

Star SPORT

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Maradona says sorry

Argentine football legend Diego Maradona felt obliged to apologise to the supporters of United Arab Emirates club Al-Wasl on Sunday after the club were thrashed 5-0 by Dubai. The 50-year-old -- who was dismissed as Argentine national coach after last year's World Cup -- had guided the side to two wins after an opening run of three defeats, albeit two friendlies and a Cup match, but Dubai brought him back down to earth. "I want to apologise to the Al-Wasl supporters for this defeat," said



Sublime Samuels thumps BCB XI

SPORTS REPORTER



Marlon Samuels rediscovered his form in style with an explosive unbeaten hundred to put the BCB XI bowlers to the sword as West Indies posted a 75-run victory in the T20 warm-up match at the Fatullah Cricket Stadium yesterday. The right-hander, along with Andre Russell took full advantage of the home side's poor bowling attack to keep the momentum going before the series proper after the visitors decided to bat first in their last practice game. Darren Sammy's men also won the first 45-over-a-side warm-up game quite convincingly at the same venue. Riding on Samuels's 56-ball 102 and Russell's 35-ball 58, West Indies piled up 195 for three in 20 overs. In reply, the BCB XI batsmen did not come close to challenging the big total, managing only 120 for six in 20 overs.

Samuels, who clobbered fourteen boundaries and three sixes, provided true entertainment for the local crowd who braved the early chaos to enter the ground after the match started nearly one and a half hours later than the schedule time due to inclement weather. The crowd grew restive when authorities barred them from entering the ground as they were undecided about the start of the match following bad weather, but everything fell into place once the match got underway.

It was a good start for the home team when Farhad Reza removed Adrian Barath off the first ball of the third over with the scoreboard reading seven runs but the smiles didn't last long for them, as Samuels toyed with the local bowlers to make sure his side starts the series on a high note.

Everybody was surprised by the strength, or lack thereof, of the BCB XI bowling attack but captain Shahriar Nafees was not ready to comment on the issue after the end of the match. Instead, he believed that the West Indian batsmen will struggle against the full strength Bangladesh bowling attack.

"I am not in a position to say whether they (bowlers) are part-time bowlers because it's the jurisdiction of the selectors. This team was fielded to improve their basic strength. They (West Indies) batted well but still I believe they will struggle against our bowling," said Nafees, who scored the team highest 29 off 34 balls.

Whatever the sub-plots were the day belonged to Samuels, who also took two wickets and got back his rhythm at the right time, which is why the batsman expressed his satisfaction over his fiery knock.

"I have been off for a while but I am back now and moving forward. It's always nice to have practice and play a few matches before the series starts. I think it is very important to continue the winning streak," said Samuels when asked whether he had regained his old form after playing this knock.

The Jamaican had started his career with a lot of promise but has been struggling to perform consistently. He said that he is trying to leave his past behind to make a fresh start.

"There were ups and downs but now I am trying to put them behind and move forward knowing that I have been given the opportunity to play consistently for the team which I always wanted," he explained, adding, "I

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Emily, Mithun's replacements found?

SPORTS REPORTER

Macedonian coach Nikola Illievski hinted he may not consider strikers Zahid Hasan Emily and Mithun Chowdhury for the national camp for upcoming SAFF Championships which will be held in India from December 1 to 15.

Following their unauthorised participation in a local tournament ahead of national team's departure for the FIFA World Cup pre-qualifiers against Lebanon, Emily and Mithun were handed five match bans in the domestic circuit along with monetary punishment. Winger Zahid Hossain was also banned for two matches in local competitions for his indecent behaviour towards the coach during the home match against Lebanon. However, none of these players got any suspension on international matches.

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Nat'l youth hockey begins

SPORTS REPORTER

Dinajpur, Narail, Natore and Rangpur chalked up victories on the opening day of the Southeast Bank 22nd National Youth Hockey Competition at the Maulana Bhasani National Hockey Stadium yesterday.

In the first match, Dinajpur thrashed Khulna by 5-0, courtesy of a brace from striker Rista. In the second match, Rana Molla scored a hattrick as Narail cruised to a 6-0 victory over Naogaon.

However, the biggest win of the day was grabbed by Natore who crushed Sherpur by 8-0. Eight players struck one goal each for the winners. In the last match, Rangpur overcame Gazipur 2-1 in an entertaining affair. Rasel and Mintu scored one goal each for the winners while Shaju reduced the margin for the losing side.

The tournament began yesterday with 24 teams, divided into eight groups, taking part. Zahid Ahasan Russell, chairman of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Youth and Sports Ministry, formally inaugurated the meet as chief guest.

NAT'L CHESS C'SHIP Javed wins qualifying round

SPORTS REPORTER

FIDE master Mohammad Javed became champion in the qualifying round of the Mercantile 37th National Chess Championship through tiebreaking after five players topped the points table at the close of the eleventh and final round at the Bangladesh Chess Federation hall room yesterday.

Javed, FM Debraj Chatterjee, Golam Mostafa, Sohel Chowdhury and Mahtabuddin Ahmed shared the lead with 8.5 points each. A tiebreaking was held to decide the position of those players that saw Debraj, who was in lead after the penultimate round, finish second followed by Mostafa, Sohel and Mahtab

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PHOTOS: STAR

ALL FOR A THRASHING: West Indies batsman Marlon Samuels (above) hammers one down the ground during his tornado century against the BCB XI at the Fatullah Cricket Stadium yesterday, where a large crowd (L) turned up to watch the practice Twenty20. At one point, one of the entrances was broken down by the spectators' force.



Shakib relaxed, urges batters to be careful

MOHAMMAD ISAM

A calming air has started to envelop Shakib Al Hasan. Gone are the furrowed eyebrows, the scything look or the monosyllabic response. The aftermath of a tumultuous time has been highly visible these days in his outlook.

Last October too had been a different time for Shakib. A quick browse through YouTube would be enough to find out just how charged up the Bangladesh skipper was, spitting venom with his looks. A misfield and you were ripped into bits, a wicket was celebrated like it was war while a sledge would be replied by a counter that isn't suitable for children. And heaven forbid if you didn't move away from the sightcreens...

A year on from those heady times, Shakib has not just calmed down but this year has mostly seen an indifferent man.

His enigmatic facade has taken another shift ever since the unceremonious dismissal on that strange afternoon last month. What has helped in the interim, almost certainly, is the time he spent away from the country.

The question about his present frame of mind was tentatively put in front of him yesterday, whether it is different now that he's no longer the captain.

"Yes, I'm very relaxed. I can think more about myself," he said, smiling almost ear to ear.

"I think I'm quite fresh. I'm not thinking about it [burn-

out], I'm more focused on the game. It's not like, 'Oh I'm mentally tired'. There's nothing like that," added Shakib.

He expressed disappointment at the Tigers' lack of Twenty20 experience at the top level, though he is happy with how the team has prepared.

"No matter how much we work on it, the best way is to play lots of matches. We play international T20s after 3-6 months. It becomes difficult to adjust. If we play them

regularly, at least play one every series, it would do us a lot of good.

"I think the preparation has been very good. We played lots of matches, there was a tournament. We've all been working hard during the practice sessions. I think we're better prepared than what we were before the Zimbabwe series," said Shakib.

The most successful batsman when Bangladesh wins, Shakib also shoved

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BEACH GAMES

BD booters in final

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh moved into the final of the first South Asian Beach Games football eliminating Nepal by 5-1 goals in the last league match at Hambantota in Sri Lanka Sunday afternoon.

Bangladesh will play hosts Sri Lanka in the final of the four-team competition at the same venue today.

In yesterday's last league match, Bangladesh came from 1-0 down in the first session to outclass Nepal by 5-1 goals.

Prodip Thapa opened the scoring for Nepal in the seventh minute of the first session. But Bangladesh made a strong fightback scoring five goals in the second session. Ariful Islam levelled the margin in the second minute of the second session before Mohammad Robin put the Red and Green ahead two minutes later. Striker Enamul Haque increased the margin in the eighth minute, while Ariful scored his second goal a minute later. Abdul Baten Komol completed the rout a minute before the end.

Earlier Bangladesh conceded 4-12 goals defeat against hosts Sri Lanka in their second league match. Komol struck twice while Enamul and Sabuj scored one goal each for Bangladesh in a losing cause. Arsel scored five goals for Sri Lanka.

Meanwhile, there was bad news from Kabaddi as the Bangladesh women's team lost to favourites India by 57-87 points.

Vettel drives into history

REUTERS, Suzuka



Red Bull's Sebastian Vettel roared into the record books as Formula One's youngest double world champion on Sunday after finishing third in a Japanese Grand Prix won by McLaren rival Jenson Button.

The boyish 24-year-old German, who had started from pole position for the 12th time this season, had needed only a point at Suzuka to clinch his second successive crown with four races to spare.

Ferrari's Fernando Alonso, the previous youngest double world champion when he won for Renault aged 25 in 2006, was a close second to Button on a beautiful sunlit afternoon at the Honda-owned circuit.

"Thank you so much, every single one," said Vettel, his voice trembling with emotion as he choked back the tears behind his visor, over the team radio after being told he was the 2011 world champion.

"We took nothing for granted and we did it."

There was to be no trademark raised digit as race winner but he was number one again anyway, only the ninth driver to take back-to-back championships and on the podium for the 14th time in 15 races this year.

Vettel, congratulated by both Button and Alonso afterwards, now has 324 points to Button's 210 and Alonso's 202.

He had vowed to retain the title in style and his aggression and determination was evident from the start as he cut across Button and forced the Briton onto the grass.

"He's got to get a penalty for that," Button shouted over the radio but stewards, who included Australia's 1980 champion Alan

Jones, decided to take no further action after reviewing the incident.

The German pulled away initially at a second lap but 2009 champion Button reined him in and took the lead at his second pitstop when he emerged just ahead of the German in a race dictated by

tyre wear. "I think we were a little bit too weak today on the option tyre," said Vettel, who has been otherwise dominant in his charge to the title after seizing his first against the odds in the final race last year.

"To win the championship here is fantastic. So many things you want to say in this moment but it's hard to remember all of them," he added. "There are so many people, it's hard to name them all to thank them."

A safety car incident triggered by another coming together between McLaren's Lewis Hamilton and Ferrari's Felipe Massa, as well as a

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Red Bull-Renault driver Sebastian Vettel of Germany raises the trophy on the podium of the Formula One Japanese Grand Prix at Suzuka yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP