

BANGLADESH TOUR

No room for Malinga

DAILY MIRROR, Colombo

Sri Lanka's cricket administrators, selectors and everyone who matters including the country's political hierarchy have finally run out of patience with Lasith Malinga's indifferent performances of late for his country's national team and have taken a collective decision to send the star bowler a strong signal about his future with the Sri Lanka team by dropping him for the forthcoming Bangladesh tour.

Informed sources told this newspaper that a lot of new changes will herald the new year for Sri Lanka team following a crucial meeting of top level officials of Sri Lanka Cricket (SLC), where some radical decisions had been taken. Among them was a decision to put the performance of several other senior players of the team under the microscope and an appraisal of the team's massive support staff all of whom are paid lucrative salaries.

Following Sri Lanka's 3-2 loss in the ODI series against Pakistan, the officials had felt that the team's performance was extremely below par and analysed that Sri Lanka could not do much worse, even without the misfiring seniors. They have wanted new blood infused into the system through a gradual rotation system of resting seniors and trying out new talent in their place.

Malinga's pathetic bowling and fielding had been a main topic of concern and SLC president Jayantha Dharmadasa had reportedly communicated the decisions taken in consultation with the national selectors to the national team members and support staff.

Sources said that Dharmadasa had phoned the team manager after the ODI series and had spoken to each member of the support staff to convey SLC's concern.

Among those in the front to face the firing squad are said to be the batting coach Marvan Atapattu and fielding coach Ruwan Kalpage.

Shakib to fly down under today

SPORTS REPORTER

Shakib Al Hasan is expected to fly to Australia today to play for Adelaide Strikers in the T20 Big Bash League.

The ace all-rounder got the Australian visa yesterday. Shakib has been invited by the Adelaide Strikers, the current leaders of the league, to replace injured captain Johan Botha.

Shakib is expected to play four matches on January 5, 9, 16, 18 but he may also play the January 22 match if needed. Soon after his return from Australia, Shakib will face the home challenge against Sri Lanka, who will arrive in Dhaka on January 24 to play two Tests, three ODIs and two T20Is.

The national players are currently free and are likely to get back to business by January 9 when head coach Shane Jurgensen returns from vacation.

Meanwhile, Shakib and dashing opener Tamim Iqbal are set to play for the Rest of the World XI for a friendly 50-over match against Marylebone Cricket Club (MCC) on July 5.

The match will be held at Lord's on the occasion of the venue's bicentenary anniversary on June 22.



Forward Aminur Rahman (green shirt) strikes the first goal for Team BJMC against Soccer Club Feni in their BPL fixture at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

BJMC off to winning start

SPORTS REPORTER

Team BJMC began their Bangladesh Premier League campaign on a winning note when they handed a 2-1 defeat to Feni Soccer Club at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

Aminur Rahman Sajib and Nigerian Uche Felix scored one goal each for Team BJMC while Beninese hitman Wassiou Okalawon pulled one goal back for Feni Soccer, who have conceded defeat in all five matches against BJMC in the professional football league.

BJMC, fourth-placed finishers last season and a semifinalist of the season's curtain-raising Federation Cup, dominated the game from the word go and created numerous chances but had to be satisfied with a slim 2-1 margin. Feni Soccer failed to repeat their performance earlier in the season

in a Federation Cup encounter against ultimate champions Sheikh Jamal, in which they played brilliantly to go down to a narrow 1-0 defeat.

Former Feni striker Sajib came close to putting his new club, BJMC, ahead in the ninth minute but the tall-striker saw his grounder to the far post from the edge of the box narrowly miss the target while left-back Shakil Ahmed was denied by the woodwork in the 17th minute.

After resumption, BJMC stepped up the attack for the lead and it paid off when Sajib, availing a nice through-pass from Felix, darted into the box to shrug off two defenders before firing it past Feni goalkeeper Masud Ahmed Uzzal two minutes into the second half.

BJMC came close to doubling the score two minutes later but Shakil unbelievably drove a Ismael Bangoura push wide with only the goalkeeper left in his path.

However, he made up for it by pro-

viding a nice long ball for Felix, who easily beat Feni goalkeeper Uzzal with a low drive from inside the box to double the score in the 67th minute.

After going two goals down, Feni Soccer displayed their fighting qualities to put BJMC under pressure and secured a goal five minutes from time when Okalawon headed home an Akram Khan Liton cross from the right.

"I am more or less satisfied with the performance the boys put in, though they could not implement the game plan perfectly," said BJMC coach Ali Ashgar Nasir.

"I was eager to get a goal against my previous club (Feni Soccer)," said striker Sajib, who has set a target to score a goal in every match.

Feni Soccer's Gambian coach Omar K Sisse said they conceded the first goal due to a defensive blunder while the second goal was off-side.

Sisse however was satisfied with the way his charges played in the second half.

India to take on Pakistan in final

CRICINFO, Sharjah



India overcame a tense chase thanks to a half-century from Ankush Bains to beat Sri Lanka by three wickets in the second semifinal and progress to the final of the Under-19 Asia Cup here on Thursday.

In Saturday's final at the Sharjah Cricket Stadium they will take on archrivals Pakistan, who, powered by hattrick from the leg-spinner Karamat Ali and Sami Aslam's 75, were powered into the title-deciding match after they edged Afghanistan by two wickets the same day.

**SRI LANKA U-19s:** 223 for 8 in 50 overs (Dumindu 60, Mendis 52, Perera 34; Yadav 3-49, Khan 2-28, Hooda 2-43)  
**INDIA U-19s:** 224 for 7 in 49.1 overs (Bains 54, Bhui 37, Herwadkar 27; Fernando 2-57)  
**Result:** India Under-19s won by 3 wickets.  
**Player-of-the-match:** Ankush Bains.  
**AFGHANISTAN U-19s:** 196 all out in 48.4 overs (Shahidullah 27, Ihsanullah 22, Shafaq 48, Shaidi 51; Karamat 5-33, Saeed 3-43)  
**PAKISTAN U-19s:** 199 for 8 in 48.2 overs (Aslam 75, Imam 42, Raja 33, Talat 22; Rehman 2-40)  
**Result:** Pakistan Under-19s won by 2 wickets.  
**Player-of-the-match:** Karamat Ali.

IFA SHIELD

Sheikh Jamal invited

SPORTS REPORTER



invited issued them a verbal invitation to the world's fourth-oldest tournament in Kolkata, starting from the last week of this month.

The tournament is scheduled to get underway from January 29 and Sheikh Jamal may be given direct entry to the quarterfinals.

"Someone named Debu Mukherjee from India phoned me today to invite Sheikh Jamal to the IFA Shield and I told him to send the official invitation to us," said Sheikh Jamal DC president Manjur Kader adding that he accepted the invitation in principle.

The Indian official also asked the Sheikh Jamal president to send the names of 20 players and three officials for visa process-

ing purposes.

Explaining the reasons behind his interest to take part in the IFA Shield, Kader said: "When I was manager of Abahani, I had a dream of beating any of three Indian sides -- East Bengal, Mohun Bagan and Calcutta Mohammedan -- on their pitch but we never beat them and had to leave the tournament after the first phase."

"The objective will remain the same this time -- to beat any of them on their home ground and I am confident that Sheikh Jamal DC can do it as they have a bunch of national footballers and some quality footballers like Sony Norde," said the veteran organiser.

Sheikh Jamal will be the first Bangladeshi side to take part in the IFA Shield in five years since Mohammedan SC played the prestigious tournament in 2008. Mohammedan once became runners-up in 1995 when they suffered a 3-1 defeat in the penalty shootout against East Bengal.



Maria Sharapova of Russia plays a forehand return on way to defeating Kaia Kanepi of Estonia in the Brisbane International quarterfinals yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

Brisbane blockbuster

AFP, Brisbane



Serena Williams Thursday served a perfect first set on her way to setting up a blockbuster semifinal against Maria Sharapova at the Brisbane International.

The top seeded Williams didn't lose a point on serve during the opening set during her comprehensive 6-3, 6-3 win over Slovakia's Dominika Cibulkova.

In stark contrast to Williams, Sharapova was forced to recover from an error-strewn start before eventually downing 2012 champion Kaia Kanepi in three sets 4-6, 6-3, 6-2.

Friday's semifinal will be the 17th meeting between the two superstars of the women's game, who make no secret of their frosty personal relationship.

Williams holds a clear advantage over the Russian, winning 14 times against

Sharapova, including the last 13 in a row.

Their most recent clash was in the final of last year's French Open, where Williams won a tight battle 6-4, 6-4.

"Some of the matches were a bit closer than others," Sharapova said of her run of 13 losses.

"I know I've tried and I didn't succeed in the last many times that I've played her, but I'm setting up an opportunity to go out there and try to change that, and I'm going to try to do that."

Williams, who lost only four times in 2013, was in irresistible form against Cibulkova.

The world number one said she had been working on her serve in the off-season, but was still surprised at not losing a point in the first set for the first time since juniors.

"She [Cibulkova] was returning really well, she stays so low to the ground and does so many good things, especially off the ground. She's just so powerful," Williams said.

Pakistan poised for the kill

AFP, Abu Dhabi



Paceman Bilawal Bhatti removed experienced Sri Lanka batsmen Kumar Sangakkara and Mahela Jayawardene off his successive deliveries to put Pakistan in command of the first Test on Thursday.

The 22-year-old debutant removed Sangakkara (55) with the last ball of his tenth over and then had Jayawardene off the first of his next to leave Sri Lanka at 186-4 in their second innings at close on the third day on a Sheikh Zayed Stadium pitch which had eased out for batsmen.

Bhatti c Senanayake b Eranga Bhatti c Prasanna b Matthews

Ajmal lbw b Herath Rahat b Herath

SCOREBOARD									
<b>SRI LANKA:</b> First innings 204 (Mathews 91; Junaid 5-58, Bhatti 3-65)									
<b>PAKISTAN:</b> First innings (overnight 327-4)									
Manzoor run out	21								
Shehzad c Karunaratne b Eranga	38								
Hafeez c Silva b Lakmal	11								
Younis b Eranga	136								
Misbah c Sangakkara b Herath	135								
Shafiq c Silva b Lakmal	13								
Akmal c Senanayake b Eranga	6								
Bhatti c Prasanna b Matthews	14								
Ajmal lbw b Herath	0								
Rahat b Herath	0								
Junaid not out	4								
Extras: (lb-2, nb-2, w-1)	5								
Total: (All out in 129.1 overs) 383									
Fall of wickets: 1-46, 2-59, 3-83, 4-301, 5-329, 6-342, 7-369, 8-378, 9-378									
<b>Bowler</b>									
Lakmal	33	9	99	2					
Mathews	13	1	43	1					
Eranga	30	6	80	3					
Herath	35.1	9	93	3					
Senanayake	18	2	66	0					
<b>SRI LANKA:</b> Second innings									
Karunaratne b Junaid				24					
Silva c Akmal b Junaid				81					
Sangakkara c Younis b Bhatti				55					
Jayawardene c Shafiq b Bhatti				0					
Chandimal not out				24					
Extras: (lb-2)				2					
Total: (For 4 wickets in 61.3 overs)				186					
Fall of wickets: 1-47, 2-146, 3-150, 4-186									
<b>Bowler</b>									
Junaid	13.3	0	46	2					
Rahat	17	6	33	0					
Bhatti	14	1	65	2					
Ajmal	13	3	30	0					
Hafeez	4	1	10	0					