

TOUR OF INDIA
Pakistan
axe Afridi

AFP, Lahore

Pakistan on Monday dropped big-hitting all-rounder Shahid Afridi from their squad for the three-match one-day international series against arch-rivals India starting this month.

Pakistan fly to New Delhi on December 22 and play the first Twenty20 match in Bangalore three days later.

The second Twenty20 match will be played in Ahmedabad on December 27 followed by one-day matches in Chennai (December 30), Kolkata (January 3) and Delhi (January 6).

SQUADS

Twenty20: Mohammad Hafeez (capt), Nasir Jamshed, Kamran Akmal, Umar Akmal, Umar Amin, Shoaib Malik, Shahid Afridi, Saeed Ajmal, Mohammad Irfan, Junaid Khan, Sohail Tanveer, Umar Gul, Asad Ali, Zulfiqar Babar, Ahmed Shahzad

ODI: Misbahul Haq (capt), Mohammad Hafeez, Azhar Ali, Younis Khan, Nasir Jamshed, Haris Sohail, Kamran Akmal, Saeed Ajmal, Wahab Riaz, Junaid Khan, Umar Gul, Zulfiqar Babar, Imran Farhat, Umar Akmal, Anwar Ali.

3 bronze in
wrestling
meet

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh won three bronze medals in the International Peace Wrestling Championship held in Pakistan from December 6-9, said a press release yesterday.

The bronze medals winners were -- Mangnu Marma (120kg), Billal Hossain (96kg) and Mizanur Rahman (84kg). Hosts Pakistan, India, Iran, Afghanistan, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh took part in the meet.

'We did our best today'

FROM PAGE 16
Pacer Rubel Hossain conceded 29 runs in the last over as Samuels mesmerised with four sixes and one boundary to reprise the heroics of his match-winning knock in the final of the World Twenty20 in Sri Lanka. The common feeling was that this fateful over ultimately made the difference as Bangladesh fell 18 runs short of the formidable target of 198. But Tamim was not ready to single out any player for the defeat, pointing out that as a team they conceded 10 to 15 runs more.

"It would not be wise to identify Rubel as the reason for the defeat because as we all know the world's best bowlers also meet this fate.

Instead I think that we gave 10-15 runs more as a team. Just think of the matter in another way -- what would have happened if Rubel didn't provide the two early breakthroughs. I think we should give Rubel confidence because he is still young and

an asset for our team," explained Tamim, who was also not disappointed for missing the hundred as the team comes first for him.

The opener, who was unbeaten on a 61-ball 88, was also not ready to blame his skipper and wicketkeeper Mushfiqur Rahim who wasted three chances behind the stumps, including two against Samuels, who made the difference by scoring a sensible yet explosive unbeaten 85 that came from 43 deliveries with the help of three fours and nine huge sixes.

Bangladesh played their last series of the year and Tamim said that it was the best year he has seen in his six years with the Bangladeshi side.

"Without any doubt this was the best year because we probably won 5 to 6 matches out of nine and just consider our success in the Asia Cup and in the last series. I firmly believe that it's [the West Indies tour] one of the best series we have played," observed Tamim.

'Won't take any credit for Gazi'

FROM PAGE 16
DSS: You have been with the bowlers for a while now, what is your general opinion?

SM: They are good players, they have lots of potential. They showed that not just in the one day series but in the Test matches as well. There was one bad session in the first Test at the end of the day. We also played well in the second Test match. There were obviously a few rough patches where we did not perform the way we should have. But personally I saw improvements in all areas.

DSS: And what do you think were the reasons behind those rough patches?

SM: I think it was because of the lack of cricket. They don't play enough cricket, especially Test

Dhaka finish second

SPORTS REPORTER



Dhaka ensured they finish runners-up in the 14th National Cricket League yesterday as they raced to an innings victory over Barisal at the Sheikh Kamruzzaman Stadium in Rajshahi. Dhaka Metro, who thrashed Sylhet by nine wickets at the Cricket Garden in Rangpur finished third whereas reigning champions Rajshahi claimed the fourth spot.

Marshall Ayub, who scored 604 runs at an average of 67.11, finished as the highest run-scorer of the league while Enamul Haque Jr. topped the bowling with 44 wickets.

Earlier, Khulna were crowned champions of the league on Sunday after they beat Rajshahi within three days.

DHAKA v BARISAL

Dhaka thrashed Barisal as they raced to victory. Mosharraf Hossain, who has had a brilliant league so far, finished off with a five-for and helped Dhaka bowl out Barisal for 113 in the second innings. Rakibul Hasan's 165 in the first innings earned him the player-of-the-match award.

CHITTAGONG v RANGPUR

With both teams getting past the 350-run mark, the game at the Sylhet Divisional Stadium finished as a draw. Rangpur, who had an overnight score of 487 for 9, were bowled out without adding any runs yesterday.

terday. In reply, Chittagong finished the day on 187 for 6. Liton Kumar scored 157 in the first innings and was named the player-of-the-match.

DHAKA METRO v SYLHET

Dhaka Metro romped to a 9-wicket victory at the Cricket Garden in Rangpur, after Sylhet, who had an overnight score of 235 for 8, were bowled out for 265 in the morning session. Metro's target, 75 was completed in just 11 overs. Marshal Ayub, who scored a century and took 2 wickets, was adjudged player-of-the-match.

SCORES IN BRIEF

BARISAL: First innings 256 all out in 92.1 overs and second innings 113 all out in 32.2 overs (Ripon 31; Mosharraf 5-50) v **DHAKA:** First innings 474 all out in 136.1 overs.

Result: Dhaka won by an innings and 105 runs.

Player-of-the-match: Rakibul Hasan.

CHITTAGONG: First innings 350 all out in 95.4 overs and second innings 187 for 6 in 52 overs (Nazim 55, Nafis 53; Suvash 4-49) v **RANGPUR:** First innings 487 all out in 139.3 overs.

Result: Match drawn.

Player-of-the-match: Liton Kumar.

DHAKA METRO: First innings 345 all out in 96.1 overs and second innings 78 for 1 in 11 overs (Shamsur 45, Marshal 25; Enamul 1-42) v **SYLHET:** First innings 155 all out in 65.5 overs and second innings 265 all out in 70.2 overs.

Result: Dhaka Metro won by 9 wickets.

Player-of-the-match: Marshal Ayub.

Michel impressed with forwards

Football

SPORTS REPORTER

When it comes the international fixtures, Bangladesh suffer mostly from lack of quality strikers. There isn't any short fix as yet, but may be in the longer run Bangladesh may find a few quality strikers who will find the net regularly. At least the FIFA technical staff are hoping so as they have picked six hitmen in the 27-member U-18 squad for the Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) Academy in Sylhet yesterday.

FIFIA's technical consultant Jean Michel himself was impressed seeing the number of forwards in the selected 27 as the BFF coaching staff and FIFA technical staff took nearly one hour to finalise the final 27 players after the completion of short-duration matches among 80 players who came to this stage through the Upazila, Zilla and Division level.

Meanwhile, thirty-seven U-14 booters were also selected for the BFF Academy, which is expected to get underway in February.

reporters at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday. "We have been working in different parts of the world but we hardly got a so many strikers at such a level.

"There are many talented players around the world but not everyone has the finishing quality because scoring goal is a hard job. One who does this job well is remembered, that is why people know the names of Messi and Rolando and strikers like Gerd Mueller is still recalled after 30 years.

"The thing is that we have seen the mentality of becoming strikers among these selected forwards and I will come here after six months to see the progress of these footballers," said Michel.

Michel emphasized on the need for arranging five-a-side and seven-a-side football matches at the grassroots level so that the boys can enjoy the game as well as learn the basics of football.

Meanwhile, thirty-seven U-14 booters were also selected for the BFF Academy, which is expected to get underway in February.

"We have found some good players here. We are happy to have found six strikers in the final selection," Michel told

"Shakib Al Hasan's absence was a big blow in the one-day series and I also failed to perform in the ODIs but still we won the series against a team, which in my opinion is the most dangerous side in world cricket now.

I think we played as a unit and the self-belief was the key behind the success," he added.

Despite the impressive performance, the left-hander felt that there were still a lot of areas where they should improve to become a good team in world cricket.

Chris Gayle was the name before the series who scared the Tigers and the fans most but the left-hander completely flopped in the series against Bangladesh. Tamim had an interesting reply to end the press conference when asked about Gayle's failure. "What I learnt from watching Gayle in the series was that pressure can make an honest man of anyone."

DSS: What is the main difference between the set-up here and your experiences elsewhere?

SM: It's a huge difference, huge. Here obviously you guys are going towards the right way, but outside they are already in the right way. They have more facilities, they are more disciplined. They have a proper system, more organised. BCB is organised as well, but they [other countries] are more. Cricket is an industry and they are running their industries better than us.

DSS: Will you be continuing your stint here?

SM: It depends on the BCB at the moment. I want a clear plan as to how they want to use me. So yeah, if things work out I would love to continue.

DSS: Do you think the turning tracks in Bangladesh devalued the series win in any way?

SM: Look, you need support for your own strengths. I remember when we played against England in Pakistan, Darren Gough told the boys that when you come to England, we'll put grass in your kitbags and even in your rooms, because he couldn't find any grass on the pitch.

It shows that everybody needs some support. As a professional cricketer though, you have to be able to bowl on every pitch and do well on any ground.

Rajib draws 8th board

SPORTS REPORTER

Grand Master Enamul Hossain Rajib came out of the losing streak in the Rose Valley Open International Chess Tournament as he drew against FM Diptayan Ghosh in the eighth round held in Kolkata, India on Monday.

Rajib played with black pieces against English Opening of Diptayan before drawing his eighth board in 42 moves. Rajib has 4.5 points from eight games.

Chittagong
briefs

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

CJKS Liberty Group Volleyball League, organised by Chittagong Jela Krira Sangstha, gets underway tomorrow at the MA Aziz Stadium with thirteen teams fighting it out for the title.

The participating teams, split into four groups, will play the round-robin league matches and top teams of each group will advance to the Super Four on the way to decide the title.

TABLE TENNIS

A seven-day long Table Tennis League will begin tomorrow at the Gymnasium of MA Aziz Stadium. A total of 50 players from ten clubs will participate in this league which will comprise ten men's and four women's teams.

PREMIER LEAGUE

Chittagong City Corporation (CCC) Eleven notched up a 2-0 win over Agrabad Noujoan Club in the day's lone encounter of Chittagong Premier Football League at the MA Aziz Stadium yesterday.

Francis put CCC Eleven ahead in the 13th minute before Jaber sealed the victory in the 35th minute.

BKSP keep

FROM PAGE 16

Saikat Das scoring one goal apiece while Faridpur beat Dhaka 2-1, thanks to one goal each from Sarwar and Mainul. Alamgir scored the lone goal for Dhaka.

Rajshahi Division came from behind to hold Dinajpur to a 4-4 draw, thanks to a four-goal haul from Rasel of Rajshahi.

"Mueller's record isn't an obsession for me, but it would be good, because it's been there for a long time," he said in the run-up to Sunday's match.

'Messidependence'

AFP, Madrid

Spain on Monday hailed Lionel "Missile" Messi's record-breaking 86-goal haul in 2012 and decreed Barcelona's "Messidependence" is a blessing.

The 25-year-old Argentine star smashed the 40-year-old record of

German legend Gerd Mueller of 85 goals in a calendar year, with a first-half brace that sealed his side's 2-1 win in Seville at Real Betis.

"Missile" Messi, Leo leaves Torpedo Muller behind with 86 goals in a year," cried the front page of Barcelona-based sports daily Sport.

"A Messi-anic victory," gushed the newspaper's columnist Josep Maria Casanovas of the Barca forward, who is also favourite to win a fourth player-of-the-year Ballon d'Or.

"We are lucky because we will always be able to say that we lived that wonderful year in which Messi scored 86 goals. It is a pleasure, a spectacle, a wonder to see the best player in the world in action," he said.

Barcelona-based sports daily Mundo Deportivo said the team were dependent on the Argentine striker after he pushed them into winning territory in a tough match against Betis.

"Messi played. And just as well. His two goals gave Barca victory over a proud

Betis," the paper said, hailing his "stratospheric record" of goals scored in a calendar year.

"Is there an absolute 'Messidependence'?" asked the paper's columnist Javier Gascon. "Yes. And so what? Thanks to that Tito Vilanova's team is leader with 14 victories and a draw in 15 matchdays."

Spain's biggest selling sports paper, Marca, agreed.

"Using the word 'Messidependence' has a certain negative connotation. As if Barcelona was not capable of winning games but for its star. But in Barca they take it as a blessing. Yesterday, it was," the paper said.

Mundo Deportivo had a word for his team mates, too.

Messi himself said the team was key even as he celebrated the new record after the game at Betis.

Barca coach Tito Vilanova looked forward to more to come from Messi, who now has 74 goals in all competitions for Barcelona this year as well as 12 for Argentina.

His La Liga total is already up to 23 for this season alone and he can add to his year's tally with three games still to play in 2012 -- in La Liga against Atletico Madrid and Valladolid and the Spanish Cup tie at Cordoba.

"It seems impossible to score so many goals, let's hope he can add to the record in the games to come," said Vilanova.

"He is still young and gives us so much, even tonight he helped us out defensively when we needed it, he has so many more qualities than just his goals."

Vilanova was quick, however, to dampen the euphoria surrounding his star player.

"We shouldn't heap more pressure on him. His record this year is absolutely brutal. Let's enjoy the moment and not focus on how many goals he might score in the future," added the coach.

Barca's sporting director, Andoni Zubizarreta, was happy to sing Messi's praises.

"I think his records will be valued more in the future, it's one more for now but he makes it seem so easy it's hard to measure his talent," said Zubizarreta.

"It's a gift to see him play football but I think he'll say the same, it's a team game and he needs his team mates to help him."

Messi has made a habit of creating landmarks in his career.

Last season, he became the most successful scorer in a La Liga season by hitting 50 goals in the league campaign.

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