

Cameroon punish Eto'o

Cameroon banned reigning African Footballer of the Year Samuel Eto'o for 15 matches Friday after a players' strike forced a friendly fixture in Algeria last month to be cancelled. The surprisingly harsh punishment was meted out by the Cameroon Football Federation (FECAFOOT) disciplinary committee and reported on the website of the governing body. National team striker and captain Eto'o has been voted African Footballer of the Year a record four times and has represented the Cameroonian 'Indomitable Lions' for more than a decade.



Fight at long last

BISHWAJIT ROY

Under the morning fog the same old batting collapse from Bangladesh was revisited at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday. But this year's best batting display from ton-maker Shakib Al Hasan and Shahriar Nafees saw normalcy finally returning to Bangladesh's batting on the first day of the second Test against Pakistan.

Recovering from 43 for four Bangladesh scored 234 for five, before bad light caused a premature end to the day's play that was truncated by early morning fog, thanks to Shakib's brilliant unbeaten hundred and Nafees's 97. Statistically speaking, it was an even day but still there was much more for the dejected Bangladesh cricket team to cheer after their poor showing thus far in the series, which threatened to completely shatter their confidence. Shakib and Nafees batted almost two sessions on the day with great determination and temperament, showing critics who often question the country's Test status that there was another side of the coin other than that witnessed in the host's innings and 184-run capitulation in Chittagong.

If it was satisfying to see Shakib walking back to the dressing room with an unbeaten 108, then the dismissal of Nafees at the fag end of the day had dulled a bit of the sheen as the left-hander missed his deserved hundred by just three runs. It would have been his second Test hundred five and a half years after he scored his maiden ton against Australia in Fatullah.

In the end, the fact was that the record 180-run partnership for the fifth wicket between Nafees and Shakib gave Bangladeshi batsmen the much-needed self-belief that it was not impossible to stay at the crease and even score at a reasonable clip against this versatile Pakistan bowling

attack, who wrapped them up for 135 in the first innings in Chittagong.

In the ongoing series, Bangladesh's batting had been crying out for a semblance of fight and the two batsmen finally showed how it should be done. The way they picked up singles and punished the bad balls during their scintillating partnership to frustrate the Pakistan bowlers for the first time in the series must be a source of encouragement for other members of the team.

Bangladesh went into the match, the start of which was delayed by more than an hour due to dense fog in the morning, almost without hope and the crisis deepened when they lost four quick wickets for 43 runs.

The in-form Nazimuddin was unlucky when Indian umpire SK Tarapore gave him out leg before wicket in response to a modest appeal from Pakistan -- the ball would have gone over the top of the stumps -- but Tamim Iqbal, Mahmudullah Riyad and Nasir Hossain could have saved their wickets. Aizaz Cheema was the wrecker-in-chief, taking three wickets.

The continuous shuffling in the batting order could have been a talking point of the Bangladesh innings, but Shakib joined Nafees to hog the end-of-day spotlight. The duo's century partnership, the first by Bangladesh since June 2010, changed the whole scenario.

The southpaw batsmen didn't take any risks over the entire length of the partnership and at no stage were subdued. It was fantastic to see Bangladesh play out the second session without any loss and thereafter losing only one wicket late in the third session, which brought captain Mushfiqur Rahim to finish the day with Shakib.

Shakib tapped one down to third-man to

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Bangladesh batsmen Shakib Al Hasan (L) and Shahriar Nafees cross over for a run during their fighting 180-run partnership for the fifth wicket on the first day of the second Test against Pakistan at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

A worthy walk

MOHAMMAD ISAM



A long walk can do wonders to a man's perception.

When Shahriar Nafees found no mode of transport to reach the team hotel after completing his Premier League transfer on Thursday evening, he and younger brother Iftekhar Nayeem walked from the Bangabandhu National Stadium to Shahbagh. During the 45-minute sojourn through the capital's busiest area at that hectic hour on the most chaotic of days, Nafees went unrecognised as he tried to find a way to reach the hotel on time.

Afterwards, he spoke of how difficult it is for the commoners to find a way home, especially when the need most arises. It is quite certain that Nafees didn't score 97 yesterday in the second Test against Pakistan because he walked for so long (maybe his footwork was helped a bit) and he gritted it out in the streets.

But his fight with a moving ball, under dank conditions and against a rampant bowling attack was quite similar to the battle of finding a bus at 6:00pm in Motijheel in the dark and in front of a few thousand people vying for one seat.

During his 4-and-a-half hours stay, Nafees battled two thoughts. Firstly, everyone he knows told him to calm down at the crease and secondly, he wanted to avoid getting out unnecessarily.

"Whoever I've met after the last Test, whether it was family members, ex-cricketers, management, journalists, etc., they said that I looked very hurried. I didn't want to do it today. The other thing was that I won't get out badly. I could be out but I didn't want to raise the question 'why you got out like this?'," said a beaming Nafees, understandably happy to have played his most fulfilling knock in international cricket.

"It is indeed satisfying, to have made the runs against this attack and in such conditions and especially when the team was in trouble," he told The Daily Star Sport later.

Nafees saw four wickets fall by the fourteenth over but the man who walked in knew 43-4 like the back of his hand. Shakib Al Hasan changed gears and as Nafees said later on, the picking of singles was the key in their 180-run stand, a fifth wicket record for Bangladesh.

"The team needed this partnership. We weren't in a good situation when Shakib walked in. There was much to learn

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BCB to send security team in Jan

SPORTS REPORTER

The Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) will carry out a security inspection of Pakistan in January 2012 as a precursor to Bangladesh's tour of Pakistan in April the same year.

This was announced by BCB president Mustafa Kamal. His statements came after PCB officials, including new chairman Zaka Ashraf, met with BCB members in Dhaka.

At the press conference following the meeting yesterday, Ashraf said that the situation in Pakistan was back to normal now. "All those things that you must have seen, they are over now. That's why we want to reorganise cricket, bring back cricket to Pakistan. Fans are also being deprived of this game."

Pak players pulled out of Premier League

SPORTS REPORTER

The Pakistan Cricket Board has asked its active national cricketers not to take part in the Dhaka Premier League that begins later this month.

PCB CEO Subhan Ahmed told Pakistani channel GEO TV that they wouldn't want to risk the players who are considered for the upcoming series against England in the UAE.

Players like Younis Khan, Imran Farhat, Umar Akmal and many more from the current Pakistan line-up have been named by the various clubs in Dhaka as their foreign players.

Cheema credits Tigers duo

SPORTS REPORTER



Pakistan pacer Aizaz Cheema praised the brilliant batting of the Bangladeshi duo of Shakib Al Hasan and Shahriar Nafees on the first day of the second and final

Test at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.

Cheema reduced Bangladesh to 43 for four, taking three wickets but Shakib joined Nafees to turn the tables on the home side, who had been performing poorly with the bat so far this series against a formidable

Pakistan bowling attack.

Cheema thought the big difference in approach was the composure with which the two left-handers batted.

"The partnership was looking for singles and to hit the odd boundaries. They were concentrating on every ball delivered and they seemed to settle down better than any other game that we have played against them so far in the tour. Otherwise there wasn't much of a difference," said Cheema after the day's play.

"Bangladesh batsmen batted well and the wicket also changed its behaviour as the day progressed for which our bowlers were not able to get the breakthrough," he added.

The right-arm paceman also said that the conditions in the morning helped the pacers to inflict the damage on the Bangladesh top order.

"The wicket helped the pacers early. So we will follow the strategy that we had on Day One on the second day and much also depends on the weather. My aim was to bowl on a good line and length and try to hit the seam often. All went right and I am glad to have the wickets," he explained the reason behind his success in the morning session.

When asked about the condition of Azhar Ali, who suffered an injury on his hand when a sweep shot from Shakib hit him at short leg, Cheema said: "He has been attended to by the doctor. He has got a bruise and is being examined by the team doctor and apparently the injury doesn't look to be a serious one."



Pakistan pace bowler Aizaz Cheema in action on the first day of the second Test against Bangladesh, during which he broke the Tigers' top order with a three-wicket burst.

PHOTO: STAR

Venomous Vernon

Sri Lanka fold within 3 days

Cricket

AFP, Centurion

Vernon Philander claimed his second five-wicket haul of the match as South Africa stormed to victory by an innings and 81 runs before tea on the third day of the first Test against Sri Lanka at SuperSport Park here on Saturday.

Sri Lanka crashed to 150 all out in their second innings, with Philander taking five for 49 after taking five for 53 in the first innings. Wicketkeeper Mark Boucher took six catches to equal the South African record for the fourth time.

The Sri Lankans could not cope with South Africa's pace attack on a pitch of uneven bounce and extravagant seam movement.

They lost their first six wickets for 70

runs and only some desperation hitting by their tailenders enabled them to reach their eventual total.

Sri Lanka were 38 for four at lunch. Fast bowling discovery Philander took two wickets and Dale Steyn one before Sri Lanka lost Mahela Jayawardene to a needless run out when he was one run short of becoming the first Sri Lankan to score 10,000 runs in Tests.

Philander made the first breakthrough when he had Sri Lankan captain Tillekeratne Dilshan caught behind by Mark Boucher for six in the fourth over, with Dilshan forced to play a ball close to his off stump which moved away off a pitch which has helped the fast bowlers throughout the match.

Tharanga Paranavitana was caught behind for four off Dale Steyn in the fifth

over and Kumar Sangakkara followed two overs later when he edged a superb delivery from Philander to Boucher, the ball swinging in to the left-hander and then nipping away off the pitch.

Paranavitana survived two television reviews and was struck on the knee and right elbow during his brief innings.

Steyn, on a hat-trick after finishing off the Sri Lankan first innings, appealed for leg before wicket when he beat Paranavitana with the first ball of the innings.

Umpire Rod Tucker gave the batsman not out and his decision was shown to be correct when the South Africans asked for a review, with the ball missing the left-hander's leg stump.

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Greg to advise Aussies

Cricket

AFP, Sydney

Former India coach Greg Chappell will share his knowledge of the Indian team with the out-of-sorts Australian squad ahead of the first Boxing Day Test next week, reports said on Saturday.

The former Australia captain has been called in to help the struggling home side prepare for the key winter series.

New coach Mickey Arthur asked Chappell to share his knowledge of India's batting maestro Sachin Tendulkar and his teammates, the Daily Telegraph reported.

Tendulkar has been a perennial thorn in the side of Australia's bowlers, averaging 60.6 with 11 centuries in 31 Tests against them and is eyeing his 100th international hundred during the Australian tour.

Yet Chappell, who coached India for a three-year spell ending in 2007, reveals in his autobiography 'Fierce Focus' that Tendulkar goes through phases where he was "surprisingly fragile."

The book says Chappell tried to restore Tendulkar's lost confidence after the Little Master became "frustrated with his form

and wracked with self-doubt."

Describing Tendulkar as a prisoner of his incredible fame in India, Chappell said he carried expectations greater than Donald Bradman.

"There was a constant frenzy trying to get in at him. The only time he left his room in India was to go to the ground," he said.

"I'd suggest to him to have a day off but he never wanted to."

"Once I said to him 'you must have so many friends, it must be hard finding time to keep touch with all of them'. He looked me straight in the eye and said 'Greg, you would have more friends in India than I have.'"

Chappell will also share his views on other Indian players including big hitting opener Virender Sehwag, a player he greatly admired but whose talent he described as a "mixed blessing" to the India.

"He was, simply put, the best striker of the ball I'd ever seen, including Viv Richards," he said.

"But his impact on the team's results was not as good as it should have been. When he got off to a flier, they all thought they could get 350."

"They'd go out and slog like him, collapse and before we knew it we were out for 220. When he got out early they'd panic."

BFF to get Sylhet BKSP today

SPORTS REPORTER

After more than a year of deliberation, Bangladesh Football Federation is set to get the Sylhet BKSP on a five-year lease agreement to run its proposed football academy there. The BFF president Kazi Salahuddin will sign a formal agreement in this regard with the secretary general of BKSP Brigadier General MM Salehin at the NSC auditorium today.

The Sylhet BKSP, one of its four centres of sporting excellence around the country, is situated over 13 acres of land in Khadimnagar on the outskirts of Sylhet city.

A source inside BFF informed that it will pay monthly fifty thousand taka to BKSP authorities to run the academy at the BKSP which

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