

12 refs get FIFA Batch

SPORTS REPORTER

Five Bangladesh referees and seven assistant referees have earned the FIFA Batch to conduct international matches under the Asian Football Confederation (AFC) for the year of 2014.

The results were disclosed on Tuesday by the AFC after they sat an exam in September, said Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) referees' committee vice-chairman Monir Hossain.

They are Tayeb Hasan Babu , Mizanur Rahman Mizan, Jasimuddin Jashim, Jalaluddin Jalal and Bhuban Mohan Tarafder (referees), Monir Dhali, Ferdose Ahmed, Chondon , AKM Nuruzzaman, Sheikh Iqbal Rahman, Nahidur Rahman Nahid and Soheli Sadat (assistant referees).

Pakistan take Hafeez and Talha back

AFP, Lahore

In-form batsman Mohammad Hafeez and forgotten paceman Mohammad Talha Thursday returned to Pakistan's 15-man squad for the three-Test series against Sri Lanka starting in the United Arab Emirates next week.

Hafeez was discarded from the Test team for the two-match series against South Africa in October after a run of poor scores in the year.

But the 33-year-old has scored three hundreds in the ongoing five-match one-day series to regain his place in the Test squad.

Pakistan lead the series 3-1, with the fifth and final match in Abu Dhabi on Friday.

The first Test against Sri Lanka starts in Abu Dhabi on December 31. The second Test will be in Dubai (January 8-12) and the third in Sharjah (January 16-20).

Also returning to the Test squad is 25-year-old right-arm paceman Talha, whose only Test in 2009 ended abruptly after a militant attack on the Sri Lankan team bus in March 2009.

SQUAD

Misbahul Haq (captain), Mohammad Hafeez, Ahmed Shahzad, Khurram Manzoor, Shan Masood, Azhar Ali, Asad Shafiq, Younis Khan, Adnan Akmal, Junaid Khan, Saeed Aijmal, Abdul Rehman, Umar Gul, Rahat Ali, Muhammad Talha.

Jose's swipe at Arsenal

MAIL ONLINE



Jose Mourinho bristled with mischief as he delivered his festive thoughts while he challenges for a third Barclays Premier League title.

Mourinho could not resist another verbal swing at Arsene Wenger and the Arsenal fans who branded his team 'Boring, boring Chelsea' during Monday's goalless draw at the Emirates Stadium.

He also claimed League leaders Liverpool had it easy without European football to interfere with preparations and had the usual dig at Rafa Benitez, but he started by taunting Arsenal.

'Boring are a team who play at home and cannot score a goal,' said Mourinho. 'You fill your stadium, in weather like we had on Monday, to see victories. If any team were boring, they were boring because Petr Cech made zero saves.'

Mourinho was delighted with his team at the Emirates. They were tight in defence and dangerous on the break after three days of tactical following a Capital One Cup defeat at Sunderland.

'It is not a coincidence that before this game we had time to work,' said the Chelsea boss. 'That is something we didn't have since the summer.'

'I had three days to work tactically and I worked on everything I wanted to: defensive set pieces, attacking set pieces, defensive organisation, transitions, counter attack.'

'It was a special week for us. It was the kind of week Liverpool have every week.'

It was a reminder that leaders Liverpool, who visit Stamford Bridge on Sunday, are not in Europe and went out of the Capital One Cup in September.

As for Tottenham's decision to appoint Tim Sherwood as manager, Mourinho offered only sympathy for Andre Villas-Boas, his former colleague turned rival who was sacked by Spurs.

'My only problem is to feel sorry for the manager who lost his job a couple of days before Christmas, when he was enthusiastic about going forward with his contract at Tottenham,' said Mourinho.

KP holds Eng together

AFP, Melbourne



Kevin Pietersen played a cautious out-of-character innings and lived a charmed life as English wickets clattered around him on an attritional opening day of the dead-rubber fourth Ashes Test against Australia Thursday.

Pietersen, under fire for his unproductive batting in England's troubled series, curbed his natural attacking instincts to keep the pressing Australians at bay before a crowd of 91,092, the highest single-day attendance for any Test match.

Pietersen went to stumps unbeaten on a fighting 67 off 152 balls, with Tim Bresnan not out one in England's 226 for six. In doing so Pietersen passed Geoff Boycott as the fourth all-time England run-getter.

The subdued Pietersen had some luck along the way and denied the impressive Ryan Harris both times, as England were pinned down by a disciplined Australian bowling attack on a slow scoring day at the Melbourne Cricket Ground.

Pietersen, who took 12

balls to get off the mark, had some good fortune on six when he was caught by fielding substitute Nathan Coulter-Nile at deep backward square leg off Harris.

But Coulter-Nile was unable to stay within the field of play in taking the catch, staggering over the boundary marker, and Pietersen was awarded a six instead.

He had a second "life" on 41 when George Bailey had two goes in a fumbling attempt at a catch off Harris at mid-wicket.

Pietersen, who thrills and frustrates in equal measure with his prodigious batting skills, anchored the tourists' innings.

Harris, who was superb leading the Australian attack, ended a threatening 67-run partnership when he got Ian Bell to nick an outswinger to Brad Haddin for 27 in the 73rd over.

Bell's obdurate innings came off 98 balls in just over two hours, with just one four.

During his innings Bell joined Michael Clarke in passing 1,000 runs for the calendar year.

Perth Test centurion Ben Stokes fell late in the day when he edged to Shane Watson at slip off Mitchell Johnson for 14. He he was followed by Jonny Bairstow, replacing Matt Prior but bowled by a Johnson snorter

SCOREBOARD				
ENGLAND: First Innings				
Cook c Clarke b Siddle	27			
Carberry b Watson	38			
Root c Haddin b Harris	24			
Pietersen not out	67			
Bell c Haddin b Harris	27			
Stokes c Watson b Johnson	14			
Bairstow b Johnson	10			
Bresnan not out	1			
Extras: (b-10, lb-6, w-1, nb-1)	18			
Total: (For 6 wkts in 89 overs)	226			
To bat: Broad, Anderson, Panesar				
Fall of wickets: 1-48, 2-96, 3-106, 4-173, 5-202, 6-216				
Bowler	O	M	R	W
Harris	20	8	32	2
Johnson	20	2	59	2
Siddle	22	7	48	1
Lyon	20.2	3	60	0
Watson	6.4	2	11	1
AUSTRALIA: Rogers, Warner, Watson, Clarke, Smith, Bailey, Haddin, Johnson, Siddle, Harris, Lyon.				
Toss: Australia.				



Manchester United defender Chris Smalling (C) heads in his side's first goal against Hull City during their Premier League encounter at the KC Stadium yesterday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Gunners back on top

AFP, London



Arsenal returned to the Premier League summit on Thursday after Theo Walcott scored twice as Arsene Wenger's side came from behind to win 3-1 at West Ham United.

Arsenal spurned several first-half chances at Upton Park and they were punished early in the second period when Carlton Cole put the hosts in front after Wojciech Szczesny spilled a shot from Kevin Nolan.

However, Walcott struck twice in three minutes to turn the game around, squeezing a low shot past West Ham goalkeeper

Adrian in the 68th minute and then heading home a cross from substitute Lukas Podolski.

Podolski was making his first appearance since August after a hamstring injury and he marked his comeback with a goal in the 79th minute, drilling home from Olivier Giroud's lay-off.

Victory sent Arsenal three points above former leaders Liverpool, who visited fourth-place Manchester City later on Thursday, while West Ham slumped to second-bottom.

Chelsea also leapfrogged Liverpool, moving up to second place by beating Swansea City 1-0 in one of the day's 10 traditional Boxing Day fixtures.

Everton's hopes of making

further ground on the Champions League contenders were thwarted, however, as they crashed to a 1-0 defeat at home to bottom club Sunderland.

Manchester United doggedly overturned a two-goal deficit to win 3-2 against Hull City at the KC Stadium and register their fifth consecutive win in all competitions.

Early goals from James Chester and David Meyler gave Hull a 2-0 lead, only for Chris Smalling and Wayne Rooney to bring United level before half an hour had been played.

Rooney's goal, a sumptuous volley, was his 150th for the club in the top flight and he contributed to the winner in the 66th

minute by pressuring Chester, a one-time United youth player, to put through his own goal.

Newcastle United closed to within two points of the Champions League places by coming from behind to overwhelm nine-man Stoke City 5-1 at St James' Park.

Tottenham Hotspur's new permanent head coach Tim Sherwood saw his side draw 1-1 at home to West Bromwich Albion, for whom Jonas Olsson cancelled out Christian Eriksen's 36th-minute free-kick.

Southampton ended a run of six games without victory by winning 3-0 at Cardiff City through a Jay Rodriguez brace and a Rickie Lambert strike.

World record crowd at MCG

AFP, Melbourne

The opening day of the fourth Australia-England Ashes Test set a new world record crowd at the Melbourne Cricket Ground on Thursday.

Ground officials announced an updated first-day attendance of 91,092 and the biggest single-day crowd for a cricket Test match.

The massive Boxing Day turnout eclipsed the previous single-day crowd record at the MCG of 90,800 set in the 1961 Test between Australia and the West Indies.

"The boys in the team room are so pumped to have played in front of that many people," Australia paceman Ryan Harris said.

"The noise at the end of the day when Mitchell Johnson was charging in was tremendous."

Australia have already claimed the Ashes urn off England with an unassailable 3-0 series lead after huge Test victories in Brisbane, Adelaide and Perth.

Windies take a U-turn

AFP, Auckland



The West Indies tasted success for the first time on their New Zealand tour Thursday when they scraped home by two wickets in the first one-day international.

After rolling over New Zealand for a modest 156 in 42.1 overs, the West Indies made hard work of reaching their target for the loss of eight wickets in 27.3 overs.

A rollicking unbeaten 43 from Darren Sammy in 27 balls took them over the line as wickets fell regularly at the other end.

When just the last two wickets were left, Sammy knocked off the final 10 runs with a six and a four off Mitchell McClenaghan to be sure of the win.

The victory, no matter how narrow, was a change of fortunes for a side comprehensively outplayed during their 0-2 Test series loss to New Zealand.

Although their batting remained fragile, the introduction of one-day specialists unleashed a West Indies bowling line-up that New Zealand failed to handle on a seam-friendly wicket.

Any confidence New Zealand took from the Tests quickly evaporated when they were sent into bat and faced new arrivals Ravi Rampaul, Dwayne Bravo and Jason Holder.

It was not the return to international cricket that big-hitting opener Jesse Ryder wanted.

He only faced five balls before slashing at a wide Rampaul delivery to be caught by Darren Bravo at cover point without scoring.

His failure signalled the start of a disap-

pointing batting performance which was only rescued by the McCullum brothers Brendon (51) and Nathan (47).

They contributed 98 of the New Zealand total with the remaining nine batsmen scoring a total of just 49 runs with nine extras.

Martin Gupthill was trapped leg-before by Ravi Rampaul for two. Ross Taylor, the Test series hero, went for three, Kane Williamson (eight), Corey Anderson (13) and Luke Ronchi (seven) as New Zealand slumped to 66 for six.

Nathan McCullum and McClenaghan (three not out) held off the demise as long as they could, featuring in a nine-over stand worth 44 runs for the last wicket.

Bravo returned figures of four for 44 while Rampaul and Holder took two wickets apiece.

What should have been a simple run chase started badly when McClenaghan bowled Kieran Powell (four) in the second over.

Like New Zealand, the West Indies top order could not establish a partnership as Johnson Charles (nine), Darren Bravo (14) and Dwayne Bravo (12) all fell to McClenaghan, who finished with figures of five for 58.

Lendl Simmons arrested the slide with a positive innings, reaching 34 before he was given out caught by Ross Taylor off Kyle Mills.

SCORES IN BRIEF

NEW ZEALAND: 156 all out in 42.1 overs (B McCullum 51, N McCullum 47; Holder 2-21, Rampaul 2-27, Bravo 4-44)

WEST INDIES: 157 for 8 in 27.3 overs (Simmons 34, Sammy 43 not out; Mills 2-37, McClenaghan 5-58)

Result: West Indies won by two wickets.

Player-of-the-match: Darren Sammy.

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