

SPORT



Waqar made Pak head coach again

AFP, Lahore

Pakistan cricket chiefs on Tuesday appointed fast bowling legend Waqar Younis for a second spell as national head coach.

The 42-year-old had been tipped as favourite to take over the role vacated by Australian coach Dav Whatmore, whose contract expired in March.

Former wicketkeeper Moin Khan, who filled in as interim coach, guided Pakistan to the Asia Cup final but a poor performance in the World Twenty20 in Bangladesh meant his contract was not extended.

Waqar, currently in India, said: "I am extremely pleased to have been selected as the head coach."

"My immediate aim would be to prepare the team for the upcoming busy cricket season including the next year's World Cup in Australia and New Zealand."

Waqar returns to the job he held from February 2010 to September 2011, during which time he led Pakistan to the 2011 World Cup semi-final.

The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) said a three-member committee including Khan had "unanimously recommended" Waqar for the job, a decision endorsed by the board chairman Najam Sethi.

The PCB has also advertised for fielding and batting coaches and a spin bowling consultant as they seek to build towards the World Cup.



BCB North Zone's spinner Taijul Islam is in his stride against Walton Central Zone at the BKSP yesterday. He finished with match figures of 11 for 177. PHOTO: STAR

Speculations aplenty

SPORTS REPORTER



In Bangladesh cricket there has never been any shortage of issues to fill the air. Primarily the Tigers are the subject of all focus while they are on international duty or off it. However, with the Tigers enjoying a break after four months of non-stop international cricket, plenty of issues come to the fore to dominate the sports coverage. And now it is time to make the air full of speculations regarding the probable head coach for the national team.

The sudden departure of Shane Jurgensen from the position of the Tigers' head coach made sure that the cricketing affairs will not at all be dull at a time when a routine first-class domestic tournament is making hardly any waves.

And interestingly, whenever the issue to find out a coach for the national team arises, the word 'high-profile' becomes the most popular tune among the

officials and journalists and there is no exception this time around.

One thing is for certain that no name will be missing from the lists called speculation. Pragmatism can wait in those dare dreams where the most desired names in world cricket easily labelled as wishful thinking. And that's why the names of former England coach Andy Flower and former India coach Gary Kirsten came up in the air along with many other big names.

But can we fulfil their demands—both in financial and management aspects?

For instance if someone approaches Andy's agent he will be pleasantly surprised to learn that it might cost the BCB five times more than what it had paid Richard Pybus, the highest-paid among the eight foreign coaches it has employed so far.

The demands not stop at that point. To hire Andy the board might also have to accept other realistic clauses like allowing him a free hand to choose his support staff. Besides, Andy would

prefer the post of director of coaching which the BCB can ill afford in a management structure where everyone pretends to be the boss and loves to bark at the coach after a defeat.

However, it is not the time to put fingers on the calculator because the slogan is that the board will try its best to hire the best possible candidate for the most demanding post.

The board formed a five-member search committee which is yet to sit to set a guideline and work out a list of candidates.

But in reality the board has communicated with some candidates and those communications are still in a preliminary stage. There is a notion that the team needs a good coach with strong character, no matter how big his name is in world cricket.

It may be too early to comment on any name but a coach from subcontinent is not an unlikely proposition. No doubt more names will crop up in the days to come and the onus is on the board to strike the balance between its

Taijul spins champs out

SPORTS REPORTER



The Nasir Hossain-led BCB North Zone recorded a vital 51-run win over reigning champions Walton Central Zone to knock them out of the Bangladesh Cricket League and, in the process, book a place in the finals.

The Northerners will now take on Prime Bank South Zone in a five-day finale, set to begin on May 9 at the Sher-e-Bangla National Cricket Stadium in Mirpur.

After bowling out North Zone for just 87 runs in their second innings at the BKSP on Monday, Central needed 267 runs to win the crucial game.

However, slow left-arter Taijul Islam, followed up his six-wicket haul in the first innings with a five-for to take North home. Taijul finished with match-figures of 11 for 177 and

almost single-handedly took his side home.

Beginning the day on 1 for 1, Taijul removed opener Rony Talukder early in the day. He then removed danger-men Shamsur Rahman and Marshall Ayub and ripped through Central's middle-order. He completed his five-wicket haul by sending back Mosharraf Hossain in the 42nd over.

Pacer Shuvaish Roy added his bit to the bowling department by taking three scalps. He got the crucial wickets of Riyad and Nurul Hasan in the 50th and 52nd overs.

Taijul's eleven wickets further extended his position as the highest wicket-taker of the tournament. He now leads the pack with 27 wickets, six ahead of Riyad.

BCB NORTH ZONE: 457 and 87
WALTON CENTRAL ZONE: 278 and 215 (Elias 60, Shamsur 36; Taijul 5-89, Shuvaish 3-25)

Arambagh hold R'ganj

SPORTS REPORTER

Arambagh KS held leaders Rahmatganj MFS to a 1-1 draw in their Premier Bank Bangladesh Championship League encounter at the Birshreshtha Shaheed Mostafa Kamal Stadium in Kamalapur yesterday.

Nurul Afsar put Rahmatganj ahead in the sixth minute before Mamun cancelled the lead three minutes from the break to snatch a valuable point from Rahmatganj, who are on top of the table with 27 points from 11 matches.

Arambagh leapfrogged to the third position with 16 points from 12 matches.

Now goes Richards

SPORTS REPORTER



Bangladesh fielding coach Corey Richards became the high-profile member to part ways with the Bangladesh Cricket Board in a month's time. The Australian, who was hired in February last year, also performed the role of an interim batting coach for the team.

He submitted his resignation letter yesterday and the BCB accepted it.

Richards's departure, following the resignations of David Dwyer and Shane Jurgensen, means that the national team's support staff has now only two members -- physio Vibhav Singh and computer analyst Nasir Ahmed. The other member to resign was Richard McInnes who served as the head of BCB's National Cricket Academy.

BCB had made it public that it was in the hunt for a number of new specialised coaches and the mood in the camp was as such that Richards's exit was just a matter of time.

According to BCB's cricket operations committee chairman Akram Khan, it was a mutual decision with

both the board and the Australian agreeing to part ways.

"Corey [Richards] has been an integral member of the Bangladesh team management. However, both the coach and the board have different plans for the future and we have taken our respective decisions for the best interest of the team," said Akram.

The word around Mirpur however was that the board officials had planned to continue without him, and while an official decision was yet to be made, the issue was discussed during the board meeting on Monday.

The Australian was initially eyeing the role of the head coach of the Bangladesh team after Jurgensen resigned. However, the BCB had other plans and as a result, Richards decided to tender his resignation.

"With regards to cricket, becoming head coach is one of the things that I aspire to do and Shane put my name forward as a recommendation to take over from his role, the BCB obviously preferred to look elsewhere and there are obviously a few specialist coaches they are looking for.

"All in all that's not where I wanted to head to. So it's just best that I step aside and let somebody else come," Richards told The Daily Star.

Richards, who was originally contracted to stay till 2015, has said that the whitewash against New Zealand and the progress of some of the batsmen were some of the positives that he will take along with him.

"Look, I think the most important thing is to develop players. The likes of Mominul Haque, Mushfiqur Rahim and Anamul Haque, they have really sort of developed and blossomed through pure hard work.

"2013 was really successful in Bangladesh and people quickly forget about that, we took great strides in Bangladesh becoming a better cricket team, unfortunately the recent performances overshadowed the good work in the last 18 months. I am really pleased to be a part of some of them," said Richards.

Richards's previous assignment was as a batting coach for Cricket New South Wales for two years. He had also worked as the assistant coach to the Sydney Sixers.

AFC PRESIDENT'S CUP Russel take on KRL today

SPORTS REPORTER



Sheikh Russel KC will be hoping for a good start in their debut appearance in the AFC President's Cup when they take on KRL Football Club of Pakistan in one of two openers at the Sugathadasa Stadium in Colombo, Sri Lanka today.

Sheikh Russel earned the right to represent Bangladesh in the third-tier club competition of Asia by emerging champions in Bangladesh Premier League and became the second club from Bangladesh to take part in the competition. Abahani have participated five times in the competition but failed to make it to the final round on each occasion.

Playing the final round will be a tough ask too for Sheikh Russel, who have lost much of their strength due to departure of star players which has left them languishing in sixth position in the league.

In an attempt to change the fate, Sheikh Russel brought in Montenegrin coach Dragan Djukanovic to replace last season's successful coach Maruful Haque but things

have not changed yet under the new coach.

"Our aim is to go beyond the group phase but we are now focused on the first match against KRL FC. We will be all but confirmed to play the next round if we can win our first match, which is really important for us," said Dragan at the pre-tournament press briefing in Colombo yesterday, according to message received here.

Dragan has problems upfront as there is no genuine striker in the squad and ankle injury of Mithun Chowdhury has put him in further trouble to choose his playing eleven against KRL FC, last edition's runners-up.

"We are not thinking much about the opponents and their strength rather we are trying to put our best to make a good start," said captain Biplob Bhattacharjee.

KRL FC coach Tariq Lutfi is optimistic about his side's progress but he seems to feel the absence of two midfielders, who have joined the national team to play a friendly against Palestine.

"However, the boys are fully motivated to meet the challenges and have been here to qualify for the next round," said Lutfi.

Echoing the sentiment of his coach, captain Kamran Khan said that they would

Federer skips Madrid meet

AFP, Madrid

Roger Federer became the second of the world's top four to pull out of the Madrid Masters on Tuesday as he has decided to stay at home with his wife Mirka as they await the birth of their third child.

The 17-time Grand Slam champion's withdrawal comes just two days after world number two Novak Djokovic also decided not to compete in the Spanish capital due to a wrist injury.

"I've decided to withdraw from Madrid to be with my wife Mirka during these next few exciting weeks for our family," he said on his official Facebook page.

"I apologise to my fans and hope to be back in Madrid next year. I'll be training near my home, and am excited to rejoin the Tour soon!"

ITALY 1934

Meazza, the maverick

For those who saw him in his pomp, Giuseppe Meazza was the greatest player the football world had seen.

The leading star in the Italy side that won the World Cup in the 1934 and 1938, coach Vittorio Pozzo suggested his presence was akin to starting "every game 1-0 up". "Opposing teams often assign two or three people to mark me," Meazza said. "I never yearn for solitude more than in these matches, so I act like I'm not interested in the game. And then I pounce."

A lively playmaker with an eye for goal, Meazza's career spanned nearly 20 years and he scored 216 league goals. Arguably described as Italy's most successful international ever, he was top scorer in Italy on three occasions in 1930, 1936 and 1938.

He had several signature techniques, not least la foglia morta -- the dead leaf - in which a shot would appear destined to sail over the crossbar before suddenly dropping down, like a leaf from a tree, into the goal.

With his slick, Brylcreemed hair and designer suits, he was a legendary womaniser with a champagne lifestyle yet, during an era in which Benito Mussolini would spend vast sums encouraging Italians to settle down and procreate, he was still able to establish himself as a national hero for the propaganda machine.

Though enjoying great success as an orthodox centre-forward, it was as an old-fashioned inside forward that Meazza was to enjoy his greatest successes as a player, both scoring goals and creating opportunities for others.

The decision by Italy's master coach Vittorio Pozzo to move the Inter striker into a slightly deeper role for the 1934 World Cup proved inspired. That time, Meazza's contribution was also decisive and he scored the winner that beat Spain in a quarterfinal replay before setting up the crucial goal by Schiavo that beat Czechoslovakia 2-1 in the final.

Soon after guiding Italy to their second World Cup in 1938, Meazza suffered a serious knee injury which effectively ended his career. He made the cross-city switch to Inter's rivals AC Milan in 1939, but the outbreak of war



PHOTO: DAILY STAR ARCHIVE
Giuseppe Meazza scored 216 goals in Serie A and netted 33 times for Italy.

and his waning fitness limited him to only a handful of appearances.

The Italian went on to make 53 appearances for his country, scoring what was then a record 33 goals, a total unbeaten until Gigi Riva came along 30 years later to set a new mark.

Meazza also played for Juventus, Varese and Atalanta before returning to Inter in a player-coaching role, helping the club to avoid relegation. He had a brief spell as Italian coach, with moderate success, between February 1952 and May 1953.

He died two days short of his 69th birthday on August 21, 1979.

"I was Meazza," he had said the year before his death. "Everyone knows me. In 10, 20 years, people attending football matches will still talk about Meazza, will know who Meazza was."

In March 1980, this legendary temple of football in Milan was officially renamed the 'Stadio Giuseppe Meazza'.

SL outplay Ireland

AFP, Dublin

Sri Lanka beat Ireland by 79 runs to win the first one-day international at the Clontarf ground in Dublin on Tuesday.

After losing the toss, Sri Lanka made 219 for eight in their full 50 overs before dismissing Ireland for just 140 in reply with more than 10 overs to spare.

Player-of-the-match Ajantha Mendis starred with both bat and ball for Sri Lanka, hitting an unbeaten 18 off just nine balls before taking three wickets for 27 runs with his unorthodox spin.

SCORES IN BRIEF
SRI LANKA: 219 for 8 in 50 overs (Tharanga 24, Chandimal 39, Matthews 30, Priyanjan 31, Kulasekara 42 not out; Murtagh 2-21)

IRELAND: 140 all out in 39.5 overs (Porterfield 37, N O'Brien 33, Sorensen 17, Dockrell 18 not out; Lakmal 3-29, Kulasekara 2-30)
Result: Sri Lanka won by 79 runs.

Player-of-the-match:

Safina to retire in Madrid

AFP, Madrid

Former world number one and Olympic silver medallist Dinara Safina announced on Tuesday that she is to retire, Russia's tennis federation press service reported.

The report said that the 12 WTA titles winner Safina will participate in the award ceremony of the WTA Madrid Open tournament, where she has won one of her titles in 2009. Safina's farewell ceremony will also take place in Madrid.

"Of course I decided to quit much earlier," the press service quoted Safina as saying.

"I decided to withdraw from any official announcements until now as I was still hoping to overcome my back injury. But this moment has finally come."