

SPORT

THE FINISH has BEGUN

The defeat for Australia in the Lord's Test was not just another loss. Some cricketing stalwarts down under saw it as the beginning of the downward trend. Following are some of their fears:

This could well be the worst Australian side ever to embark on an Ashes tour... Australia must find a way of scoring runs or be consigned to the dust bowl of history.

Malcolm Conn in the Herald Sun

Australia has clocked up some vintage defeats over the last few years. MCG 2010. Newlands 2011. WACA 2012. But Lord's 2013 has been as shabby and public a humbling as any of them. Victor Trumper! Donald Bradman! Shane Warne and by now probably Elizabeth Hurley! Your boys took one hell of a beating!

Gideon Haigh in the Australian

The most sobering aspect of Australia's crash from mediocrity to desperation is there is no clear way back.

Chloe Saltau in the Age

Shane Watson remains the Carl Hooper of Australian cricket as he ever was, a mercurial talent who would have been an added bonus in a winning team, but is asked to shoulder more than he can handle as a leader in a losing one.

Malcolm Knox in the Sydney Morning Herald

Aussies a laughing stock!

SKY SPORTS, London

Captain Michael Clarke admitted that his Australia team have become a laughing stock and cannot have any complaints about it after an "unacceptable" batting performance in the first innings at Lord's.

Clarke provoked some chortling in the crowd when he insisted that Australia could win the remaining three Tests to regain the Ashes at the post-match presentation ceremony in front of the pavilion. "I heard a lot of the crowd laugh when I said that, and rightly so," the captain reflected later.

"We've got so much support here and in Australia but we're letting ourselves and our supporters down at the moment. We're letting our bowlers down as well."

FIXING SCANDAL Indian police file charges on Cronje

AFP, New Delhi

Indian police filed charges on Monday over the 2000 cricket fixing scandal involving the late South African captain Hansie Cronje, an officer said.

The charges filed in a New Delhi court involving six accused including book makers and Cronje, who died in a plane crash in 2002, come 13 years after the scandal sent shockwaves through the cricketing world.

"There are six accused in this case, three of them are on bail while two are abroad," inspector Keshav Kumar told the court.



CRUEL!

Professionals are meant to be paid. A rickshaw-puller is paid for paddling passengers from place to place. An office executive gets his salary after a month's hard work. But here are some professionals honing their skills on the artificial turf at the Maulana Bhasani National Hockey Stadium yesterday unaware of the fact that they are perhaps the most underprivileged professionals sweating it out just to uphold the pride of a nation come the Asia Cup next month. These hockey players have been crying out since early June for the players' transfer, the lone source of income for them. But the transfers remain a way off with some clubs hell bent on not entering the transfer market, complaining about factors that have nothing to do with these hapless professionals. If the stalemate is not brokered by the country's sports minister soon then the trifle TA and DA they are now getting from the federation will remain their only source of income be it rain, shine or Eid.

PHOTO: STAR

BCB in election mode, not players

SPORTS REPORTER



It seems that all activities relating to cricket in the country have become stagnant as, according to many, the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) is going through a transition period with an ad-hoc committee at the helm of the country's richest sports body.

But this is a period that should have found the BCB at its most vibrant and active as they are on the cusp of hosting the World Twenty20 next year, which will be the biggest event ever held in the country.

Under the leadership of Nazmul Hassan Papon the interim body has not made any headway in solving a range of problems in time -- from the payment issues with the Bangladesh Premier League (BPL) to the slothful clubs of the Dhaka Premier Division Cricket League. Most importantly, the sub-committees have ceased to act as the board election is now on everyone's mind.

Papon has already confidently declared that the election dates would be announced within a month but the vital question of under which constitution the elections will be held remains.

A BCB member on condition of anonymity informed that a guideline regarding the BCB consti-

tution may come from the courts on July 25. Until and unless the constitution problem is solved, the BCB cannot ask the clubs to send their councillors because under the latest constitution which in 2012 was approved by the National Sports Council (NSC), the apex sports body in the country, the clubs that played the Super Six round in the last Premier League have the right to send two councillors each.

But while the organisers have been busy with the details of the election, players are under a cloud of uncertainty about whether this year's Premier Division Cricket League, on which most of the cricketers depend for their income, will in fact be held.

"I'm hopeful that the league will take place in September. The clubs wanted to delay the players' registration (which was last scheduled for July 25) but they are ready to start the league by September 2. We earlier fixed the starting date on August 29, so I don't think it will be a big problem if we start the league by the first week of September. We must finish the first leg by September and after the home series against New Zealand the Super League will take place. Everything however will be decided in the next board meeting," assured Jalal Yunus, chairman of BCB's media committee and also of the Cricket Committee of Dhaka Metropolis (CCDM).

Premier League in 3 phases

SPORTS REPORTER



Having abandoned its initial plan of holding the professional football league matches at neutral venues, the Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) came up with a guideline to stage the upcoming 2013-14 Bangladesh Premier League (BPL) in three legs with the participation of 10 clubs.

"The emergency meeting of the BFF executive committee today (Monday) made a guideline to hold the upcoming Bangladesh Premier League in three phases at home, away and neutral venues. In line with the guideline, the professional league committee will discuss the matter with the participating clubs and finalise the details before sending it to the BFF executive committee meeting again for final approval," said BFF president Kazi Salahuddin after the meeting at the BFF House yesterday.

"We made this guideline after the participating clubs agreed in principle to play the Bangladesh Premier League (BPL) in three phases instead of at the proposed neutral venues. They will first follow the previous system of home and away matches and then the football federation will decide a neutral venue where matches of the third phase will take place," informed the BFF boss.

To meet the FIFA standard of giving each club a minimum 40 matches in a season and decentralising the matches of the professional football

league, BFF had proposed to increase the number of participating teams and play the matches in three neutral venues. Most clubs however demanded additional compensation from the BFF for the expenditure of travelling to each neutral venue, which seemingly prompted the BFF executive committee to revert to its previous method and arrange an additional phase to meet the FIFA standard.

"Holding the league over three phases will be a pilot project and if we succeed in the new format we will follow it for the next three seasons," said Salahuddin.

The meeting also dropped the plan to hold a separate relegation league featuring the two bottom-placed sides of the BPL and the two top sides of the Bangladesh Championship League, citing reasons, citing reasons of unequal strength between the teams as the Bangladesh Championship League does not allow foreign players.

As per the guidelines, each club will get a minimum of 35 guaranteed matches -- 27 league matches, three matches each in the season's curtain-raising Federation Cup and the Independence Cup and two matches in the Super Cup.

The BFF executive committee has also decided to hold the fourth edition of the Super Cup with the top six teams of the BPL and, like the third edition, only local players will be eligible to take part.



PHOTO: INTERNET
Pakistan skipper Misbahul Haq, known for his dour batting, changed tack to score a match-winning 43-ball 53 in the fourth ODI against West Indies at St. Lucia on Sunday.

Pakistan shine in rain

AFP, Gros Islet



Inclement weather, the Duckworth-Lewis method and a lightning assault by Pakistan's middle-order batsmen stole the thunder from the West Indies as the Pakistan capitalised, Hafeez and Misbah crashing 54 runs off five overs before home captain Dwayne Bravo tried to get his team back into the match.

In a match already reduced to 49 overs-per-side and after Marlon Samuels blazed an unbeaten 106 in the home team's total of 261 for seven, Pakistan were set a revised target of 189 off 31 overs as a second shower of the day interrupted play when they were 68 for two off 17 overs.

Needing a further 121 off 14 overs, half-centuries from Mohammad Hafeez and skipper Misbahul Haq sped the visitors to the target with one over to spare.

Following a tie in the third match two days earlier, Pakistan now have an unbeatable 2-1 lead going into the fifth and final match at the same Beausejour Stadium venue on Wednesday.

West Indies seemed a dejected bunch when they took the field after being told by the umpires of the revised target, and Pakistan capitalised, Hafeez and Misbah crashing 54 runs off five overs before home captain Dwayne Bravo tried to get his team back into the match.

SCORES IN BRIEF
WEST INDIES: 261 for 7 in 49 overs (Charles 32, Samuels 106 not out, Gayle 30, Simmons 46; Irfan 2-60)
PAKISTAN: 189 for 4 in 30 overs (Jamshed 22, Hafeez 59, Misbah 53 not out, Akmal 29 not out; Roach 1-33)

Result: Pakistan won by six wickets on D-L method.
Player-of-the-match: Marlon Samuels.

Praising British press

AFP, London

British newspapers on Monday relished England's comprehensive thrashing of Australia in the second Test at Lord's, gleefully confident that the hosts will go on to retain the Ashes.

Australia are 2-0 down in the five-match series after being beaten by 347 runs with a day to spare.

Many commentators noted that only once in Ashes history has a team fought back from such a position to win a series.

"It does not get much more comprehensive than this," said the Daily Mail, declaring that "it is already clear the Ashes are assuredly staying put".

"England's superior quality has told at Lord's after an indifferent first day and there would appear to be no way back for Australia now, not when they are such a shambles both on and off the field," the newspaper added.

"Lord's of the manor" headlined The Sun, while the Daily Mirror said the Australians suffered "humiliation. There is no other word for it".

All the papers paid homage to Joe Root, the 22-year-old opening batsman who made 180 in England's second innings 347 before taking two wickets.

De Kruif cuts 3 to make it 24

SPORTS REPORTER



Dutch coach Lodewijk de Kruif yesterday released three more booters from the preparation camp for the SAFF Championship to cut down the national football squad to 24 from 27.

The released players are midfielders Pranotosh Kumar and Mezbabul Haque Manik and goalkeeper Ziaur Rahman. The latest reduction in the squad brought the total footballers excluded from the preliminary squad to 10 while expatriate booters Anando Rahman and Farhan Khan pulled out of the camp after failing to cope with the conditions.

Pranotosh, who was in de Kruif's squad for the AFC Challenge Cup Qualifiers, has basically been dropped due to the right knee injury he picked up during Saturday's practice match against the BFF XI while it is believed that de Kruif has better options in the case of Manik and Zia.

"The manager told me that I will return to the squad if I can recover my injuries by August 15," said Pranotosh. "As per the advice from the team physio, I will undergo an MRI scan after a week's rest but it seems to me that injury is minor and I will be able to return to the squad."

De Kruif is likely to travel to Thailand for a 10-day trip with 24 players to play two practice matches, although the schedule is yet to be finalised.

Women's club cricket

SPORTS REPORTER

Mohammedan and Sheikh Jamal Dhanmondi Club reached the finals of the Women's Club Cricket tournament after winning their respective semi-final matches yesterday.

Mohammedan thrashed Dipali Club by 213 runs at the Dhanmondi Cricket Stadium while Sheikh Jamal beat Gulshan Youth Club at the City Club Ground by 61 runs.

Mohammedan rode on a century from Shuktara Rahman (107) and a quick 78 from Salma Khatun to post 275. In reply, Dipali were bundled out for just 62.

In the day's other game, Sheikh Jamal were restricted to 147 for 9 in the first innings. In reply, Gulshan were bowled out for 86 runs.

None in place of Shoaib

SPORTS REPORTER

The National Shooting Federation (NSF) is not mulling any alternative for coach Shoaibuzzaman who was terminated on Friday following his argument with its member Asbab Ali Foyes on the first day of a three-day performance evaluation competition among the country's top shooters at the National Shooting Complex in Gulshan.

"At the moment, we are not thinking of appointing any coach in place of Shoaib as we still have two coaches in the camp," said NSF joint secretary Ishfaq Ahmed yesterday.

Shoaib protested the sudden decision to hold the shoot-off without any prior notice

and argued with NSF member and BKSP coach Foyes, who later conveyed the matter to the executive committee meeting the same day and the committee terminated him.

The country's top shooters also requested NSF's general secretary to change the decision, but he informed them that he had nothing to do with the decision of the executive committee.

There have been rumours that some shooters might boycott the camp in protest of the untoward decision of the federation.

"Boycotting the camp is totally a personal matter of the shooters, but I don't think they will take such adventurous decision," said Ishfaq.