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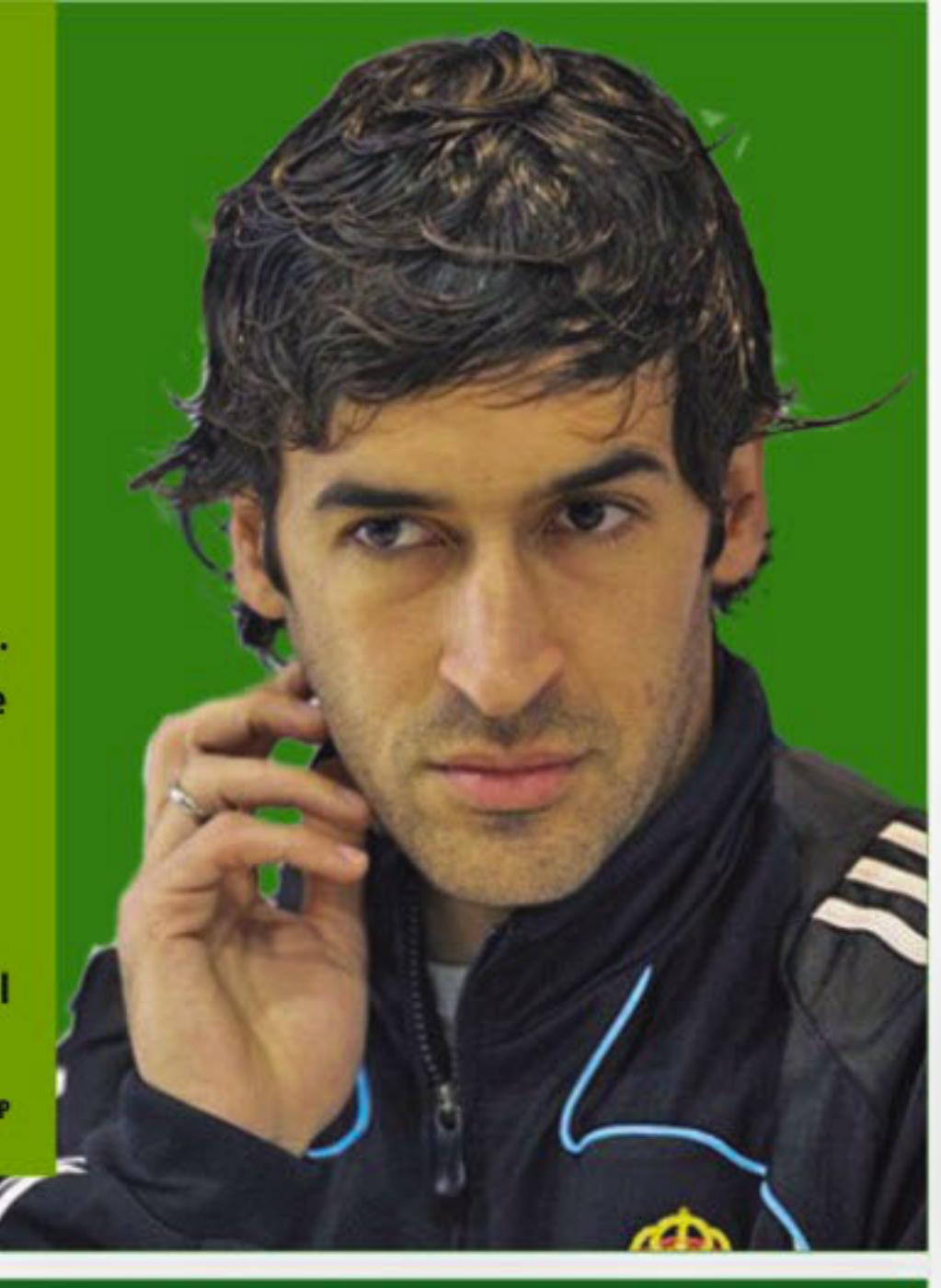
Raul donates to museum

Schalke 04's former Spanish international striker Raul has donated his jersey and the football he scored his 400th professional goal with to the future museum of German football.

Raul scored the goal on February 19 in a 4-0 win over Bundesliga rivals Wolfsburg.

"I'm experiencing wonderful times in the Bundesliga and I'm very proud of the affection shown to me by the German fans," said Raul.

"It's obviously a wonderful gesture to German football as a whole," said Manuel Neukirchner, director of the museum which opens in 2014.



Mahela taking matters into his own hands

Sri Lanka take on Pakistan today

SPORTS REPORTER



Mahela Jayawardene wants to take things forward on his own terms in Sri Lanka's crucial Asia Cup game against Pakistan today.

After their defeat to India on Tuesday, a Lankan win would keep them alive in the tournament though a loss would put them virtually out of the competition.

Having faced a similar situation during the hotly-contested CB series in Australia which ended just last week, Jayawardene is getting used to being on the precipice.

During the CB series, the equation was stacked against Sri Lanka during the latter stages of the round robin league after they were dismantled by Virat Kohli in Hobart. In their next game, a heroic return to form by Lasith Malinga put them into the best-of-three finals of the prolonged competition.

"We are quite used to that [do-or-die games]. We had quite a few of those in Australia but I think it's good to have it in our control where we don't have to depend on somebody else," he said during a pre-match press conference at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.

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The situation however is slightly more challenging as there are a few injuries in their squad (Angelo Matthews having gone back home) but what's more demanding is the fact that Sri Lanka are playing a virtual semifinal after just one game in the competition.

"The amount of cricket we've played, we have trained ourselves to switch from one tournament to the other pretty quickly," said Jayawardene.

"We know how important the Asia Cup is and you can't make mistakes. Going into the game tomorrow, we need to control those mistakes. We want to make sure we are alive in this tournament," he added.

One of the ways that Jayawardene may keep his side alive is by playing more than the four bowlers he employed against India. With inexperienced leg-spinner Seekkuge Prasanna being given a go, it meant that not only does Tillakaratne Dilshan have to bowl all ten overs, it left very few options if one of the regulars got hit.

"It depends on the surface, which combination we want to play. We cannot get the right combination for the injuries. We like to keep changing things around. We'll have a look at the wicket and opposition and do



LOTS OF MICS, VERY FEW QUESTIONS: Pakistan coach Dav Whatmore is finally made available to the media at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday, ahead of their crucial Asia Cup tie against Sri Lanka.

PHOTO: STAR

Riyad banks on flat pitch

SPORTS REPORTER



As he was walking away from a gruelling batting session at the indoor facilities in Mirpur, Mashrafe Bin Mortaza light-heartedly commented: "After losing the match (against Pakistan) I have only been practicing my batting." When it comes to gearing up the team no one compares with the 'braveheart' cricketer and yesterday's training session was no exception, although his comment reflected his inner pain.

It was evident that the team were still smarting from the defeat against Pakistan in the Asia Cup opener on Sunday, when they squandered a golden opportunity to pull off a special win. Without any doubt, the Tigers must learn the craft of coming out on top in close matches to make winning a habit. To win such matches the team may need some batting contributions from Mashrafe, but for inspiration on the field the team would be looking more to the bowling of the paceman, who once again made a good comeback to international cricket after an



PHOTO: STAR

Former Bangladesh skipper Mashrafe Bin Mortaza (C) shares a word of advice with ace all-rounder Shakib Al Hasan during a practice session at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium yesterday. Mashrafe will be facing India for the first time in two years as the two sides face off tomorrow.

eleven-month injury-break.

Everyone, including the Tigers' vice-captain Mahmudullah Riyad, was expecting that the "Narail Express" will live up to its reputation against the Indians when they meet the defending champions in their second encounter at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur tomorrow.

And as the Bangladesh vice-captain Riyad said, nothing can be

better for cricket fans in the country than Mashrafe claiming the prize scalp of Sachin Tendulkar, who has been waiting for a year to fulfil the desire of cricket lovers around the globe by becoming the first batsman to score a hundred international centuries.

"We all know Mashrafe bhai has always given us a good start against India and I hope it will happen again in the next match. Everybody will try

their best in the match against India but definitely the expectations will be high for him (Mashrafe Bin Mortaza)," said Riyad during a press conference yesterday.

"India have very strong top order batting, so we have to make sure that we get early breakthroughs as well as keep up the momentum if we want to do anything against them. Sachin is a great batsman and everybody is waiting for the rare record but as a Bangladeshi player I will not love to see it happen against us and hope we can send him back early," he added.

Riyad was excited with the batsman-friendly Mirpur wicket and he was also banking on Bangladesh's previous impressive performances against their next-door neighbours which he believes will inspire the team to do well in tomorrow's game.

"The wicket was very good for batting in the last two games and hopefully it will be the same in the next match, so we have to put up a good total on the board and the encouraging thing is that we always scored handsome totals whenever we met India. We had a talk with Saeed Ajmal (Pakistan spinner) regarding the pitch and what he said

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PCB hopeful of Tigers' tour

Cricket

INTERNET, Islamabad

Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) chairman Zaka Ashraf has said that a 'misunderstanding' caused Bangladesh to take a tough stance on their proposed series in the country, but remained optimistic that the tour will go ahead and revive international cricket.

The Express Tribune quoted Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) president AHM Mustafa Kamal as saying that he will not send the team to Pakistan if the International Cricket Council (ICC) did not agree to send its match officials.

Kamal's comments came after the ICC Chief Executives Committee agreed to recommend non-neutral match officials for the series as special dispensation in 'exceptional circumstance' in case security apprehensions do not allow the sport's world governing body to send its own officials.

Pakistan have not hosted an international fixture since a gun attack on the Sri Lanka team in March 2009.

However, Bangladesh's promise to send its team in April this year, followed by its delegation giving a thumbs-up to security arrangements in the country, raised hopes of the revival of international cricket.

But the BCB chief's latest comments, in which he said that the tour will not take place "if proper rules are not followed including allocation of match-referees and umpires by the ICC", came as a shock to the country desperately awaiting the return of international cricket.

Ashraf, who is running from pillar to post for the revival,

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Pakistan avoid media 'commitments'

SPORTS REPORTER

Pakistan yesterday all but avoided the usual practice of talking to the media the day before an international game, the Asia Cup tie against Sri Lanka.

Usually called the "pre-view day" by sports reporters, it is assumed by players and organisers in this part of the world that one member of each team that is playing a match on the following day will be made available to the media. Such has been the case in all bilateral series over the years as well as before most games of the World Cup held last year.

But Pakistan team manager Col. Naveed Akram Cheema wasn't letting the media speak to any of the players despite repeated requests. At one stage, he was asked to let Dav Whatmore speak, which he did after the training ended. The new coach however gave answers to a Pakistani television

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HANDA FALDO CLASSIC

Siddikur's decent start

SPORTS REPORTER

Siddikur Rahman started the Handa Faldo Cambodian Classic on the right note as he carded a three-under-par 70 in the first round on Wednesday.

The 27-year-old settled for a tied 20th position along with eleven others as Korea's Baek Seuk-hyun took the lead with a six-under-par 66 at the Angkor Golf Resort yesterday.

The Korean set a new course record as he produced matching halves of 33s in the opening round of the inaugural Handa Faldo Classic with 300,000 dollars of prize money.

Meanwhile, Siddikur, who is currently eighth in the Asian Order of Merit, started the day with a birdie in the third hole as he finished the front nine on one-under-par 35. But Siddikur stumbled as he bogeyed on the 10th hole before birdying on the 14th and 17th to end the back nine on one-under-par 35 too.



India's master batsman Sachin Tendulkar (L) knocks at the practice facilities of the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur alongside Sri Lanka's wicketkeeper batsman Kumar Sangakkara yesterday. The Indian little master concentrated hard as he attended an optional practice session along with three of his teammates.

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