

Mahela quits
T20 captaincy

CRICINFO, Colombo

Mahela Jayawardene has resigned as Sri Lanka's Twenty20 captain, soon after his team lost the final of the World Twenty20 against West Indies in Colombo. He said he will remain captain of the ODI and Test teams until at least the end of Sri Lanka's tour of Australia in January, and remains available for Twenty20 selection.

"I had a chat to the selectors before this tournament started. I was going to step down from T20 captaincy after this World Cup," Jayawardene said. "I personally feel that for Sri Lanka going forward we need a younger leader. It's a great opportunity for somebody to start in that T20 format. I've spoken to the selectors and they were quite happy with that choice."

Vice-captain Angelo Mathews has been groomed for captaincy over the past 18 months, and is the obvious candidate to take the reins in the shortest format.

Jayawardene, 35, had given up the captaincy in all formats in 2009, but resumed leadership when Tillakaratne Dilshan quit the post in January this year.

Rajapakse
okays new
Pak tour?

PTI, Karachi

The 2009 Lahore terror attack is yet to become even a distant memory but Sri Lanka President Mahinda Rajapakse has reportedly given his consent to the country's cricket team touring Pakistan again.

According to the "Express Tribune", the Sri Lankan President told the media that his government was ready to send the team to Pakistan.

But Rajapakse reportedly made it clear that the final decision rested with the two boards. He said it was up to the boards of both the countries to sort out the dates and other intricacies for a tour.

"We are ready to take the initiative in this and will be happy if international cricket resumes in Pakistan," the newspaper quoted Rajapakse as saying.

No Test-playing nation has visited Pakistan since March 2009 when terrorists attacked the Sri Lankan team in Lahore killing six Pakistani policemen and a van driver.

Walton buys
Dhaka Div

SPORTS REPORTER

Walton Hi-Tech Industries Limited became the second company, after Prime Bank Foundation, to receive a franchisee license for the National Cricket League (NCL).

The local electronics giant signed a deal with the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) yesterday to buy Dhaka Division.

The BCB is waiting for the other four divisions to get franchisees shortly.

Wins for DYS,
Shantinagar

SPORTS REPORTER

Dhaka Young Star and Shantinagar SC won their respective matches in the Green Delta Second Division Hockey League at the Maulana Bhasani Hockey Stadium yesterday.

Dhaka Young Star defeated Udit 7-1 while Shantinagar SC beat Raktim Sangha 1-0.

Gentleman's

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While the Sher-e-Bangla National Cricket Stadium is sure to host a number of games in the series, there is also possibility for Khulna's Sheikh Abu Naser Stadium to witness its first Test match. ICC's Roshan Mahanama will arrive in Dhaka on the 11th of this month to take decision on whether the venue meets the international standards.



Victoria Azarenka of Belarus poses with China Open trophy after defeating Russia's Maria Sharapova in the final 6-3, 6-1 at the National Tennis Centre in Beijing yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

Azarenka takes title

Tennis

AFP, Beijing

World number one Victoria Azarenka thrashed second seed Maria Sharapova of Russia in straight sets on Sunday to win the 4.8 million dollars China Open.

The Belarusian dispatched Sharapova, ranked number two in the world, 6-3, 6-1, in the final of the Beijing tournament -- the last Premier Mandatory event of the women's calendar.

Azarenka, 23, sped to a 4-0 lead in the first set against the French Open champion, breaking her opponent's serve twice and holding her own on both occasions.

Sharapova, 25, won her first game in the fifth, before Australian Open champion Azarenka continued her 100 percent service game in the sixth.

The Russian responded by upping her serving and return shorts, winning two games in a row, but it was too little too late as Azarenka broke Sharapova in the final game to win the set 6-3 in 43 minutes.

Azarenka continued her momentum into the second set, again winning the first four

games with ease.

The tennis star from Belarus then came from behind to hold her serve in a lengthy fifth game to make it 5-0 before Sharapova scraped a game, following an 18-shot rally.

With Azarenka serving for the match Sharapova had two break points at advantage but the Russian was unable to convert.

Azarenka then squandered a match point before finally taking the game and set to record a big win.

It was Azarenka's first China Open title in four attempts and her fifth tournament triumph of the season.

Both finalists had made it to the last two without dropping a set and Azarenka is now 7-4 to the good against Sharapova in head-to-heads.

It was the sixth time the two had met in the final of a tournament and the fourth time this year. Azarenka has now won five and lost only one of their title deciders.

The China Open is one of four compulsory events, ranking behind only the Grand Slams and end-of-season WTA Championships in prestige.

Sharapova, a four-time Grand Slam winner, is yet to win a Premier Mandatory tournament.

Academy delayed

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opened before March next year, although the final selection of 60 budding booters -- 30 each for the U-14 and U-18 groups -- will be completed by October.

"If everything is going in the right direction it will take till March next year to complete everything at the BFF academy in Sylhet," said National Sports Council (NSC) director (Development and Planning) Abdur Rahman at his office yesterday.

Rahman informed that the NSC has already sent over a Tk 3 crore project proposal to the ministry of youth and sports which was scheduled to sit in a meeting on Thursday next before finally sending it to the Finance Ministry for the final approval.

"If the finance ministry approves it within October 15, we will be able to start the work in December after a one-month tender process. And then it will take another four months to put all things in place. The football federation can start the academy by March though there will still be some work left," said Rahman.

The government had leased its Sylhet BKSP to the BFF last December for five years. But the football's governing body has sought assistance from NSC in July to decorate the football academy with furniture, gymnasium equipments, filtration at the swimming pool, levelling of the playgrounds and recruiting office staff.

The state minister for youth and sports Ahad Ali Sarker along with NSC and BFF officials had inspected the Sylhet football academy on September 18 and the sports minister instructed his officials to complete all things as soon as possible. Meanwhile, the first chunk of 300,000 dollars out of the FIFA promised 700,000 dollars for this project has already been deposited to the BFF account in July.

Aussie women

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"It's a good feeling," said Fields, who missed 2010 final through injury. "England played a really good match, but we had the belief in our team. Just an all-round performance. It's awesome to be standing here as winners."

"All the hard work has been worth it."

Alyssa Healy (26) and Meg Lanning (25) put on 51 for the competitive total after they were put in to bat.

Cameron smashed five boundaries and a six during her rapid 34-ball knock.

England captain Edwards showed disappointment over the loss.

"It didn't go our way, but congratulations to Australia. We didn't do well up front, and just couldn't pin them," said Edwards, declared player of the tournament on scoring 172 in five matches.

SCORES IN BRIEF

AUSTRALIA: 142-4 in 20 overs (Cameron 45; Colvin 2-21)
ENGLAND: 138-9 in 20 overs (Edwards 28; Jonassen 3-25; Stalekar 2-16; Hunter 2-36)

Result: Australia won by four runs.

Galong in Dhaka

SPORTS REPORTER

Hence Galong, an AFC Women's Competition official, is scheduled to arrive here tomorrow to inspect the venues as well as facilities as Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) expressed interest in hosting the AFC Women's qualifiers for the Asia Cup.

The Bangladesh women's national team are supposed to take part in the qualifiers, although the time and venues have yet to be finalised.

Hence will inspect the Bangabandhu National Stadium (BNS) and the Bishreshtha Shaheed Mostafa Stadium on Wednesday before she leaves on the same day.

PM declares

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She said that her government was giving priority to physical education and sports, apart from developing the infrastructure of sports structures from the grassroots to urban areas.

Having applauded the country's successes in sports, Sheikh Hasina also urged the country's financially well off citizens, businessmen and organisations to come forward to support the country's sports.

The BFF also invited some sponsors like Prime Bank, Beximco and Islami Bank to the opening ceremony.

In the exhibition match, BFF President's XI beat Pioneer Chairman's XI 1-0 with Mashud Uddin Chowdhury, one of 12 Airtel Rising stars who earned a ticket to receive training at Manchester United, scoring the decisive goal.

Novak's 3rd China Open

Tennis

AFP, Beijing

World number two Novak Djokovic overcame Jo-Wilfried Tsonga of France in straight sets on Sunday to win the China Open for a third time.

The 25-year-old Serb defeated the world number seven 7-6 (7/4), 6-2 to maintain his unbeaten record at the ATP 500 tournament in Beijing and take the winner's prize of \$30,570 dollars.

Djokovic has won the China Open every time he has entered, his previous titles coming in 2009 and 2010 before he missed last year because of injury, and his record at the tournament now stands at 14-0.

He is pressing to beat Roger Federer to the year-end number one spot in the world rankings and said he was "delighted" at his latest triumph.

"It's an amazing feeling to win this trophy in the new stadium," he said of the capital's National Tennis Stadium which had yet to be built the last time he won in Beijing.

Little separated the players throughout the entire opening set. The first four games went to serve before Tsonga made a breakthrough in the fifth game, breaking Djokovic without losing a point.

But the Serb immediately broke back and the next six games went with serve to force a tie break, where Djokovic raced to a 4-1 lead.

Tsonga won two quick points before Djokovic spurned an opportunity while 5-3 ahead, pushing a simple forehand shot well wide.

But two mistakes from the Frenchman, a double fault and a backhand half volley into the net, gave the tie break to Djokovic.

The first two service games of the second set were held before Djokovic broke in the third and was spurred on to take the next two games, establishing a 4-1 lead. Then he came from behind to hold serve in the sixth.

Tsonga held in the seventh before Djokovic did the same to take the set and the match in one hour and 41 minutes.

"The first set was really even, and maybe a couple of points decided the winner there," Djokovic said.

"We served well when we needed to, and I think the realistic thing to expect for the first set was tie break."

"I managed to hold my nerves in the end. He made the double fault that probably cost him the set."

"Then when you're getting to the second set with the set advantage, mentally it is much more encouraging for you and then you try to play on that confidence run that you have," he added.

"I made that early break in the second and after that I felt much more comfortable on the court."

A disappointed Tsonga admitted afterwards that he had let an opportunity slip early in the tie.

"It was a good match," he said. "I missed maybe something in the first set. I was a break up and I was playing well."

"But then he played solid. It was really difficult to control him. I just tried to play my game, to be aggressive. But against a player like this, for the moment my level is not high enough to beat him."

The Serb had won his previous five meetings against Tsonga, including three this year. He was ultimately too strong for the Frenchman, who was making his first China Open final appearance and only his third full match of this year's tournament.

Tsonga, making his fourth appearance at the China Open, started with a tough three-set win over Uzbekistan's Denis Istomin before receiving a walk-over against Russia's Nikolay Davydenko.

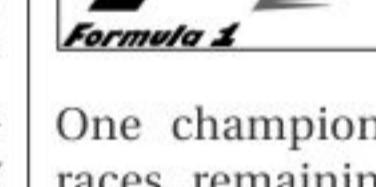
He defeated Mikhail Youzhny 6-3, 6-2 in the third round and won his semifinal match against Feliciano Lopez when the Spaniard, who was trailing 1-6, 4-1 at the time, retired with a wrist injury.

For his part Djokovic opened with a first-round three-set win against German qualifier Michael Berrer and followed it with a 6-1, 6-3 victory over Carlos Berlocq of Argentina.

In the third round, the Serb dispatched Austria's Jürgen Melzer 6-1, 6-2 before defeating Florian Mayer of Germany in the semifinal 6-1, 6-4.

F1 sent wide open

REUTERS, Suzuka



Red Bull's Sebastian Vettel won the Japanese Grand Prix on Sunday and blew the Formula One championship wide open with five races remaining after Fernando Alonso spun out at the start.

Alonso's pre-race lead over reigning champion Vettel, chalking up his second win in a row and third of the season, was cut to four points from 29 with the Spaniard in danger of falling behind in South Korea next weekend.

"It was an important step today but there's still a long way," said Vettel after holding aloft the winner's trophy and making the familiar raised forefinger gesture as number one.

"These things happen and obviously you

don't hope for those things to happen to yourself," he added of Alonso's exit into the gravel following contact with former Ferrari champion Kimi Raikkonen's Lotus.

"We have so many races, it could happen. We don't know what happens in the next race, it's good to take the points today."

Ferrari's Felipe Massa came second, 20.6 seconds behind Vettel, for the Brazilian's first podium finish since October 2010 with Japan's Kamui Kobayashi delighting his home crowd with third place for Sauber.

Only the third Japanese to stand on a Formula One podium, he was the first since Takuma Sato at Indianapolis in 2004. Only Aguri Suzuki, in 1990, had previously finished in the top three at Suzuka.

"Fantastic, unbelievable," he said, sharing a podium with Vettel for the first time since their Formula Three days and addressing the fans in Japanese.



PHOTO: STAR

