

SPORT



WHO ARE PISTORIUS'S FELLOWS?

Oscar Pistorius is in the same prison as an apartheid death squad leader and has shared birthday cake with a Czech prisoner, according to reports. Oscar is 3 weeks into his 5-year sentence after being convicted of killing his girlfriend Reeva Steenkamp. Prosecutors announced on Tuesday that the appeal against Pistorius's conviction and sentence would be heard on December 9.



Bangladesh cricketers sprint during their practice session yesterday evening at the Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium in Chittagong, where they take on Zimbabwe in the first of five one-day internationals tomorrow. PHOTO: ANURUP KANTI DAS

Busy 2015 for Tigers

SPORTS REPORTER



The cricket operations committee of BCB was not in favour of sending the national team to Zimbabwe for a three-match ODI series prior to the World Cup; instead they wanted to play a series of one-dayers in Dubai in January next year.

International Cricket Council's High Performance Unit invited Bangladesh and Zimbabwe to play a tournament in Dubai involving the Associate member countries -- Afghanistan, Ireland, Scotland and UAE -- who have qualified for the World Cup to be held in Australia and New Zealand from February 14 to March 29.

"There is a proposal from the ICC to send the team to Dubai and play some matches before the World Cup. In principle we have agreed in today's [Wednesday's] meeting that we should take the opportunity and we will send a proposal to the [BCB] board for the final decision," said BCB director and media committee chairman Jalal Yunus after the meeting of cricket operations committee.

The Zimbabwean authority has already requested BCB to play three ODIs in their country as part of preparation for the World Cup.

"We are in favour of the Dubai trip as our coach also recommended playing there as there are some pitches similar to the ones down under and on the other hand there is possibility of rain in January in Zimbabwe. The Dubai event

SAFF WOMEN'S C'SHIP BD bow out from semis

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh were eliminated from the 3rd SAFF Women's Championship after suffering a 0-1 defeat against Nepal in the second semifinal at the Jinnah Football Stadium in Islamabad yesterday.

A 56th minute spot-kick, by Sanjana Rana decided the outcome in favour of the Himalayans, who had previously beaten Bangladesh 3-0 in the semifinal of the first edition in 2010.

Bangladesh coach Norio Tsukitate said his side were unlucky not to score a goal, according to information provided from the Bangladesh Football Federation.

Meanwhile, India thrashed Sri Lanka 5-0 in the first semifinal to set up the final clash against Nepal for Friday, which would be a repeat of the first two finals, where India emerged winners on both occasions.

Bansal given one week's time

SPORTS REPORTER

Indian coach AK Bansal has been given one week's time by the Bangladesh Hockey Federation (BHF) to get his necessary permission from Indian sports authority to coach the Bangladesh national team ahead of January's World Hockey League (Round-2).

Bansal, who is involved with a government sports institution in Patiala, is yet to acquire a no-objection certificate from the Indian sports ministry three weeks after BHF decided to appoint him as the head coach.

"I talked to Bansal yesterday (Tuesday) and requested him to obtain his necessary permission within the next one week. If he fails to do so, we will start searching for another foreign coach as the World Hockey League is coming close," said wing commander Rafiul Huq, representative of the BHF president.

Meanwhile, the BHF Coaches' Committee yesterday recommended three local coaches -- Mamunur Rashid, Alamgir Alam and Zahid Hossain Raju -- to run the national team's camp from November 22 in BKSP until a foreign coach takes over.

A series of experiments

NAIMUL KARIM from Chittagong

It's never the best of signs when a team goes into an ODI series, prior to the World Cup, without a number of its regular players. Circumstances in Bangladesh's cricket this year has been as such that the management have been compelled to replace some of their experienced players with younger ones, who are now aiming for spots in the major event next year.

Abdur Razzak, who has been sidelined due to a hamstring injury, has been replaced by Arafat Sunny. Even though the veteran slow left-arm is expected to get fit soon, he may not be a sure shot for the event in Australia and New Zealand. He played just six out of the 13 ODIs the Tigers played this year and has a disappointing average of a 112.33. For Arafat, who debuted just this year, the upcoming series remains a golden opportunity.

The other two players in focus would be the uncapped duo of Sabbir Rahman and Jubair Hossain. While Sabbir is expected to perform Nasir Hossain's duties at number seven, Jubair has been fast-tracked in place of Shohag Gazi.

For a batsman, who was the most consistent player for the Tigers in his initial years, Nasir's fall this year has been alarming. He averaged 20 this year and has scored just 99 runs in 7 Test innings. Sabbir, who has shown promise in domestic competitions both as a batsman and as a fielder, might have to shoulder the responsibility of holding the tail in this series.

Shohag is in a race against time to correct his bowling action. He is expected to give the re-test before the World Cup next year, but there remains a hint of uncertainty. In a bid to bring in variety to the attack the selectors have brought in leg-spinner Jubair. While the 19-year-old has impressed in the Tests, the one-day format will be

a completely different ball game and the upcoming series will be a litmus test to see how far he can go.

The other issue that the selectors will want to put a lid on is Bangladesh's number three batsman. The position has perennially been a problem for the Tigers. The issue was seemingly resolved after the arrival of Mominul Haque, who with 375 runs in 13 matches is already the fifth highest run-getter for Bangladesh in this position.

However, this year Bangladesh have used two other batsmen in this position -- Mohammad Mithun and Imrul Kayes -- and it's still not certain if Mominul has sealed his spot.

While a series win will no doubt be the Tigers' priority this winter, but by the looks of things there are a lot more issues that need to be resolved within the next month; and the Zimbabwe series, which starts tomorrow, perhaps is their last chance to experiment.

Navy edge closer

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Navy edged closer to the title of the Walton Premier Division Chess League as they maintained their solo lead at the close of the eighth round yesterday.

Navy defeated Sultana Kamal Smriti Pathagar by straight 4-0 points at the Bangladesh Olympic Association yesterday to raise their tally to 14. Navy will be facing Bangladesh Navy Junior team in the final round today.

Holders Mohammedan, meanwhile, have 12 points after they beat Pritam-Prism Chess Club by 4-0 points yesterday. Mohammedan will take on Titas Club in today's match.

Pacers were fantastic: Streak

NAIMUL KARIM from Chittagong

In essence it may seem as though Heath Streak hasn't had a lot to do in the series so far. After all, there isn't much that a pace-bowling coach can do when his quick bowlers get to bowl single-spell overs on tracks tailored for turners.

However, behind the scenes, Streak has been steadily working on forming the right pace-bowling combination for the Tigers in the World Cup in Australia and New Zealand next year, where teams with good pacers are expected to have an edge. And he was happy with what he saw in the Tests.

"In the first Test Shahadat's [Hossain] wickets were really important. Yes the spinners did the job on that wicket, but Shahadat got [Vusumuzi] Sibanda and [Hamilton] Masakadza, which were key wickets.

"Shafiul [Hossain] and Rubel [Hossain] were fantastic as well. I have done some good work with both of them and they are starting to show some good signs. If you look at their career strike rates and what they did in this series, they performed much better and in much tougher bowling conditions," said Streak.

The inclusion of Mashrafe Bin Mortaza and Al-Amin Hossain are bound to make the pace attack a lot stronger. However Streak wants to further develop players like Abul Hasan and Shafiul and he hopes that they can make an appearance in the upcoming series. Abul, who has been recovering from an injury, has been included in a 30-player list, according to Streak, submitted for the World Cup.

"We have to cut that list to 15 by early January. Maybe some of them will get a chance sometime in the series. But we can't take Zimbabwe lightly. We need to play our best team and try and win the series. Maybe if we get into the right position then we can expose one or two of these guys," said Streak.

This series could well be the last opportunity for the Tigers to prepare themselves for the major event. While it's still not sure how many pacers can be exposed here, Streak tries his best to include as many as he can in the practice matches. Yesterday for instance, Abul, Shafiul and Mohammad Shahid, all took two wickets each. Shafiul in particular looked very good.

Despite the dearth of matches prior to the World Cup, the Zimbabwean reckons that there's enough time to prepare the bowlers.



Dropped from the national side, Nasir Hossain seemed to have found form, scoring 61 runs for the BCB XI against Zimbabweans yesterday, but it may be too late. PHOTO: STAR

'We can win by a big margin'

SPORTS REPORTER from Chittagong

Zimbabwe's poor run in Bangladesh continued as they slumped to a thumping 88-run defeat against a BCB XI in the lone practice match prior to the five-match ODI series at the Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium yesterday.

Batting first on a track that seemed to have assisted the pacers, the hosts posted 282, courtesy of a half-century from Nasir Hossain and a quick-fire 33 from Abul Hasan, who hit four sixes, towards the end. In reply, the visitors, who apart from Elton Chigumbura, had most of their first-team members playing, were bundled out for 194 in 45.3 overs.

BCB XI captain Anamul Haque, who is also on the squad for the first

two one-day internationals, reckoned that the visitors were demoralised following the 3-0 Test defeat and hopes that the Tigers can use that as an advantage in the upcoming ODI matches.

"Throughout 2014 we lost a number of close matches and as a result we were mentally a bit down. The case with Zimbabwe at the moment might be similar. They may be morally down and we need to use that to our advantage," Anamul told reporters after the match.

"Our bowlers bowled really well and they [Zimbabweans] also did not have two or three of their main players. If they comeback they will be stronger. But I believe that if we can play to the best of our ability, we can win this series by a big margin," he added.

He however also warned that there was no room for complacency

despite being in a strong position. "In an ODI it takes one batsman or bowler to change the course of the game. It will be a good fight. So we really have to give it our best," said Anamul.

The Tigers practised under lights yesterday. Apart from Shakib Al Hasan and Tamim Iqbal, who were rested by the team management, the remaining players were present. The players began with a fielding session with special focus on dew that forms here in the evening. After that they went through their routines in the nets.

SCORES IN BRIEF

BCB XI: 282 all out in 50 overs (Nasir 61, Shamsur 49; Sibanda 4-44)

ZIMBABWEANS: 194 all out in 45.3 overs (Maruma 50, Raza 44; Shafiul 2-24) Result: BCB XI won by 88 runs.

NSC moves to solve DFA issues

SPORTS REPORTER

In an effort to make District Football Associations (DFA) functional and reduce differences between the DFAs and District Sports Associations (DSA), a 12-member committee of the National Sports Council (NSC) sat for a meeting yesterday where they discussed about DFAs problems and solution to those.

Since their formation in 64 districts in line with FIFA recommendation in 2008, the DFAs, which are non-affiliated bodies of the NSC, have been struggling to get grounds from DSAs and to get government funds to run the district competitions. Government fund to run the DFAs is something that the Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) is also pushing the government for the last six years.

"We have specified the problems, the solutions to which are also not difficult. I am hopeful that we can submit our recommendations to the higher authority after a couple of meetings," said Narayan Chandra Devnath, the convener of the committee and the sports director of the NSC, after the meeting.

"However, the NSC will have to come forward with financial package if it really wants to promote football across the country," added Devnath.