

India instil young blood

First T20I against England today

Cricket

PTI, Pune

India need to put behind the humiliation of losing the Test rubber against England and regroup quickly to take on the confident visitors in the first of the two T20 Internationals on Thursday.

Under-fire for the first Test series loss to England in 28 years and with his captaincy under the scanner, skipper Mahendra Singh Dhoni will have to put these issues on the back burner and motivate his teammates for the shortest format of the game.

To the home team's advantage, a younger lot of players -- some of who were not part of the Test series like flamboyant all-rounder Suresh Raina, Rohit Sharma and Ambati Rayudu -- would give India the much-needed edge and enthusiasm.

All three are very good T20 players and would also bring the extra zip and verve in the fielding department which was absent in the Tests.

They have all been busy playing in the Ranji Trophy for their respective units and will be match fit too.

Incidentally Sharma, who has been in good form with the bat in the Ranji Trophy recently, had top-scored with an unbeaten 55 when the two teams last met in a T20 game, won by India by a whopping margin of 90 runs in Sri Lanka earlier this year during the ICC T20 World Cup.

Yuvraj Singh, who flopped in the Test series barring a fighting 74 in the opener at Ahmedabad, is back to the format in which he has excelled in the past.

Dashing opener Virender Sehwag

has opted out of the two-match series, which ends with the last match at Mumbai on December 22, and it has given the chance to Ajinkya Rahane, who warmed the bench right through the Test series, to open the innings with Gautam Gambhir.

Rahane had impressed with a 61 when the two teams met in a T20 game last year in England at Manchester and would be eager to get going after playing Ranji Trophy games for Mumbai.

Dhoni, himself a superb T20 and 50-over batsman, would be the late-order game changer, and with Virat Kohli, who had rediscovered his wonted touch with a patient 103 in the last Test at Nagpur, will give extra impetus in the batting and fielding sections. The new ball bowling has a fresh look to it in the form of Ashok Dinda, Abhimanyu Mithun, Bhuvneshwar Kumar and Parwinder Awana -- with veteran Zaheer Khan opting out.

Dinda and Awana had been part of the Test squad in the latter stages but did not get a game while Mithun has been added as a replacement for his injured Karnataka teammate, R Vinay Kumar.

Spin bowling department will be manned by R Ashwin, who would be extra keen to impress after a disappointing show with the ball in the Test rubber, Ravindra Jadeja, who made his Test debut at Nagpur, and Piyush Chawla, who too was part of the team in the drawn final game.

England have made wholesale changes in their squad with triumphant Test skipper Alastair Cook returning home and replaced at the helm by hard-hitting middle order

batsman Eoin Morgan who was part of the Test team but did not play a single game.

Morgan is also the stand-in captain for the injured Stuart Broad, replaced by James Harris, who has returned home along with many other members of the team, notably Kevin Pietersen.

The absence of Pietersen, who played a big role in England winning the Test rubber, would be welcomed by India. The star batsman is no longer part of the England Twenty20 team.

England have included T20 specialists like Alex Hales, Jos Butler, Jade Dernbach, James Tredwell, Michael Lumb, Luke Wright and Danny Briggs -- some of who have been part of the development squad which played a few matches in Navi Mumbai when the Test matches were on.

Retained from the Test squad along with captain Morgan are Tim Bresnan, wicketkeeper Jonny Bairstow, Samit Patel and Joe Root, who made an impressive Test debut in the final match.

Bresnan and Patel also had the opportunity to play in two and three Tests while Morgan and Bairstow did not.

India have lost three T20 games, all in bilateral series, between the two sides. They had lost bilateral matches played at Lord's in June 2009 and the next two held at Manchester and Kolkata in August and October last year.

The game here would be the first T20 International played at the swanky Sahara Stadium on the city's outskirts which hosted IPL matches last year. It has a capacity of 43,000.

V-Day hockey from Saturday

SPORTS REPORTER

The South East Bank Victory Day Hockey Competition will begin at the Maulana Bhasani Hockey Stadium on Saturday, with six teams taking part.

Bangladesh Army, Bangladesh Navy, BKSP, Bangladesh Air Force, Bangladesh Police and BHF XI comprising national hockey players -- will compete in the meet as powerhouses like Abahani, Mohammedan, Usha KC expressed their inability to take part.

Participating teams will face each other in the round-robin basis tournament and top two teams will play in the final, speakers informed at a press conference at the BHF conference room yesterday. Sponsors South East Bank will provide Tk 5 lakh.

PAKISTAN IN WI
Tour can be split into 2 parts

CRICINFO, Karachi

Pakistan's tour of the West Indies in July 2013 is likely to be split into two parts in order to accommodate the Pakistan Cricket Board's plan of hosting India in August for a series that is yet to be confirmed. Pakistan were due to play two Tests, five ODIs and two Twenty20s in the Caribbean in June and July but now they will only play either Tests or limited-overs matches to create a window for India.

According to the FTP, West Indies are scheduled to host Pakistan from the last week in June to the last week in July but they also have a tri-series against India and Sri Lanka during that time.

V-Day tennis

FROM PAGE 16

yesterday.

Amol Roy, Arif Hossain, Anwar Hossain, Munir Hossain, Ranjam Ram, Alamgir Hossain, Hanif Munna and Delwar Hossain beat their respective rivals to move into the quarterfinals in men's singles.

In women's singles quarterfinals, Sharmin Alam Sarda beat Ayesha Sultana 6-0, 6-1, Afrana Islam beat Moumita Jannat Mou 6-0, 6-1, Jara Alam beat Tasin Ajmi Rajani 6-1, 6-1 and Ishita Afroz beat Safina Shah 6-1 and 6-2 to reach the semifinals.



PHOTO: AFP

Pakistan all-rounder Shahid Afridi sweeps one during a training session in Lahore on Wednesday. Pakistan will play two Twenty20s and three one-day internationals against India starting on December 25.

'Afridi still can play'

Cricket

AP, Islamabad

Dropped all-rounder Shahid Afridi might be reconsidered for Pakistan's one-day international series against India, limited-overs captain Misbahul Haq said on Wednesday. Afridi was picked only for the two Twenty20s against India this month but left out of the three one-dayers because he's scored only 182 runs in his last 16 ODIs with only one half century.

But Afridi has scored two half centuries in 50-over practice matches in the last three days, including 90 off 64 balls on Wednesday to catch the eyes of his captain. "If his form remains like this and we needed him, we will definitely consider him," Misbah said in Lahore at Pakistan's training camp for the tour. "The form of senior players, who are experienced enough, is very important."

Afridi has played 349 one-dayers, the third most for a Pakistani, but has struggled for runs in ODIs this year. Former captain Wasim Akram reportedly criticised Afridi's exclusion from the ODIs and said the enigmatic allrounder could have been picked in any team as a bowler. "Indian players are afraid of Afridi and I fail to understand why he was dropped," Daily Jang quoted Akram as saying. "If the selectors were thinking that Afridi was out of form, then they should have also dropped

him from the Twenty20 team."

Pakistan leave for India on December 22, and the series begins with a Twenty20 at Bangalore on December 25. The Pakistan Cricket Board appointed another former captain Inzamamul Haq as the batting consultant for the short tour of India which ends on January 6 after the third ODI in New Delhi.

Misbah said Inzamam has helped the batsmen how to be mentally strong while playing against India and be aggressive against their archrivals. "He is teaching us what types of hurdles we are going to face and how to get over them," Misbah said. "No doubt in India vs Pakistan cricket you have to play aggressive cricket and we will try to apply it over there."

Pakistan coach Dav Whatmore believes off-spinner Saeed Ajmal will be their trump card against India, but Misbah said the rest of the bowlers also have to take responsibility. "India has depth in their batting line-up and you can't catch them with one bowler," Misbah said. "As always, Saeed Ajmal is our trump card, but as a team if we bowl well, then we do have a chance and I think it's not a right thing to depend only on Saeed Ajmal."

Misbah said the first tour between the neighbours in five years will ramp up the pressure and expectations more than usual, but he insists they must try to treat the series as a regular event.

Local Snippets

FROM PAGE 16

Inter-House Sports

Nazrul House became champions in the Inter-House Sports Competition of Foujdarhat Cadet College while Rabindra House emerged champions in overall performance in Chittagong yesterday.

Cadet Hasan, cadet Sayem and cadet Reefat have been adjudged best athletes in senior, intermediate and junior groups respectively, said a press release.

Div-I football

Youngmen's Club of Fakirpool posted a 2-0 win over Badda Jagarani Sangsad in the Popular Life Insurance Senior Division Football League at the Birshreshtha Shaheed Mostafa Kamal

Stadium in Kamalapur yesterday.

After a barren first half, Rabbi struck two goals in the 76th and 81st minutes respectively to seal the victory.

Int'l rating chess

Grand Master Abdullah Al Rakib maintained his solo lead in the Shaheed Mukti Joddha Mufti Mohammad Kased International Rating Chess Tournament at the close of the eighth round at the Bangladesh Chess Federation hall room yesterday.

Rakib beat FM Khandoker Aminul Islam to secure 7.5 points from eight games.

Grandmaster Ziaur Rahman, IM Minhazuddin Ahmed Sagar and FM Nasir Ahmed shared the second position with seven points each. FM Mehdi Hasan Parag

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS 39 High card 24 Tokyo's old part

1 Smell 40 Squabble 25 Director

5 U.K. 43 Plaster- 26 Cohort

fliers fiber- of Whoopi

6 Teen's board mix and Sherri

skin woe 47 Home entertainment piece

12 One of the Three 48 Vicinity

Bears 50 Oodles

13 Conclusion 51 Billboards

52 One- named

Mideast port super- model

16 Wrestling hold 53 Some ever- greens

18 Tetanus 54 Lad

20 Lassoes 55 Harp's cousin

22 Jewel 56 Marginalia

23 Jaunty 57 Choke

topper 58 Lobster

26 Samson's weapon eater's aid

against the 59 Pleasant

Philistines 60 BPOE members

17 Sketched 34 Rejoices

19 Make 35 God, in

marginalia 36 Grenoble

22 Choke 37 Aloof

23 Lobster 38 Lament

eater's aid 39 Preten- tious

24 Tokyo's old 40 Vacation- ing

part 41 Bronchial

name sound

25 Director 42 Radiate

Howard

26 Cohort 43 Prank

of Whoopi 44 Host

and Sherri 45 Mad

46 Highway king of

division literature

47 47 48 49

48 Arrest 50 51 52

53 54 55

