

UEFA charges Wenger

Arsenal coach Arsene Wenger was charged with improper conduct by UEFA on Wednesday following his criticism of the match officials after his team's Champions League exit. Wenger hit out at the referee following the 3-0 win over AC Milan on Tuesday, which was not quite enough to overturn the Italians' 4-0 lead from the first leg of the last 16 tie. "UEFA has opened a disciplinary case against Arsenal manager Arsene Wenger for improper conduct in relation to last night's UEFA Champions League round of 16 second-leg match against AC Milan in London," said a UEFA



Captain focused only on cricket

SPORTS REPORTER



With so much of off the field controversies rocking cricket in the country of late, the onus is now on little Mushfiqur Rahim to shift the focus back on the field as the Asia Cup gets underway at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur in a time of two days.

The Bogra-lad however expressed his confidence about on the field affairs while talking at an official press conference on the eve of the region's biggest cricket extravaganza involving three world champions India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka along with the hosts.

"As professional cricketers, no matter what goes on off the field, at the end of the day we have to play on the field and we are selected for that and we are accountable for that," opined the Bangladesh captain when asked about how his team would put behind all the off the field controversies.

"All of us sat down and had a brief chat about it before the first day of practice and we will talk again in the evening today [Thursday]. So I hope that we can put it behind us because we are up against three very big teams. So we have to play our best cricket and there is no alternative to hard work if we are to do that. So at the moment we are just thinking about how to perform well on the field," he added.

It was however not possible for Mushfiqur to hide his frustration when asked about how it felt when he saw that the captain and vice-captain's names were not confirmed when the team was announcement.

"Captaining any national team is a big responsibility and challenge. Of course before a big tournament such as this, the announcement of the squad without the name of the captain or vice-captain was a little bit of a shock. Only the next day we learnt that I would be the captain and Mahmudullah Riyad the vice-captain, so I have nothing more to say about that. But as I said, it is the performance on the field that matters and that is what we are focused on."

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NICE MEETING ONCE AGAIN: Bangladesh captain Mushfiqur Rahim (R) greets his Pakistan opposite number Misbahul Haq at the lobby of Sonargaon Hotel yesterday.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

Whatmore feels good to be back

SPORTS REPORTER



The Pakistan cricket team arrived in Dhaka yesterday morning to take part in the Asia Cup starting on March 11 when they take on hosts Bangladesh in the opener.

The Misbahul Haq-led Pakistan are in good form, with the 4-0 reversal in the ODI series against England recently being a minor blip in what has otherwise been a highly successful year and a half for the team. On top of that, they have an ace up their sleeve in their new coach, a familiar face in this part of the world.

Day Whatmore was seen milling about the press conference room, talking to journalists he knows well from his time as the Bangladesh coach, a four-year stint which ended in 2007. He now embarks on his next international coaching assignment in the place he was last employed as a national coach, but this time he will be sitting in the visitors' dressing room.

"It feels good [to be back in Bangladesh]," said Whatmore when asked how he felt to be back in Bangladesh during the Pakistan team's official press conference at a city hotel yesterday. "There are so many familiar faces here. It feels nice to be in familiar surroundings. There are some good memories and some not so good. But it's good to come back."

The coach himself is a serious weapon in Pakistan's arsenal as he has worked closely with all the countries involved in the tournament. He was the coach when Sri Lanka won the World Cup in 1996 and he was also the director of operations in India's National Cricket Academy following the end of his tenure as head coach of Bangladesh.

"It could be an advantage, but we have got some pretty good brains with the Pakistan team," said Whatmore when asked whether his inside knowledge of Pakistan's opponents will be an advantage. "The objective will always be to pick the right combination given the conditions you are playing in and also the opposition you are playing against."

The big buzz surrounding the tournament is the anticipation of the India-Pakistan match on March 18, the first meeting

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Kamal's somersault

Tamim included in Asia Cup squad



SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Cricket Board president AHM Mustafa Kamal loves to enjoy late night dramas. And on Thursday night the BCB boss added another to this long list in his strange profile by agreeing to include Tamim Iqbal in Bangladesh's Asia Cup squad.

But his sudden somersault hardly quelled the growing discontent of a cross section of people who have started to believe that he has waged a war against all standard norm and

procedure. And the Tamim axe from the selector's 15-man squad was one of the many prejudices that he wanted to establish by flexing his muscles.

Kamal, now in England, is yet to speak his mind ever since putting Tamim in the stand-by list that sparked furor at home and abroad, resulting in the resignation of chief selector Akram Khan for his inexplicable intrusion.

BCB's cricket operations committee chairman Enayet Hossain Siraj previously said that the board kept Tamim out of the 15-member squad suspecting that the left-hander might not have fully recovered from typhoid.

But after a full length training session on Thursday, Tamim convinced everyone beyond any doubt that his fitness was not an issue that kept him out of the final squad.

"He is fully fit. The ball is now in the president's court," said Siraj while confirming that after Thursday's training the doubt, if there was any, has been removed.

Captain Mushfiqur Rahim, who was next in the line of fire of Kamal's long list for his outburst against the mismanagement during the inaugural Bangladesh Premier League, was again

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Former cricketer Shakil Kasem (3rd from L) addresses a press conference at the Jatiyo Press Club yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

LOCAL SNIPPETS

SPORTS REPORTER

Victoria Sporting Club posted their second victory in the Premier Bank Bangladesh Championship League when they defeated Beanibazar SC 2-1 in their fifth game at the Birshreshtha Shaheed Mostafa Kamal Stadium in Kamalapur yesterday.

Beanibazar went ahead in the eighth minute through a strike from Dipu while Rasel restored parity two minutes from the lemon break and Zahed Hasan struck the winner in the stoppage time of the second half.

The victory took Victoria to the fourth position with seven points from five matches while Beanibazar also remained stuck glued at fourth position in the seven-team table.

Inter-Club Shooting

The Sonali Bank 18th Inter-Club Shooting Championship was inaugurated yesterday at the National

'We will fight till the last ball is bowled'



SPORTS REPORTER

The country's cricketers were roused into action and came under one umbrella yesterday, vowing to fight 'till the last ball is bowled' to win their rightful place as councillors of the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB).

The former cricketers under the banner of "Cricketers of Bangladesh", while raising their collective voice against the recent amendment in the BCB constitution that barred cricketers from becoming councillors, also expressed their grave concern over the way the game is being run in the country now.

"You can't run cricket without the cricketers. The intention of not involving cricketers in the cricket activities is not good because it simply creates chances for corruption. Cricket is now in the hands of non-cricketing interest groups, who work on the basis of personal interest only," observed former BCB general secretary Tanvir Mazharul Islam Tanna.

Threatening tougher action, he also added: "We must take to the streets if president (AHM Mustafa Kamal) and Mr Tutul (BCB's influential director and head of the constitutional

amendment committee Dewan Shafiqul Arefin Tutul) think they know cricket much more than the cricketers. The cricket board is now not in the game; rather they are engaged in personal gain and corruption."

Tanna also accused some people in the board of taking advantage of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's sport-friendly approach.

"What I felt is that there is a desperate need to make an audit by an independent firm to uncover the corruption," he demanded.

Former Bangladesh captain Roquibul Hassan became emotional when talking about the way the board insulted the cricketers. He also pointed out the lack of professionalism in the board's activities.

"For the cricketers it's not a job (in the board), rather it is just slavery. While the world's other cricket boards are being run by professionals, our board is being run by the standing committees," said Roquibul.

"You know our CEO (Manzur Ahmed) died of mental stress. He could not take the stress and he shared that with us," Roquibul said in an accusing tone.

"We will fight till the last ball is bowled. In 2003, there were 10 councillors while in 2008 there were 15. Logical progression dictates that

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