

Star SPORT

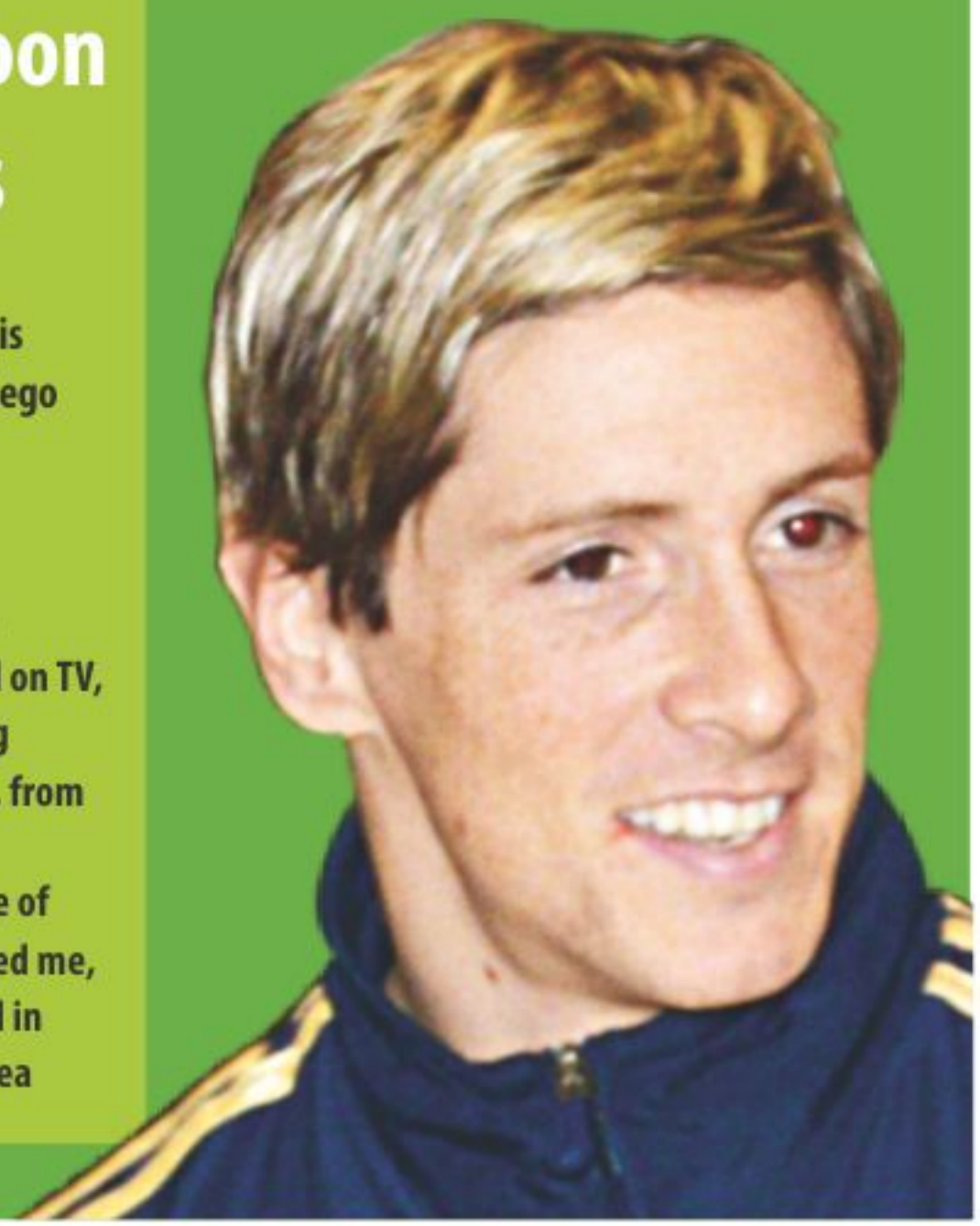
DHAKA WEDNESDAY DECEMBER 12, 2012, E-MAIL: sports@thedailystar.net

Japanese cartoon inspired Torres

Chelsea star Fernando Torres has revealed the inspiration behind his medal-laden career -- not Pele, Diego Maradona or Johan Cruyff, but a Japanese cartoon called Captain Tsubasa.

"I remember when I was a kid, we couldn't find the signal really well on TV, but everyone in school was talking about this cartoon about football, from Japan," he said.

"I started playing football because of this, and because my brother forced me, and I loved the cartoon," he added in comments published on the Chelsea



BPL auction on Dec 19

SPORTS REPORTER

The players' auction for the second edition of the Bangladesh Premier League (BPL) T20 is all set to take place on December 19. The new governing council of the BPL has decided to stage the opening ceremony of the T20 tournament on January 17, with the first match scheduled to take place the very next day.

"We managed to squeeze in a few meetings in between the Bangladesh-West Indies series and took these decisions. As of now, these dates are confirmed," said Afzalur Rahman Sinha, chairman of the BPL Governing Council. "The various financial problems which surfaced have been openly discussed with the franchisees and the results have been positive. I am hopeful that we'll come to a solution in the coming days," added Sinha.

The recent talks about an additional team in the league were dismissed by the Chairman. "I did hear about such a proposition a few days back, but ever since then nothing has been done regarding the matter."

Rayudu takes Tiwary's spot

CRICINFO, Mumbai

Injured India batsman Manoj Tiwary has been replaced in the India squad for the Twenty20s against England by Ambati Rayudu. Tiwary's injury was diagnosed as a side strain. He had picked up the injury, which will keep him out of action for six weeks, during a Ranji Trophy game on Sunday, while batting in Bengal's first innings against Saurashtra.

Rayudu, who has played for Baroda in the Ranji Trophy since the 2010-11 season, has had a prolific run this year, with scores of 64, 85, 10, 54, 1, 131 and 58 in his previous five games. A bit-hitting middle-order batsman, Rayudu did not have too much success on his last Twenty20 assignment: October's Champions League T20, where he played for Mumbai Indians. But in IPL 2012, he was Mumbai Indians second-highest scorer behind Rohit Sharma, with 333 runs from 15 innings at a strike-rate of 132.14. He is yet to debut for India across formats.

For Tiwary, who captains Bengal in the Ranji Trophy, this is a second setback in quick succession -- he had suffered a wrist problem earlier in the season. When fit, he had shown some good form, scoring 191 against Gujarat, and also making 93 against England for the Board President's XI last month.

India play two Twenty20s against England, on December 20 and 22, and that is followed up by limited-overs series' against Pakistan running into the first week of January. Later in January, England return for a one-day series.

Tigers keep up the momentum

SAKEB SUBHAN



The Bangladesh cricket team ended their year with a series against the West Indies that can justifiably be called a fruitful one. Not many gave the Tigers much of a chance against a West Indies side that had recently regained the services of explosive opener Chris Gayle, whitewashed New Zealand in a home Test series and won the ICC World Twenty20. The highlight of Bangladesh's campaign against the men from the Caribbean was their 3-2 ODI series victory, but there were positives to take from the Test series that preceded it and the lone T20I that followed.

Bangladesh entered the Tests against the West Indies after not having played the format for 11 months. Apart from two National Cricket League (NCL) games leading into the first Test on November 13 in Dhaka, the Tigers had not played the longer form of the game for the best part of a year. That they scored 556, their highest Test total, in the first innings was indicative of the talent and fortitude they possess. Naeem Islam hit his maiden Test ton while Shakib Al Hasan and Nasir Hossain missed theirs by 11 and four runs respectively.

More than the total on board, what was heartening was the fact that the batsmen were eager to spend time in the middle as Bangladesh played out 148.3 overs -- a monumental achievement considering that they had spent most of the previous five months playing twenty-overs cricket. Their inexperience in Test cricket caught

up with them in the next innings as they looked completely unable to pace a chase of 245, falling short by 77 runs on the final day.

The next Test in Khulna too saw some individual brilliance from the Tigers, with debutant fast bowler Abul Hasan scoring a century from number ten to save Bangladesh's blushes after they slumped to 192 for eight. Shivnarine Chanderpaul, who scored 203 in Mirpur, hit 150 here but the show was stolen by a marathon 260 from the attractive Marlon Samuels as West Indies racked up 648 to set up a 10-wicket win.

Bangladesh's performance in the Tests is not fairly reflected by the 2-0 result. They gave enough signs of progress, hinting at becoming a competitive side sooner rather than later. Off-spinner Shohag Gazi's nine wickets in his debut Test, the Tigers' highest Test score, that they took both Tests into the fifth day and ended three out of the five days of the first Test on top were all positive signs.

They currently seem a side just a step or two short of real competence in Test cricket. Two of the things they will have to look at is maintaining a consistent level of performance all through the five days, and becoming more incisive as a bowling unit. In both these regards the Bangladesh Cricket Board can help by strengthening the domestic first-class structure to make players more longer-version savvy.

If the Tests were a mixed blessing, there was no ambiguity in the joy the home team provided in the ODI series. This was the format in which West Indies were

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Premier League resumes today

SPORTS REPORTER



The Grameenphone Bangladesh Premier League resumes today, after a 12-day gap due to the national U-23 team's engagement in the Mahinda Rajapakse International Football Tournament in Sri Lanka, as Feni Soccer Club host Team BJMC at the Shaheed Salam Stadium in Feni.

Both BJMC and Feni Soccer are at the pit of the nine-team table with no points as BJMC suffered two successive defeats against Sheikh Jamal Dhanmondi Club and Sheikh Russel KC while Feni Soccer lost to holders Abahani in their only fixture.

On paper and statistics, Team BJMC are ahead of Feni Soccer, who lost both their previous encounters of the professional league to BJMC. BJMC will be certainly looking forward to taste their first victory of the sixth edition of the professional league but it is sure that Feni will not give much room to the visiting side on their home soil

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CTG FOOTBALL Blues beat Customs

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Chittagong Mohammedan Sporting Blues defeated Customs SC 2-1 in the Chittagong Premier Division Football League at the MA Aziz Stadium yesterday.

Mohammedan, who were held to a goalless draw by Noujoan Club in their previous match, went ahead in the 26th minute through Dalim before foreign recruit Cisoko doubled the margin in the 57th minute.

Customs pulled one goal back seven minutes from time but that only reduced the margin of defeat.



West Indies bowlers Veerasammy Permaul (L) and Ravi Rampaul walk out of Hotel Sonargoan to set off for West Indies yesterday, ending their month-long tour of Bangladesh.

PHOTO: STAR

India need to change their attitude first



MAIL TODAY, Nagpur

India have big questions to answer in the aftermath of the Kolkata Test and the biggest surrounds the attitude of their near god-like top names.

When the likes of MS Dhoni, Gautam Gambhir and the rest went back to their hotel rooms after that defeat, how much were they hurting? How much hunger for the long-haul form of the game -- with its mental and physical demands -- have these multi-millionaire players still got? Are they thinking, deep down, "Never mind", and prioritising instead the fun, glamour and huge financial rewards that come from the Indian Premier League? That is the crux of the issue now for India. The last thing their

cricket needs, really, is a win in Nagpur and a share of this series because all that would do is paper over the cracks.

They would believe everything is okay. India left Yuvraj Singh, Zaheer Khan and Harbhajan Singh out of their squad for the final Test but it is attitudes as much as personnel that need to change. India will always have some good young players but what kind of cricket will they want to play? Will they still dedicate themselves to Test cricket or will they look to that lucrative six-week world of IPL Twenty20 instead? We had the sight of India's chief selector, Sandeep Patil, having what looked like an animated conversation with their coach Duncan Fletcher.

They could have been talking about what they were going to have for lunch for

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Close escape for Sylhet cricketers

SPORTS REPORTER

A bus containing 15 cricketers who played for Sylhet in the recently concluded National Cricket League (NCL) almost plunged off a bridge in Bhairab on its way back to Dhaka. Players stated that the bus had hit the railing of the bridge after which the front tire of the vehicle nearly went over the edge.

The accident took place just before dawn yesterday. The driver reportedly lost control of the car as he tried to avoid a static truck in the middle of the road. "It was an abandoned truck in the middle of the road that led to the accident. The left side of our bus hit the bridge's railing and the tire almost went outside the bridge," said Alok Kapali, a player from the team.

"We carefully got off from the other side of the bus," he added. The players were then stuck in a Bhairab restaurant from 5 am to 7:30 pm as they were not able to avail any other bus service due to the general strike called by the opposition party. "None of the players were hurt. But honestly speaking, the damage could have been a lot worse. We are alive today just because of everybody's prayers," said Kapali.

The team was originally scheduled to leave Rangpur yesterday morning. However, they decided to leave on Monday evening to avoid the strike. "Our game was over by 2 pm, so we left at 5," said Kapali.

The captain of the team, Rajin Saleh narrated the incident to popular cricket website Espnricinfo. "We just about escaped. The bus was probably approached by a lorry from the right but most of us were asleep. We started off from Rangpur at 5:30 pm last evening and the drive was slow because of the fog. Probably it was a lorry which suddenly came, at

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New Zealand captain Brendon McCullum talks to the media in Auckland before their departure for South Africa yesterday.

PHOTO: CRICINFO

Knit Concern badminton

SPORTS REPORTER

Shuttler Enayetullah Khan, national champion, was eliminated from the quarterfinal stage of the Knit Concern Badminton Tournament after losing to youngster Shuvo yesterday.

Abdul Hannan, also a national shuttler, followed the footsteps of Enayetullah as he lost to Ramjan in the quarterfinal. Shuvo and Ramjan will face each other in today's semifinal while former national champion will Javed play against Sajjad at the same venue in Narayanganj.

Knit Concern, a garments manufacturing company, is organising the even where the top

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Afridi at a crossroads



AFP, Karachi

There was a time when Shahid Afridi's name would have been the first on Pakistan's one-day international teamsheet, but the all-rounder's future looks uncertain after he was dropped for this month's series against arch-rivals India.

The 32-year-old has endured a dreadful run of form, scoring just 85 runs in his last 10 ODI innings, prompting selectors to axe him from the 15-man squad for the three-game series starting later this month.

While Afridi has retained his spot for the two Twenty20 matches, the warning bells are ringing for the man whose dismissal has often emptied the stands in the past.

In his 349 ODIs Afridi has taken 348 wickets and scored 7,075 runs -- at an electric strike rate of nearly 114 runs per 100 balls -- but he has not scored a half-century in his last 10 innings, a slump former England great Geoffrey Boycott

has called embarrassing.

"Pakistan have lost out with his batting deteriorating so badly," Boycott told the ESPN Cricinfo website recently.

"In the early days when he was playing and batting well, he tended to believe his own publicity. People wanted him to hit big sixes, everybody was raving for him, and he kept trying to oblige."

But former Pakistan captain Rashid Latif insisted Afridi, Pakistan's third most-capped one-day player of all time, could still make a comeback.

"Afridi is facing tough times. Even a player like Ricky Ponting had to quit after he failed to score big," said Latif of the former Australia captain who retired earlier this month.

"But Pakistan is different in the way that a player can stage a comeback after a good performance and Afridi can still do so."

Another former captain, Moin Khan, described Afridi's axing as unjust.

"Afridi is an impact player," said Khan. "He holds a psychological dominance over

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