

Star SPORT

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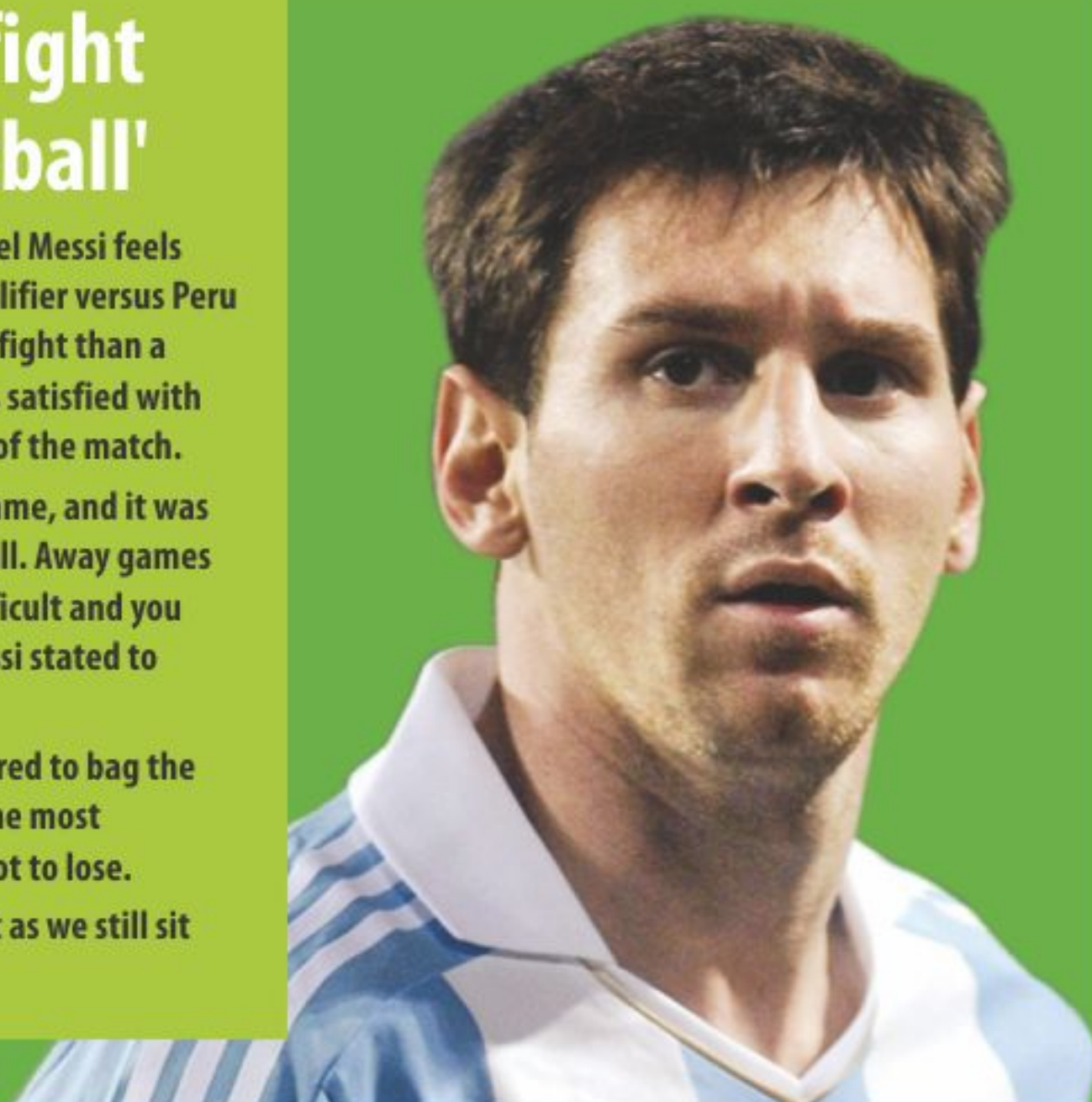
'More of fight than football'

Argentina skipper Lionel Messi feels that the World Cup qualifier versus Peru was more of a physical fight than a football game, but was satisfied with the eventual outcome of the match.

"It was a really tight game, and it was more fight than football. Away games like this are always difficult and you have to be strong," Messi stated to reporters.

"We would have preferred to bag the full three points, but the most important thing was not to lose.

"A draw is a good result as we still sit atop of the table."



Torrid start for Siddikur

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh's ace golfer Siddikur Rahman endured an indifferent round of golf in the first round of the Yeangder Tournament Players Championship in Taipei yesterday, finishing with a one-over-par 73 which saw him wallowing in joint 63rd position. It was quite a different tale for Philippines' Angelo Que, who carded a flawless seven-under-par 65 to finish in top position, leading Gaganjeet Bhullar of India and Jason Knutson of the USA by 1 stroke.

On the front nine Siddikur traded two birdies in the second and fourth holes for two bogeys in the sixth and ninth. Things only got worse on the back nine, where a birdie in the tenth and bogies in the 16th and 17th meant that the 27-year-old finished with an unsatisfactory one-over-par score.

There were high hopes of Siddikur notching his second title on the Asian Tour leading up to the tournament, especially as he had played so well in the recently concluded Selangor Masters in Malaysia -- finishing the championship strongly with consecutive rounds of six-under-par 66s. Being eight shots behind leader Que in Taipei however, the Bangladeshi will have to turn in quite a performance in the remaining three rounds to justify those hopes.

Hockey back after 3 years

SPORTS REPORTER

After a long three-year gap, the First Division Hockey League gets underway from tomorrow at the Maulana Bhasani Hockey Stadium with ten clubs taking part in the tournament format league.

Like the last edition of the First Division held in 2008, there will be no relegation but the champions will be promoted to the Premier Division Hockey League.

"We have been forced to take such a decision in the face of the clubs' demand," said Bangladesh Hockey Federation general secretary Khaza Rahmatullah at a press conference yesterday.

The champions and runners-up will be given Tk 25,000 and Tk 15,000 respectively as prize money. The participating 10 teams divided into two groups will play the tournament-format league.

Group A consists of Barnak Samaj, Bachelors Club, Farashganj SC, Uttara Hockey

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Bangladesh captain Mushfiqur Rahim speaks during a press conference in Colombo yesterday, ahead of the ICC World T20 which begins in Sri Lanka on September 18. PHOTO: AFP

'Anything is possible'

SPORTS REPORTER



Bangladesh captain Mushfiqur Rahim was optimistic about his side's chances in the ICC World Twenty20 to be held in Sri Lanka from September 18. The wicketkeeper batsman emphasised two factors -- his team's good showing in this year's Asia Cup in Dhaka and the right build-up to the mega tournament -- while speaking at the pre-event media conference in

Colombo on Thursday.

Mushfiqur wanted to take inspiration from the Asia Cup performance and carry on the good form shown by his team in the regional showpiece into the ICC World Twenty20.

"The Asia Cup was a huge step up for us. We beat India and Sri Lanka. If we had luck going our way maybe we would have beaten Pakistan in the final as well. Now, if we can build on the Asia Cup form it would be great for us," the Bangladesh skipper was quoted as saying in the tournament's official website.

Bangladesh's performance in the tournament's three editions thus far has been far from notable. The lack of match practice was blamed on those occasions but the situation could not be more different this time as the Tigers enter the meet after playing a number of T20 matches against South Africa, Zimbabwe, Ireland, the Netherlands and Scotland, apart from their participation in a T20 tournament in Trinidad & Tobago before coming to Sri Lanka.

So the Bangladesh captain had no

doubts that his side has had the right build-up, saying that "The boys are shaping up really well. We have had a good preparation for the last three months. We played 12 games and won nine. A couple of our guys have also been playing here in the SLPL (Sri Lanka Premier League). So it is looking good for us."

The Bangladesh wicket-keeper batsman also believed that momentum will be a huge factor in the tournament and was keen to see his side get on a roll.

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Rare exhibition for booters



Football

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh will set off for Nepal tomorrow to play two exhibition matches, and while the games will be low-key affairs, the tour will mark a landmark as a significant departure from usual practice for the national football team. Traditionally, overseas tours for the football team have always concentrated on either tournaments or preparatory matches ahead of tournaments. This is the first time, that the team will be going to play exhibition games without the impending pressure of a tournament.

Most of the national players have been idle since the completion of the Bangladesh Premier League in early July. But due to this timely intervention from the National

Teams' Committee of the Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) the booters will find themselves employed in the off-season. This will help the booters keep up their fitness during the off-season, while also acting as preparation for next year's international engagements. The new season is set to get underway from Saturday, through the Federation Shield, which is a qualifying tournament for the Federation Cup.

Some 81 booters split into four groups had started the off-season training since August 25. The number of booters was reduced to 28 on September 6 and yesterday coach Saiful Bari Tutu announced a 23-member final squad with the inclusion of four new faces goalkeeper Maksudur Rahman Mustaq, midfielder Sohel Rana, defender Raihan Hasan and striker Anwar Hossain.

Bangladesh's two exhibition matches

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Players of the Bangladesh women's cricket team jog before a practice session at the Academy Ground in Mirpur yesterday, ahead of today's third and deciding T20I against the visiting South Africa. PHOTO: STAR



Sri Lankan skipper Mahela Jayawardene shapes to play the reverse sweep during the ICC World T20 warm-up match against the West Indies at the Nondescripts Cricket Club (NCC) Stadium in Colombo yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

Lanka deliver warning

AFP, Colombo



Mahela Jayawardene and Tillakaratne Dilshan hit half-centuries as hosts Sri Lanka prepared for the World Twenty20 with a nine-wicket win over the West Indies on Thursday.

Skipper Jayawardene (57 not out) and opener Dilshan (50 not out) put on 103 for the second-wicket to help their team achieve a 133-run target with 26 balls to spare in a warm-up match in Colombo.

The Sri Lankan captain smashed two sixes and six fours in his 35-ball knock while Dilshan's 38-ball innings contained one six and five boundaries.

Johnson Charles (30), Darren Bravo (29) and Kieron Pollard (28 not out) were the main scorers for the West Indies, who rested star opener Chris Gayle.

Sri Lanka are in Group C of the preliminary league with South Africa and Zimbabwe. The West Indies are in Group B with Australia and Ireland.

Two teams from each group will advance to the Super Eights round.

In another match in Colombo, wicketkeeper-batsman Niall O'Brien cracked a 49-ball 62 with the help of two sixes and four boundaries to set up Ireland's easy 54-run victory over Zimbabwe.

Ireland scored 181-5 off 20 overs before restricting Zimbabwe to 127-8, with pacer Alex Cusack finishing with 3-6 off three overs and left-arm spinner George Dockrell with 3-28 from four overs.

Kevin O'Brien, brother of Niall, hit a brisk 30 not out off 14 balls while Ed Joyce contributed 29 for Ireland.

Opener Hamilton Masakadza top-scored for Zimbabwe with 44, hitting two sixes and five fours.

Nat'l B chess

SPORTS REPORTER

The Access Holding 38th National Chess B Championship gets underway from today at the Bangladesh Chess Federation hall room with players having over 2100 ratings eligible to take part in the qualifiers of the main event of the National Chess Championship.

Apart from the players, who have over 2100 ratings, the champion from the Sub-Junior Championship, Junior Championship and Women's championship will also play the National Chess B Championship directly. Some 150 players from districts, Dhaka City, Public

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