

Star SPORT

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Traore bows out of Cup

Burkina Faso's march to the Africa Cup of Nations last eight has come at a major price, with star player Alain Traore sustaining an injury that rules him out of the rest of the competition.

Traore pulled a muscle in his left thigh in the opening minutes of Tuesday's goalless draw with champions Zambia, which saw the Burkinabe top Group C.

"Alain's chances of continuing in this Nations Cup are minus 10 per cent," the team's doctor, Romaric Toe, told



Barisal Burners players enjoy a light moment during a practice session at the Chittagong Divisional Stadium yesterday. Barisal Burners take on Chittagong Kings today.

PHOTO: STAR

Orion sues I Sports, claims 100 crore

COURT CORRESPONDENT

Orion Sports Ltd, the company that owns the Khulna Royal Bengals, yesterday filed a Tk 100 crore damage suit with a Dhaka court against I Sports Ltd, the owners of the Rangpur Riders, for making defamatory and derogatory remarks about spot-fixing in a Bangladesh Premier League (BPL) match between the teams.

Md Obaidul Karim, chairman of Orion Sports Ltd, filed the suit claiming Tk100 crore as compensation against Md Mustafa Rafiqul Islam, director of I Sports Ltd, for making derogatory statements.

Khulna beat Rangpur by nine runs on January 25. But the defendant Mustafa at a press conference alleged that Rangpur was a victim of spot-fixing and that Khulna was involved.

Karim stated that the news, which was published in The Daily Manab Zamin on January 27, was 'false, fabricated and concocted and it was fully malafide, defamatory and derogatory and it caused a loss of Tk 100 crore of Orion Sports Ltd.'

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Payment anxiety alive and kicking

Owais Shah threatens to sit out next match

BISHWAJIT ROY from Chittagong



Just when the second edition of the Bangladesh Premier League (BPL) was gathering some real momentum with big crowds lending added excitement to some close matches on the field, the unfortunately familiar issue of player payments reared its ugly head again.

Defending champions Dhaka Gladiators ignited the flame this time by saying that their foreign players are frustrated with the non-payment issue and that England recruit Owais Shah even threatened to refrain from playing the next game if not given the 25 per cent of his wages as agreed upon before the tournament.

Before the tournament started it was agreed that the players would get 25

Dhaka Gladiators batsman Owais Shah threatens to refrain from playing.

Gladiators owner blames BCB.

BPL Governing Council member-secretary Mallick says that the franchise did not submit signed contracts in time.

Local players also anxious as tournament

percent of their wage before the start, 25 per cent by the end of the tournament, and the rest within 90 days of the end of the event.

Gladiators owner Selim Chowdhury however blamed the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) for creating the latest unrest, saying that it must be run by professional and dedicated people.

"It took almost one year to complete the dues of the players for the first edition of the competition, which is why the BCB

initiated some new procedure. As per that new procedure we paid Tk 3 crore to BCB for the 25 per cent initial payment because BCB has taken the responsibility of the players' payment. But unfortunately our players are yet to get their money," said Chowdhury while talking to reporters at a city hotel yesterday.

"(Owais) Shah told me that he will not play the next match if he doesn't get the money. What happens if the players leave us for the payment issue? Who will take the responsibility for that? The BCB must take the responsibility because they are the guarantor. We paid the money and it's not true that we didn't provide them the contract sheets because we sent them several times," he added.

BL: (smiles) I don't really like comparing the innings, but I believe that taking everything into consideration, like my mental state, how I was perceived at the time, the way I batted, how I felt and even my self-esteem I feel that the 213 against Australia (in the 1998-99 series) in Jamaica is the one innings I will cherish the most. I know people talk about the 153 a week later, but in Jamaica knowing what I did and what was going on around me, even though you wouldn't have been able to tell, I feel that was the most special.

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go beyond

EXCLUSIVE

At prince LARA'S court

QUAZI ZULQUARNAIN ISLAM

Brian Lara looks worried. Sprawled on the bed in jeans, polo shirt and a blue cap, Lara's posture may look casual but his eyes tell a different story. He is talking animatedly to his liaison officer but his words are inaudible. Outside the small room in the corner of the sprawling house, there is frenetic activity -- hoards of people resort to all but climbing trees to catch a glimpse of the legend in the flesh.

We are in Raojan, a small town about an hour and a half away from the main Chittagong city, and the hometown of the owner of the Chittagong Kings -- the team Lara is representing as a brand ambassador for this edition of the Bangladesh Premier League. It has taken six hours and rides in rickshaws, cars, and even an aircraft to get this far. And after all this, Simon, the good-natured liaison officer informs me that I have just fifteen minutes. "Please ask relevant questions," adds another voice as an afterthought. As if there is a set of relevant questions for Brian Lara, I think. But I am prepared, and so, I see, is Lara -- eyes steely, gaze unwavering.

Daily Star Sport (DSS): So Brian, how has Bangladesh been for you so far?

BL: I haven't been here for quite some time, maybe ten years or so and it's always a great experience coming to this part of the world. The love for cricket is something unique and it's something a lot of people around the world don't understand. This place for any cricketer is very very special and I have really enjoyed my time here so far. Cricket-wise we are struggling a bit, but I believe we have backed ourselves into a corner and hopefully we can move out of here.

DSS: Backing yourself into a corner seems almost a Lara specialty, no? There are so many great innings you have played with your back against the wall -- which do you consider your best?

BL: (smiles) I don't really like comparing the innings, but I believe that taking everything into consideration, like my mental state, how I was perceived at the time, the way I batted, how I felt and even my self-esteem I feel that the 213 against Australia (in the 1998-99 series) in Jamaica is the one innings I will cherish the most. I know people talk about the 153 a week later, but in Jamaica knowing what I did and what was going on around me, even though you wouldn't have been able to tell, I feel that was the most special.

DSS: On the topic of that 153 in Barbados, what was going through your mind when Courtney Walsh came down to bat out an over against Jason Gillespie, with the West Indies so close to both victory and defeat?

BL: (laughs) Well, Courtney coming out to bat is not a scene most of the West Indies like to see, much less me as the captain at that time. So I tried to meet him half-way as he was coming out to bat, but even before I could get a word in, he was on me saying -- "What are you talking about? I am not getting out, unless you are getting out." And Courtney is someone who has won many games for the West Indies with the ball and you kind of want to believe him at that moment. But there were a couple of balls that he trapped in that game and I still don't know how he did it...

DSS: Is it true that during that series you practised a technique called 'visualisation' and it was something you borrowed from Michael Jordan after reading about how he employed the same technique with good effect?

BL: Yes, absolutely. But for visualisation to work, you need to have everything in place. It's all good and well to say that you want to score a hundred, but if you are standing by a bar at three in the morning and not training, then it will probably be very



I think professionalism. I don't really have intimate knowledge of all that is going on, but professionalism is the ingredient that the Australians and now the English have in common in their rise to the top.

DSS: ...and then it stops working?

BL: No, no no. You visualise, but not everything always works out. Even Michael Jordan will tell you that.

DSS: Back in the day, people always said that when Lara gets a century, he gets a big one. Apart from physical and mental stamina, what do you feel is required to play long innings?

BL: A desire and a passion and not to set any milestones as 'the' milestone. During my first Test century in Sydney my coach at that time, Rohan Kanhai, said 'set your stall out'. He also said, 'your next innings begins at zero'. I didn't understand what he meant at that time but I realised that in cricket, it's best to fill your boots whenever you have the chance. So why be happy with a hundred in two/three sessions when most teams usually target to bat at least five?

DSS: From the outside looking in,

it always seemed that you preferred Test cricket to ODIs. Is that true?

BL: I feel that your true worth as a cricketer is best tested in Test cricket. Not to take anything away from the other forms of the game, which believe are also very important, but it is in Test cricket where a batsman is most often challenged. As a batsman it's more likely that you bat in a Test match whereas you might not do so in a one-day international.

DSS: In your role with the Chittagong Kings you have come face to face with many local cricketers. Do you feel that they share the same view regarding Test cricket? Or do you think many aspiring cricketers might be swayed by the economic benefits of T20 cricket?

BL: I see Bangladeshi cricketers as very humble and having a love for the game. I think they are very eager about all forms of the game and whenever they are given the opportunity they are very enthusiastic. This last series against the West Indies showed them to be fighters. They are a talented bunch but obviously something is still missing. But this is a part of the world where cricket is religion and I am sure they will come up to scratch soon.

DSS: So what do you think should be immediate next steps for Bangladesh in their goal to be a competitive Test nation? You said there is something missing, so what do you think we can add?

BL: I think professionalism. I don't really have intimate knowledge of all that is going on, but professionalism is the ingredient that the Australians and now the English have in common in their rise to the top. Professionalism in all aspects and from all stakeholders, including players and administrators.

DSS: Having spent an extended amount of time here now, what has impressed you most about Bangladesh so far?

BL: The people and their interest in cricket. It really baffles me that that does not trickle down into an excellent cricket team yet. Considering how much love for the game there is here it's no different from India where it is sometimes overwhelming. It reminds me of the West Indies, 50-60 years ago when we gained independence from the British and there was generally a lot more appreciation for the game which led to great cricketers in the 70s and the 80s. And maybe that goes back to my earlier point about professionalism and whether everything is there in place for any youngster to play cricket.

DSS: On a lighter note Brian, Dwight Yorke was here last year and he went on record saying that you

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Arambagh stun Muktis

SPORTS REPORTER



The Grameenphone Bangladesh Premier League

witnessed its first upset when relegation-threatened Arambagh KS handed a lone-goal defeat to Muktijoddha Sangsad at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

Sabuj Kumar Biswas struck the all-important goal in the 23rd minute to take the Arambagh outfit off the foot of the table, on six points from nine matches, three clear of bottom club Feni Soccer.

Muktijoddha Sangsad remained in fourth position with 14 points from nine outings, six less than leaders Abahani and five behind Sheikh Jamal DC and Sheikh Russel KC.

meant they not only ended their five-match losing streak, but also exacted revenge for their 1-0 loss against Muktijoddha Sangsad in the first leg.

Muktijoddha came into this match on the back of a creditable home draw against Abahani, but were stunned by basement side

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Arambagh midfielder Sabuj Kumar Biswas (C) takes a flight of ecstasy after scoring the only goal of their Grameenphone Bangladesh Premier League match against Muktijoddha Sangsad at the BNS yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR