

SPORT

Late blow for U-19s as Jasim ruled out

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Under-19 suffered an eleventh-hour setback as vice-captain Jasim Uddin was ruled out of the Under-19 Asia Cup due to a finger injury.

The wicketkeeper-batsman sustained the injury during training on Tuesday and an X-ray confirmed an oblique fracture of the right index finger. Zakir Hasan has been named as his replacement in the 15-man squad, which flies for Dubai today.

Bangladesh will play their first group match against Malaysia on December 28 at the Abu Dhabi Oval 1.

Fahad loses

SPORTS REPORTER

FIDE Master Fahad Rahman suffered his second defeat in the World Youth Chess Championship (U-10 open group) when he lost against Abdrashev Arlen of Kazakhstan in the eighth round in Al-Ain, UAE on Tuesday.

The second defeat in eight matches meant Fahad slipped to 14th position from fourth with six points from eighth rounds. Fahad is scheduled to play against India's Kushagra Mohan today, according to a press release from Bangladesh Chess Federation.

Windies seek ODI recovery

AFP, Wellington

The West Indies have rejected any suggestion of a Test hangover going into the opening one-day international against a New Zealand side bolstered by the return of Jesse Ryder.

"We're more comfortable in the shorter forms of the game," captain Dwayne Bravo said on the eve of Thursday's first of five ODIs, after losing the Test series 2-0.

"It was a disappointing Test series but hopefully the guys have put that behind them."

With seven ODI specialists added to the squad "it's a different vibe, a different energy," he added.

New Zealand welcome back Ryder while the West Indies will be without their talisman Chris Gayle, the Windies' Darren Sammy noted.

Gayle remains sidelined with a hamstring injury while Ryder has been in devastating form in New Zealand domestic cricket ahead of his return to the international arena after a 22-month self-imposed exile.

New Zealand selection manager Bruce Edgar said Ryder will provide "added firepower" at the top of the order where he will partner another returning international Martin Gupthill.

Despite New Zealand's comprehensive win in the Tests -- the first time they have won a three-Test series in nearly eight years -- captain Brendon McCullum said it was back to square one for the ODIs.

"We'll start on the same level come Boxing Day," he said as New Zealand toned down the euphoria of their red-ball success and reacquainted themselves with the white ball.

"I've said it before when we've been on the other side of the coin, so I can't change now. I think it's a separate game."

"We'll store this away as a Test unit and be very happy with the performance. Now we have to turn our attention as a different unit. We know the West Indies have different players and so do we."

Sparkling Sabbir

SPORTS REPORTER



Young prospect Sabbir Rahman cancelled out yet another good knock by Mushfiqur Rahim as Prime Bank registered their second successive win in the Victory Day T20 Cup at the Sylhet Divisional Stadium yesterday.

Sabbir smashed six fours and four sixes during his unbeaten 50-ball 84 as Shakib Al Hasan's Prime Bank posted a four-wicket victory over Mushfiqur's Abahani in an entertaining first match of the day.

In the second game, Mohammedan recovered from their massive defeat in their last game against traditional rivals Abahani by securing a comfortable seven-wicket victory against the Tamim Iqbal-led UCB BCB XI in a low-scoring affair. It was the second win in three games for Mashrafe Bin Mortaza's side.

In the first game, Mushfiqur's 33-ball 50, which contained four sixes and a boundary, gave Abahani a fighting total of 171 but it was Sabbir's day as the young right-hander almost single-handedly took the challenge to his opponents. The beauty of Sabbir's innings was that he was there at the end as teammate Shohag Gazi finish the chase with three balls to spare, smiting four boundaries in his unbeaten 6-ball 14.

The success of a promising cricketer like Sabbir will certainly provide the national selectors with much-needed options ahead of the ICC World Twenty20. The bowling of Rubel Hossain would also have given them comfort as the right-arm paceman played a crucial part in Prime Bank's victory by taking three wickets for 17 runs.

In the second match, Tamim Iqbal scored 34 and Rony Talukder hit 43 but their efforts were not enough to post a challenging total on the board as BCB XI were restricted to 129. Alauddin Babu did the initial damage and then Dewan Sabbir finished the job, the pacers using the favourable conditions well.

Mohammedan started unimpressively but Mominul Haque took charge to make the chase an easy one for Mohammedan. The left-hander hit an unbeaten 50 off 28 balls with seven fours and a six as Mohammedan reached the target with 2.5 overs to spare.

ABAHANI: 171-7 (Maruf 15, Soumya 31, Mushfiqur 50, Riyad 18, Zia 28, Taijul 2-39, Rubel 3-17)

PRIME BANK: 175-6 in 19.3 overs (Anamul 22, Sabbir 84 not out, Mehrob 16)

Result: Prime Bank won by four wickets.

UCB BCB XI: 129-9 (Tamim 34, Rony 43, Naeem 20, Dewan Sabbir 4-22, Babu 2-23)

MOHAMMEDAN: 130-3 in 17.1 overs (Nurul 28, Mominul 50 not out, Talabur 30 not out, Enamul 2-14)



Bangladesh under-19 captain Mehidy Hassan Miraz (L) and three of his teammates pose for a photo in front of the BCB National Cricket Academy in Mirpur yesterday. The junior Tigers leave here today for Dubai to participate in the Asia Cup.

PHOTO: STAR

Bowling worries teams

Second SA-India Test starts today

AFP, Durban



Finding the right combination of bowlers will be the biggest headache for both South Africa and India ahead of the second and final Test starting at Kingsmead on Thursday.

After fighting out an epic draw in the first Test in Johannesburg, the two top-ranked teams in Test cricket will seek a series win at a venue where South Africa have lost their most recent four Test matches, including an 87-run defeat by India three seasons ago.

World champions South Africa will almost certainly be without injured fast bowler Morne Morkel, who has been a key member of a three-pronged pace attack together with Dale Steyn

and Vernon Philander.

Morkel suffered a sprained ankle early in the second innings of the first Test. His likely replacement is Rory Kleinveldt, who has played in four Tests.

But South Africa will be tempted to play Kyle Abbott, who was called into the squad after Morkel's injury.

Kingsmead is Abbott's home ground and the accurate fast-medium bowler will be keen to add to the success of his only previous Test when as a late replacement he took seven for 29 in the first innings against Pakistan at Centurion last season. He had match figures of nine for 68.

Kingsmead has lost much of the pace that was on offer when current bowling coach Allan Donald had match figures of nine for 54 when India were bowled out for 100 and 66 in 1996-97 but the Proteas could contemplate going in

with an all-pace attack.

Leg-spinner Imran Tahir had a poor match in Johannesburg and South Africa have the option of using part-time off-spinner JP Duminy, who was described by AB de Villiers as the best spinner in the first Test.

India's concerns will be centred around the lack of success of off-spinner Ravichandran Ashwin, who failed to take a wicket in 36 overs in the second innings after South Africa had been set a world record target of 458 in Johannesburg.

Kingsmead may be more helpful to Ashwin than the Wanderers but India could also call on Ravindra Jadeja or Pragnan Ojha, who are both left-armers.

In the most recent Test at Kingsmead, Sri Lanka's left-arm spinner Rangana Herath was player-of-the-match after bowling his side to victory with match

Bartoli, Parker L'Equipe's top sports persons

AFP, Paris

Wimbledon women's singles champion Marion Bartoli and NBA star Tony Parker were named female and male sports person of the year by French sports newspaper L'Equipe on Wednesday.

Bartoli, 29, topped the women's section with 886 points following her stunning success at Wimbledon beating German Sabine Lisicki, her first -- and only -- Grand Slam crown at the 47th attempt, a record in the women's game for those who have finally captured such a lofty honour.

Two skiers downhill world champion Marion Rolland (522pts) and giant slalom world champion Tessa Worley (520pts) finished second and third but not much consolation given both have been ruled out of February's Winter Olympics in Sochi, Russia, because of injury.

Feds expecting third child

AFP, Paris

Former world number one and 17-time major winner Roger Federer said Tuesday that he and wife Mirka are expecting another child.

Federer became a father in July 2009 when Mirka gave birth to twin daughters, Myla Rose and Charlene Riva.

"Mirka and I are very happy to share the news that Myla & Charlene will be big sisters in 2014! Happy Holidays," the 32-year-old Federer announced on his website.

8 Russian athletes banned

REUTERS, Moscow

Six Russian male weightlifters and two female cyclists have been banned for breaking anti-doping regulations.

"The Russian Weightlifting Federation (RWF), on the basis of RUSADA decisions, decided to suspend six athletes for doping violations," the country's anti-doping agency said on its website (www.rusada.ru) on Tuesday.

Evgeny Kolomiets and Yuri Selyutin were banned for 10 years, starting in October 2013, for repeated abuse.

Mikhail Reznitchenko, Tejmur Alekserov and Dmitry Srybnyi were suspended for two years while Oleg Musokhranov was banned for three months, starting on Nov. 7, 2013.



PHOTO: STAR

Bangladesh's hockey coach Naveed Alam (2nd from R) listens to his charges who came to the Maulana Bhasani National Stadium yesterday to report to him at a camp for the Asian Games qualifiers.

48 join prep camp

SPORTS REPORTER



As many as 48 hockey players reported to the national team's Pakistani head coach Naveed Alam at the Maulana Bhasani Hockey Stadium yesterday for the preparation camp for qualifying round of the Asian Games which will be held in Bangladesh in March, 2014.

The Bangladesh Hockey Federation (BHF) asked 41 players selected through the December 6 open trial and 19 players from the squad which took part in the last Asia Cup to join the ten-day training camp in a bid to search for probable players for the Asian Games qualifiers.

"All 41 selected players and seven current national players have reported to the coach today," said BHF member Rafiqul Islam Kamal yesterday adding that the rest of the players including four Navy players, who are currently in India, are expected to join the camp by Friday.

Kamal informed that their inten-

tion to conduct this training camp with 66 players was to form three squads -- national team, A team and national U-21 team -- for the Asia Games Qualifiers, World Hockey League (round-1) and AHF U-21 Championship, all of which will be held in Bangladesh in 2014.

"The players will practise two sessions a day for ten days this time and afterwards we will reduce the number but it has not been decided as to how many players we will select for the second phase of the preparation camp," said Kamal, a member of the five-member selection committee.

Though no one admitted, it is firmly believed that the game's governing body is actually trying to find out the right replacements for four suspended players -- Rasel Mahmud Jimmy, Zahid Hossain, Kamruzzaman Rana and Imran Hasan Pinto -- ahead of the Asian Games Qualifiers where five teams from seven will qualify for the 2014 Asian Games to be held in Incheon, Korea next year.

SPORTS DESK



Mohammad Hafeez bagged his third century of the series as Pakistan took an unassailable 3-1 lead in the 5-match one-day series against Sri Lanka by winning the fourth ODI by eight wickets in Abu Dhabi on Wednesday.

The dashing right-hander scored an unbeaten 113 off just 115 balls with 12 boundaries and two sixes as Pakistan wrapped up the match with 53 balls to spare and eight wickets in hand. Hafeez found enough support from opener Ahmed Shehzad (44) and two-down batsman Sohaib Maqsood (46 not out) to script a facile victory and a series win, with the fifth and final match remaining to be played in Abu Dhabi on Friday.

Afp adds: Earlier, wily spinner Saeed Ajmal took four wickets while paceman Umar Gul grabbed three to help restrict Sri Lanka to a modest total of 225.

Gul removed openers Kusal Perera (eight), Tillakaratne Dilshan (eight) and Dinesh Chandimal (five) to reduce Sri Lanka, who won the toss and opted to bat, to 36-3 on a flat Sheikh Zayed Stadium pitch before Ajmal (4-39) tightened the screws at the end of the innings.

Swann saga over: Cook

AFP, Sydney



England captain Alastair Cook Wednesday declared the furore over Graeme Swann's shock retirement "closed", saying the spinner had assured him that controversial remarks about player arrogance were not directed at his teammates.

Swann stunned the cricket world with his announcement Sunday that he was resigning immediately from the England team midway through the Ashes series. He stoked tensions by saying some players had "no idea how far up their own backsides they are".

There was speculation he was referring to his England colleagues, particularly outspoken batsman Kevin Pietersen. But Swann has since denied that and Cook said Wednesday he had insisted it was not the case.

"A phone call to Swanny reassured me very quickly that it wasn't at all anything about England players," Cook told reporters ahead of Thursday's Boxing Day fourth Test, where the tourists will be hoping to avert a 5-0 series whitewash.

"I haven't heard the quotes exactly -- obviously I've seen what's been written -- and whether it's come across badly, he totally 100 per cent reassures me and the whole England team that it's not about us.

"So to me the matter's closed on that."

Hafeez scripts series win

Ashan Priyanjan fought hard during his 93-ball 74, which included ten boundaries, to register the highest score for a one-day debutant for Sri Lanka, beating Chamara Silva's 55 made against Australia in Colombo in 1999.

Priyanjan shared two useful stands of 89 with Kumar Sangakkara (51) for the fourth wicket and then added another 40 with skipper Angelo Mathews (38) to keep Sri Lanka on course for a respectable total.

But Sangakkara's run out, off a brilliant piece of fielding by substitute fielder Anwar Ali at point, derailed Sri Lanka. Sangakkara had looked good during his 78-ball knock, featuring three boundaries.

Ajmal then bowled Nuwan Kulasekara (one), trapped a dangerous looking Mathews and Sachitra Senanayake (nought) to stand on the brink of a hat-trick -- Suranga Lakmal denied him the feat.

Kithuruwan Vithage clipped in with a useful 27 before he became one of Junaid's two wickets.

SCORES IN BRIEF:

SRI LANKA: 225 all out in 48.5 overs (Priyanjan 74, Sangakkara 51, Mathews 38; Ajmal 4-39, Gul 3-37)

PAKISTAN: 226 for 2 in 41.1 overs (Hafeez 113 not out, Maqsood 46 not out, Shehzad 44; Lakmal 1-49)

Result: Pakistan won by 8 wickets.

Man-of-the-match: Mohammad Hafeez.