

Life ban for Sreesanth

AFP, New Delhi



Test fast bowler Shanthakumaran Sreesanth has been banned from cricket for life after being found guilty of spot-fixing during the Indian Premier League, authorities said Friday.

Ankeet Chavan, a teammate of Sreesanth's in the Rajasthan Royals team, was also handed a life ban following a probe by the Board of Control for Cricket in India's (BCCI) anti-corruption chief Ravi Sawani.

"Sreesanth and Chavan have been banned for life from playing any representative cricket, or in any way being associated with the activities of the BCCI or its affiliates," the board said in a statement.

The BCCI's three-member disciplinary committee, taking action on Sawani's report, handed a five-year suspension to Amit Singh, who played in the IPL till last year, for his involvement in spot-fixing.

Rajasthan Royals' Siddharth Trivedi was suspended for one year after being found guilty of the lesser charge of not informing officials about approaches made by bookmakers.

The case against Harmeet Singh, a 21-year-old spinner, who had also been suspected of hiding a bookmaker's approach, was "closed in the absence of evidence against him", the BCCI statement said.

The BCCI did not announce any action against another Rajasthan Royals player, Ajit Chandila, who was also accused of spot-fixing by the anti-corruption officer.

The BCCI have not released Sawani's report but the Indian Express newspaper said that Sreesanth, Chandila and Chavan were found guilty on multiple accounts, including conceding a "pre-determined number of runs per over in exchange for bribes".

Sreesanth, Chandila, Chavan and Singh are



among 39 people who have also been charged separately in court by Delhi Police in the corruption scandal that rocked this year's IPL.

Sreesanth, 30, is the only one to have played for India, having taken part in 27 Tests, 53 one-day internationals and 10 Twenty20 matches. He was a member of India's victorious teams in the World Twenty20 in 2007 and the World Cup in 2011.

The Indian Express quoted Sawani as saying in his report that he hoped the BCCI will "impose such sanctions as considered appropriate to send out a strong signal indicating the zero tolerance policy of the BCCI to any corruption in the sport."

"Obviously, the anti-corruption education given to the players had no impact on the conduct. Therefore, the players deserve no leniency whatsoever," he said in his report.

The players were arrested in May along with scores of bookies as part of a police investigation into the spot-fixing scandal, which had caused outrage among fans in the cricket-mad nation.

BCCI chief Narayanaswami Srinivasan had voluntarily stepped aside from his post in June after his son-in-law was arrested, and later released on bail, over alleged links to illegal bookmakers.

Son-in-law Gurunath Meiyappan is one of the owners of IPL franchise Chennai Super Kings, a team bought by Srinivasan's India Cements conglomerate when the popular Twenty20 league was launched in 2008.

Gambling is mostly illegal in India, but betting on cricket matches thrives through networks of underground bookies.

Spot-fixing -- in which a specific part of a game, but not the result, is fixed -- is also illegal.

TIMELINE

May 16: Arrested by Delhi Police for allegedly fulfilling promises made to bookmakers in the IPL match against Punjab Kings XI on May 9.

The police alleged Sreesanth had promised to concede 14 runs in his second over.

May 16: Provisionally suspended by BCCI on the same day.

May 20: Rajasthan Royals suspends Sreesanth.

May 21: Sreesanth claims he is innocent in his first public statement since the allegations.

May 28: Remanded in judicial custody by Delhi Court.

June 11: The cricketer is released from jail.

July 30: The Delhi police name Sreesanth among 39 people in its chargesheet.

Sep 12: BCCI summons Sreesanth to present his case to the disciplinary committee.

Sep 13: Sreesanth banned for life for IPL fixing.

Shooting trials start today

SPORTS REPORTER

Country's top shooters are set to sit in one of two trials today at the National Shooting Complex in Gulshan as the National Shooting Federation (NSF) bids to select the shooters for next month Asian Airgun Championship to be held in Tehran.

Some 14 shooters have been training since the first day of this month under two local coaches after the NSF cut down the number of 64 shooters to 16 after almost two-months training at three different places.

"We are thinking of sending five to six shooters in the events of Air Pistol and Air Rifles but all will depend on the performance of the shooters in the two trials," said NSF joint secretary Ishfaq Ahmed yesterday.

"We will also look into performances of foreign shooters at recently concluded international competitions before finalising our squad," said Ishfaq.

The NSF official was however confident that the shooters would be able to come up with better scores.

Air-rifle shooters Sharmin Akter Ratna, Sharmin Akter, Abdullah Hel Baki and Shovon Chowdhury have been doing well in training after reaching their targets set by the federation while newcomer Arjina Arji and Anwar Hossain are also showing their prospect in Air Pistol.

Siddikur just avoids cut

SPORTS REPORTER

Country's ace golfer Siddikur Rahman narrowly avoided the cut-off in the US\$500,000 Yeangder Tournament Players Championship in Taipei on Friday. Siddikur followed up his dismal first round performance to play one-over-par 73 to make overall 148.

Siddikur, who played three-over-par 75 on the first round, yesterday played four bogies at the first, third, sixth and eighth hole against three birdies at fourth, 10th and 18th hole to avoid the cutoff.

Thai golfer Thaworn Wiratchant was on the top of the leaderboard with overall eight-under-par 163.

Club licensing from this season

SPORTS REPORTER

The Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) is going to introduce club licensing from this season in a bid to bring more the professionalism to clubs who have been playing in the professional and semi-professional football league.

To educate the clubs, the game's governing body will hold a two-day seminar with the participation of 18 clubs -- ten clubs from BPL and eight from BCL. AFC development officer Yogesh Srikant and AFC marketing consultant Kentaro Hiyoshi, already in city, will conduct the seminar.

The club licensing consists of three parts -- sporting, infrastructure and legal aspects and all clubs must comply with those aspect to get licenses from the game's governing body.

The BFF though has already implemented some of criteria of clubs licensing as they made all clubs mandatory to appoint at least a head coach equivalent to AFC-B license, having a youth team, and a home venue (in some cases).

But, appointing a full-time general secretary or Chief Executive Officer at each of professional clubs as per club licensing will be big challenge for the BFF as well as ensuring to have a guaranteed practice venue for each club.

Harare Test on a knife's edge

AGENCIES, Harare



Test in Harare on Friday.

Pakistan, needing 264 for victory, finished on 158 for five and the home side require five wickets to claim a rare Test triumph and level the series 1-1. Captain Misbahul Haq (26) and wicketkeeper Adnan Akmal (17) were the not out batsmen.

Pakistan set out positively as they began to chase down the target on a deteriorating pitch showing signs of uneven bounce at Harare Sports Club.

Pakistan opener Khuram Manzoor scored 54 before falling to spinner Prosper Utseya but Mohammad Hafeez failed again as his desperate Test form continued.

When Younus Khan was bowled for 29 to reduce Pakistan to 100 for four, Zimbabwe would have fancied their chances but they allowed too many runs in the last hour as the pendulum swung back Pakistan's way.

Earlier, left-arm opening bowler

Rahat Ali took five for 52 as Zimbabwe were bowled out after adding only 78 runs to their overnight total of 121 for four.

Rahat made the first breakthrough of the day when he had Vusi Sibanda caught behind for 10 and he followed up with the key wicket of Zimbabwe captain Brendan Taylor, who made 27 off 83 balls, as well as tail-ender Chatara.

Off-spinner Saeed Ajmal claimed two wickets and left-arm fast bowler Junaid Khan one as Pakistan kept the Zimbabwe batsmen under pressure.

Zimbabwe have won only two tests - both against Bangladesh - in nine since returning to the test arena in 2011 after a six-year absence.

SCORES IN BRIEF

ZIMBABWE: First innings 294

PAKISTAN: First innings 230

ZIMBABWE: Second innings 199 all out in 89.5 overs (Mawoyo 58, Masakadza 44, Taylor 27, Sibanda 10, Mutumbami 29; Rahat 5-52, Ajmal 2-56, Rehman 2-40)

PAKISTAN: Second innings 158 for 5 in 49 overs (Manzoor 54, Hafeez 16, Younis 29, Misbah 26 not out, Shafiq 14, Akmal 17 not out; Chatara 2-29, Utseya 2-40)



PHOTO: AFP

Zimbabwe fast bowler Tendai Chatara bowls during the fourth day of the second Test against Pakistan at the Harare Sports Club yesterday. He took two wickets.

No upgrades in Davis Cup

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh's hopes of upgrading their position in the Davis Cup evaporated after suffering a 1-2 defeat to Bahrain in their fourth and final group match of the Asia/Oceania Zone Group-IV at the Dubai Aviation Club in UAE on Thursday.

The third defeat in four matches meant Bangladesh will have to stay at Group-IV, the lowest tier, for another year. Bangladesh had improved their position to qualify for the 2012 competition in Group-III but they failed to keep the momentum and were relegated to Group-IV to take part in the competition this year.

Like the previous games, Amol Roy maintained his winning streak after handing a 6-4, 6-2 defeat to Abdul Karim but Anwar Hossain lost to Yusuf Qaed 2-6 and 1-6 before the Amol and Biplob Ram pair went down 6-7 and 4-6 to the Karim and Hasan Abdul Nabi pair in the doubles event.

'KP can be a mentor'

AFP, Birmingham



Andrew Strauss believes Kevin Pietersen can act as a "mentor" to an inexperienced England one-day side despite his own sometimes difficult relationship with the star batsman.

Pietersen was briefly cast into the international wilderness last year after being accused of sending derogatory text messages about then England captain Strauss to South Africa players.

England lost that Test series to the Proteas and Strauss, who'd been struggling for runs, promptly retired from all senior cricket -- a decision he insisted had nothing to do with the fall-out from the controversy sparked by Pietersen, the man he succeeded as England skipper.

Pietersen, however, was soon back in the England fold and now finds himself the senior player in a one-day squad where his fellow recent Ashes-winners Alastair Cook, now the regular captain, Ian Bell, James Anderson, Stuart Broad and Graeme Swann have all been rested ahead of the return Test series in Australia starting in November.

England are 1-0 down in a five-match series, with their convincing 88-run loss at Old Trafford separating rain-ruined no results at Headingley and again at Edgbaston on Wednesday.

But whatever the outcome of the series, which continues in Cardiff on Saturday, Strauss believes the experience of playing alongside Pietersen, whose 2013 has been blighted by injuries, can only benefit the likes of 22-year-old all-rounder Ben Stokes.

"He can be really good with young players, actually," Strauss told reporters at Edgbaston on Thursday when asked about the 33-year-old Pietersen.

"I think it's good that he's playing this one-day series, and him opening the batting in one-day cricket is an interesting and potentially quite explosive option for England to use.

"Given that he's had injuries, and whatever, it's quite nice for him to have a good run of cricket.

"I hope he is playing that mentoring role and playing it well."

Strauss added: "I suppose Kevin is a complicated character. But he can be fantastic, really good and engaged in the dressing room and really go out of his way to help other people at times."

Pre-season begins for Abahani

SPORTS REPORTER



Four-time professional football league champions Abahani will start their pre-season preparation from tomorrow at the ULAB ground with the participation of 22 local players. The preparations will begin even though the Sky Blues have yet to complete the players' registration formalities.

Long-serving Amalesh Sen and manager Sattyajit Das Rupu will initially conduct the training until a foreign coach takes charge of Abahani at the start of next month. Abahani is still searching for a European coach following the failure of Iranian Ardeshir Mourmamate, who failed to deliver a single piece of silverware last season.

Among the 22 players, goalkeeper Sultan Ahmed, defenders Mofazzal Hossain Saikat, Nasiruddin, midfielder Jamal Hossain, Rony, Rajon Mia and striker Sohel Rana are newcomers as Abahani have yet to complete their players' registration formalities.

Abahani also retained the services of Prantosh Kumar, Arman Aziz, Sujon, Wali Faisal, Meshu, Uttam, Saikat Bhunik, Shahel, Komol and Towhid.

Rupu informed that they would confirm their foreign coach in the third week of this month while the six to seven foreign players were likely to come to Dhaka for trial. However, they have already confirmed Mohammedan's former Nigerian striker Osei Morison, who was the top scorer in the last edition of the professional football league.

Abahani is the second club to start their preparation after Sheikh Jamal Dhanmondi Club, who began their pre-season preparation in the middle of last month.

BCCI mulls tri-series involving Pak, SL

PTI, Chennai



The BCCI could explore the possibility of hosting an ODI tri-series involving Pakistan and Sri Lanka later this year and the modalities are likely to be discussed during the Asian Cricket Council meeting on Friday.

The officials from the three boards will be present at the meeting and there is a strong chance that the BCCI might propose to have a tri-series sometime in December in India.

PCB chief operating officer Subhan Ahmed, SLC secretary Nishantha Ranatunga and CEO of ACC Syed Ashrafur Haq have arrived in the southern capital of Tamil Nadu for the meeting.

The ACC is headed by BCCI's president-in-exile N Srinivasan.

The ACC meet assumes significance as it has been scheduled just two days before the proposed meeting between Cricket South Africa chief Haroon Lorgat and BCCI secretary Sanjay Patel in Dubai on the sidelines of an ICC board meeting to resolve the impasse over India's tour of South Africa.

The BCCI is presently in disagreement with Cricket South Africa over the number of matches to be played in the series in November-December. India will play a short series against the West Indies in November and New Zealand tour will start from January 19. If the tri-series takes place in between these two tours, then the South African board would be left with no other option but to host India for two Tests, three ODIs and a Twenty20 international from December and ending with the New Year's Test.

The tri-series would lead to rescheduling of Pakistan's home series against Sri Lanka in the UAE in December-January. Sri Lanka and Pakistan are set to play two T20 internationals, five ODIs and three Tests from December 11 to January 20. The limited-overs series concludes on December 27.

The PCB wouldn't mind such series involving India and Sri Lanka as it would generate a huge amount of advertisement revenues and benefit all three boards.

It has been reliably learnt that Ahmad will hold discussions with the BCCI officials on the issue during the meeting.