

Chance to blood youngsters

Tigers leave for Zimbabwe tonight

 Cricket

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh captain Mushfiqur Rahim isn't banking too much on the "unofficial" tag of the forthcoming tri-nation Twenty20 tournament against Zimbabwe and South Africa which begins in Harare on June 18.

The cricket team will leave the capital tonight for the 12-day tour that will be their first competitive tournament after the success in the Asia Cup three months ago.

Speaking after the Tigers' training session at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday, the 23-year-old said that he would want the team to take the opportunity to play against a much higher-ranked opposition as well as get scores even with the hosts.

"We are playing against Zimbabwe and in their backyard. We don't have fond memories of the last tour because we lost both the Test and the one-day series, so it's an opportunity," said Mushfiqur. "And playing South Africa so early before the World Cup is an opportunity as well. Definitely we will



MUSHFIQUR RAHIM

play for a win and try to give hundred percent."

It will also be a first tour with the Tigers for six individuals in the touring party: new coach Richard Pybus, all-rounder Ziaur Rahman, batsman Anamul Haque, left-arm spinner Elias Sunny, paceman Abul Hasan and bowling coach Shane Jurgensen.

Yet it will be Pybus's first assignment that will be under the spotlight.

"A lot of the new players will get chances there and we will look at them and also make a new combination. Obviously we are taking it seriously. This is also the first tour of our coach [Richard Pybus] so he will take this very seriously to begin his journey on the

right note," he added.

One man who is obviously not travelling with the Tigers is their main man, Shakib Al Hasan.

The world's No 1 all-rounder has been granted a break by being rested during the Zimbabwe tour, so Mushfiqur said that this would be a chance to try a new combination, though it is easier said than done.

"It is very difficult to get a replacement of him. Most of the time he had single-handedly won matches for us so naturally we will feel his absence.

"At the same time, we will get the chance of making a team without him, because God forbid if he gets injured, even then we have to play as a team.

"If he had played, a lot of young and old players who have got into the side would get very little opportunity as he would have played all the matches. We would have played one bowler less if he had played.

"Now we have to make a combination of a bowler and a batsman. It will be an opportunity for them as well as for us to see them," he explained.

In his first tour as skipper, Mushfiqur found preparations to be adequate as many of the Tigers were

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A team to play 4-day tourney in India

SPORTS REPORTER

The Bangladesh A team are all set to visit India to play an eight-team four-day tournament in Bangalore in July-August this year.

Cricket operations committee of the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) has finalised almost all the tour arrangements and is now waiting for the board's approval.

Besides the Bangladesh second string side, Sri Lanka A is the other foreign team in the in the month-long competition where four top Ranji Trophy sides including

Old foes share points



FRANCE 1: 1 ENGLAND
NASRI 39



LESCOTT 30

AFP, Donetsk

France came from behind to force a 1-1 draw with England on Monday as a cagey Euro 2012 opener between the Group D rivals ended in a stalemate.

Manchester City defender Joleon Lescott headed England into a 30th-minute lead to leave Roy Hodgson's men dreaming of the perfect start to their campaign on a sweltering night at the Donbass Arena.

But Lescott's City team-mate Samir Nasri struck back with a 39th-minute equaliser, lashing a low shot from outside the area to give France a share of the points and extend Les Bleus unbeaten run to 22 games.

A cagey opening period saw both sides begin cautiously, and it was 11 minutes before anyone got a shot on goal with Nasri's low shot flying just wide of Manchester City

team-mate Hart's post.

Yet England seemed far from cowed by the occasion, and should have taken the lead four minutes later after Ashley Young slipped in James Milner with a lovely through pass that caught France square.

The Manchester City midfielder rounded Hugo Lloris with his first touch but then failed to find the net from a tight angle.

Moments later Yohan Cabaye tested Hart from long range, the City keeper diving to his left to stop his low strike.

Meanwhile Alex Oxlade-Chamberlain, a surprise starter on the left side of midfield ahead of Stewart Downing, enjoyed a confident start, dispossessing Adil Rami early on and producing one memorable jinking run.

England's bright opening yielded its reward on 30 minutes with the breakthrough

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PHOTO: STAR

Europa Youth players waded in confetti shower after winning the Citycell Premier Division Basketball League title beating The Gregarious in the last match at the Dhanmondi Indoor Basketball Gymnasium yesterday.

Red-hot Moore drives Europa

SPORTS REPORTER



Europa Youth retained Citycell Premier Division Basketball League title after beating The Gregarious by 77-68 points in an entertaining title-deciding match at the Dhanmondi Indoor Basketball Gymnasium yesterday.

The match lived up to the pre-match

hype, as the foreign recruits of the teams made a difference to the game and the its entertainment value, in front of more than a thousand spectators.

Europa Youth were playing their two Americans Cheyenne Moore and Daniel Tabarez and Puerto Rican Ricardo Catala while at the other end The Gregarious fielded Americans Mitchell Carter, Philip Gary and Nepalese Binod Kumar.

In fact, Cheyenne Moore, the 6 feet 7 inches forward from Connecticut

proved head and shoulders above the others as he dodged past the Gregarious players before netting points one after another. The 28-year old displayed all the skills in the book - galloping runs, slick passing of the ball, three-pointers, free shooters and slam dunks to amass the match-highest 31 points.

Europa dominated from the first quarter by taking a 20-11 lead before Gregarious staged a comeback in the

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DOMINANCE EXTENDED: Spain's world No 2 tennis star Rafael Nadal poses with the French Open trophy after beating Serbia's Novak Djokovic in the final at the Roland Garros in Paris yesterday. The win gave Nadal the most French Open titles, seven, in open history.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Nadal on 7th heaven



AP, Paris

Rain or shine, clay or mud, Sunday or Monday, Rafael Nadal rules Roland Garros.

The man they call "Rafa" won his record seventh French Open title Monday, returning a day after getting rained out to put the finishing touches on a 6-4, 6-3, 2-6, 7-5 victory over Novak Djokovic.

He denied Djokovic in his own run at history -- the quest for the "Novak Slam."

The match ended on Djokovic's double-fault, a fittingly awkward conclusion to a final that had plenty of stops and starts, including a brief delay during the fourth set Monday while -- what else? -- a rain shower passed over the stadium.

They waited it out and Nadal wound up as he has for seven of the past eight years: down on the ground, celebrating a title at a place that feels like home. He broke the record he shared with Bjorn Borg, improved to 52-1 at the French Open and beat the man who had defeated him in the last three Grand Slam finals.

"This tournament is, for me, the most special tournament of the world," Nadal said.

After serving his fourth double-fault of the match, the top-seeded Djokovic dropped his head and slumped his shoulders, an emotional two-day adventure complete, and not with the result he wanted.

He was trying to become the first

man in 43 years to win four straight major titles. He came up short and joined Roger Federer, who twice came up one match short of four in a row -- his pursuit also halted by Nadal at Roland Garros in 2006 and 2007.

Nadal won his 11th overall Grand Slam title, tying him with Borg and Rod Laver on the all-time list.

"It was a very difficult match against the best player in the world," Nadal said. "I lost three Grand Slam finals -- Wimbledon, the US Open last year, and the Australian Open this year. I'm very happy, very emotional."

A match with so much of tennis history riding on it proved awkward and frustrating for both players.

Djokovic was throwing rackets around early in the final, then Nadal was complaining bitterly as the rain picked up late Sunday, the tennis balls got heavy and officials refused to stop the match.

Djokovic rolled through the third set as the rain turned the heavy red clay into more of a muddy paste. He had all the momentum when play was halted, up a break early in the fourth.

When they came back Monday under cloudy skies, the surface and the tennis balls had dried out and Nadal looked more like he usually does -- sliding into his stops, spinning his shots, moving Djokovic around the court, always getting one more ball back.

"I'm not going back, saying it's your fault and your fault because I lost," Djokovic said. "It's unfortunate because I was playing better, feeling

better on the court in the third set yesterday. Today, he started strong. I started slower. I was a little bit unfortunate in that first game and things turned around."

On the restart, Nadal broke serve right away to tie the set at 2-2 and the frustrated Djokovic was back -- slamming himself in the head with his racket after missing an easy forehand that gave Nadal the break point.

It was one of 15 unforced errors in the set for Djokovic, who went back to trying to end points early and blunt the huge advantage Nadal has sliding around on clay. When the surface was muddy, the evening before in the third set, Djokovic only made eight unforced errors.

Play was nearly stopped with Nadal ahead 5-4 in the fourth, but a rain shower passed and they went back out. Both men held serve and Djokovic needed to hold once more trailing 6-5 to force a tiebreaker.

Nadal hit a big forehand winner to set up match point, and Djokovic, who had saved four of those in a quarterfinal win over Jo-Wilfried Tsonga, had no more magic. He double-faulted and fell to 0-4 against Nadal at the French Open.

EURO2012
TODAY'S MATCHES

Wroclaw, Group A:
Greece v Czech Rep (10pm)
Warsaw, Group A:
Poland v Russia
(12:45am, June 13)