

Whitewash or not?

Final Aussie-Indo T20 today

Cricket

PTI, Melbourne

Stung by a prolonged losing streak in what has turned out to be a nightmarish tour, a hapless India will now look to avoid a Twenty20 whitewash when they lock horns with Australia in the second match on Friday.

Completely outclassed in the humiliating 0-4 Test loss against the hosts, India had hoped for redemption in the limited-over format but they again succumbed to a 31-run defeat in the first Twenty20.

The young legs did show some energy on the field but at the batting crease, they were no different to their Test seniors and skipper Mahendra Singh Dhoni has to do something to inspire his team on Friday.

In the bowling department too, the Indians failed to make early inroads in the Australian line-up and now that off-spinner Ravichandran Ashwin's card has been shown up to be blank by a rampant David Warner on Wednesday, Zaheer Khan's return would be crucial to India's chances.

The wicket at the MCG also might not suit spinners on Friday so overtly as it did in the ANZ Stadium. It's a batting wicket and the skills of the bowlers would be tested utmost.

Dhoni believed it was the uneven surface which did his batsmen in and MCG might reflect their preparedness in a better light.

As things stood though, Indians checked in at their hotel in Melbourne this morning and would stay indoors though there was a word that a few youngsters might visit the MCG later in the afternoon.

It's better they do, for if Australia seize an early momentum, they would be difficult to put down in the one-day internationals. The corresponding effect of despondency in Indian ranks would be palpable too.

Australia, on the other hand, have been simply ruthless so far as after mauling India in the Test series, the hosts notched up a convincing victory in Sydney and they would now look to complete a Twenty20 clean sweep against the visitors on Friday.

Australia would only go better once Daniel Christian, Mitchell Marsh and Clint McKay get an opportunity to show their wares and chances are they would in front of 90,000 strong fans who are likely to turn up at the MCG, home of Australian cricket.

Christian has been on the fringes of selection in the Test side this summer and is viewed as one of the upcoming stars of Australian cricket.

He was the top scorer in domestic one-day matches and was also the second highest wicket-taker. A powerful hitter, Christian didn't get a chance to bat on Wednesday but picked up two for 35 with his fast deliveries.

Marsh, younger brother of Shaun, has set the domestic stage ablaze with his powerful hitting. Just 20, Marsh likes expressing his talent both with bat and

ball and is one of the many multidimensional cricketers who are coming up through the ranks in Australian cricket.

McKay, a 194cm tall right-arm fast bowler, is renowned for his control and economy. The 28-year-old local boy is said to possess enough variety in his armoury.

The fast bowler is a handy lower order bat too and has already represented Australia in all three formats -- Tests, ODIs and Twenty20 Internationals.

The variety and the options Australia has in bowling is equally befuddling. George Bailey, the home captain, said as much when he said he has quite a few bowlers who could bowl in the death overs.

"It could be Lee, Doherty, Hogg or Faulkner -- anyone," said Bailey.

The hosts are well-served by explosive left-handed openers in David Warner and Matthew Wade and the two are likely to be top draw this whole summer.

SQUADS

AUSTRALIA: George Bailey (captain), David Warner, Travis Birt, Daniel Christian, Xavier Doherty, James Faulkner, Aaron Finch, David Hussey, Brett Lee, Clint McKay, Mitchell Marsh, Shaun Marsh, Matthew Wade and Brad Hogg.
INDIA: Mahendra Singh Dhoni, Gautam Gambhir, Virender Sehwag, Virat Kohli, Rohit Sharma, Suresh Raina, Parthiv Patel, Rahul Sharma, Zaheer Khan, Ravichandran Ashwin, Umesh Yadav, Praveen Kumar, Vinay Kumar, Irfan Pathan, Ravindra Jadeja and Manoj Tiwary.



Pakistan spinners Abdur Rehman (L) and Saeed Ajmal do a bit of stretching during a practice session at the Dubai International Cricket Stadium yesterday.

PHOTO: INTERNET

3-0 will be big: Misbah

Third Pak-Eng Test in Dubai begins today

Cricket

AFP, Dubai

Captain Misbahul Haq believes routing world number one England 3-0 will be a big achievement but stressed his team will not take that extra pressure into the third and final Test starting here on Friday.

No team has ever registered a clean sweep in the 58 years of Pakistan-England cricket and Misbah's team has a good chance of creating history after their comprehensive ten-wicket win in the first Test and by 72 runs in the second.

England, who will also be in danger of losing their world's top rankings if they lose here, will have to find a quick solution to counter Pakistani spinners Saeed Ajmal (17 wickets) and left-arm Abdul Rehman who has 12 in two matches.

Misbah said Pakistan will look for an encore in the third Test.

"It will be a big achievement for the team [winning 3-0]," said Misbah of the clean sweep which Pakistan last achieved against Bangladesh at home in 2003, while their last against a top Test nation was beating West Indies 3-0 in 1997.

"The way the team is performing with consistency, if we play well like we did in the first two games good results will come but we will not take that extra pressure [of clean sweep]," said 37-year-old Misbah.

Since taking over as captain in the aftermath of spot-fixing scandal during which Pakistan lost 3-1 to England in 2010, Misbah has led Pakistan to eight wins with one defeat and five draws.

Misbah said England were still a good

team and winning the last Test will not be easy.

"No doubt, England is a good team, they are number one in the world and it will not be easy because they will be more prepared, but we will try our best," said Misbah, who praised Ajmal and Rehman.

Ajmal took a career best 7-55 in the first Test here and Rehman registered his best 6-25 in the second in Abu Dhabi, feats which Misbah said were extraordinary.

"I think both have been bowling well for quite some time now and they create pressure on the batsmen and never give any opportunity to let them out of that and on top of that England batsmen were low on confidence," said Misbah.

Misbah hinted about keeping the same combination, although Pakistan have the option of using the bench player in paceman Wahab Riaz in place of Junaid Khan.

"I am a firm believer in the balance of the team because the first priority is to win and I think we will go with whatever is the best combination for the team," said Misbah, predicting the Dubai stadium pitch will help batsmen more than in the first Test.

England captain Andrew Strauss admitted the key would be countering Pakistan's spinners.

"That's one of the crucial things about playing spin, you have to adapt your game according to the surfaces you play on. I am very optimistic, you'll see people a bit clearer in what their gameplan is and how they are looking to play, which is a good starting point," said Strauss.

"These conditions are slightly different, so it's more about adapting your game to the conditions than going right

back to square one and saying 'right, I need to change everything'. That's a dangerous route to go down.

"It's a setback [2-0 down] in the sense that we didn't want it to happen, and we didn't want to lose a series. But that's gone, finished -- and in some ways, maybe it's a good lesson for us that if you're five percent off your game against the majority of sides you're going to come unstuck."

"We desperately want to avoid losing the series 3-0; we desperately want to come back and show we're better than we have shown so far in the series. I think there's a feeling among the whole squad that we can and should come back and do that."

Strauss added that middle-order batsman Ian Bell was fit after suffering stomach problem which forced him to miss practice on Wednesday.

The only question remaining is whether England will play with two spinners or drop one from Graeme Swann or Monty Panesar.

TEAMS

PAKISTAN (from): Misbahul Haq (captain), Mohammad Hafeez, Imran Farhat, Taufiq Umar, Azhar Ali, Younis Khan, Asad Shafiq, Umar Akmal, Adnan Akmal, Umar Gul, Junaid Khan, Aizaz Cheema, Wahab Riaz, Saeed Ajmal, Abdul Rehman.

ENGLAND (from): Andrew Strauss (captain), Alastair Cook, Jonathan Trott, Kevin Pietersen, Ian Bell, Eoin Morgan, Matt Prior, Stuart Broad, Graeme Swann, Graham Onions, James Anderson, Steven Finn, Steve Davies, Monty Panesar, Ravi Bopara.

Samad's death anniversary observed

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinaipur

The 48th death anniversary of subcontinent football legend Syed Abdus Samad, was observed in Parbatipur, Dinaipur yesterday.

Samad, popularly known as "Football Jadukar" by the people of Parbatipur has floral wreath placed on his grave to mark the occasion.

A Milad Mahfil was also later organised at his residence by the Samad Smriti Sangha of Parbatipur.

Samad's skill was particularly dribbling, tackling and in taking measured shots. Samad was selected for the Indian National Team in 1924 and eventually went on to captain the side in 1926.

One of his many career highlights includes a match he played in against China in Peking. He played as a substitute player in the second half and scored four goals in a row to give his side a 4-3 victory after trailing 0-3 in the first half.

After 1947, Samad settled in Parbatipur where he was employed in the Pakistan Eastern Railway. In 1957, he was appointed a coach of National Sports Council Board and also received the President's Award in 1962.

Mashud

FROM PAGE 16

cricket at the grassroots level. And let's hear it from the horse's mouth.

"We are launching a series of documentaries with basic coaching tips on batting, bowling, wicket-keeping and fielding so that those who do not have access to proper coaching could benefit from it," said the former Bangladesh captain to a small audience at a city restaurant yesterday.

Obviously, his voice might not be heard in the midst of frantic activities surrounding the launching of the inaugural BPL that starts next week. But this is certainly something that deserves more applause than that which will be heard from the stands during those short-term entertaining games.

Mashud's documentaries under the banner of Clemon Cricket Master and with the slogan 'Know cricket, play cricket' will appear on Channel i every Friday. The programme that involves former cricketers like Aminul Islam, Mohammad Rafique, Roquibul Hasan, Khaled Mahmud, Mohammad Salahuddin and Mashud himself will have a duration of 25 minutes and it will be aired from 6pm.

'IPL no distraction'

Cricket

AFP, Dubai

England captain Andrew Strauss disagreed the lucrative Indian Premier League (IPL) was a distraction for his team which faces a 3-0 defeat against Pakistan in the third and final Test starting here on Friday.

Pakistan won the first two Tests, the first here by ten wickets and the second by 72 runs in Abu Dhabi, to clinch an unassailable 2-0 lead.

And with Saturday's auction in the IPL looming, Strauss was asked whether that would be a distraction for his players.

"I certainly hope not. I think we've had this circumstance before," the England captain said.

Names of several members of the current squad will appear in the auction to be held in Bangalore with James Anderson, Ian Bell, Graeme Swann, Ravi Bopara, Matt Prior and Chris Tremlett appearing favourites to be included.

Stuart Broad, Eoin Morgan and Kevin Pietersen already have IPL contracts in place.

Strauss, who insisted he doesn't want to join the Twenty20 league, remained in the background as his team faced a whitewash -- the first in Pakistan-England Test history.

"I certainly remember Test matches in the past where this has been looming, in the background -- and it is very much in the background.

"I would be very, very surprised if any of our players had their attention anywhere other than on the game at the moment -- especially after what's happened over the last couple of Test matches. So it's not a big issue for us."

Local snippets

FROM PAGE 16

Harbaid High School 1-0 in the Upazila final with Habibur Rahman scoring the all-important goal.

Beanibazar EC committee

A 35-member executive committee of Beanibazar SC was formed yesterday for two years to run the club which is taking part in the Bangladesh Championship League, a second-tier professional football league.

Shariful Alam and Sajed AA Adel have been named the president and the general secretary respectively of the committee which also included six vice presidents including former national footballer Intiaz Subhan Jonny. Former national striker Rummon Bin Wali Sabbir was named the joint secretary of Beanibazar SC, which were taken over by a group of former Mohammedan organisers.

ESS Sports

A two-day annual sports event of the European Standard School was completed at the Sultana Kamal Women's Sports Complex yesterday with over 500 students taking part in 102 events.

ESS principal AFM Nurul Islam, chairman Eng. Abdullah, managing director Kazi Morhsedul Islam were among others

Aamer freed from jail

FROM PAGE 16

However, "a short, immediate prison sentence was necessary and appropriate".

Last month, Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) chairman Zaka Ashraf held out the prospect of Aamer returning to international cricket once his jail term and ICC ban had been completed.

"The PCB cannot side with anyone who has done wrong and because of them the name of the country was stained," Ashraf said. "Whenever Aamer is cleared by the ICC and serves his punishment, we think he needs intense counselling and then we will take guidance from the ICC about him on whether there was any hitch on his playing."

Before, the scandal left-arm paceman Aamer had made a huge impact with his on-field performances having taken 51 wickets in 14 Tests, including seven at Leeds in 2010 as Pakistan beat Australia for the first time in 15 years.

Reports from Changa Bangial of Punjab in Pakistan says, Aamer will announce his next move when he returns home later this month after his release from a British prison, his brother told.

Glitzy IPL auction Saturday

AFP, New Delhi

England spinner Graeme Swann and Sri Lankan captain Mahela Jayawardene head a star cast of cricketers who will be auctioned on Saturday to join the Indian Premier League (IPL).

As many as 144 foreign and Indian players have thrown their hat in the ring in an auction restricted to players not already aligned to any team in the money-spinning Twenty20 league.

Australian fast bowlers Mitchell Johnson and Peter Siddle, and England duo James Anderson and Ian Bell, are among the other leading players going under the hammer in Bangalore.

Each of the nine franchises have a maximum of 2 million dollars to spend at the auction as they bid to strengthen their line-ups ahead of the fifth edition of the IPL which will be played between April 4 and May 27.

Team insiders warn, however, that no more than 20-25 players are likely to be bought since only a few slots are up for grabs to fill the quota of 11 foreign stars in the 33-man squads allowed for each club.

"Teams will focus on their strategic requirements, not on star quality alone," Delhi Daredevils executive Amrit Mathur told AFP.

"If a team already has a number of batsmen, it will likely go for bowlers. The idea is to provide an all-round balance to the squad."

Much will also depend on the availability of the players for the seven-week tournament that will host 76 matches.

Premier Bank

FROM PAGE 16

Bangladesh Championship League and Murshedy promised to distribute half of the sponsor money among participating teams. The champions will be awarded Tk 3 lakh while the runners-up will receive Tk 2 lakh.

Except the opening match, the matches of the first phase will be held at Bishreshtha Shaheed Mostafa Kamal Stadium and the second phase will be held in Cox's Bazar.

Mahmood

FROM PAGE 16

50,000 dollars, while Mahmood remained unsold. After MacGill's withdrawal, Mahmood was taken in by the club at his base price of 100,000 dollars

Club officials up in arms

FROM PAGE 16

reportedly going to miss the service of two of their vital foreign players -- Rajat Bhatia and Mithun Manhas. The chaos however started with the expulsion of Surjo Torun Club, who failed to appear in the ground on time in the match against Kalabagan on Tuesday, which was followed by the resignation of CCDM chairman GS Hasan Tamim.

The angry club officials not only condemned the BCB's decision but also came down heavily on the board's new venture, the BPL. The officials claimed that some vested quarters had arranged a business-oriented tournament like

the BPL and they believed that this kind of initiative will only destroy cricket in Bangladesh.

"We have decided to take a tough stance against these vested quarters who didn't even bother to talk with the club officials regarding their new venture (BPL). But you know the clubs had been playing a pivotal role in taking the country's cricket where it is today," said Manzur.

"The BPL has been arranged to bankrupt Bangladesh's cricket and to siphon off our hard-earned foreign currency. We have taken the decision to foil this kind of conspiracy against our cricket,"

added Manzur as he read the written statement during the hastily arranged press conference at a local hotel yesterday.

It was also said in some quarters that the league may resume today but the BCB's acting CEO Nizamuddin Chowdhury said that they were waiting for the return of their president.

"We are waiting for the return of our president. An emergency board meeting will be called to find an amicable solution. What I can say is that what happened is unfortunate," said Nizamuddin.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS

1 Recordings
6 Big bother
9 Scale notes
12 Sudden gush
13 Rawls or Reed
14 Exist
15 Places in the heart
16 Range of understanding
18 Basement
20 Sea eagle
21 Handle
23 Fond du --, Wis.
24 The staff of life
25 Auctioneer's cry
27 Foundation
29 Claim
31 "Rug"
35 Hay machine
37 Wrestling style
38 Separated

DOWN

1 Airport org.
2 Suitable
4 Great Lake
5 Play for time
6 Andean beast
7 Gloomy
8 Lord's Prayer opener
9 Word with savor or laissez
10 Sports venue
11 Emulated
12 Betsy Ross
17 Opposing
19 Tag

Solution time: 25 mins.

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CRYPTOQUIP

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N V V H F H C W L C S H N L C W Z C D M,
K N A W M Z N A F C W W S G C S
S G Y W C K L N V S G Y W C L M ?

Yesterday's Cryptoquip: SINCE ONLY TOP MILITARY LEADERS ARE GRANTED ENTRY INTO THIS PLACE, IS THAT GENERAL ADMISSION?
Today's Cryptoquip Clue: V equals F