

SPORT

KING OF SELFIES

AS Roma captain Francesco Totti celebrated his first brace this season by taking a 'selfie' after he levelled for the Serie A title challengers in the city derby against Lazio on Sunday. 'The King of Rome' scored his 239th goal in Serie A and he celebrated in style, taking a mobile phone from one of Roma's coaching staff and snapping a photo of



Rubel free to play WC

COURT CORRESPONDENT

National team cricketer Rubel Hossain was released from the Dhaka Central Jail yesterday afternoon, hours after securing bail in a rape case filed against him by film actress Naznin Akter Happy. According to Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) officials and Rubel's lawyer, the player will now be available to play for Bangladesh in the World Cup.

The pacer walked out of the prison at around 4:45pm, Farman Ali, senior jail super of the Dhaka jail, told The Daily Star.

Earlier in the day, Judge (in-charge) KM Imrul Kayes of the Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court of Dhaka granted Rubel bail till submission of the police report, after hearing his petition.

During yesterday's hearing, defence lawyers told the court that Rubel was selected for the upcoming ICC World Cup and that he had to leave for Australia on January 24.

The defence further said that if he is not granted bail then there would be an irreparable loss to the country, adding that the charge brought against Rubel was not primarily proven.

On the other hand, the prosecution remained silent and added that they assisted for granting bail to the cricketer considering it as a national issue.

BCB director Akram Khan yesterday told reporters that they were relieved to see Rubel walk out of jail.

"60 per cent of our fast bowlers generally struggle with injury issues so we are relieved that we can consider him now. He is fit, experienced and would have been our first option.

"He was a little tense yesterday, but I am sure that he will be fine for the World Cup after getting bail. Hopefully he can give it his all in the World Cup," said Akram.

Chief selector Faruque Ahmed echoed Akram's views and was happy after the bowler received bail.



RUBEL HAPPY: Bangladesh pacer Rubel Hossain is escorted out of the Dhaka Central Jail after he was granted bail yesterday afternoon. PHOTO: STAR

Gayle blitz sets up record chase

AFP, Johannesburg

Chris Gayle blasted 90 off 41 balls as the West Indies achieved a world record run chase in the second Twenty20 international on Sunday to beat South Africa by four wickets.

South Africa captain Faf du Plessis hit a 46-ball century in his team's total of 231 for seven -- their second highest total in the shortest form of the game. But it was overhauled with four balls to spare on a record-breaking day at the Wanderers with West Indies captain Darren Sammy finishing the match with a six to take his team to 236 for six.

Man of the match Gayle was again the star for the West Indies as he shared a second wicket stand of 152 off 75 balls with Marlon Samuels, who made 60.

It was astonishing batting by both teams in ideal conditions on a field where the world record 50-overs run chase was achieved by South Africa when they scored 438 for nine against Australia in 2005/06. The previous T20 record chase was 211 for four by India against Sri Lanka in Mohali in 2009/10.

The tempo of the match was set when Du Plessis and David Miller (47) put on 103 off 49 balls for South Africa's third wicket. Du Plessis hit five sixes and 11 fours, while Miller hit three sixes and four fours off 26 balls.

West Indies raced to 86 for one in the six-over power play, with Gayle and Samuels posting a fifty partnership off 21 balls. Samuels scored 60 off 39 balls with seven fours and two sixes.

South Africa were still in with a chance when medium-pacer David Wiese had Gayle caught behind in the 14th over and followed up with the wickets of Samuels and Kieron Pollard, both caught at long-on, in his next over.

At that stage the West Indies still needed 47 off 25 balls. Two more wickets fell but Sammy clinched the win by hitting an unbeaten 20 off seven balls, finishing the match by slamming Marchant de Lange into the crowd beyond midwicket.

South African opening bowler Kyle Abbott conceded a world record 68 in his four overs.

SCORES IN BRIEF:

SOUTH AFRICA: 231 for 7 in 20 overs (Du Plessis 119, Miller 47, Ongeles 19; Holder 2-40, Bravo 2-32)

WEST INDIES: 236 for 6 in 19.2 overs (Gayle 90, Samuels 60, Sammy 20 not out; Wiese 3-43, Abbott 1-68)

Result: West Indies won by 4 wickets.

Player-of-the-match: Chris Gayle.



TIGERS DOWN UNDER

Which Tamim will show up?

NAIMUL KARIM

Look up on the Youtube for Tamim Iqbal's debut World Cup knock eight years ago, when the left-handers booming drives against Zaheer Khan in Trinidad left India bewildered; you will find that the views-counter is still ticking at a rapid pace.

Tamim's aggressive 51 had given the Tigers a good start to their chase; but more than that, it instilled in the team a belief that they can take on any team at the highest level of the game; and that obstacles such as experience could be overcome to beat a team which comprised three of South Asia's legendary cricketers.

Eight years on, Tamim is headed towards his third appearance in the World Cup, albeit in a comparatively different avatar.

A change in the left-hander's batting approach in the recent past suggests that the mega event in Australia and New Zealand may not necessarily witness a flamboyant Tamim. In fact, he may be more noticeable for his calm approach this time.

Tamim's most sought-after knocks in 2014 have come in Test cricket where he batted out a whole day for the first time in his career and subsequently scored the slowest century by a Bangladeshi batsman.

The batsman's career statistics suggest a shift in approach too. His strike-rate in the longer version has hovered around the mid 40s since 2012 whereas prior to that period the strike-rate was 60.15.



TAMIM IQBAL

ODIs have seen a similar transformation too. Tamim's strike-rate in the last two years have been in the mid 60s, which is considerably less than what it was (83) between 2008 and 2012.

National selector Habibur Bashar reckons the change in approach could play a positive role for the Tigers in the World Cup.

"Everyone goes through changes in their batting style during their career. Earlier he used

to give us good starts and our run-rate would climb to 5 to 5.50 at the beginning but he wasn't really consistent. Now with the changed approach, Tamim will be more consistent for sure.

"The good thing is that now Tamim knows that he can bat both ways; so he can change his style according to the need of the team. It's a big plus for him," Bashar believes.

Bashar reckons that there would be a lot more responsibility on Tamim's shoulders this time around, compared to the previous two World Cups.

"Honestly speaking, our success in those conditions would depend on how well our top order batsmen can negotiate the new ball and for that a lot will depend on Tamim," says Bashar.

"There are times when players have to decide what is good for them. I am sure nobody has asked Tamim to change his style. But maybe a new realization has dawned upon him and it's not necessarily a bad thing," added the former national captain.

The south-paw opener is expected to return to the country this week from Australia, where he underwent a surgery on his left knee. As he gets set to join the national training camp, which begins today, there will be several questions regarding his game-plan this time around.

Perhaps the time has come for his short cameos on Youtube to be replaced by innings' which hold together the backbone of Bangladesh's batting line-up.

Federer's 1,000th victory

AFP, Brisbane

Roger Federer brought up his 1,000th victory at tour level in style Sunday when he beat Canadian Milos Raonic in three tough sets to win the Brisbane International.

He is third on the all-time list for matches won, behind Jimmy Connors (1,253) and Ivan Lendl (1,071).

Federer was forced to absorb some superb shotmaking and blistering serves from the 24-year-old before winning 6-4, 6-7 (2/7), 6-4 in two hours and 13 minutes at Pat Rafter Arena.

Federer's glittering career now includes 83 singles titles, including 17 Grand Slams, since his first victory over Frenchman Guillaume Raoux in Toulouse in 1998.

BHF distributes hockey kits

SPORTS REPORTER

The Bangladesh Hockey Federation (BHF) yesterday distributed sports gears among 21 schools of four districts -- Dhaka, Narayanganj, Munshiganj and Narsingdi ahead of the First Security Islami Bank National School Hockey Championship, which will get underway from January 31 in 11 different venues.

The sports gears include jerseys, sports shoes, sticks, balls and goalkeeping sets.

'Sometimes I kept silent'

SPORTS REPORTER



Rasel Mahmud Jimmy, arguably the most talented hockey player of his generation, is determined to make his mark again as the national hockey team left for Malaysia yesterday for warm-up matches ahead of the Hockey World League (Round-2) in Singapore this month.

The 28-year-old forward feels relieved to be part of the national set-up again after serving a one-year suspension when he had to face a lot of queries around the team. "I faced a lot of questions from people around me. They

wanted to know what was the problem, what happened to me, why I was not with the national team, how I felt staying away from the team, and so on. Sometimes I tried to give answers; sometimes I kept silent and felt embarrassed. But now everything is past and I am happy to be part of the national team again," said Jimmy at the team's congregation at the Maulana Bhasani Hockey Stadium on the eve of their departure yesterday.

"Now everyone including my parents is waiting to see how I perform in the upcoming tournaments. It is a challenge for me to do well and get back to my old self," said a determined Jimmy, who was named as the best midfielder in the 2013 Hockey World League (Round-2) in Delhi.

When asked what would inspire him to do well after being out of action for one year, Jimmy said it was the game

itself that meant most. "I am what I am today because of the national team. People beyond the country know me due to hockey. Playing for the national team is the first inspiration for me and the second one is my hockey family where my father (former national hockey player Sona Mia) is a motivation," said Jimmy.

Jimmy is hopeful that the national team would put up a good performance compared to those of the recent past as he felt the coaches have had excellent work on fitness of the players, which is the main strength of this squad.

"Generally we collapse in the last quarter of the game due to lack of fitness. But this time our coaches worked on that area apart from how to press on the opposition and how to defend and I think we will play better than the recent past," said Jimmy.



Veteran forward Rasel Mahmud Jimmy (R) and newly-appointed captain Krishno Kumar (L) look up as Pushkor Khisha brings out his cell phone for a selfie during the national hockey team's congregation at the Maulana Bhasani Hockey Stadium yesterday. PHOTO: STAR

Clarke given time till Feb 21

AFP, Sydney

Selectors named Michael Clarke Sunday as captain of Australia's squad for next month's World Cup, with a fitness contingency should he not be able to play following recent hamstring surgery.

Clarke, who missed the final three Tests against India following the surgery, has been given until February 21 to prove his fitness for the one-day tournament.

"Captain Michael Clarke will lead our World Cup campaign should he recover from his injury," chief selector Rod Marsh said.

"He is one of the world's best batsmen and we want to give him every chance to prove his fitness for a tournament as important as this one.

"(By February 21) we want to be completely and utterly settled. What we don't want to talk about is people's fitness.

"We had to draw the line somewhere, we just couldn't keep it hanging on and on and on."

A standby player for Clarke has not been named however Marsh said that if he became unavailable, George Bailey would captain the side in his absence.

Clarke, 33, who has a history of chronic back/hamstring trouble, admitted he has a lot of work to do over the next six weeks, but was upbeat he will return as captain.

"I'm confident I'll be fit," Clarke said. "My focus is to get fully fit. However long that takes.

"It's really irrelevant what I think. That's what the selectors have gone with. That's the system.

"I have to get fit and healthy and get myself back on the park."

All-rounder Mitchell Marsh, who missed the recent Melbourne and Sydney Tests against India with hamstring trouble, was also named in a squad that contained few surprises.

Misbah to quit ODIs after World Cup

AFP, Lahore



Pakistan captain Misbahul Haq said Sunday he will quit one-day cricket after the World Cup. The 40-year-old said he has informed the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) of his decision although he intends to keep playing Test cricket.

Misbah becomes Pakistan's second senior player after Shahid Afridi to announce his one-day retirement after the World Cup which is being staged in Australia and New Zealand from February 14 to March 29.

"It's my final decision and I have informed the PCB of my decision," Misbah told AFP. "It would be icing on the cake if I retire with a World Cup win and I will do my best to do that. I've thought about this for a long time.

"The World Cup is an important event and I want to finish on a winning note," said Misbah, who will be playing his second World Cup after featuring in Pakistan's semifinal finish in 2011.

Misbah has so far played 153 one-day internationals, scoring 4,669 runs at an average of 42.83 with 37 fifties, the most runs without a hundred in all one-day internationals.

Misbah, who took over the Test captaincy in 2010, replaced Afridi as one-day leader in May 2011. He quit Twenty20 cricket in 2012.

Pakistan will fly to New Zealand on January 21 to play two one-day internationals on January 31 and February 3.

They will play two warm-up games on February 9 and 11 before taking on India in their first World Cup match in Adelaide on February 15.

WORLD CUP'S final squads

Australia, West Indies and United Arab Emirates (UAE) on Sunday announced 15-man final squads for the World Cup, to be played in Australia and New Zealand from February 14 to March 29.

AUSTRALIA

Michael Clarke (captain), George Bailey, Pat Cummins, Xavier Doherty, James Faulkner, Aaron Finch, Brad Haddin, Josh Hazlewood, Mitchell Johnson, Mitchell Marsh, Glenn Maxwell, Steve Smith, Mitchell Starc, David Warner, Shane Watson.

WEST INDIES

Jason Holder (captain), Marlon Samuels, Suliaman Benn, Darren Bravo, Jonathan Carter, Sheldon Cottrell, Chris Gayle, Sunil Narine, Denesh Ramdin, Kemar Roach, Andre Russell, Darren Sammy, Lendl Simmons, Dwayne Smith, Jerome Taylor.

UAE

Mohammed Tauqir (captain), Khuram Khan, Swapnil Patil, Saqlain Haider, Amjad Javed, Shaiman Anwar, Amjad Ali, Nasir Aziz, Rohan Mustafa, Manjula Guruge, Andri Berenger, Fahad Al Hashmi, Muhammad Naveed, Kamran Shahzad, Krishna Karate.

Kiwis ease to 1-0 lead

AFP, Christchurch

A cracking half-century by Brendon McCullum set New Zealand up for a comfortable three-wicket win over Sri Lanka in their first one-day international in Christchurch Sunday.

After McCullum's 51 in 19 balls had provided his side a comfortable target well under four an over, Corey Anderson stepped up with 81 to ensure the job was done.

Sri Lanka, electing to bat first, posted 218 for 9 on the back of Mahela Jayawardene's 104 in 107 balls.

It was the 18th ODI century for the 37-year-old, who was rarely in trouble by the New Zealand attack until caught in a wicket meltdown late in the late innings.

Sri Lanka had reason to believe their modest target was defendable when they removed Martin Guptill on the third ball of New Zealand's reply.

But for McCullum that was a signal to open up as he blazed away to bring up his 50 in just 19 deliveries with six fours and three sixes.

SCORES IN BRIEF

SRI LANKA: 218 for 9 in 50 overs (Dilshan 19, Jayawardene 104, Thirimanne 23; Milne 2-37, McClenaghan 4-36)

NEW ZEALAND: 219 for 7 in 43 overs (B McCullum 51, Anderson 81; Kulasekara 2-43, Dilshan 2-28)

Result: New Zealand won by 3 wickets.

Player-of-the-match: Corey Anderson.