

SPORT



Lodewijk de Kruif (C), flanked by his coaching staff, briefs his charges after a practice session of the national football squad at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

De Kruif now has 26

SPORTS REPORTER



Dutch coach Lodewijk de Kruif yesterday released four more players from his camp, reducing the number of players to 26, which all but makes up the touring party for national team's Thailand engagement.

The exclusion of Arup Kumar Baidya, Yousuf Sifat, Nahidul Islam Nahid and Tapu Barman trimmed the camp to 26, including two injured players -- winger Zahid Hossain and striker Shakhawat Hossain Rony -- and late call-up Rezaul Karim Reza.

The Dutch coach was supposed to declare his 25-member squad on Sunday, but took one more day after the second practice match against Team BJMC made him think twice. The 43-year old coach had expressed his dissatisfaction over defensive blunders by Kesto Kumar Bose and Nasiruddin Chowdhury, but both of them survived the cut.

De Kruif had earlier released three players -- Arman Aziz, Shahedul Alam Shahed and Uttam Kumar Banik while expatriates Anando Rahman and Farhan Khan pulled out of the camp,

having failed to impress.

It now looks like De Kruif has pinned hopes on those players who had played in the AFC Challenge Cup Qualifiers or missed the qualifiers due to injury.

However, some new faces such as striker Wahed Ahmed, winger Mobarak Hossain, midfielder Omar Faruque Babu and expatriate midfielder Jamal Bhuiyan have found place in the squad, which is supposed to travel to Thailand on July 22 for a ten-day trip. It has been learnt that a couple of players may be kept back home for the tour of Thailand where Bangladesh will play two friendly matches against the Thai national team.

The four players released yesterday will however be kept as standby and the coach may call them before the SAFF Championship, scheduled for September 1-11 in Nepal, if needed.

Meanwhile, the national team is scheduled to play a third practice match against Arambagh tomorrow.

"I tried my best but the ultimate decision is the coach's which you will have to accept," said excluded Yousuf Sifat. "But, I am hopeful of securing a place in the squad in future by per-

forming in domestic competitions."

"We all felt the pressure till yesterday (Monday) but now feel bit relaxed after the squad has been trimmed," said defender Kesto Kumar. "The coach rectified the mistakes that we made during the second practice match. At present, the training is going on in full swing."

Winger Mobarak, who drew the attention of De Kruif through his Super Cup performance, echoed the sentiment of Kesto but felt that there was still stiff competition among the players to get into the final squad.

Goalkeeper: Biplob Bhattacharjee, Mamun Khan, Shahidul Alam Sohel and Ziaur Rahman.

Defender: Ariful Islam, Nasiruddin Chowdhury, Ashraf Mahmud Linkon, Rezaul Karim, Yeamin Munna, Kesto Kumar, Wali Faisal, Atiqur Rahman Meshu and Raihan Hasan.

Midfielder: Mamunul Islam, Pranotosh Kumar, Jamal Bhuiyan, Omar Faruque Babu, Mithun Chowdhury, Mobarak Hossain Bhuiyan, Mezbabul Haque Manik, Zahid Hossain and Sohel Rana.

Striker: Zahid Hasan Emily, Shakhawat Hossain Rony, Toklis Ahmed and Wahed Ahmed.

Nat'l Cricket C'ship

SPORTS REPORTER

The second round of the National Cricket Championship resumed yesterday following a halt of three weeks due to inclement weather. Group A's fixture saw Narayanganj beat Maulvi Bazar by four wickets at the Shaheed Chandu Stadium in Bogra.

Batting first Maulvi Bazar finished on 183 for 9. In reply, Narayanganj rode on SK Humayun's half century to reach their target within 46 overs.

In Group B, Jessore defeated Brahmanbaria by 59 runs in a low scoring encounter at the Dinajpur Stadium. Batting first Jessore were bundled out for 137 runs. In reply, Brahmanbaria were bowled out for just 72 runs in 27.5 overs.

Brahmanbaria's Murad Khan was the pick of the bowlers as he finished with figures of 4 for 10 in seven overs.

Junior TT team to leave for India

SPORTS REPORTER

A 12-member squad of the junior table tennis team will leave here today for India to take part in the South Asian Junior Table Tennis Championship, which is scheduled to take place in New Delhi from July 20-22.

The squad -- comprising nine players, two officials and one umpire -- will take part in singles, doubles and team events of both boys' and girls' sections. They will also play in cadet boys' singles and team events.

Moin named Pak chief selector

AFP, Karachi

Pakistan's cricket bosses on Monday appointed former captain Moin Khan as chief selector, a post he said he took on as a challenge.

The 41-year-old takes over from Iqbal Qasim, who stepped aside earlier this month in a move seen as a reaction to the team's miserable performance in the Champions Trophy in England.

Real demand: No league in 2013?

SPORTS REPORTER



The big question surrounding this year's Dhaka Premier Division Cricket League is whether the clubs are actually serious about participating in the country's lone 50-over competition. The question was raised after the majority of the clubs in the Dhaka Premier League's clubs committee came up with new demands to once again render this year's league an uncertainty.

The new demands greatly frustrated CCDM (Cricket Committee of Dhaka Metropolis) chairman Jalal Yunus leading him to doubt whether this year's league, which has already suffered numerous delays because of the clubs' reluctance, will take place at all.

"I don't think there is any scope of accepting their demands if we want to hold the league this year. The most we can do is delay the players' registration but there is no way to compromise with the start of the league because we have a home series against New Zealand in October and then we have to play the first-class domestic league," said frustrated Yunus.

As per the latest schedule which was confirmed after the last board meeting, the league is scheduled to start on August 29 and the players' registration is set to take place on July 25, but the clubs wanted the players' registration and the start of the competition to be postponed till September.

"I'm trying my best to make sure that the league will take place because it would be a shame if we cannot hold it this season. But if you take a decision according to your own whims, then it simply hampers the progress of cricket," added Yunus.

As always, this season has seen the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) bending to the demands of the clubs as the board deferred the start of the league on several occasions and also caved into the clubs' demands by introducing a new player payment scheme. The players grudgingly accepted the latter despite the fact that it would reduce their income from the league, which is for a majority of them the main source of income.

"It's really a shame. It is very much clear that the clubs are trying to skip this year's league and that is why they have been coming up with one demand after another," said a BCB member on condition of anonymity.

Another BCB official suggested that: "The time has come to think about the matter seriously. Cricket can't suffer over the years because of the whims of the clubs and ultimately cricket progress will be hampered if we continually kowtow to the clubs. So, we must revive the one-day competition of the National Cricket League (another 50-over competition that once ran alongside the Dhaka Premier League) and take bold steps to make it a competitive tournament so that players can earn money from there."

And Anderson

AFP, London



Britain's newspapers revelled in England's dramatic victory in the Ashes opener, lavishing praise on match-winner James Anderson, whose four-wicket haul Sunday brought his total for the match to 10.

But they also warned that the Australians would not be the whipping boys many predicted before the series.

Aussie skipper Michael Clarke still had "plenty of hope" for the rest of the summer, they said.

Monday's Daily Telegraph and Guardian both carried a photograph of England players celebrating the winning moment on the front page.

"Howzat for starters?" was the Guardian's headline.

The back-page headline of the Daily Mail read "We've nicked it," a reference to defiant Australian batsman Brad Haddin's edge which finally sealed victory.

Popular tabloid the Sun carried an editorial supporting the technology which detected Haddin's nick.

"Wow...what a start to this year's Ashes

ACSU likely to leave today

SPORTS REPORTER

Members of the International Cricket Council's Anti Corruption and Security Unit (ACSU) who arrived in Dhaka on Saturday are expected to leave the country today after having conducted their latest phase of interviews.

According to the Bangladesh Cricket Board's acting CEO, Nizamuddin Chowdhury, the board met the officials in order to discuss the progress of its investigation. "They are continuing with their investigation independent of the board. We did meet them and have a discussion, but none of those matters can be revealed to the media as of now," said Chowdhury. "From what I have heard till now, they haven't interrogated anybody new," he added.

ACSU is expected to provide its report on suspected match fixing in the Bangladesh Premier League in the first week of August.

Mahut lifts Newport title

AFP, Newport

French wild card Nicolas Mahut rallied from a set down to defeat Australia's Lleyton Hewitt Sunday in the final at the Hall of Fame Championships.

Mahut battled back from a first set loss to take a 5-7, 7-5, 6-3 victory over the 2012 runner-up Hewitt on center court.

One Man Afridi

AFP, Georgetown



Shahid Afridi made one of the more remarkable comebacks in international cricket in leading Pakistan to a crushing 126-run victory over the West Indies in the first one-day international at the Guyana National Stadium on Sunday.

Omitted from his country's failed Champions Trophy campaign, the mercurial all-rounder returned the best-ever ODI bowling figures by a Pakistani, and the second best overall, in snaring seven for 12 to rout the home side for just 98 off 41 overs after having top-scored with a typically swashbuckling 76 in the visitors' total of 224 for nine.

"I try hard and I back myself and I want to thank people back home," said Afridi.

"It's not time for me to just survive in the team, but to give a lot to the team. I tried to stay positive.

"Whenever I got the ball in my zone I went for it. And what a pitch it was for me to bowl on. I just kept it simple, and it worked."

This match represented yet another stunning spike in the 17-year international career of Afridi whose ability to delight and entertain with his extravagant manner has often been overshadowed by an almost chronic failure to deliver at the most critical of times.

Fortunately for Pakistan, this was not one of those times and the impact on match started with his domination of a 120-run sixth-wicket partnership with his captain, Misbahul Haq

(52), the pair rescuing their team from the depths of 47 for five after gangling fast-medium bowler Jason Holder had wrecked the top order in finishing with the excellent figures of four for 13.

While Misbah laboured towards yet another workmanlike half-century, occupying 121 deliveries, Afridi's knock was a hurricane by comparison, decorated by five sixes and six fours off just 55 deliveries.

He looked well on the way to complet-

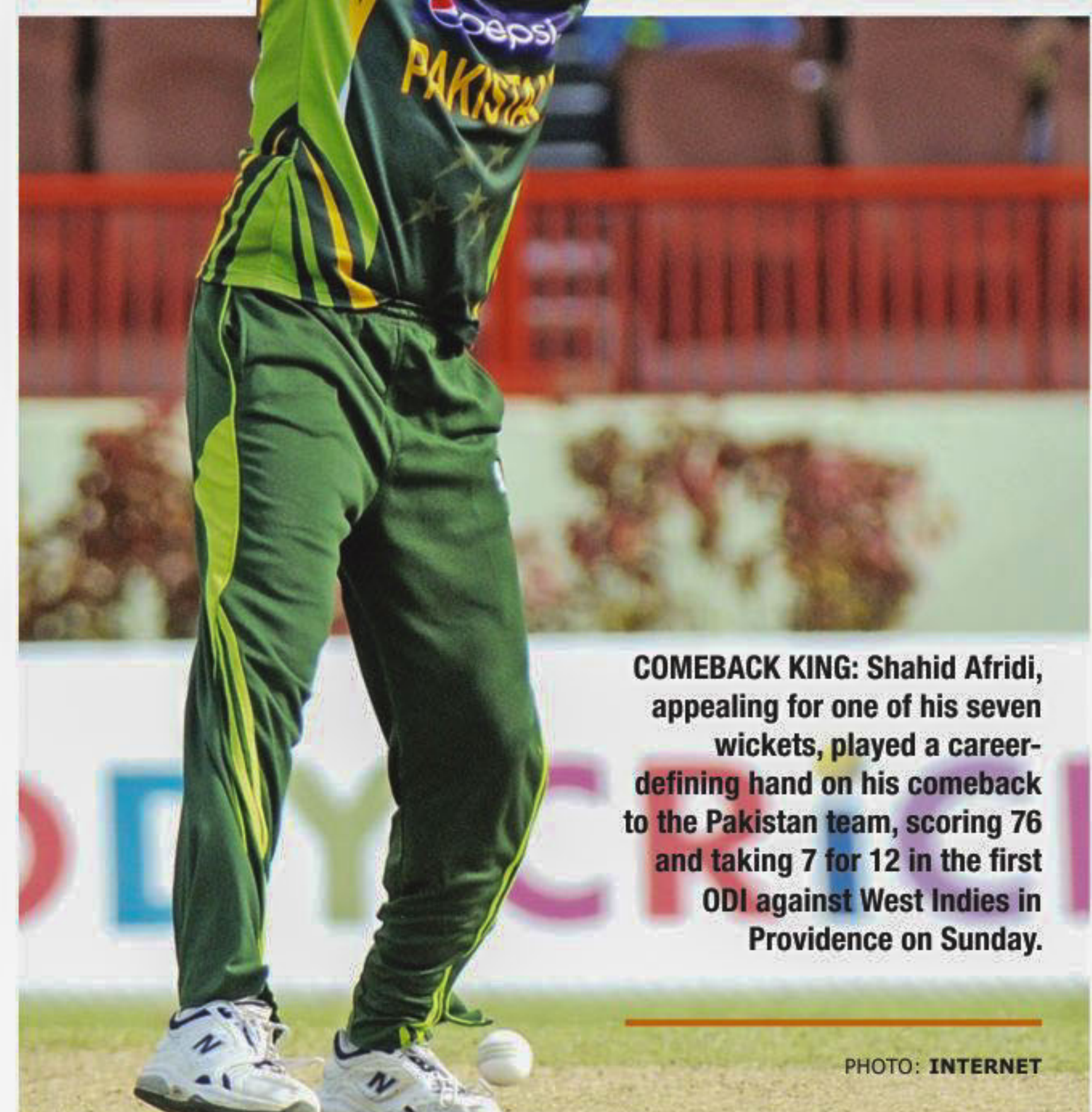
SCORES IN BRIEF	
PAKISTAN: 224 for 9 in 50 overs (Misbah 52, U Akmal 19, Afridi 76, Ajmal 15 not out; Roach 2-38, Holder 4-13, Bravo 2-52)	
WEST INDIES: 98 all out in 41 overs (Samuels 25, Sammy 21 not out, Narine 14; Irfan 2-17, Afridi 7-12)	
Result: Pakistan won by 126 runs.	
Player-of-the-match: Shahid Afridi.	

ing a hundred but perished in the 39th over, caught by Darren Sammy at deep midwicket off the bowling of Kieron Pollard.

West Indies would have been expecting the likes of Pollard and fellow big-hitter Chris Gayle to produce similar innings to give their team a fighting chance of getting the 225 runs needed for victory.

However that hope never materialised, and Afridi took most of the demolition job with early damage was done by Muhammad Irfan.

Pakistan then got a huge boost when Marlon Samuel's sharp single and Misbah's direct hit from cover found the dangerous opener short of his ground and the West Indies wobbling badly at seven for three.



COMEBACK KING: Shahid Afridi, appealing for one of his seven wickets, played a career-defining hand on his comeback to the Pakistan team, scoring 76 and taking 7 for 12 in the first ODI against West Indies in Providence on Sunday.

PHOTO: INTERNET

Choton kept alongside Koster

SPORTS REPORTER

The Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) yesterday announced a 29-member contingent for the SAFF U-16 Championship keeping Rene Koster as head coach and Golam Rababani Choton as a coach.

Koster had reportedly wanted to guide the side himself but the game's governing body kept Choton in the squad as he trained them for one and a half months before Koster took charge on July 10.

The championship is scheduled to be held in Nepal from July 20-30 with eight South Asian nations taking part. The grouping and fixtures will be finalised in the managers' meeting.

The 29-member contingent -- which consists of 23 booters, four coaches, one doctor and a team leader -- will leave for Nepal tomorrow.

Same England for 2nd Test

AFP, London

England on Monday named an unchanged squad to face Australia in the second Ashes Test, starting at Lord's later this week.

The home side got off to the best possible start in the five-Test series, beating the tourists by 14 runs in a thrilling encounter at Nottingham's Trent Bridge on Sunday.

National selector Geoff Miller said in an England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) statement that picking the same squad would "provide options" for skipper Alastair Cook and coach Andy Flower.

Fast bowler Steven Finn struggled at Trent Bridge and even though the second Test, which starts on Thursday, is at the Middlesex seamer's Lord's home ground, consideration will be given as to whether the paceman should be replaced by either Tim Bresnan or Graham Onions.

"It was a fantastic start to the Investec Test series, with both sides showing a huge amount of skill and determination," said Miller as he reflected on a dramatic match at Trent Bridge.

SQUAD
Alastair Cook (captain), Joe Root, Jonathan Trott, Kevin Pietersen, Ian Bell, Jonny Bairstow, Matt Prior, Tim Bresnan, Stuart Broad, Graeme Swann, James Anderson, Graham Onions, Steven Finn.