

Lampard in China talks

Chelsea star Frank Lampard is poised to follow former teammates Didier Drogba and Nicolas Anelka with a lucrative move to China, after Guizhou Renhe confirmed Monday they were in talks with him.

The England international midfielder has been linked since March with a move to the Chinese Super League. Chelsea manager Roberto Di Matteo played down the reports after his side's 1-1 draw with Liverpool on Sunday. But a Renhe official confirmed in a brief statement to AFP that talks with



Different WI await Tigers

First Test begins today

SPORTS REPORTER

SAHARA CUP 2012 On paper, the Test series beginning at 9:30 am today between hosts Bangladesh and the West Indies at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium may seem a good contest, being a battle between Test cricket's seventh (West Indies) and ninth (Bangladesh) ranked teams. That impression may be further entrenched if Bangladesh's record against their opponents is considered -- two draws and two wins from eight matches, their best returns against a top team.

But Bangladesh fans will do well to bear in mind that this is a much-improved West Indies side, and expectations for this series should be kept on the conservative side. Even the two victories came against a woefully weakened side.

The West Indies have the clear edge, having an incisive bowling attack -- always critical in Test cricket -- consisting of spinners and pacemen who can be effective on most surfaces, while the Tigers' attack is known more for its inexperience and indiscipline. But where the opposing camps can be said to be evenly matched is in the quality of their trump cards -- Chris Gayle and Shakib Al Hasan.

Gayle's return to the West Indies team is one of the chief factors behind their recent rejuvenation that saw them sweeping a two-match Test series against New Zealand at home in July and winning the World Twenty20, while Shakib's talismanic status for Bangladesh is nothing new for the team's followers. The Magura left-hander has been in top of the world all-rounder rankings for quite a while. Gayle's name has inspired fear in opposition bowlers for a bit longer.

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Adoring fans throng to have a glimpse of their favourite cricketer Shakib Al Hasan, who heads off after a practice session at the BCB National Cricket Academy in Mirpur yesterday on the eve of the first Test between Bangladesh and West Indies.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

Sammy seeks clean sweep We'll play cricket hard

NAIMUL KARIM

SAHARA CUP 2012 West Indies captain Darren Sammy said that his team was aiming for a better score-line in this series than they went away with after their tour last year. In a press conference held at the Sher-e-Bangla National Cricket Stadium yesterday, the visiting captain stated that the players were confident and ready for the two-match Test series against Bangladesh that begins today.

"Every year we set targets that we want to achieve. The last time we came here, we drew one Test and won the other one. This year we look to go one further. In the one-day series last year we won two and lost one. We also lost the T20 game. So we'll look to improve on that," said Sammy.

Providing a hint regarding the visitors' team combination for the first Test match, the all-rounder stated that slow left-arm bowler Verasammy Permaul has a good



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chance of playing his first Test. "The team selection is a little tricky. There's a combination that we used in the past, but young Permaul has a good chance of making his Test

debut. He played here before with the Academy team and has been bowling really well," said Sammy.

Permaul, who toured Bangladesh in September this year along with the West Indies High Performance side, took 12 wickets in the two longer-version games that he played. He also performed well in the one-day and T20 games.

The captain further stated the importance of the return of Chris Gayle to the side. Earlier, Bangladesh captain, Mushfiqur Rahim, stated that they had made separate plans to counter the left-handed opener, who on an average has scored close to 60 runs per innings in Tests against Bangladesh.

"He is the coolest person to bat with. It's good to have his experience at the top. The new ball has affected us in the past so hopefully what he is doing will continue to be beneficial to us," said Sammy. "Our team is quite balanced. We believe that we can take 20 wickets in this match with whatever combination we

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BISHWAJIT ROY

SAHARA CUP 2012 The Tigers will once again step out of their comfort zone when they take on a new-look West Indies in the first Test of the two-match series, starting from today at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur. After almost a year's break, Mushfiqur Rahim's men face the same old challenge of proving their worth in the longer version of the game against opponents who have established themselves as a much improved side than the last time they played here a year ago, with the return of Chris Gayle proving particularly inspirational.

Unlike the buzz that surrounds the lead-up to one-day series, the lead-up to this Test series has been quiet. There have however been whispers doing the rounds in some circles that the home side may pull off a surprise, but the reality is that it is a format which requires a combination of skill, technique and temperament for success. The millions of



We will play good cricket and hard cricket, at the end of the day we will see what the result is. As long as we play consistent cricket it's good. Previously we couldn't do that. So this is our basic plan,

cricket lovers in the country would be happy if the Tigers can put together a string of decent performances through the series rather than some sporadic shows of individual brilliance which they have been doing since their elevation to the top flight twelve years ago.

And as usual, Bangladesh captain Mushfiqur Rahim demonstrated his confidence while talking at the pre-match conference yesterday, although he was well aware of the size of the challenge of playing Test cricket after such a long gap. One might have thought that two rounds of National Cricket League (NCL) matches and some practice sessions could in no way be adequate preparation, but skipper Mushfiqur was not at all unhappy with the preparation and he hoped that his team is mentally ready and prepared to fight in the series.

"Obviously this is a big challenge because we are playing Test cricket after a long time, but preparation-wise we haven't prepared very badly or very well. We have prepared for a long time, based on the last few days of practice I hope that everybody is mentally prepared and ready to go," said the wicketkeeper-batsman.

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National A chess

SPORTS REPORTER

IM Minhazuddin Ahmed Sagar took solo lead in the Healthcare Pharmaceuticals Ltd 38th National A Chess Championship after overnight leader GM Reefat Bin Sattar lost to holder GM Ziaur Rahman in the fifth round at the Media Center of Bangladesh Olympic Association yesterday.

Sagar beat Mahtabuddin Ahmed to secure 4.5 points from five matches while Reefat on with previous four points after losing to Zia. Reefat, Zia and FM Debraj Chatterjee shared the third position with four points each.



West Indies' explosive batsman Chris Gayle cuts an imposing figure during the team's practice session at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.

A day of trouncings

SCORES IN BRIEF

KHULNA: First innings 416 all out in 87.3 overs and second innings 297 for 9 for 5 declared

RANGPUR: First innings 171 and second innings 134 all out in 37.4 overs (Sajedul 36; Saqlain 4-53; Shafiq 3-37)

CHITTAGONG: First innings 307 all out and second innings 153 all out in 46.5 overs (Aftab 52; Nafees 45; Ripon 5-51; Razzak 4-28)

RAJSHAHI: First innings 232 and second innings 297 for 9 for 5 declared

SYLHET: First innings 390 and second innings 6 for no loss (Imtiaz 6 not out)

BARISAL: First innings 242 and second innings 138

DHAKA METRO: First innings 241

innings 307 (Mosharraf 76; Shuvagata 57; Enamul 5-57)

SHAHJAHAN: First innings 242 and second innings 138 for 5 declared

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