

SPORT

A CROWN FOR FEET

Nike has created their first ever micro-diamond encrusted football boots to mark Cristiano Ronaldo's Ballon d'Or hat trick, which he will wear for the second leg of Real Madrid's Copa del Rey tie against Atletico Madrid on Thursday. Dubbed the Mercurial CR7 Rare Gold, the boots feature gold colouring to match Cristiano's new trophy. So don't be surprised if an Atletico player asks to swap boots with

- INTERNET



It feels great when someone from Bangladesh is on top of the world in all three formats. It obviously feels special to me. Hopefully I can continue performing for Bangladesh. Shakib reacts on his promotion in the ICC rankings

BCB may not send extra players

SPORTS REPORTER

The number of players travelling to Brisbane for the pre-World Cup camp will be decided in tomorrow's meeting of the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB).

A 15-member team was announced and pacer Shaiful Islam had been named as a stand-by player to fly with the team on January 24. Another additional player's name was supposed to be announced but it was learnt that the board was now hesitant to send two additional players, considering the expenses. The management said they found no good reason to send players from here, they would rather prefer to hire some good local net bowlers.

Shakib turns up Heat

SPORTS REPORTER



A day after becoming the world's No. 1 all-rounder in all three formats of cricket, Shakib Al Hasan produced an outstanding bowling performance to guide his side Melbourne Renegades to a crucial win over Brisbane Heat in the T20 Big Bash League yesterday.

The 27-year-old all-rounder, who became the first ever player to hold the top all-rounder's position at the same time after topping the ODI rankings on Monday, took four wickets for just 13 runs as the Renegades beat Brisbane Heat by five wickets at the Docklands Stadium in Melbourne yesterday.

Shakib's player-of-the-match performance earned him the best figures for a Renegades player in the Big Bash history and more importantly kept his side in with a chance of making it to the last four.

Shakib also took a catch and effected a

run-out as the visitors were wrapped up for just 80 runs, having batted first.

The ace-spinner, who had earlier taken three wickets in his previous two matches, however failed with the bat for the third time. Coming in at No. 6, Shakib managed to score only two before being caught at deep cover by Stephen Parry while trying to upper-cut a bouncer from Daniel Christian. The Renegades were five down for 39 at that time, but Ben Rohrer and Tom Beaton made sure they got over the line with no more casualties and with six overs to spare.

Shakib's Renegades, who are at sixth position on the eight-team table, will square off with his former side the Adelaide Strikers in their last round-robin match on January 19 at the same venue.

Shakib's performance will also encourage the Bangladesh team, who have two more left-arm spinners in their ranks, to thrive in the otherwise seaming conditions of Australia and New Zealand during the World Cup next month.

Du Plessis given rest Final Windies T20I today

AFP, Cape Town

South Africa will rest captain Faf du Plessis for the final Twenty20 international against West Indies in Durban on Wednesday as they seek to manage his long-term hip injury ahead of the 50-over World Cup.

Du Plessis scored the second fastest century in Twenty20 internationals, off 46 balls, on Sunday as South Africa lost the series to the tourists having gone 2-0 down with one to play. Middle-order batsman Justin Ontong will take over as captain for the final fixture.

"Faf has been rested for the last T20 as a precautionary measure ahead of a busy ODI period over the next three months," Proteas team manager Mohammed Moosa said in a statement released by Cricket South Africa on Tuesday.

"He has a longstanding hip niggle and any amount of rest will be beneficial to him in the long run."

Misbah to give all to win WC

AFP, Lahore



Retiring Pakistan captain Misbahul Haq vowed Tuesday to roll back the years and lead his team to victory in the World Cup starting in Australia and New Zealand next month.

Misbah, 40, on Sunday announced he would quit the one-day game after the mega-event in February and March.

He is one year older than Imran Khan was when Pakistan won its only World Cup in 1992, an event also held in Australia and New Zealand.

"For me it will be a big motivation to give whatever I can, whether it's physical, mental or skill-wise to finish on a high and do what the 1992 Pakistan team did -- win the World Cup," Misbah told reporters.

Pakistan start their campaign with a highly-charged opening game against arch-rivals and title-holders India.

They also face the West Indies, Zimbabwe, the United Arab Emirates, South Africa and Ireland in Group B, with the top four teams from two groups progressing to the quarter-finals.

Misbah said his players were "focused and determined" and he was confident they would adjust to the fast and bouncy Antipodean pitches.

Misbah became Pakistan's most successful Test captain with 15 wins last year, and has vowed to continue in the longer format.

He has also led Pakistan in 78 one-day internationals with 41 wins, 34 losses and three ties or no results.

Pakistan Cricket Board chairman Shaharyar Khan paid tribute to Misbah.

"We respect Misbah's decision to retire," Khan told reporters. "It's sad that a player of his calibre will leave one-day cricket."

"A mature and decent player like him is hard to find."

Ajmal action to be reassessed in Chennai

AFP, Lahore

Suspended Pakistan spinner Saeed Ajmal will have his bowling action reassessed in India this month as he tries to make a comeback to international cricket, an official said Tuesday.

The 37-year-old was ranked world number one in one-day internationals when his action was reported during the Galle Test in Sri Lanka in August last year. He was suspended by the International Cricket Council (ICC) a month later after a bio-mechanical analysis.

Ajmal last month withdrew from next month's World Cup after failing to completely alter his action, leaving Pakistan's bowling attack badly weakened.

Mohammad Akram, head coach of the Pakistan Cricket Board's national academy, said Ajmal would travel to the Indian city of Chennai for a reassessment.

"Ajmal will have his bowling action reassessed in Chennai on January 24 and he as well as we are confident that he will clear the test," Akram told AFP.



TIGERS DOWN UNDER

'Never wanted to remove his pads'

NAIMUL KARIM

Soumya Sarkar may be the newest entrant in Bangladesh's World Cup squad; but there are two aspects of his resume that can outshine a majority of the other cricketers in the current line-up. For one, he has a double century in under-19 cricket. He almost single-handedly annihilated a U-19 Qatar line-up during the Asia Cup in 2012 with his 135-ball 209.

And secondly, he is one of the few players in the squad to have played in Australia. Soumya, alongside Anamul Haque and Taskin Ahmed, was a member of the under-19 team that participated in the World Cup there back in 2012.

While his performance in the tournament was ordinary, the fact that he is in Bangladesh's best 15 two years on, speaks volumes about his determination.

There is a sense of delight watching Soumya bat at the top of the order. Maybe that's because of the fact that he follows a textbook style of batting with his right foot almost perennially reaching the pitch of the ball. Most of Bangladesh's batsmen tend to depend upon their natural flair. Tamim Iqbal has his hand-eye coordination; Mominul Haque identifies the length of the ball quite quickly; while Shakib Al Hasan depends a lot on aggression.

While it's still early days for the 21-year-old, Soumya seems to be inclined



Soumya Sarkar

more towards Mushfiqur Rahim's school of batting. And that's the reason why his 20 off 18 deliveries against Zimbabwe, although a short innings, was entertaining to watch.

The manner in which he got to the pitch of the deliveries and drove three of his four boundaries on the off-side, two of which were off bouncers, got quite a few spectators excited. While nervousness got the better of him on his ODI debut, he proved his class in the last Dhaka Premier League.

He was the fourth highest run-getter of the competition with 615. The final match of the meet, a must-win encounter for his side Prime Bank Cricket Club, saw him score a reassuring 97 to lead them home.

Prime Bank coach Khaled Mahmud described him as an exciting prospect for the country's future.

"The one thing that I always stress on as a coach is constantly telling my players to complete their training schedules. For Soumya though, that is never required. He never wanted to remove his pads. He just wanted to go on and on."

"He works hard and is a knowledgeable player as well. He also has good footwork. His first assignment will no doubt be a challenge, but I am sure he will be able to handle the pressure," opined Mahmud.

Soumya, who got out to a short ball in his first ever ODI, expects many more such deliveries in Australia and New Zealand and he is gearing up for that.

"I have begun practising against the short ball. The only way I can be comfortable over there is if I practise. I have been playing with tennis balls and plastic balls that bounce a lot, so that I can adjust," Soumya said following his practice session at Mirpur yesterday.

Described as a utility player by the team management, one who can bowl pace and bat at any position, Soumya's inclusion in the squad surprised the player himself. He told reporters that he didn't think he would make the team after playing just one ODI.

With none of the experienced back-up openers in form, the selectors took a gamble. While a similar move paid off for Faruque Ahmed and company back in 2007, only time will tell if a similar result is in store.



Fielding is one area the Tigers need to improve dramatically if they are to make an impression in the World Cup which starts in Australia and New Zealand from February 14.

PHOTO: STAR

Hockey team bounce back

SPORTS REPORTER

The Bangladesh national hockey team bounced back within a day of their 1-3 defeat against Malaysia U-21s by handing Malaysia U-23s a 5-1 defeat in the second practice match in Kuala Lumpur yesterday.

The Bangladesh team went ahead in the very first minute through a strike from Pushkor Khisha Mimo, who also struck another goal in the 48th minute.

Defenders Mohammad Ashraful and Khorshedur Rahman converted two penalty corners out of five while Rummon Sarker, who struck the lone goal against Malaysia U-21, struck another goal to complete the rout. The Bangladesh team are scheduled to face Oman in another practice match on Thursday in Singapore, where they will be taking part in the Hockey World League (Round-2) starting from January 17.

Assistant manager-cum-selector Rafiqul Islam Kamal informed that Bangladesh played much better than the first match and should have scored a couple of more goals in yesterday's match.

Int'l rating chess begins today

SPORTS REPORTER

Prime Bank 17th International Rating Chess Tournament begins today at the Bangladesh Chess Federation Hall Room.

The tournament has a total prize money of Tk 1.25 lakh. 80 players have already enrolled their names for the tournament, which will be held over nine rounds in Swiss-League format.

Meanwhile, Grand Master Ziaur Rahman lost his seventh round board against India's Niranjana Navalgund in the 13th Parsvnath International Chess tournament in New Delhi yesterday. Zia has four points from seven matches.

Four teams firm on league boycott

SPORTS REPORTER



Four hockey clubs including Mohammedan SC and Mariner Youngs Club yesterday reiterated their stance of not participating in the Premier Division Hockey League for the second successive season.

The decision was made after a meeting among the officials of Mohammedan, Mariner Youngs, Bangladesh Sporting Club and Wari Club at the Mohammedan Club tent after the Bangladesh Hockey Federation (BHF) had asked those clubs to send their representatives to the League Committee.

"I cannot understand why they asked us

to send representatives because our stance is uncertain as we did not take part in the Premier League last season. However, we are sticking to our previous decision of not taking part any competition under the existing illegal committee," said Mohammedan's hockey committee chairman Sajed A Adel yesterday.

However, Lokman Hossain Bhuiyan, director-in-charge of Mohammedan, believes there is still room for resolving the year-long deadlock between the federation and the clubs through discussion.

"Personally I have discussed the matter with the high-ups of the federation and officials of Abahani, but I think there is a lack of sincerity on their part," alleged Bhuiyan.

Del Potro's 1st in 10 months

AFP, Sydney



Juan Martin del Potro savoured the thrill of being on court again by winning his first match in 10 months since wrist surgery at the Sydney International on

Tuesday.

The giant Argentine, who is defending his Sydney title on a wildcard after his ranking sank to 338 due to his inactivity, had a 6-3, 7-6 (7/4) win over Ukraine's Sergiy Stakhovsky.

It set up the 2009 US Open champion and one-time world number four with a

second-round encounter with Italian top seed Fabio Fognini.

Just to be playing again was a triumph for del Potro after going under the knife last March on his left wrist, which forced him off the tour.

"It was a great moment for me. I think I played well to be in my first match after 10 months," he said.

"I served well. My forehand is still working out. So that's a good sign for the future."

"I need to work very hard to my backhands and my movements, but I think now is time to think about my comeback and enjoy this moment a lot," he added.