

Del Piero extends Sydney stay

Italian World Cup winner Alessandro Del Piero Thursday signed on for a second season in Australia's A-League as his Sydney FC side push for a play-off place. "I'm very happy about this news," the Juventus and Italy legend told a press conference after agreeing to activate the second year of a reported US\$2 million-a-season contract. "For sure it's a great moment for me, for Sydney FC," he said, thanking the club for trusting him. The 38-year-old Juventus legend said he would not carry on if he could not play



Forward Pushkor Khisa Mimo was the linchpin of Bangladesh hockey team's impressive 4-1 win against Oman in a World Hockey League match at New Delhi's Dhyanchad Stadium on Thursday.

PHOTO: FIH

Bangladesh make light work of Oman

SPORTS REPORTER



Bangladesh followed up their remarkable triumph over China to post another slick victory in the World Hockey League (Round-2) when they handed a 4-1 defeat to Oman in their third match at Dhyanchad Stadium in New Delhi yesterday.

The second successive win helped Bangladesh secure six points from three matches, equal with Ireland and China. Bangladesh, however, remain in fourth on goal difference. India sit on top of the table with nine points.

Pushkor Khisa Mimo, Sheikh Mohammad Nannu, Rasel Mahmud Jimmy and Moinul Islam Koushik struck one goal each while Anwar Jumman Saad pulled one goal back for Oman after the barren first-half which was an almost equal battle.

It seemed that Bangladesh were playing with a lot of pressure at the start aiming to replicate their performance against China. There were

plenty of missed passes, waster penalty corners and even some shaky defending, from which Oman almost capitalized on a few occasions. Forward Jimmy, the architect-in-chief of that famous win over China also looked a shadow of his real self as Bangladesh struggled to shake off the nerves against a team they beat 6-3 in the AHF Cup last year.

After the resumption however, Bangladesh justified their standing with Mimo and Jimmy tearing apart the defense of Oman before Mimo put Bangladesh ahead three minutes into the second half.

Jimmy entered the circle playing a one-two with Kamruzzaman Rana and put a fierce hit for Mimo, who drove forward to connect and send the ball into the Oman net.

Afterwards, an unmarked Jimmy failed to extend the margin twice with just the opponent goalkeeper to beat before Bangladesh goalkeeper Zahid Hossain thwarted a good effort from Oman's Anwar Jumman.

On 51 minutes, Sarwar Hossain

ran down the right to go deep before cutting it back for Nannu who, with the goalpost behind him, swivelled on his toes and hit it home (2-0).

Bangladesh kept pressing hard to extend the margin and the pressure paid off immediately. Bangladesh snatched two successive penalty corners and Jimmy converted one of them to make it 3-0 in the 60th minute.

Five minutes later, Oman bit back to reduce the margin as Anwar Jumman converted Oman's third penalty before Koushik came close to scoring in the next minute but his attempt went narrowly wide.

However, Koushik did not mistake to wrap up the victory in the 68th minute from a counter attack. Availing a long through, man-of-the-match Mimo advanced to the circle to set-up Jimmy, whose fierce hit was denied by the head of goalkeeper Fahad Khamis and Koushik pushed the air-borne rebound home.

Bangladesh will take on bottom-side Fiji on Saturday.

Dual debut in BCL final

SPORTS REPORTER



The final of the Bangladesh Cricket League (BCL) will see a double debut when it gets underway today at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur. The match will mark the first time that a day-night first-class match is played in Bangladesh, and it will also be the first time that the pink cricket ball is used in the country.

Walton Central Zone and BCB North Zone will play the five-day final of the newly-designed franchise-based first-class competition. The match will start at 1pm and the new ball can be taken after 70-over intervals in each innings.

Jahurul Islam will lead the BCB North Zone as their regular skipper and Bangladesh captain Mushfiqur Rahim will sit out the final due to family commitments. Mushfiqur's national deputy Mahmudullah Riyad will also not be playing for Central Zone because of a minor

groin injury.

The focus however will be on players like Central Zone's Marshall Ayub and Shamsur Rahman, who earned a call-up to the 25-member preliminary squad for the upcoming tour of Sri Lanka on the back of impressive performances in the domestic circuit. The 24-year old Marshall was not only the top-scorer in the last National Cricket League but also the highest run-getter in the BCL with 454 runs so far, including a double century. Whether the right-hander can enhance his credentials with a strong performance here and earn a call-up to the 15-member final squad

First day-night first-class match in Bangladesh

First time pink ball will be used in the country

Focus on national probables

will be an interesting sub-plot over the next five days.

Regarding the innovations this match will bring, many are questioning the merits of playing with the experimental pink ball before the serious business of taking on Sri Lanka in Tests.

The players however were excited with Bangladesh cricket's first taste of the two innovations.

"Everybody is excited because the pink ball and day-night longer-version match is totally new for us. The first day is very important for the players. Hope it will be a good final," said Central Zone skipper Mosharraf Hossain, who also believed that it will not be a big problem for the players to shift their focus to longer-version cricket after the T20 matches in the just concluded Bangladesh Premier League (BPL).

After the end of the league matches of the BCL on January 11 this year, the competition took a long break before the final to accommo

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Walton Central Zone's batsman Shamsur Rahman tosses the pink ball that will be used in the day-night Bangladesh Cricket League final starting at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium today.

PHOTO: STAR

Salahuddin wants results

Football

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) president Kazi Salahuddin yesterday urged the national booters to produce some positive results in the upcoming AFC Challenge Cup Qualifiers in Nepal.

"We are providing you the maximum facilities we have but we can't play on the pitch for you. If you give me results, I will give you everything," said Salahuddin during a near one-hour lunch with the booters at the BFF House.

"If you can't perform well and produce results at the international level, the federation will not be able to manage sponsors in future. So the responsibility is on you to take the country's football forward," said the BFF Boss.

"The AFC Challenge Cup Qualifiers is the beginning for you as new coaches are coming tomorrow," added the BFF boss, who also talked about the areas in which the national team erred in various situations in the past.

"We are convinced," said midfielder Pranotosh Kumar Das. "It is time to deliver and we will try to give our best in the AFC Challenge Cup."

"We agreed with the shortcomings that the president pointed out. We often conceded goals from set pieces and from now on, we will work hard on it," said the Abahani

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Uni cricket tournament from today

SPORTS REPORTER

The week-long cricket carnival named Clemon Indoor Uni Cricket will start at the Shaheed Suhrawardy National Indoor Stadium in Mirpur today.

A total of thirty-two universities will take part in the eight-a-side indoor cricket tournament, the first of its kind in Bangladesh.

The tournament was the brainchild of former Bangladesh cricketers Akram Khan, Athar Ali Khan and Khaled Mashud, who arranged this tournament under the banner of 'THE 3 CRICS'.

The champion team will receive Tk 5 lakh and the runners-up will get Tk 2 lakh, while there will also be a cash reward for the best player of each match.

Spin v pace in Chennai

First Indo-Aussie Test starts today

Cricket

CRICINFO, Chennai

For a rivalry that has produced plenty of gripping cricket over the past decade or so, the run-up to this India-Australia series has been strangely muted. India captain MS Dhoni hasn't spoken to the press even once before the series, there have been no major controversies in the warm-up matches, there hasn't been too much of the pre-series mind games, and even the broadcasters' TV campaign has changed from the taunting tone it had before the England series to a more sober, cricket-centric one.

Both India and Australia are going through a generational change in the batting, but when it comes to the bowling, the first of four Tests that begins in Chennai today could feature two of the most contrasting line-ups in any match.

Though the surface at the Chidambaram Stadium is expected to have plenty of turn, Australia are

going in with only one specialist spinner in Nathan Lyon, and with three fast bowlers and medium-pace bowling all-rounder Moises Henriques. India, on the other hand,



Off-spinner Harbhajan Singh will mark his 100th Test appearance at Chennai today.

PHOTO: INTERNET

are almost certain to start with only one quick bowler in Ishant Sharma, and play three, or even four, spinners. Unexpectedly, India announced a day ahead of the Test that Harbhajan Singh, Australia's nemesis on so many occasions, will be in the eleven for what will be his 100th Test.

The series also presents a huge challenge for both captains. In Chennai Michael Clarke, without the reassuring presence of Ricky Ponting and Michael Hussey, will be leading an eleven of which only three players have played a Test in India. The other eight all have 20 Test caps or less. For Dhoni, whose stocks have steadily declined since the high of the 2011 World Cup, another high-profile home series defeat could trigger the end of his Test captaincy.

When these two teams faced off in a Test series last year, the consensus in India was that the tour offered the best chance to beat Australia in Australia. It ended with India losing all four Tests, some of them in an

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Thais on top as Siddikur struggles

SPORTS REPORTER

Thailand's Chapchai Nirat sank eight birdies in his last 13 holes to share the lead while ace Bangladesh golfer Siddikur Rahman endured another one of his poor starts to finish joint 103rd after the first round of the Zaykabar Myanmar Open yesterday.

Having kept at even par till the fifth hole, Nirat -- ninth on the Asian Tour order of merit -- played brilliantly thereafter to end the day with an eight-under-par 64, sharing top spot with Thanyakon Krongpha at the Royal Mingalardon Golf and Country Club. Prom Meesawat, also from Thailand, finished a shot behind his compatriots.

But the Asian Tour's season curtain-raiser

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