

Politics pokes its ugly nose

WICB withdraws U-19 team

SPORTS REPORTER



Finally cricket, believed to be the game to unite the country, has also fallen victim to the current political violence. The news that the West Indies Cricket Board (WICB) has withdrawn its Under-19 team from the ongoing tour of Bangladesh on security reason came as shock to every cricket fan.

In a delayed effort the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) was trying to convince their Caribbean counterparts for changing their minds. The visiting side however will leave Chittagong for Dhaka this morning and may play their remaining six games of the seven-match one-day series at Mirpur if the WICB revokes their decision.

BCB's acting CEO Nizamuddin Chowdhury, who got in touch with the WICB to save the country from this embarrassment, however saw little hope of continuing the series.

"I have just talked with my West Indies counterpart and he said that they had little to do with this issue. He agreed that the team was not targeted, but they took the decision on the security assessment from their security team. He however took time from me to inform us the final say regarding the tour. I also requested him to learn about the exact situation from the ICC security team which recently visited the country," Nizamuddin told The Daily Star over phone last night.

Following a blast on Saturday night near Hotel Agrabad, where the tourists were staying, the West Indies team management decided not to play the second one-dayer on Sunday. But after discussion with the hosting board officials they later agreed to play the match on Monday. They only agreed as the WICB was convinced that the players and members of team management were not targeted and not in any immediate danger as a result of the incident and assurance of 'enhanced security measures' by the BCB.

But WICB issued a statement in the early hours of Monday regarding the decision of pulling out their youth side from the series.

"The WICB decision [to withdraw the team] was taken following consideration of a report on the situation in Bangladesh as prepared by WICB security manager Paul Slowe. The report emphasised that the current security environment in Bangladesh is not conducive to the playing of cricket in light of the 72 hours nationwide blockade and calls for countrywide dawn-to-dusk protest. The State Department of the United States of America has also issued a travel alert to its citizens living in and travelling to Bangladesh," said the statement.

In the past only twice have happened that touring teams withdrew from Bangladesh, but on both occasions the reason was different. Pakistan, led by Majid Khan, withdrew the team from a three-day match in Chittagong in 1978-79 while after the India-Bangladesh match in the SAARC Cricket Tournament in 1992 was forfeited Pakistan, Sri Lanka and India withdrew their teams.

But this latest incident happened before a time when Bangladesh is going to hosts two big events like the Asia Cup and the ICC World Twenty20 next year, besides a home series against Sri Lanka in January.

This is election time and the country is currently witnessing continuous strikes and blockades accompanied by bomb blasts. In October, New Zealand cancelled a scheduled training session after hartal was called for that day. The rest of the tour went on smoothly as cricket was kept out of any political turmoil.



PHOTO: STAR

The kits of the West Indies U-19 cricket team are brought back to the hotel from the Zohur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium in Chittagong yesterday after the visitors decided not to play the second youth ODI and withdraw from the tour on security grounds.

BCB boss doesn't know 'why they are leaving'

SPORTS REPORTER



The West Indies Under-19 team's tour of Bangladesh, like any other series that falls under the game's development segment, was not expected to garner much attention. However, going by the course of events that have recently unfolded—which saw the West Indies Cricket Board withdraw from the series yesterday following an explosion near the team hotel in Chittagong on Saturday—the tour's deeds might cast a shadow in the country's dream of successfully hosting the ICC World Twenty20 in March next year.

The fact that the ICC sent an e-mail to the BCB yesterday afternoon, asking the board to inform them regarding the events of the U-19 tour, is in itself proof enough that the ICC has taken the West Indies' withdrawal quite seriously.

However, whether or not the BCB is on the same page—despite their efforts in the last two days to keep the series running—remains a question. And the main reason behind that

theory is the rather oblivious reaction displayed by the BCB president Nazmul Hassan Papon regarding the recent events.

"I returned to Dhaka today morning (Monday) and heard that they (West Indies) wanted to withdraw from the series. The WICB sent a letter to the BCB and I am yet to see that. We will respond to that accordingly today evening (Monday evening)," is what the president said at his Beximco office at around 3 pm yesterday.

The BCB president was also not aware regarding the details exchanged between the boards in the last two days either.

"Board to board communication did not happen. At least I did not communicate with them. However, I still have to know if the CEO or someone else spoke to them formally," said Papon, when in fact the board's CEO had already begun communicating with his West Indies counterpart from Sunday onwards.

Almost 36 hours after the blast and 24 hours after the West Indies decided against playing the second ODI, Papon stated that his approach would be to know why they had taken the decision. "Our first question will be

why they are leaving? The country is going through strikes and a few cocktails might burst, but they are not directed towards them. They were fully satisfied with the increased security planned for them after the blast, so why leave now?" said Papon.

The president exuded confidence and stated that the withdrawal would not affect the upcoming international tours and the World Cup.

"I am expecting that the country's political instability will come to an end by December or January at most. So I am not worried about Bangladesh's ability to host the ICC World T20. The security issue should be solved by them," said Papon.

Like the president said, there are indeed high chances of the political instability to end by this year, paving the way for a smooth international cricket calendar in 2014. However, the events that have followed in the last two days clearly depict the board's weakness in diplomacy. As put by a BCB official, "The matter would not have stretched this far had we been serious right from the start."

Unchanged SA Test side for India series

CRICINFO, Johannesburg

South Africa have not made any changes to their 15-member squad for the two Tests against India from the one that featured against Pakistan in the United Arab Emirates.

Graeme Smith, who was part of the one-day squad, but didn't play in any of the two ODIs, will return to lead the side in the Tests.

South Africa lost the first Test against Pakistan in Abu Dhabi by seven wickets, but bounced back in Dubai by an innings and 92-run win.

There are four fast bowlers in the squad in Dale Steyn, Morne Morkel, Vernon Philander and Rory Kleinveldt, and two spinners in Robin Peterson and Imran Tahir. The squad includes Thami Tsolekile as the reserve wicketkeeper.

The two-Test series kicks off on December 18 at the Wanderers while the second match will be played in Durban, from December 26.

SQUAD
Graeme Smith (captain), Hashim Amla, AB de Villiers, JP Duminy, Faf du Plessis, Dean Elgar, Imran Tahir, Jacques Kallis, Rory Kleinveldt, Morne Morkel, Alviro Petersen, Robin Peterson, Vernon Philander, Dale Steyn, Thami Tsolekile.

Oz go 2-0 up easily

AFP, Adelaide



Australia wrapped up a comprehensive 218-run victory over England on Monday to take a 2-0 series lead, leaving them on the brink of reclaiming the Ashes.

The home team captured the four remaining wickets in just under an hour on the final morning in Adelaide and are now just one victory away from winning back the famous urn after three consecutive series defeats.

It was a second emphatic reverse for England after they lost in Brisbane by 381 runs and the tourists must regroup before the third Test, which starts in Perth on Friday. England have only won once in 12 Tests on the traditionally pacy WACA pitch.

"I think that something that is most pleasing is we are finally getting some results," said Australian skipper Michael Clarke, who nevertheless cautioned that his side still had work to do in their quest to return to the top of the world rankings.

"I think we have to be realistic," said Clarke. "That's our second Test win in the past 12 months -- certainly not a record we're proud of. There's a lot of work for us to do to get back to being the number one team in the world and that's our goal."

Australia's victory in Brisbane was their first Test win since they beat Sri Lanka in January. They lost 3-0 to England in July-August.

England captain Alastair Cook admitted his side lost the game on the first day

when they were guilty of several dropped catches, allowing Australia to pile up an imposing 570 for nine declared, with Clarke making 148.

"On that first day we had an opportunity to a put a bit of pressure on Australia. We let a few chances go, and they really made us pay for that," he said.

Cook said England's first innings total of 172 was not good enough.

"You don't get too many chances on good wickets and we had the opportunity then and we didn't take it. I thought that was the main difference. Australia took their chances very well," he said.

"The only guys who can change it are the guys in the dressing room. No one else can change it for us. We can't sit there moping about it. It's hurting us like hell but we're the only guys who can change it."

Demon paceman Mitchell Johnson was named man-of-the-match for the second consecutive Test after his seven for 40 in England's first innings.

"I guess having that intimidation factor is definitely a bonus," said Johnson, who has now taken 17 wickets in the series at 12.70, silencing the England fans who mercilessly taunted him for wayward bowling during the last Ashes series Down Under.

"It wasn't probably quite there in the last couple of Ashes series for me, so to be able to come out, just back my ability, and know what I wanted to bowl, I have just really enjoyed it, so I will continue to do that throughout the series."

Clubs to warm up thru' V-Day hockey

SPORTS REPORTER

Country's top hockey players are set to return to domestic competition after 16 months as four premier league clubs including giants Abahani and Usha KC have decided to take part in the Victory Day Hockey Tournament, which will get underway from Friday.

Since the completion of the Premier Division Hockey League in August 2012, there has been no domestic competition for the top players, only international engagements such as the AHF Cup, World Hockey League and Asian Cup.

The season was supposed to get underway in April through the curtain-raising tournament, Club Cup, but

continuous disagreement between clubs officials and the federation regarding players' transfers has seen the start of season deferred quite a few times. However seven clubs have lately completed their registration formalities for the upcoming season.

Traditionally, services teams, government institutions and BKSP take part in the Victory Day tournament, but this time four clubs – Abahani, Usha KC, Azad SC and Ajax SC – are taking part in the seven-team meet which will also feature Bangladesh Army, Bangladesh Air Force and Bangladesh Police.

It is not the first time though that some of the premier league clubs will be participating in the competition, as

Abahani, Mohammedan, Usha and Sonali Bank participated in the tournament quite a few times since its introduction in 1981. "Generally, the premier league clubs do not take part in this tournament as the club players are usually unavailable, but this time the clubs are preparing for the upcoming season. That is why the clubs have decided to take part in the tournament which will also work as their preparation for the Club Cup, which is scheduled to get underway from December 25," said Bangladesh Hockey Federation's joint secretary Anvir Adil Khan yesterday.

Group: A – Abahani, Bangladesh Army and Ajax SC

Group: B – Usha KC, Azad SC, Air Force and Bangladesh Police.

Star becomes India team's title-sponsor

CRICINFO, New Delhi

Television network Star India has won the title-sponsor rights of the Indian team, having submitted the winning bid to the Board of Control for Cricket in India on Monday.

So Star now holds all the three important rights in Indian cricket: broadcasting, series title and team sponsorship.

Star bid 1.92 crore rupees per match for bilateral series, and 61 lack rupees per match for ICC-sponsored tournaments. It holds the rights for the period running January 1, 2014, to March 31, 2017.

Cricketers return to business

SPORTS REPORTER

The Bangladesh national team and A team players began their camp for the T20 Challenge Series with a series of fitness drills at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium yesterday.

The players took screening tests with physio Vibhav Singh to find out any possible injury concern and also underwent beep tests, which saw players repeatedly run to and fro on a designated 20-metre path.

Young all-rounder Sabbir Rahman fared best among the A team players in the tests, whereas, young pacer Al Amin Hossain beat captain Mushfiqur Rahim to finish with the maximum number of rounds among the national team players.

Ace all-rounder Shakib Al Hasan is on leave and missed yesterday's training session.

Zia draws 2nd board

SPORTS REPORTER

Grandmaster Ziaur Rahman drew against Norwegian FM Stigar Petter in his second round match of the 5th London Chess Classic FIDE Open at the Olympia Conference Centre in Kensington, London on Sunday.

Zia, who has 1.5 points from two games, was scheduled to play against FM Berry Neil of Scotland in third round last night.

Niaz loses, Debraj wins

SPORTS REPORTER

Grandmaster Niaz Murshed lost against Indian IM Anurag Mhamal in the fifth round of the SREI International Grandmasters' Chess Tournament in Kolkata yesterday.

Niaz has three points from five games while FM Debaraj Chatterjee, who beat Indian Phadke Sohan in the fifth round, has 2.5 points.

Football Quiz

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1. During the 1998 FIFA World Cup™, which England player was sent off for kicking Diego Simeone in retaliation for a foul?

2. Who won the Golden Boot at the 2010 FIFA World Cup™?

3. Who scored the winning goal for Germany against Argentina in the 1990 FIFA World Cup™ Final?

Winners of Quiz 06

1. Golam Mahmud, Mohammadpur
2. Rasheeq Islam, Uttara
3. S M Arshad Amin, Gulshan
4. Md. Mahbubur Rahman, Sobhanbag
5. Arafat Hossain, Dhaka Cantonment

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