

Wasim a fan of MS policy

PTI, Hobart

Pakistan pace legend Wasim Akram has backed India skipper Mahendra Singh Dhoni's controversial rotation policy, saying that there is "good reason" behind the move as senior players are either "not in his control" or they have become a "liability".

Dhoni's remarks about senior players being slow fielders has triggered speculation that there are dissensions in the Indian dressing room.

Akram said Dhoni's comments are an "absolutely genuine" opinion.

"In my opinion, Dhoni is a very intelligent person and I totally agree with him because he says what he thinks. There must be a very good reason behind his comments. I have never heard Dhoni speaking in such a manner," Akram told 'espnstar.com'.

"I think either the seniors are not in his control or they are a liability," he said. The former Pakistan captain feels Sachin Tendulkar and Virender Sehwag will have to be physically fit to sustain themselves in the ODI format.

"As the grounds are big in Australia, players have to be in the best of their health to play. Nobody questions Tendulkar's fitness, either you see him fielding at short third-man or fine-leg. You can hide your fielders in Test and T20s but not in ODIs," Akram explained.

Akram also questioned the role of coach Duncan Fletcher in team selection.

"If I am the coach, I will send the best batsman to open the innings. Gautam Gambhir has scored in 90s twice in the series so far and he is the best opener available. It is up to the team management to decide who will be his opening partner."

Local snippets

FROM PAGE 16 their upazila champions being crowned after Chitol HH High School beat Haardi High School 4-0.

Jr Davis Cup tennis

Bangladesh's junior tennis players got off to a flying start against rivals Bahrain and Turkmenistan in the 2012 Junior Davis Cup Pre-qualifying Tournament. In the singles against Turkmenistan, Bangladesh's Akhter Hossain Rana sealed a victory by a 6-1, 6-4 margin but Mamun Bepari lost the next singles battle 6-4, 6-6, 1-6. Which left the doubles pair to which the victory and Mamun Bepari with Marma secured it by winning 4-4, 7-6, 6-3.

Against Bahrain, Bangladesh won both their singles with Akhter beating his opponent in 6-0, 6-2 sets, Mamun bagged a 2-6, 6-3, 6-3 win and in the doubles, Marma and Akhter teamed up and beat Bahrain 6-2, 1-6, 2-6.

Siddiqui's Int'l School sports

The annual sports competition of Siddiqui's International School was held at the Physical Education College ground in Mohammadpur yesterday. The meet was inaugurated by Dr. Abdul Latif Chowdhury, renowned physicist and Professor of North Carolina State University. The occasion was enlivened by the presence of eminent folklorist Dr. Ashraf Siddiqui who later distributed prizes among the winners. The guardians along with the students and teachers enjoyed the event.

EXIM Bank hockey

Bangladesh Army and Abahani Limited were both victorious in their respective matches in the EXIM Bank-Jurjahan Group Shahid Smriti Hockey Tournament. Bangladesh Army beat Bangladesh Air Force 2-0 with Shirajul Islam and Milon Hossain finding the net. Abahani thumped Bangladesh Navy by a 7-2 margin with Jahid Hossain scoring 3 field goals and Khurshidur Rahman converting 2 penalty corners.

Mahela warns Lahiru Sri Lanka take on Australia today

Cricket CRICINFO, Hobart

Sri Lanka's captain Mahela Jayawardene has warned batsman Lahiru Thirimanne to keep a check on how far he backs up in Friday's match against Australia. However, Thirimanne might be free to indulge his habit of gaining ground after Australia's captain, Michael Clarke, said he did not believe it should be legal for a bowler to mankad a batsman.

Thirimanne was lucky to be given a reprieve in Tuesday's game against India, when he was mankaded by spinner Ravi Ashwin, who noticed Thirimanne was backing up a long way out of his crease. India captain Virender Sehwag withdrew the appeal to avoid criticism over what has traditionally been seen as an unsportsmanlike method of dismissal.

However, Thirimanne did not appear to learn his lesson and continued to leave his crease before the bowler had entered his delivery stride, risking a run-out and gaining an advantage over the fielders by cutting down the distance required to complete a run. Jayawardene said he had discussed the issue with Thirimanne since Tuesday's game and he was confident there would be no repeats.

"I have [spoken to him]," Jayawardene said. "I think there was a bit of fault in him as well. He's a young lad and I'm sure he'll learn from that. We've spoken, definitely."

"I think he can take a start but it's just where he's leaving the crease is probably a bit unfair. He can probably hold himself a bit longer and then take a start, I don't think that's a problem. It's just him understanding exactly what he can do and what he can't do."

The ICC changed its playing conditions last year to allow a bowler to mankad a

batsman any time before he had completed the usual delivery swing of his arm. Prior to that, the ICC rule stated that a bowler could only attempt to run out a batsman backing up at the non-striker's end if he did so before he had entered his delivery stride.

Clarke will have a difficult decision to make if Thirimanne continues to back up too far in Friday's match. "I hope he decides to stay in his crease," Clarke said. "I'm glad that nothing has come of it. It's a part of the game I don't like. I don't think you should be able to mankad."

"But in saying that, if somebody is going to be a long way outside their crease, you would hope that by warning them they would understand that the bowler or the fielding captain has asked the batsman to stay in his crease. If he continues to do that, it is in the rules that you can be out like that. But I hope we don't have to worry about it."

Asked if he would have withdrawn the appeal if he was in Sehwag's position, Clarke said: "I'll find out when I'm in that position. Hopefully I'm not."

Sri Lanka went on to win Tuesday's match against India and now have the opportunity to take top spot on the Commonwealth Bank Series points table if they can beat Australia in Hobart. They are coming off a tie and two consecutive victories and Jayawardene said the challenge would be not to fall away after a couple of strong performances.

"After the last couple of games we came back strongly into the tournament so the challenge is to try and be consistent, play the way we've been playing, and make sure we handle certain situations better than the opposition," he said. "We've been quite happy with the progress of the team."

Thinking of unthinkable

Cricket AFP, New Delhi

India's cricket greats have begun talking about a topic that was considered unthinkable a year ago -- Sachin Tendulkar's retirement from the sport.

Or, at least, the need for the record-breaking batsman to quit one-day cricket to prolong his Test career, like former Australia captain Ricky Ponting did this week.

"Maybe his time has come," former World Cup-winning captain Kapil Dev said of the "Little Master" on the Headlines Today news channel. "Every player has his time. Age is not on his side as it was earlier."

Tendulkar, who turns 39 in April, is not only the world's leading batsman in both the Test and one-day formats, but also the longest-serving international cricketer, having made his debut in 1989.

Fans have been left on tenterhooks as Tendulkar, who has scored a record 51 Test and 48 one-day centuries, struggles to reach the unprecedented milestone of 100 international hundreds.

Tendulkar has now gone 11 Tests and nine one-day internationals (ODIs) without a century since making 111 against South Africa in the World Cup in March last year. It is the longest gap for the prolific batsman without a three-figure knock, even though scores of 85, 91, 94 and 80 in the interim suggest his form has not deserted him.

The immediate spark for talk of Tendulkar quitting is his indifferent run in the ongoing tri-series in Australia where he has managed just 90 runs in five games at an average of 18.

Former captain Sourav Ganguly, who played alongside Tendulkar from 1992 to 2008, said his ex-teammate's decision to pick and choose one-day matches was costing India dear.

"Sachin has to ask himself whether it's helping him as a one-day player or if it's

helping the Indian team," Ganguly told Headlines Today.

"If Sachin can't get an answer to these questions, he has to go."

Tendulkar, who has played a record 458 one-day internationals, has turned out in just 18 ODI matches in the past two years, including nine in India's triumphant World Cup campaign in February-April 2011.

He still managed to record the first ever double-century in ODIs -- 200 not out against South Africa in February 2010 -- and was the star performer in India's World Cup win with 482 runs, second only to Sri Lankan Tillakaratne Dilshan's 500.

"It affects everyone's form if Tendulkar keeps coming in and going out of one-day tournaments," Ganguly said. "I said after the World Cup that Sachin needed to look at his one-day career because he had achieved everything in one-day cricket."

Ganguly dismissed batting legend Sunil Gavaskar's suggestion that the selectors should talk to Tendulkar about his one-day future.

"I don't see any of the selectors stepping in," Ganguly said. "They are not going to stand in front of Sachin Tendulkar and say 'Listen little champ, you need to go'. That is never going to happen."

The Hindu newspaper urged former players to lay off Tendulkar, saying the decision to quit or not should be left to him.

"A lot has been said -- especially by former sportspersons who themselves stayed on well beyond their use-by date -- about Tendulkar's ODI career," the paper wrote.

"Whatever the intentions, these gems of seemingly timely advice are clearly uncalled for. Sachin has served the country with exceptional pride and genius for far too long and he deserves the right to choose his own time of departure."

In the immediate term, Tendulkar has two games -- against Australia on Sunday and Sri Lanka next Tuesday -- and a possible best-of-three finals if India qualify, to silence his critics.

PM calls upon pvt sector Malisse ousts Roddick

AFP, Memphis

Belgian veteran Xavier Malisse upset US second seed Andy Roddick 7-6 (10/8), 7-5 on Wednesday to reach the second round of the 1.375 million dollars ATP and WTA Memphis Open. Malisse fired 12 aces, twice as many as Roddick, to advance into a second-round matchup on Thursday against Germany's Benjamin Becker, who eliminated Israel's Dudi Sela 6-4, 6-1.

South African seventh seed Kevin Anderson fired 19 aces in advancing 7-5, 6-3 over US qualifier Robby Ginepri in 75 minutes.

All to play

FROM PAGE 16 Today's games should make the picture clearer, but an unlikely victory for Sylhet may well muddy matters further. Hossain (athletics), Senior Warrant Officer (ret'd) M Lutfor Rahman (swimming), M Ruhul Amin (weightlifting), Khandakar Abul Hasan (volleyball), Saidul Haque Sadi (table tennis), Brigadier General M Showkat Hossain (body building), Syed Abdul Majid Koran (cricket) and Jahangir Alam Chowdhury (kabadi).



Jelena Jankovic of Serbia makes a forehand return to Samantha Stosur of Australia during their Dubai Open quarterfinal yesterday. Jankovic won 6-4, 6-2.

Stirling stars in Irish win

AFP, Mombasa

Paul Stirling starred with both the bat and ball as Ireland beat Kenya by eight wickets in the second Twenty20 international match at the Mombasa Sports Club grounds on Thursday.

The 21-year-old Middlesex player took two wickets in the Kenyan top order and pretty much single-handedly won the game for his team with his unbeaten 65 to give the hosts their second crushing defeat in the three-match series.

Spinner George Dockrell and pacemen Trent Johnston, John Mooney and Kevin O'Brien had each grabbed one wicket apiece as Kenya reached 131 for seven after being put in to bat.

The Irish victory served as a morale boost in their preparations for next month's Twenty20 World Cup qualifying tournament in the United Arab Emirates.

The third and final match in the series will be played on Friday.

SCORES IN BRIEF

KENYA: 131-7 (Obuya 28, Patel 27; Stirling 2-21) IRELAND: 132-2 in 17.3 overs (Stirling 65 not out, Porterfield 23, Wilson 22; Aga 1-10, Varaiya 1-27) Result: Ireland won by eight wickets.

Emeka as

FROM PAGE 16 Meanwhile, the Bangladesh Football Federation recently sent Emeka's certificates to the AFC to check out whether those certificates are equivalent to the AFC B-license and AFC responded in the negative.

Jankovic upends Stosur

AFP, Dubai

Former world number one Jelena Jankovic returned to somewhere nearer her best form on Thursday to upset Samantha Stosur and reach the semifinals of the Dubai Open in her adopted home city.

It is the eighth-seeded Serb's first semifinal of the year and also her best win for 12 months as she beat the fourth-seeded US Open champion from Australia 6-4, 6-2.

Jankovic achieved it despite a slowly healing muscle tear in her left thigh which, she says, was originally "five point five centimetres long."

She mostly adopted a more assertive style than she once had, controlling more of the rallies, and reducing the amount of court she needed to cover.

Stosur, by contrast, appeared subdued, looked travel-weary, and sounded as if she might be suffering from a cold. Having a base locally may have aided the livelier Jankovic significantly.

"I tried to make as many returns as possible, because her serve is one of the best, if not the best in the game, and it is not a typical serve," Jankovic said.

"I was trying to read it and lean to one side a little earlier. I think I did that pretty well and was in control much of the time. It's a long time since I have been in the final here, and that's what I'm looking to do."

It is seven years since she faced Lindsay Davenport in the final, and if she wins Friday's semi against Agnieszka Radwanska, the fifth seeded Pole, it will give Jankovic a chance of

going one better than she did against the former Wimbledon and US Open champion in 2005.

Jankovic survived a mini-crisis on her serve game in the seventh game when she came through three deuces, going on to make an important breakthrough for 5-3 in the next game.

She broke much earlier in the second set, in the third game, but was unable to consolidate it. Three break of serves in a row followed before Jankovic held for 4-2 and then broke again with the help of a Stosur double fault.

"I felt flat, and maybe it is all catching up with me," said Stosur, referring to the travel from Australia to Switzerland for the Fed Cup and now here. "But I can't make that an excuse."

Stosur nevertheless felt that this week and last (in Doha), which brought five wins in the Middle East, is an improvement on her recent form which has yet to deliver another title since her great triumph in New York in September.

Later a ruthless Radwanska came through to face Jankovic in little more than an hour.

She allowed only three games to Sabine Lisicki, even though the Wimbledon semifinalist from Germany is this week at a career-high world ranking of 13.

"I was playing much better than on other days," Radwanska said after her 6-2, 6-1 success. "I was returning very well. She's a great server so I made sure I was prepared."

"I haven't played Jankovic for a few years, so it will be a challenge," she added, strangely overlooking the win she had over the Serb en route to winning the Pan-Pacific Open title in Tokyo five months ago. Their head-to-head record is 1-1.

Bukola double spells

FROM PAGE 16 Sheikh Russel yielded only four scoring chances and capitalised on three of them with Nigerian hitman Bukola scoring twice and laying the other one off for Moro Mohammed in their counter-attack based game.

"In the first-half, our plan was to build up the game from the midfield which did not work properly and we adopted a counter-attack based game after being reduced to 10 men late in the first half and the boys executed the plan well," said Sheikh Russel coach Maruful Haque.

After striking the bar early on, winger Anwar Hossain turned provider for Bukola,

who raced past Mohammedan's Mobarrak Hossain to place the ball to the left-hand of advancing goalkeeper Himel to give Sheikh Russel the lead in the 57th minute.

Bukola, the top-scorer of the second professional football league, doubled the margin from a spot kick in the 78th minute. The lanky striker was bought down by two Mohammedan defenders inside the box and made no mistake from the penalty spot.

Bukola then ran down from the right flank to cut the ball back for an unmarked Moro who drove a groundier past opponent keeper Himel in the stoppage time of the second half.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS 1 Balaam's beast 4 Practice boxing 8 Nitwit 12 Make pigeon noises 13 - Alto 14 Pressing need? 15 Attention-getting, and much more 17 Progeny 18 Boorish types 19 Sanders' franchise 21 Firmament 22 X-rated 26 Busy places 29 Pigs' digs 30 Literary collection 31 Wading bird 32 More, to Manuel 33 Item on stage 34 Lair 35 Car wash option 36 South American plain 37 Strikingly unusual 39 One-name R&B artist 40 Zeta 41 Chronicles 45 Con game 48 Foolishly impractical 50 Novelist Ferber 51 Magazine founder Eric 52 Eggs 53 Clothing store section 54 Dines 55 Buddhist sect 2 Protein bean 3 Last year's frosh 4 Ghosts 5 Sucker 6 Foreman foe 7 Pyrotechnician's supply 8 "Saturday Night Fever" genre 9 Raw rock 10 "Ulalume" writer 11 Conclusion 16 What attendance takers count 20 Saute 23 "GWTW" plantation 24 Aware of 25 Mob boss 26 Stash 27 Mountain goat 28 In - veritas 29 Lisa Simpson's instrument 32 Rhesus monkey 33 City north of Dallas 35 Humor 36 Bobcats' kin 38 33-Down's state 39 Upkeep (Abbr.) 42 The gamut 43 Not pretaped 44 Read cursorily 45 Height of fashion? 46 Praise in verse 47 Massachusetts cape 49 Actress Hagen

Grid for crossword puzzle with numbers 1-55.

CRYPTOQUIP

S G A F E O B J S E G F M F R T P F D D F X Y B G G V F G G V Y G A N P N O B I R X Y F U R F M Y X E V F U R Y Y B Q F T T S B I J F U T P S B T N F Q.

Yesterday's Cryptoquip: BECAUSE THE SINGLE BILL'S SURFACE FADED WITH TIME, YOU MIGHT SAY IT'S NOW A DULLER DOLLAR. Today's Cryptoquip Clue: G equals T