

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 The news that the West Indies Cricket Board (WICB) has withdrawn its Under-19 team from the ongoing tour of Bangladesh on security reason came as shock to every cricket fan.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 Sloane. 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.

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 with 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 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."

SCOREBOARD

AUSTRALIA: First innings 570 for 9 declared (Clarke 148, Haddin 118; Broad 3-98)

ENGLAND: First innings 172 (Bell 72 not out, Carberry 60; Johnson 7-40)

AUSTRALIA: Second innings 132 for 3 declared (Warner 83 not out; Anderson 2-19)

ENGLAND: Second innings (overnight 247-6)

Cook 89, Haddin 118; Broad 3-98)

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