

Draxler out for weeks

Schalke 04 teenager Julian Draxler was ruled out for several weeks on Thursday after undergoing surgery for a broken arm he sustained in their 2-2 Champions League Group B draw against Montpellier on Wednesday, the club said.

Draxler, who scored one goal and earned a penalty that added another for Schalke, was taken off early in the second half after he snapped a bone in his lower arm when he was brought down for the spot kick.

The 19-year-old Germany international had levelled in the 26th minute for the hosts who conceded a



'Our bowlers won us the game'

BISHWAJIT ROY from Colombo

The party is on for the home team fans. Sri Lanka, backed by 35,000 electrifying fans in the big bowl, won the bowlers-dominated first semifinal by 16 runs against 2009 champions Pakistan to reach another final of a global event of ICC. Mahela Jayawardene & Co are now one match away from emulating their feat of 1996 when they won the ICC World Cup.

When many feared a reversal for the home team after they were restricted to 139 for 4, their bowlers brought them back in contention brilliantly to earn them their first T20 victory at the Premadasa Stadium in their fifth attempt. And that secured Sri Lanka their second World T20 final.

"We are really proud at the way the team has been progressing towards the target. There is a great atmosphere today. We are a very proud cricketing nation and people

always support us and we hope they will always remain behind us to encourage us in playing good cricket," said a soft-spoken Sri Lanka skipper Jayawardene in the post-match press conference.

"Kumar Sangakkara and I are very fortunate that we are going to play our fourth final in an ICC global event. Now we have to cross one more hurdle to make the cricket-loving

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people happy. We are really excited about Sunday's [final] game," he added.

The home skipper, who was adjudged player-of-the-match for his match-winning 42-run knock in difficult conditions, said that they were 15 to 20 runs short in their total but the bowlers did an excellent job against a strong Pakistan batting line-up to bring about the victory.

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Sri Lanka captain Mahela Jayawardene sets himself up to execute a reverse sweep as Pakistan wicketkeeper Kamran Akmal looks on during the sides' World Twenty20 semifinal at the R Premadasa Stadium in Colombo on Thursday.

PHOTO: AFP

A chance to break new ground

BISHWAJIT ROY from Colombo

In recent times it has been always Australia that has called the shots in their wonderful historic rivalry against West Indies, but history will not count when the two meet in the second semifinal of the ICC World Twenty20 at the R Premadasa International Stadium today.

Instead of their storied rivalry, it was the prospect of the explosive Chris Gayle being pitted against the in-form Shane Watson that took centre-stage in discussions before the high-voltage battle which will start at 7.30pm Bangladesh Standard Time. Adding a bit of intrigue to an already enticing prospect, Gayle was the point of discussion not just for his murderous batting on the field but also for some off-field issues. Gayle and teammates Andre Russell, Fidel Edwards and Dwayne Smith attracted the attention of police bodyguards during a late-night party in their hotel rooms, an incident that saw three British women being escorted from the players' rooms and briefly arrested.

The relaxed West Indian skipper Darren Sammy however was not willing to talk about the issue, which was resolved with no charges made and the women released on bail; he was instead looking forward to a team effort while talking at the pre-match press conference at the P Sara Stadium yesterday.

"Next question please," was the

AUSTRALIA WEST INDIES

Played: 57 Won: 30
 Played: 43 Won: 17
 In 2012 In 2012
 Played: 12 Won: 9
 Won: 7 Won: 5

HEAD TO HEAD
5:3

KEY PLAYERS

SHANE WATSON SUNIL NARINE

Matches: 35 Runs: 973 Highest: 81 Average: 31.38
 Matches: 10 Wickets: 11 BBF: 4/12 Average: 21.90

answer from the smiling Sammy when he was asked about the mood in the camp following the incident before a crucial knockout battle.

"It's not only Chris (Gayle). Obviously he sets the momentum for us at the top of the order, but it's about everybody. To win this game it will take a total team effort. In any cricket match you will have one individual winning the man-of-the-match for doing something brilliant, but it will take a collective effort, like you saw in the games before, to win the semi final," he opined.

The West Indies captain was excited to renew their rivalry against Australia and expressed his optimism that they will come out on top to take a giant step forward towards their dream of winning their first global tournament since the Champions Trophy in England in 2004.

"We have always had good games against Australia. We have always

scored heavy against them. We back our guys; their attack seems to favour us. Our game against Australia (in the first round) was shaping up to be a very exciting one. It's fair to be playing them in the semifinals, hopefully we will have another exciting game and we will come out on top," said Sammy, referring to their rain-interrupted first-round game which Australia won by 17 runs through the Duckworth-Lewis method.

Australia skipper George Bailey however was very much wary of the Gayle factor but was also confident about his team's chances of reaching the final and clinching their first trophy in the game's shortest version's mega event.

"If he (Gayle) has an outstanding game, then he will make it difficult for us but we can come back through (Shane) Watson, (David) Warner and (Michael) Hussey," said Bailey. Middle-order batsman David Hussey may also come back into the side, having missed out on the early stages of the tournament.

"In Twenty20, we have these games within games. The West Indies' strength is their batting but we have the confidence that we can chase down anything they set or we can put up a good score. Confidence is a huge thing. Once you get to these knockout games you know there are no weak teams or weak players left. It's all about winning on that day. India got knocked out after winning four out of five and the West Indies have sneaked in with a few less (victories). That's the format of the game. Once you get to the knockout

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Ramu-torn Cox City pull out

SPORTS REPORTER



The fallout from the recent attacks on Buddhist temples in Bangladesh than was immediately obvious, with the terrible series of events also taking a toll on the country's sports.

Cox City Football Club, a local outfit of the coastal Cox's Bazar district, pulled out of the Grameenphone Federation Cup as well as the Bangladesh Premier League as a majority of their players belonging to the Buddhist Barua family were affected.

"Eight of our local players are from the Ramu-based Barua family and two of those eight players -- Dhiman Barua and Mutup Barua -- were directly affected by the heinous attacks while others are upset by the incidents and are not in a position to play at the moment," said Cox City FC organising secretary Khaled Mosharaf yesterday over the phone.

Cox City earned the right to play in the professional football league this season after emerging champions in the inaugural Bangladesh Championship League, the second-tier professional football league. But the newly-promoted club conveyed with regret their inability to

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1st Twenty20 washed off

SPORTS REPORTER

The first Twenty20 match between the visiting West Indies High Performance team and Bangladesh A was abandoned due to rain at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium yesterday. Only one innings could be completed, with Bangladesh A scoring 125 for nine in their 20 overs.

Bangladesh captain Naeem Islam elected to bat after the start was delayed due to inclement weather, and the home team got off to a bad start as opener Imrul Kayes was castled by Sheldon Cotterell off the second ball of the day. Shamsur Rahman and opener Anamul Haque carried the score to 27 when Shamsur was caught off Dawnley Grant. That brought in Naeem, who put together the only innings of substance, scoring a 41-ball 48 with three fours and a six. He was the ninth wicket to fall of the last ball of the innings, having shepherded his side to a modest yet competitive 125. He was helped by Sabbir Rahman, the next-highest scorer with 18, as they put together 33 for the sixth wicket.

Cotterell and Verasammy Permaul were the most successful bowlers for the tourists, each picking up three wickets for 14 and 29 runs respectively.

The West Indians however could not commence their chase as the heavens opened during the innings break.

The second T20 will take place today at the same venue.

Shuttler charges dropped

SPORTS REPORTER

The country's top shuttlers have been cleared of charges brought by the Bangladesh Badminton Federation and they have been allowed to take part in the Federation Cup, which begins today at the Wooden-Floor Gymnasium.

Of the seven shuttlers charged, four appeared before the inquiry committee on Wednesday while the rest -- Elina Sultana, Raju and Javed -- avoided the hearing for different reasons. The committee accepted their explanations.

The players had earlier avoided appearing before the BBF enquiry committee,

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West Indies superstar Chris Gayle (L) and Marlon Samuels take a break from practice in Colombo on Thursday.

PHOTO: AFP

Local flavour in curtain raiser

SPORTS REPORTER



The finals of the Grameenphone Federation Cup, which gets underway from today at two different venues, is seemingly going to be a stage for local players after the immigration department recently imposed firm restrictions on signing up foreign players for domestic competitions.

Four foreign players are eligible to play in a match according to the bylaws of the Bangladesh Professional Football League Committee. However, participating clubs are struggling to fulfil their foreign quotas as the immigration department, following directives from the Special Branch, decided to allow only foreign players with player visas;

applicable especially to players from Africa.

The decision has definitely made an impact on the participation of foreign players and competing teams, except a couple of clubs, are preparing to compete in the season's curtain-raising tournament Federation Cup with less or no foreign players.

On paper, big-budgeted Sheikh Russel KC, traditional foes Abahani and Mohammedan and Sheikh Jamal Dhanmondi Club are comparatively ahead of others on the basis of local recruitment. It is believed that the title race of the preparatory tournament of Bangladesh Premier League is mainly to be confined to these four teams although last season's runners-up Team BJMC and a depleted Brothers Union may also pull off surprise performances in the 15-team tournament after Cox City FC pulled out of the tournament citing

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