

Star SPORT

DHAKA THURSDAY DECEMBER 13, 2012, E-MAIL: sports@thedailystar.net

Cloud over Del Piero's future

Italian superstar Alessandro Del Piero wants to play another season in Australia but says his discussions with Sydney FC have stalled. The former Juventus great joined the club in September, making the 2006 World Cup winner the biggest signing in the domestic A-League history. The lucrative deal, reportedly worth 1.6 million euros (US\$2 million) a season, was for one-year with another one-year option. He told journalists talks had taken place between his management and the club about staying on but the situation had



Shakib Al Hasan and Umme Ahmed Shishir pose for photographs after their wedding ceremony at the Ruposhi Bangla Hotel last night. The 25-year-old cricketing superstar chose the auspicious day of 12/12/12 to tie the knot with the US-based computers student. PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

2nd 4-day meet on the cards



SPORTS REPORTER

Following the end of the National Cricket League (NCL) this week, members of the Bangladesh Cricket Board's (BCB) ad-hoc committee are working on a second four-day tournament which will be contested between four franchises. The tournament is expected to fill the free time in Bangladesh's domestic calendar that is available till the second week of January, after which the players will be busy with the second edition of the Bangladesh Premier League (BPL) T20.

"The tournament is going to take place for sure, however we have to work around a bit with its timing. We have to ensure that it doesn't run over to the BPL," said Mahub Anam, member of the ad-hoc committee.

In a press conference in October this year, board members decided that the national selectors would provide a pool of 80 players who will be selected for the four-franchise first-class tournament based on their performances in the NCL. "We still have to decide on a date regarding

the auctioning of these players," said Anam. He further stated that the tournament would have a final match between the top two teams. "If we can't fit the final match before the BPL, we'll have it after the T20 league ends," added Anam. The dates of the new-look tournament will be confirmed following a meeting at the BCB headquarters today.

The BCB in October tried to move away from tradition and organise the 14th National Cricket League along a franchise-based format. Various internal complications however compelled the board to scrap its plans. It was then that the board had announced its intentions of organising a four-day franchise-based tournament later in the year.

The four-day tournament, if it goes ahead as planned, will see the national players back in action following their impressive performance against the West Indies. The tournament will lead the players into the second edition of the BPL, which is scheduled to begin on January 17.

The BPL will be followed by an away tour to Sri Lanka in March, where the Tigers will play two Test matches and

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Broad out of Nagpur Test

INTERNET, Nagpur

Stuart Broad has been ruled out of England's final Test in India while fellow pace bowler Steven Finn will have a late fitness test.

Finn has suffered a strain to a disc in his lower back and will be analysed before the start of Thursday's Test in Nagpur. Twenty20 captain Broad may yet play in the T20 internationals in Pune and Mumbai next Thursday and Saturday as he remains in India to undergo treatment.

He was highly unlikely in any case to be selected to play India in Nagpur, when the tourists will be bidding for a historic 3-1 series win.

The fast bowler lost form, after first suffering a heel injury in a tour match

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Nagpur Test from today

'Perform-or-perish' for India stalwarts



PTI, Nagpur

Down in the dumps after back-to-back defeats, India's under-fire cricketers will have to pull themselves up by the bootstraps and compete on equal footing against a confident England in the perform-or-perish fourth and final Test commencing on Thursday.

Trailing the buoyant visitors 1-2 in the rubber after being outplayed in the second and third encounters at Mumbai and Kolkata, the home players need to sort themselves out on several fronts to level the series at the VCA Stadium in Jamtha.

Under-performing senior players in the Indian line-up, including skipper Mahendra Singh Dhoni and veteran batsman Sachin Tendulkar, are under severe pressure not only to lift the side with supreme personal efforts but also to save their careers after India's spineless displays at the Wankhede Stadium

and the Eden Gardens.

It would need a monumental display of grit and determination from several below-par players if India are to bounce back from this dismal situation and prevent

England from walking off with their first Test series win in India in 28 years.

The home team needs to buck up not just in one department but in

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England captain Alastair Cook speaks at a press conference in Nagpur yesterday, ahead of the fourth and final Test against India which starts today.

BJMC's first win

SPORTS REPORTER



Team BJMC posted their first victory in their third match of the Grameenphone Bangladesh Premier League when they handed

a single-goal defeat to hosts Feni Soccer Club at the Shaheed Salam Stadium in Feni yesterday.

Team BJMC came in the game on the back of two successive defeats against Sheikh Jamal Dhanmondi Club and Sheikh Russel KC and came out of the losing streak, thanks to a single goal from Shakil Ahmed in the tenth minute.

Last season's fourth-place finishers BJMC held the upper hand against Feni Soccer, who had lost both of the encounters against the same opposition last season. Guinean hitman Ismael Bangoura, top scorer of the last league, squandered a scoring chance from a one-on-one situation against the Feni goalkeeper but Shakil made no mistake as he converted a rebound after Cameroonian Jean Jules Ikanga saw his header come off the post.

"We should have won the match by at least 4 goals but Ismael, Ikanga and Eleta Kingsley squandered easy chances. However, I am happy that we secured all three points today (Wednesday) after two losses," said BJMC coach Jakaria Babu after the match.

Feni tried to play the game on the counter-attack but they could hardly put any pressure on the visiting side and had to concede their second defeat in as many matches.

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Hockey semis from today

SPORTS REPORTER

Faridpur will take on Rajshahi in the first semifinal of Agrani Bank 23rd National Youth Hockey Championship at the Maulana Bhasani Hockey Stadium today. Faridpur confirmed their semifinal berth yesterday as they thrashed Chittagong 11-2, thanks to four goals from national striker Moinul Islam Koushik and three from Sarwar Hossain.

In the other matches of the day, Dhaka beat Joypurhat 4-1, with Rakibuddin and

Mohammad Mohsin bagging a brace each while BKSP blanked Dinajpur 8-0, with Joy Chakrabarty and Khorsheer Rahman getting two goals each. BKSP will take on Dhaka in the second semifinal tomorrow.

AFC CHALLENGE CUP QUALIFIERS Bangladesh in Group D



SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh have been pitted alongside Palestine, Nepal and Northern Mariana Islands in Group D when the draw for the 20-nation AFC Challenge Cup Qualifiers was held in Kuala Lumpur on Tuesday.

The top teams from each of the five groups along with two best runners-up finishers will qualify for the eight-team finals which will be held in 2014 where Maldives will join them directly as host nation. The champions of the AFC Challenge Cup will get ticket to the AFC Asia Cup.

The qualifiers of Group D will be held in Nepal from March 2 to 6 where Bangladesh will play their first match against Palestine, a team Bangladesh lost to 0-2 in 2011 and drew 1-1 in Dhaka in 2006.

Bangladesh will play their second match on March 4

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Drought motivates SL



AFP, Hobart

Sri Lanka are putting their faith in the remnants of their "golden generation" as they target their first ever Test win in Australia in the three-match series starting on Friday.

Thirty-somethings Mahela Jayawardene, Kumar Sangakkara, Tillakaratne Dilshan and Thilan Samaraweera, who form the core of Sri Lanka's batting, are shaping as Sri Lanka's best chance of breaking their 10-Test, 25-year winless record.

Sangakkara, 35, the international cricketer of the year, would not be drawn on whether this will be his last trip to Australia, but he said an elusive Test win was a prime motivator for the team elders. "When you do get older, you do look for achievements where you haven't really tasted victory so, here and in India, [there are] Test matches still to win," Sangakkara said in Hobart.

"That's a great motivator for guys like Dilshan, Mahela, myself and Samaraweera. We're the older brigade. But whether we get it or not, the key is to really contribute to the side."

Since being hammered in their first Test in Australia in early 1988, Sri Lanka

have lost another seven matches and drawn two, most recently in Cairns in 2004. They have also never won a Test in India.

Sri Lanka's hopes appear to rest on their batsmen providing enough runs to upset Michael Clarke's Australia, the world number three Test side, who are embarking on their first series since the retirement of Ricky Ponting.

Their bowling has been hit by the Test retirements of Lasith Malinga, Chaminda Vaas and the 800-wicket Muttiah Muralidaran. Unorthodox spinner Ajantha Mendis, with 62 wickets from 16 Tests, was passed over for the tour.

Dilshan, 36, admits he is unlikely to have another chance to win a Test in Australia and acknowledges time is running out for him and his teammates.

"Definitely. For me I think this is my last tour [in Australia] in Test cricket. This is a real challenge for everyone," he said.

"We've never won a Test match here. If we can win a Test match it's great for the team and the country."

"It's never easy when you're playing Australia because the conditions are different. But we're looking forward to a great run with them in this series."

Much of Sri Lanka's hopes are pinned on the batting of veteran trio Jayawardene,

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Sri Lanka captain Mahela Jayawardene runs during a practice session in Hobart yesterday, ahead of the first Test against Australia.

PHOTO: INTERNET

GROUPINGS

- GROUP A: Myanmar, India, Chinese Taipei and Guam
- GROUP B: Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Pakistan and Macau
- GROUP C: Laos, Afghanistan, Sri Lanka and Mongolia
- GROUP D: Nepal, Palestine, Bangladesh and Northern Mariana Islands