

Camp restarts with shorter hours

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The national probables for the series against New Zealand resumed their camp at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium yesterday afternoon following a weeklong break. The players, a majority of whom were fasting, were seen sweating it out through different training sessions.

The cricketers were divided into two groups based on their fitness levels. The first group, which included the likes of Mahmudullah Riyad and Mashrafe Bin Mortaza, focused more on specialised gym sessions in a bid to lose the extra pounds. Mushfiqur Rahim and Nasir Hossain were among those in the second group which focused more on producing power and working on their skill sets.

Due to Ramadan, the team management decided to shorten the training schedule. Day 1 saw the players train from 3 pm to 5 pm. The timing of the training schedule may be revised based on the way the players' respond the first day.

Meanwhile, the cricket operations committee have decided to host three one-day games between the Bangladesh A team, which is yet to be announced, and Bangladesh Under 23 towards the end of this week. The A team, which will be touring England in August and is likely to include a number of players from the national camp, will be announced following the matches.

Clubs want league in September

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The Dhaka Premier League's clubs committee, following a meeting at Dhanmondi yesterday, stated that they want the players' registration and the start of the competition to be postponed to September. The league, which has already been delayed a number of times this year, is scheduled to start on August 29 and the players registration is set to take place on July 25.

"We want the players' registration to take place in the first week of September and the league to start in a suitable time of the same month. We want the competition to start after the Bangladesh A team and under-23 team return from their tours in England and Singapore," said Iqbal Yusuf Chowdhury, member of the Cricket Coaching School.

Hingis taken in Hall of Fame

REUTERS, London

Martina Hingis was inducted into the Tennis Hall of Fame on Saturday, becoming one of the youngest members to be enshrined in one of the sport's most elite clubs.

The 32-year-old from Switzerland was among a distinguished class of inductees who were formally inducted at Newport, Rhode Island.

Hingis, who was seemingly born to play tennis and succeeded in fulfilling her destiny, told the crowd she was humbled by the honour.

"Thank you, tennis. You gave me the world," she said. "And now I honestly am out of words, because there are no words to explain what I feel."

Rejuvenated Riyad has Kiwis in sights

SPORTS REPORTER



One of the quieter figures at the camp, the national team's vice captain Mahmudullah Riyad has had a mixed year at the international level so far. His heroic performance against the West Indies at home last year was followed by a poor performance in Sri Lanka, which eventually led to him being dropped from the side in the second Test against Zimbabwe.

While he did manage to end the tour of Zimbabwe with a good run in the one-dayers, there was talk about how the allrounder, amidst the rise of some talented youngsters on the national front, was no longer a regular choice.

However, The 27-year-old, who spoke to The Daily Star following a gruelling net session at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium yesterday, has none of those thoughts in his mind. "It's simple really. If you don't perform you won't be in the team, even if you are the vice-captain. I couldn't perform in the Tests and I missed out, partly also because of the combination. But I was consistent in the limited overs later on. I think that displayed a truer picture," said Mahmudullah.

The Test match snub has led to the player placing a special focus on the longer version of the game. "So far we have been working mostly on our fitness levels. The skill sessions began yesterday and I have certain plans with the red ball which I have talked to the coach about. I need to work on leaving the ball and improv-

ing my concentration," said Mahmudullah, adding that his endurance levels were tested in the month-long fitness camp.

With the camp set to continue throughout Ramadan, Riyad aims to work harder on his Test technique with the upcoming New Zealand series in October.

Mahmudullah's re-appointment last month as Mushfiqur Rahim's deputy till the end of the year barely created any noise in the media. That was perhaps because the majority of the attention was diverted towards Mushfiqur, who received the same term, criticising the short-term appointment. However Riyad, who dreams of leading the Tigers one day, sees his re-election as a positive step in his career. "The role of a vice-captain is to support his captain, have a good connection with the players, team planning, etc. And continuing this role is definitely a positive because these instances will help you deal with decisions in the future, if at all you're chosen to lead the side one day," said Mahmudullah.

Shifting his focus towards the recent fixing issues that rocked Bangladesh cricket, Mahmudullah said that he could not believe that his long-time colleague and friend Mohammad Ashraful could be involved. "I was shocked, honestly speaking. We played together in Dhaka and in the national team for such a long time, so it did hurt a bit when I heard him confess," he said. "He has committed an offence and I guess he does deserve a punishment. But as a friend and a colleague I hope that he can come back well," added Mahmudullah.

Negotiations begin with Game On

SPORTS REPORTER



Following months of uncertainty, yesterday saw the first signs of communication between the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) and Game On Sports Management as Bangladesh Premier League's (BPL) chairman Afzalur Rahman Sinha met with Game On's managing director Enayetur Rahman Bappy.

Following the meeting at the BCB headquarters, the officials told the media that they are in the process of exchanging their financial accounts.

"Currently Game On owes the BCB Tk 28 crore -- Tk 19 crore for having bought the hosting rights of the BPL and Tk 8 crore as prize money of the tournament. They also owe the BCB more than 80 lakhs for the new franchisee (Rangpur Riders) that joined the BPL last year," said Sinha.

"So far they have paid us a bank guarantee of Tk 10 crore," he added. Responding to the BCB's claim, Bappy told reporters that the BCB also owed Game On money. "The BCB also owes us some money from different aspects. We are supposed to get some share from tickets, franchises, etc. We have received their exact accounts. Once we finish calculating as to how much the BCB owes us we can come to an exact figure with regard to how much we owe them," said Bappy.

When asked as to why the financial process had taken so long, Sinha said, "During our earlier meeting Game On had told us that they have some claims. They can't clear the payments unless those claims are finalised. So it kept on getting delayed."

With regard to the relationship between the board and the franchisees, who have repeatedly been warned about their payment dues, Sinha was still hopeful that a solution could be reached. "Some of the franchisees have called us and they have requested to talk to the board president. They have certain issues that they want to discuss. The president will sit with each of the franchisees in the coming days and we will try to come up with a solution," he said.



Bangladesh vice-captain Mahmudullah Riyad (L) goes through weight training at Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

5-star plans dismay Cox's Bazar

MUHAMMAD ZINNAT ALI, Cox's Bazar



The people of Cox's Bazar have reacted with dismay to the decision that the cricket stadium to be built at the Golf Course will only be a temporary one, which will be replaced by a five-star hotel after the completion of the Women's World Twenty20 in February 2014.

An international standard cricket stadium had been a long-cherished dream of the people of the sea-side city, and they thought it was finally going to be realised when Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina last year ordered the Bangladesh Tourism Corporation to hand over the land to Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) to build a stadium there. But the recent announcement by Civil Aviation and Tourism minister Faruk Khan that a five-star hotel will eventually be built at the venue, replacing the stadium, shocked the people of the city as it did sportslovers and organisers across the country.

Professor Moshtaq Ahmed, a member of the civil society of Cox's Bazar felt a cricket stadium is the bigger need for the. "Why do we need a five-star hotel here when there are so many already in place? An international standard cricket stadium would have brought a revolutionary change in the development of the city," said Moshtaq.

General secretary of the district sports association Jasim Uddin said: "If a hotel is built in place of a stadium, it would shatter the dream of the people of the city."

BCB councillor Wahiduzzaman summed up the whole issue simply yet precisely by saying: "There is no alternative to building a cricket stadium in Cox's Bazar if we want to promote the city as a sports-friendly tourist attraction."

SHARAPOVA hires Connors as coach

AFP, Paris



Maria Sharapova hired former world number one and eight-time Grand Slam title winner Jimmy Connors as her new coach on Saturday, just a day after splitting with Thomas Hogstedt.

"I am happy to announce that Jimmy Connors will be my new coach. I have known Jimmy for many years and we briefly worked together in 2008 just before the Australian Open," said world number two Sharapova on her website.

"I am really excited about our new partnership and looking forward to the upcoming tournaments."

Sharapova had been working with Swedish 49-year-old Hogstedt since 2010 when the former world number one completed a career Grand Slam with victory at the 2012 French Open.



But at Wimbledon two weeks ago, she crashed out of the second round, losing to Portuguese qualifier Michelle Larcher de Brito, the world number 131.

Connors, 60, previously coached fellow American Andy Roddick, but

their 19-month relationship ended in March, 2008.

"Excited to be working with 4 time GS champion @MariaSharapova. Adding to that number is the goal.

Looking forward to some fun & hard work," tweeted Connors.

Rene to guide U-16 in Nepal

SPORTS REPORTER

Dutch coach Rene Koste will guide the U-16 national squad in the SAFF U-16 Championship, beginning on July 20 in Nepal, with the participation of eight South Asian nations. The Bangladesh contingent is expected to leave here for Nepal on July 17.

Rene, the head of coach of BFF Academy and assistant coach of the national football team, took charge of the U-16 side last Wednesday following a one-and-half month training camp conducted by coach Golam Rabbani Choton. However, Rene is seemingly not satisfied with the way the camp was conducted.

"Rene told us that there is no need to send two coaches to Nepal. We will place Rene's suggestion before the BFF

Development Committee, which takes care of all age-group teams and decide on how many coaches will accompany the boys in Nepal," said BFF general secretary Abu Nayeem Shohag yesterday.

There has also been allegation of nepotism against the 10-member selection panel which chose the U-16 squad. The squad allegedly includes two of Choton's favourites, two players on request, 11 chosen from BKSP while the rest picked from open trial. But BFF technical director BA Jubair Nipu refuted the allegation.

"There is no favourite player of Choton in the squad and the seven BKSP players came showing performance," said Nipu, who however admitted that one player was kept in the 40-member squad on request but was dropped before the final squad was picked.

Initiative to bring back six clubs

SPORTS REPORTER

Four senior members of the executive committee of Bangladesh Hockey Federation (BHF) have been given the responsibility to convince six premier division clubs to return to hockey activities as soon as possible.

The decision came yesterday at the first meeting of the newly elected BHF body, which also formed the League Committee keeping its chairman and secretary unchanged.

"Four members including (Abdur) Sadek and (Abdur) Rashid have been given the responsibility to convince those six clubs, who have decided not to take part in any hockey activities and the league committee has been asked to take necessary steps to complete the inter-club players' transfer," said general secretary Rahmatullah after the meeting.

It's raining in Newport

AFP, Newport

Rain washed out both semifinal matches at the ATP Tour's Hall of Fame Tennis Championships on Saturday.

Nicolas Mahut and Michael Russell played just three points in their semifinal contest before the downpour suspended play on the grass courts in the 520,000-dollar event.