schedule," said Bangladesh Football Federation vice president Badal Roy.

"If the championship takes place next month, we will face trouble to prepare the national team but we will have no option but to take part in the championship if the SAFF decides to stage it in October," said Roy, who is also chairman of the national team management committee (NTMC).

SAFF president Kazi Salahuddin however did not want to comment

until he gets the official request from the All India Football Federation.

"So far as I know India have expressed their desire to host the SAFF Championship in October and they have told their press so, but at the moment it will not be wise to comment until I get their request officially," said Salahuddin, who is also president of the Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF).

It is clear that the SAFF president wants to look into the reasons behind the All India Football Federation's intention to bring the championship forward.

Keeping the SAFF Championship in mind, the NTMC has a vast plan for the national football team, which was supposed to prepare for two months and play at least 10 practice matches at home and two matches on foreign soil before travelling to India to stake their

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Siddikur makes slow start

SPORTS REPORTER

Expectations may have been high after the country's golfing sensation Siddikur Rahman finished as high as joint-18th in the Omega European Masters earlier this month, rubbing shoulders with the likes of Lee Westwood and Rory McIlroy, but it was a slow start for him in the first of the Macau Open as he was in joint 86th position.

Siddikur was off-colour from the start as he bogeyed on the second hole, repeating it again on the fifth before things went from bad to worse on the 17th, where the 26-year-old went two shots over par for a double-bogey.

Things would have looked even bleaker had he not birdied on the 18th hole to finish with a score of three-over-par 74 at the par-71

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Dravid's final ODI

Cricket

PIT, Cardiff

Ending what has been a nightmarish tour positively is not the only motivation for the Indian team to win the final one-day international against England as the side would also want to ensure a fitting farewell to veteran Rahul Dravid, who plays his final one-day here on Friday.

Dravid, who has amassed 10,820 runs in 343 ODIs at an average of 39, has announced his retirement from one-day cricket after this series and he would be keen to go on a high, more so since the first four games of the series have only yielded 51 runs to him.

The 38-year-old right-hander, nicknamed The Wall for his rock solid defence and consistency, has scored 12 hundreds and 82 fifties in the ODIs and he would want to notch up a big knock today to make his final appearance memorable.

Aside from this, the match is of academic interest only as England have already won the series. The hosts are leading 2-0 after one match was rained out and another ended in a tie also due to rain interruptions.

But Mahendra Singh Dhoni's men would be keen to get at least a consolation win on what

has been a massively disappointing series.

Dhoni has a difficult choice to make on the team selection as he can either look for a win or test the mettle of his reserves.

If a solitary win from a horrendous tour is his motivation, it's unlikely he would give better performers of the side, men like Suresh Raina, Praveen Kumar and even himself a break.

If the choice is to view the men for tomorrow, then medium-pacers Varun Aaron and Vinay Kumar and batsmen such as Manoj Tiwary and Subramaniam Badrinath should be on the starting block.

Despite the series loss, India have run England close in the one-day series which is commendable given eight of their World Cup stars were missing due to injuries.

Openers Parthiv Patel and Ajinkya Rahane have been good against the new ball and Raina and Dhoni himself have been pillars of strength in the middle-order.

Off-spinner Ravichandran Ashwin, presently the top wicket-taker from both sides, has been a good presence with both bat and ball and bowling all-rounder Ravindra Jadeja has won the solitary man-of-the-match award among the Indians.

Jadeja was adjudged man-of-the-match

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A scene from yesterday's Premier Kabaddi League match between Border Guard Bangladesh and Azad Sporting Club at the Kabaddi Stadium.

PHOTO: BANGLARCHOKH.COM

PREMIER DIV KABADDI BGB off to flying start

SPORTS REPORTER

Border Guard Bangladesh's (BGB) bid to retain the title of the Premier Division Kabaddi League got off to a flying start when the holders recorded a 41-18 win over Azad Sporting Club on the opening day at the Kabaddi Stadium yesterday.

BGB, the former Bangladesh Rifles, dominated the show from the beginning to lead the first half 27-6 with the inspiration coming from discarded national player Ziaur Rahman.

Zia, arguably the best raider this time, returned to the court after being fully cured from his knee injury that kept him out of the Bangladesh national team in the 2010 South Asian Games where Bangladesh were elimi-

nated by Pakistan in the semifinals.

Zia had also earlier took part in two tournaments but he was not at his best and there was a whisper that Zia had reached the end of his career, but yesterday he looked better on the court.

"Now I am fully fit and ready to give my hundred percent in a bid to prove that I am not finished. I hope I will reclaim my place in the national team through good performances in this league," said Zia after winning the match against Azad Sporting Club.

BGB finished third in the Independence Cup and Zia is eager to see his side on the top of the league which yesterday also saw Bangladesh Police hand a 58-25 defeat to Maniknagar Kabaddi Club.

Cook cautious about India

AFP, London

England captain Alastair Cook is hoping to complete a miserable tour for India on Friday by wrapping up a 3-0 one-day series victory over the tourists.

India are yet to taste victory over England this summer, having been whitewashed 4-0 in the Test series and trailing 2-0 ahead of Friday's final one-dayer in Cardiff.

However India came agonisingly close to pipping England at Lord's last weekend, and Cook remains wary

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