

Star SPORT

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Duff calls time on Ireland

Fulham winger Damien Duff retired from international duty with the Republic of Ireland on Friday. Duff, 33, informed Ireland coach Giovanni Trapattoni that he no longer wished to be considered for selection after a dismal Euro 2012 campaign that saw the Irish crash out at the group stage with three successive defeats. The 33-year-old, who made his debut in 1998 against the Czech Republic, won 100 caps and captained Ireland in their last Euro



PHOTO: STAR

TIME TO SHED SOME WEIGHT: After enjoying a week's break, the Tigers returned to training for next month's ICC T20 World Cup at the BCB Academy ground yesterday.

Tigers back to business

Cricket

SPORTS REPORTER

The Tigers returned to business yesterday after the Eid holidays with a hope to make their presence felt in the upcoming ICC World Twenty20 to be held in Sri Lanka from July 18. Left-arm spinner and experienced campaigner Abdur Razzak expressed his optimism about his side's chances in the upcoming mega event while talking to reporters at the Mirpur Indoors after a practice session. "We got back to business after a short break and everybody is now focussing on the upcoming challenge. I think everybody enjoyed the Eid holidays and it was definitely special for me this time," said Razzak, who recently got married. "It's nice that we are getting enough opportunities to play T20 matches before the World Cup. We have had the skills but we didn't know the craft of the new version of the game previously as we hardly played any matches but this time we have already played some T20 matches which is helping every individual player to get accustomed to the format," he added, alluding to Bangladesh's recent tours of Zimbabwe and Europe where the Tigers played only T20 matches. Six cricketers were absent as captain Mushfiqur Rahim along with his deputy Mahmudullah Riyad, Mohammad Ashraful, Tamim Iqbal and Nasir Hossain are taking part in the Sri Lanka Premier League (SLPL) while pacer Mashrafe Bin Mortaza took an additional day's break. The 15-member squad announced by the BCB for the ICC World Twenty20 will take part in the T20 tournament in Trinidad & Tobago under the banner of BCB XI. The camp will end on August 29 and the Bangladesh team will leave Dhaka on August 31 for Trinidad. If any Bangladeshi player is involved in the final of the SLPL to be held on August 31 he will join the team directly in Dubai on September 1.

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Dismissed, not disgraced

Cricket

SPORTS REPORTER

The Bangladesh Under-19s may not be coming home today with any silverware but they definitely return with heads held high after their performance in the ICC U19 World Cup in Australia. Anamul Haque's team signed off the tournament with a victory against a strong Pakistan team to finish seventh in the tournament. While it is true that the result was not the best finish for Bangladesh -- they finished fifth in Sri Lanka in 2006 -- their campaign had sufficient cause for cheer, especially their show of character in bouncing back from a disappointing Asia Cup in Malaysia. And it was none other than Habibul Bashar who believed that the upcoming cricketers proved their potential throughout the tournament in unfamiliar Australian conditions. The former Bangladesh captain turned selector, who travelled with the team, was impressed by the way the

young Tigers performed in the tournament, although he was a little upset by the defeat against Australia in the quarterfinal. "The boys deserved praise because of the way they played in the tournament. But it could have been a different story if they played as per their potential in the quarterfinal against Australia," said Bashar yesterday. Bangladesh had an impressive start, reaching 64 for one against the defending champions before being bundled out for 171 in 43 overs, largely because of a middle order collapse. The bowlers brought them back into the fray when Australia slipped to 33 for four but the holders had the last laugh as their middle order clicked to snatch a five-wicket victory. "We failed to keep the initial momentum which was really frustrating. I think the middle order was fragile all through the tournament due to the conditions which helped the pace bowlers. Generally our middle order play spin in subcontinent conditions but in Australia the pace bowlers dominated all through the innings, which

made the difference," explained Bashar adding that the boys could not overcome the hiccup of losing the match against Australia when they played against England in the fifth place play-off match. "But overall our performance was impressive and there were lots of positives in the young players' performance in the tournament as we reached the second round by beating Sri Lanka and Namibia and then finished the tournament with a victory against a strong Pakistan side," said excited Bashar. The Bangladesh Under-19s played much better cricket in the World Cup compared to their poor showing in the Asia Cup where they made a first round exit after losing to Sri Lanka and Afghanistan. They avenged their Asia Cup defeat against Sri Lanka in their World Cup opener but lost to South Africa before beating Namibia in the group stage to reach the Cup competition. Bashar had high praise for the performance of captain Anamul, who hit two hundreds in the tournament.

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Five GMs for Olympiad

Chess

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh will be vying for an improved performance when they set off for Istanbul tomorrow to take part in the 40th Chess Olympiad which will be held from August 28 to September 11. Bangladesh have an added incentive to do well this time as this is the first time all five Grand Masters are taking part. Grand Masters Abdullah Al Rakib and Enamul Hossain Razeed are back after a long stand-off with the Bangladesh Chess Federation (BCF), which will no doubt motivate the three other Grand Masters Niaz Murshed, Ziaur Rahman and Reefat bin Sattar. However, the men's team which finished 73rd among 149 teams in the last edition in 2010 in Moscow, have not set any specific targets for the tournament as they feel long lay-offs from the game may tell on their performance. Razeed last took part in a competitive tournament last year while Rakeeb is back after a three-year break. "It is better to have Grand Masters in the side, rather than FIDE or International Masters. But since they were away from the game

for a long time, it will be difficult for them to do something great," opined the subcontinent's first GM Niaz Murshed. Razeed himself admitted to being rusty. "I have had good preparation. However, it would have been better if I could take part in some competitions before the Olympiad," said Razeed. There is bad news however for the women's team as the country's highest-ranked female player International Master Shamima Akter Liza withdrew from the tournament for studies. FIDE Master Zakia Sultana has been drafted in to replace her while the other members of the team are IM Rani Hamid, Shamima Sharmin Shirin, Nazrana Khan Eva and Mahmuda Chowdhury Moli. The men's best performance to date is a 35th-position finish out of 140 teams in the 2002 edition while the women's best came way back in 1992 when they finished 27th among 62 teams. The present Bangladesh contingent includes four federation officials, three inspection officials and three family members of the players, apart from the ten players, who will be bearing their own expenses.

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Booters start training today

SPORTS REPORTER

60 footballers out of a total of 81 called for the national training camp reported in person to the BFF technical director BA Jubair Nipu yesterday, while others contacted through mobile phones ahead of the training camp which starts today at different venues in the capital. The national teams, divided into four groups -- Red and Green for the senior national side, Yellow and White for the U-18 to U-23 sides -- have been called up for the training camp ahead of different international engagements. The coach of the Red team, which has most of the current national team players, Syed Golam Jillani said some of the members of the team could not report either due to injury or personal reasons, but they will report directly at the training camp. The Red team will train at the Abahani Club ground today at 4:00pm, the Green

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Rain relief for follow-on Kiwis

Cricket

AFP, Hyderabad

Off-spinner Ravichandran Ashwin took a career-best 6-31 to put India in firm command on a rain-hit third day of the opening Test against New Zealand in Hyderabad on Saturday. The 25-year-old was superbly backed by left-arm spinner Pragyan Ojha (3-44) as New Zealand were dismissed for 159 in their first innings at the stroke of lunch in reply to India's 438. The hosts, who enforced the follow-on after taking a 279-run lead, reduced New Zealand to 41-1 in the second innings at stumps on a day when only 37.3 overs were bowled. Opener Brendon McCullum was unbeaten on 16 and Kane Williamson was three not out when play was called off after tea due to rain. New Zealand trail by 238 runs. India opened the attack in the second innings with Ojha, who trapped opener

Martin Guptill (16) leg-before in his eighth over to claim his fourth wicket of the match. "There is some bounce in the wicket and in the second innings, it has started turning more. We are confident that everything will fall in place for us," said Ojha. "When it is turning, it's a bonus for you. Keep it there and let the batsmen make some mistakes. We have two more days to go and are confident with the way the guys are bowling and how everyone is approaching the game." The tourists earlier added 53 runs to their overnight total of 106-5 after the match started an hour late due to a wet outfield, with Ashwin taking three wickets and Ojha and paceman Umesh Yadav one each. It was Ashwin's third haul of five or more wickets in an innings in seven Tests. James Franklin, unbeaten on 31 on Friday, was the lone batsman to defy the Indian attack, top-scoring with an unbeaten 43 off 122 balls. "Obviously there was always going to be some balls that were going to spin past me. I was just trying not to worry about them too

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PHOTO: AFP

PARTNERS IN CRIME: India's spinning duo of Ravichandran Ashwin (L) and Pragyan Ojha, who were responsible for forcing New Zealand to follow on in the first Test, leave the ground as rain stops play during the third day at the Rajiv Gandhi Stadium in Hyderabad yesterday.

Women's warm-up match today

SPORTS REPORTER

The Bangladesh national women's football team will play a practice match against Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) U-19 women's team at the Bangabandhu National Stadium in the afternoon. The practice match has been arranged to give the women's team much-needed match time ahead of the 2nd SAFF Women's Football Championship which will take place in Colombo from September 7. Bangladesh have been pitted in the strong Group A which also includes defending champions India, hosts Sri Lanka and Bhutan.