

Siddikur withdraws from Omega Masters

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh's premier golfer has withdrawn himself from the Omega European Masters in Switzerland after completing the first round, citing back pain as his reason for withdrawal. The two-time Asian Tour winner, who endured a difficult first round with a five-over-par (75), decided to withdraw himself yesterday as he felt he could not continue playing with pain.

Siddikur posted a message on his personal website www.siddikurrahman.com yesterday confirming his withdrawal and asking everyone to pray for his swift recovery.

The 29-year-old golfer had been recently rehabilitating from back pain, which forced him into a lengthy lay-off, after the end of the first half of the Asian Tour season in early June. However, he went to flew Switzerland on August 30 and was looking forward to doing well in this event, which commences a busy second half of the Asian Tour season.

Lee and UnIndian

MAIL TODAY, New Delhi

Former Australian pacer Brett Lee is all set to make his debut on the bigscreen in an Indian-Australian film titled *UnIndian* opposite Indian actress Tannishtha Chatterjee.

The film was formally launched by Australian Prime Minister Tony Abbott and Indian cricket's living legend Sachin Tendulkar in Mumbai on Thursday.

Anupam Sharma, the Australian filmmaker of Indian origin who will direct the film, plans to start pre-production by October end to ready his effort for a theatrical release in March 2015.

"Brett has been cast as a charming, happy-go-lucky young blond man, from Sydney, who falls in love with a 30-something Indian mother (Tannishtha) of an eight-year-old," Sharma said, describing the romantic comedy as "an India centric international film on the lines of *Bend It Like Beckham* and *Slumdog Millionaire*."

BCCI blasts Botham

AFP, New Delhi

Organisers of cricket's Indian Premier League hit back angrily Friday at former England all-rounder Ian Botham's call for the tournament to be scrapped, criticising him for having the "temerity" to issue lectures.

Delivering a keynote speech in London earlier this week, Botham said the IPL was "too powerful" for cricket's long-term good.

But Sanjay Patel, secretary of the Indian board (BCCI), said Friday that Botham was in no position to take the moral high ground after his involvement in disgraced Texas financier Allen Stanford's ill-fated T20 competition between the West Indies and England.

"I can still visualise the photo of Botham sitting in the front when Stanford went to England -- and he has the temerity to talk about IPL," Patel told the Press Trust of India news agency.

"We don't want his advice. We have enough top players like (former Indian players) Sunil Gavaskar, Ravi Shastri, Kapil Dev and Rahul Dravid to advise us."



The Bangladesh players congratulate Taijul Islam (C) for dismissing Kirk Edwards during the first Test against West Indies at the Arnos Vale in St. Vincent yesterday.

PHOTO: WTCB

Fighting Federer makes it through

AP, New York



Roger Federer saved two match points while coming all the way back from a two-set deficit to beat Gael Monfils 4-6, 3-6, 6-4, 7-5, 6-2 Thursday night and reach

the US Open semifinals for the first time since 2011.

Frustrated by Monfils' unpredictable style, flummoxed by the swirling wind, and missing shots he normally makes, Federer twice was a single point from losing while down 5-4 in the fourth set.

But he got out of that hole, starting a five-game run that put the match in his control for the first time all evening. It helped that Monfils' quality of play dipped, including what wound up being a total of 10 double-faults.

This was the ninth time Federer has won a match after dropping the opening two sets.

The 20th-seeded Monfils was trying to reach his second career Grand Slam semifinal. Instead, Federer advanced to his 36th,

ninth at Flushing Meadows. Five of Federer's record 17 major singles titles have come at the US Open, but he exited in the quarterfinals in 2012, and the fourth round in 2013.

On Saturday, the second-seeded Federer will play 14th-seeded Marin Cilic of Croatia. The other semifinal will be No. 1 Novak Djokovic against No. 10 Kei Nishikori; their quarterfinal victories came Wednesday.

Cilic wasn't allowed to play in last year's US Open, forced to the sideline by a four-month doping suspension that he says he didn't deserve. But Cilic reached the second Grand Slam semifinal of his career, and first since 2010, by beating sixth-seeded Tomas Berdych of the Czech Republic 6-2, 6-4, 7-6 (4) Thursday.

"I mean, it was a difficult period. I didn't know when I'm going to start back. But (it) was also (a) good period for me," Cilic said. "I matured a bit more and I was working, day after day."

His quarterfinal ended hours before the other began, and Cilic probably assumed he would wind up facing Federer next.

Root avoids whitewash

AFP, Leeds



Joe Root's hundred in his first ODI at his Yorkshire home ground laid the platform for England's much-needed 41-run win over India at Headingley on Friday.

India still won the series 3-1 but England's victory in the finale meant they avoided being whitewashed by the world champions. Root's 113 was the cornerstone of England's 294 for seven.

India faltered in their pursuit of 295, with Ravindra Jadeja's dashing 87 at number seven too late to turn the tide.

It seemed India would restrict England to another meagre total when the hosts slumped to 117 for four off 29 overs after losing the toss.

But Root, who became the first Yorkshireman to score an ODI hundred at Headingley, and Jos Buttler (49) repaired the damage with a fifth-wicket partnership of 108.

England captain Alastair Cook made 46 before he top-edged a sweep against off-spinner Suresh Raina and was caught by India captain Mahendra Singh Dhoni.

England at last enjoyed a productive batting powerplay, scoring 55 runs for no wickets in five overs.

But Buttler fell when he set off for a non-existent single and was run out by Dhoni.

Man-of-the-match Root, though, slog-swept Jadeja for six to complete a 105-ball century.

But Root's innings ended when an intended 'ramp' off Mohammed Shami went straight to Ashwin at short fine leg.

India's run-chase started badly when they lost Ajinkya Rahane for a third ball duck when he steered James Anderson's outswinger straight to Morgan at point.

Virat Kohli was squared up by Anderson for 13. But Shikhar Dhawan, who made an unbeaten 97 at Edgbaston, swept off-spinner Ali for six. He was bowled three balls later by Ali for 31.

Ambati Rayudu completed a second successive fifty before, on 53, he saw an ugly swipe off Stokes lob to Cook at mid-on. India's victory hopes all but evaporated when dangerman Dhoni, on 29, somehow cut a wide Finn delivery low to Stokes at point.

SCORES IN BRIEF

ENGLAND: 294 for 7 (Root 113, Cook 46, Buttler 49; Shami 2-52, Raina 1-32)

INDIA: 253 all out in 48.4 overs (Jadeja 87, Rayudu 53; Stokes 3-47, Ali 2-34, Anderson 2-39)

Result: England won by 41 runs

Brathwaite trumps Tigers

SPORTS REPORTER



Bangladesh seemed to take a leaf out of their past on the first day of the first Test against the West Indies at Arnos Vale in St Vincent yesterday. For one they entered the game with only three specialist bowlers and as a result spent most of the day with their part-time spinners tossing the ball almost aimlessly.

It therefore was not a surprise to see the hosts cruise to 264 for 3 before rain disrupted play with Kraigg Brathwaite sealing his second Test century.

The hosts prospered through some patient batting and also partly due to a questionable strategic ploy from the Bangladeshis. Considering that the Tigers had highlighted their batting as their strong point in the lead-up to this Test, their decision to field—on a wicket that seemed good for batting—sparked several questions.

Whether Mushfiquir had succumbed under pressure or it was one of his strategies was not clear but by the end of the first 16 overs the captain had used five bowlers and none of them troubled the batsmen. The bowlers, instead of sticking to one plan tried a host of different things, which failed to

provide any positive results.

Al-Amin Hossain for instance, went around the wicket to Gayle very early in the innings, despite bowling a few good deliveries from over the wicket.

Opensers Chris Gayle (64) and Brathwaite (123 not out) raced to a 116-run stand in 40 overs after which Gayle was trapped in front by debutant Shuvagata Hom in the 40th over.

The other debutant, Taijul Islam got his first wicket three overs later as he got Kirk Edwards caught at silly point for 12. The left-armed was in action again as he got Darren Bravo caught at mid-on just before the close of play.

By then Bravo and Brathwaite had put on 128 for the third wicket and the West Indies were in control at 261 for 3.

While Gayle looked to press on the accelerator Brathwaite batted patiently and waited for the bad deliveries. He reached his half-century in 126 balls with a cut-shot off Shuvagata.

He went back into his shell after reaching the mark and looked for those singles. It took him 93 more balls to reach his century, which he did by driving a full-toss comfortably for a four. The period between his 50 and 100 saw Brathwaite just hit three fours.

SCOREBOARD

WEST INDIES: First innings				
Gayle lbw b Shuvagata Hom	64			
Brathwaite not out	123			
Edwards c Mominul b Taijul	62			
Bravo c Mahmudullah b Taijul	4			
Chanderpaul not out	1			
Extras (b-1, lb-2, nb-1)	4			
Total (for three wickets in 87 overs)	264			
Fall of wickets: 1-116, 2-133, 3-261				
Bowler	O	M	R	W
Al-Amin	14	7	30	0
Rubel	16	0	55	0
Mahmudullah	5	0	31	0
Shuvagata	27	4	76	1
Taijul	25	6	69	2

Bangladesh edge past SL

SPORTS REPORTER



Goalkeeper Ashim Gope thwarted a last-minute penalty stroke to help hosts Bangladesh post a hard-fought 3-2 win over Sri Lanka in the opening match of the World Hockey League (Round-1) at the Maulana Bhasani Hockey Stadium yesterday.

Trailing by 2-3 margin, Sri Lanka led a spirited fight-back in the last ten minutes and earned a penalty corner with only 28 seconds to left to the final whistle. The Bangladesh defenders made heavy weather of the intense pressure and were forced to concede a penalty stroke. Ashim stepped up to block Lahiru Weerasooriya's stroke to earn Bangladesh a close win.

The goalkeeper from Bangladesh Krira Shikkha Protisthan (BKSP) had also rescued Bangladesh from a similar situation against Sri Lanka during the semifinals of the Asian

Games Qualifiers in April when he saved three penalty strokes to give Bangladesh 3-0 win after regulation time had ended 2-2.

"It is not possible to thwart a penalty stroke if a goalkeeper does not have the basic instincts and I was confident about saving the stroke," said Ashim after the final whistle. "From the beginning, I was following his (Lahiru) footwork, the style of holding the stick. From my own assessment, I thought a player who generally takes the drag-flick shot, has a tendency to strike it with his all power on the left and thus I jumped to my right side to stop the stroke."

Bangladesh, who have been preparing over the last three months for this tournament as well as the upcoming Asian Games, played comparatively better in the first half and took a deserved lead in the fourth minute when Hasan Jubair Niloy found the board with a gentle touch after Irfan Haque had struck a fierce diagonal shot from the left.

However, the lead lasted only nine

minutes as Sri Lanka's Sadaruwan Riyalanka converted a penalty corner to level the margin. The Lankans came close to taking the lead in the 22nd minute, but Anju Hewage scuffed his shot wide on a one-on-one opportunity with Ashim.

Bangladesh restored the lead in the next minute when Krishna Kumar a penalty corner before Khorshedur Rahman converted another penalty corner to make it to 3-1 in the 27th minute. Krishna was denied by the woodwork one minute before the break.

After resumption, Bangladesh took a counter-attacking strategy which backfired and they were all over the place in the face of consistent attacks from Sri Lanka.

Sri Lanka, though, failed to cash in on three scoring chances between the 50th and the 60th minute before pulling back the second goal in the 65th minute through Riyalanka, to give the hosts some nervy moments, only to be rescued by the eventual man-of-the-match Ashim.



Goalkeeper Ashim Gope is the toast of his teammates as his late penalty-stroke save helped Bangladesh to a 3-2 win against Sri Lanka in the first match of the World Hockey League (Round-1) at the Maulana Bhasani Hockey Stadium yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

Wozniacki in final

AFP, New York



Former world number one Caroline Wozniacki booked a return to the US Open final on Friday as China's Peng Shuai retired from their semi-final a victim of cramps.

Peng was taken from the court in a wheelchair as Wozniacki was declared the victor, leading 7-6 (7/1), 4-3.

Peng had been granted a controversial mid-game medical timeout in the eighth game, left the court but returned only to be stricken again.

Wozniacki, a finalist at Flushing Meadows in 2009, will play for the title

on Sunday against either two-time defending champion Serena Williams or first-time Grand Slam semi-finalist Ekaterina Makarova of Russia.

Meanwhile, India's Sania Mirza captured her third Grand Slam mixed doubles title on Friday, winning the US Open crown with Brazilian partner Bruno Soares and then declared herself "a proud Indian".

Mirza and Soares defeated American Abigail Spears and Mexico's Santiago Gonazalez 6-1, 2-6, 11-9.

Mirza had lifted mixed doubles titles at the 2009 Australian Open and 2012 French Open with compatriot Mahesh Bhupathi.

Mirza's win comes just a month

after she was described by a Hindu nationalist politician as "Pakistan's daughter-in-law" and unfit to be a representative of India.

The blast was delivered by K. Laxman, a regional legislator belonging to the national ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), who questioned the credentials of Mirza to be "brand ambassador" for the country's newest state Telangana.

Mirza, 27, and married to former Pakistan cricket captain Shoaib Malik, broke down in tears over the controversy.

"It was tough, you know. Just before I left there was a lot happening at home. But, yeah. Still a proud Indian, I guess, five weeks later," said Mirza.

'Predictability vs adaptability'

AFP, Harare

Predictability will meet adaptability when South Africa face Australia in Saturday's triangular series final in Harare - at least according to Mitchell Johnson.

Days after fracturing South Africa all rounder Ryan McLaren's right arm, the Australian quick has ramped up the mind games after the Proteas saw off Zimbabwe on Thursday to confirm their place in the final at Harare Sports Club.

Johnson claimed that Australia can easily forecast South Africa's game plan, and suggested his own side are more versatile in the way that they go about their cricket.

"We know what they're like and they're pretty structured in their ways," he said. "They like to play a certain way and they do it most times. It gets brought up in most meetings that we have, that they have that structure."

"We're ready to adapt to any conditions and we've done that in the past. We go out there and play our own game."

Meanwhile, South Africa's batsman tend to be more orthodox as they rely on their inherent quality - as they did when AB de Villiers and Faf du Plessis scored hundreds to chase a target of 328 in the first meeting between the two sides last week.

However, Australia's own adaptability has not always been up to the mark - most notably when they failed to get the hang of a turning pitch on Sunday and lost to Zimbabwe for the first time in 31 years.