

SPORT

Blame it on rain

SPORTS REPORTER



The two scheduled fixtures of yesterday's Manyavar Bangladesh Premier League were postponed after heavy downpour turned the pitch at the Bangabandhu National Stadium unplayable.

Only seven minutes was played in the day's first match between Mohammedan SC and Rahmatganj MFS before referee Hannan Miron stopped play as heavy rain continued along with thunderbolts. Once rain relented, parts of the pitch became completely waterlogged, forcing the referee to call an end to the proceedings for the day.

The two postponed matches will be held today where the first match will begin from the eighth minute and with the same eleven that played the first seven minutes yesterday while the remaining fixtures will be bodily shifted.

However, the question regarding how an international venue becomes so unplayable in just half-an-hour's rain reigned supreme. The obvious answer is the poor drainage system at this multi-purpose venue, which is scheduled to host Afghanistan and Singapore for two friendlies later this month before hosting Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan for World Cup and Asian Cup Qualifiers in mid-June when the rainy season will set in.

"We don't have enough modern equipments to remove water quickly from the ground," said Fazlur Rahman Babul, chairman of the BFF grounds and facilities committee.

"Some parts of the pitch were waterlogged. The two flanks have become uneven due to frequent use of rollers and that is where water logs heavily," explained Babul. The veteran organiser also expressed his displeasure over the fact that crores of taka is being spent over renovation of the stadium but the authorities concerned never gave much thought about improving drainage system.



Parts of the playing surface of the Bangabandhu National Stadium were inundated by heavy downpour yesterday afternoon, forcing the two matches of the Bangladesh Premier League to be called off.



PHOTO: STAR

Shakib defends Chawla

AGENCIES, Mumbai

Bangladesh all-rounder Shakib Al Hasan defended Kolkata Knight Riders teammate Piyush Chawla for not taking the defending champions across the finish line with his bat in the last over of their IPL cricket match against Mumbai Indians.

"He (Pollard) bowled well, but we could have executed our shot selection better. Twelve runs in the last over always bring pressure on the batsmen. If you can't make the right selection it will be difficult. Sometimes it goes for you and other times, it goes against. We are all humans and we all make mistakes," said Shakib.

Shakib, who bowled superbly by taking 2 for 22 on his return, rued that his team had allowed over 70 runs at the death.

"They scored too many runs in last five overs; they scored around 70 runs, but it can happen in a T20 game. We did not play near our best."

T20 league for retired greats?

AFP, Sydney



Cricket greats Shane Warne and Sachin Tendulkar are planning to start a new Twenty20 competition for former international players, reports said Friday.

Unconfirmed reports say that Warne and Tendulkar have offered 28 big-name ex-players contracts worth \$US25,000 a match, with 15



We could soon be seeing some of the legends in this picture grace the field once again as Sachin Tendulkar and Shane Warne are planning a T20 league for the greats.

Twenty20 games planned for the Cricket All Stars League over a 42-month period.

Players believed to have been contacted include Australians Brett Lee, Ricky Ponting, Adam Gilchrist and Glenn McGrath, along with Michael Vaughan and Andrew Flintoff from England, and South African Jacques Kallis.

The Australian said none of the players it contacted wanted to discuss the proposal but there was concern about the push to sign a one-page contract with the promise of more details to follow.

Cricket Australia had no comment when

INDIA'S TOUR OF BANGLADESH Senior players to be rested?

AGENCIES, New Delhi

The Indian team is likely to travel to Bangladesh with a new Test captain. Virat Kohli has requested the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) to exclude him from the tour as he is keen on taking a break following a long cricket season. It is learnt

that the team is unlikely to include a head coach with the board yet to shortlist names for the role vacated by Duncan Fletcher. The tour to Bangladesh begins on June 10 with India set to play a lone Test and three ODIs.

Kohli replaced Mahendra Singh Dhoni as full-time Test captain after the long-standing skipper pulled the curtains on his career in the long format following the Boxing Day Test at the MCG last year. But sources have informed The Indian Express that Kohli has already spoken to BCCI secretary Anurag Thakur about wanting rest once the Indian Premier League gets over.

Sources in the BCCI said that barring Fletcher, the rest of the coaching staff are likely to be retained with Ravi Shastri set to remain as team director alongside Sanjay Bangar, Bharat Arun and R Sridhar.

Kohli, though, is not the only senior cricketer with hesitations over touring Bangladesh next month. The BCCI senior selection committee headed by Sandeep Patil is scheduled to pick the squad on May 20, and it's likely that they will go with a second-string outfit, an outcome that the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) is dreading.

"Kohli has confirmed that he wants a break. Many senior players don't want to travel to Bangladesh as they already have been touring a lot over the past one year. Few of them have requested for a break but the BCB wants at least some of the key players to be sent to Bangladesh as it will keep some interest alive with the TV viewers," a BCCI source said.

The source also confirmed that Fletcher's replacement is unlikely to be named in the coming days. "We haven't short-listed names of potential candidates who we think can coach the Indian team. The process is still in progress and it will take another month or so."



VIRAT KOHLI

'Zim tour will go on as planned'

DAWN.COM, Lahore

After much confusion about a scheduled visit in the aftermath of Wednesday's attack on Karachi's Ismaili community, Zimbabwe decided to go ahead with this month's cricket tour to Pakistan.

Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) Chairman Shaharyar Khan announced Zimbabwe's decision to reporters in Lahore.

"Zimbabwe Cricket chairman Wilson Manase called me three times to reaffirm that Zimbabwe would be touring Pakistan as per schedule," said Shaharyar.

Zimbabwe are due to arrive in Pakistan on May 22 to play three ODIs and two T20s.

A security team working under the supervision of Zimbabwe Cricket had expressed satisfaction over the tour, but security concerns rose after gunmen attacked the Ismaili community's bus in Karachi, killing at least 45 people.

Zimbabwe then decided to pull out of the tour but in a bizarre turnaround retracted its decision within 16 minutes.

The Zimbabwean board initially released a statement saying that a decision had been reached not to tour on the advice of Harare's Sports and Recreation Commission (SRC).

The SRC had previously cited concerns over the safety of the touring party, but after the news release was issued, the statement was withdrawn.

IN A NUTSHELL

Bell backs Root as captain

AFP, London

Ian Bell hailed Joe Root despite being replaced as vice skipper by his fellow batsman in this week's shake-up of English cricket.

Bell said that while disappointed to lose his role as Alastair Cook's deputy, he understood Strauss's reasons for the change.

"He sees Rooty as a future England captain," Bell said at a press conference.

"It's a smart move. He (Root) has got a good cricket brain. It will be good for him to learn a few more things."

"We've got to start looking forward -- and Joe Root is an England captain of the future, there's no doubt about that," Bell said of the 24-year-old Yorkshireman.

Stars meet visually impaired children

AGENCIES, Mohali

A group of ten visually impaired children from the Institute of the Blind in Chandigarh got a rare opportunity to play cricket with their favourite stars from Kings XI Punjab.



The children played alongside KXIP skipper George Bailey, Glenn Maxwell, Rishi Dhawan, Manan Vohra and other players.

"It makes us feel very fortunate to be able to share time with them, it's great to see them enjoying the game of cricket. It is just lovely to see joy on their faces and be able to meet players like Glenn Maxwell and be able to see the skill and ability in playing the game," Bailey said when asked how it felt.

The kids played with an audible ball, which is specially used for the visually impaired.

'I didn't mislead Pietersen'

BBC

New England and Wales Cricket Board chairman Colin Graves says he did not mislead Kevin Pietersen over a potential recall to the England side.

Graves insists he "did not make any promises" to the 34-year-old. He added in a statement: "Kevin was told on Monday and I completely support the decision that was taken. He may not have liked what he heard but it allowed him to look at his opportunities."

"Despite everything, he can work with us to rebuild the relationship and make a further contribution to English cricket. It was important he knew where he stood."

BCCI plans 'mini-IPL'

AGENCIES, New Delhi

The BCCI, unhappy with the lack of interest for the Champions League Twenty20, has come up with a mini-IPL in the UAE.

The new tournament will feature the top four IPL teams that have made the playoffs this year, and will be played in a league format leading to a knockout phase.

Federer in last four

AFP, Rome



Roger Federer remained on course for a semifinal clash with Spanish rival Rafael Nadal at the Italian Open after cruising past Tomas Berdych 6-3, 6-3 in just over an hour on Friday.

Federer has made the final in Rome three times in the past 12 years but has been beaten on every occasion -- twice by Nadal and once by Felix Mantilla, in 2003.

The 33-year-old Swiss could now meet Nadal, the seven-time champion, in the last four if the Spaniard overcomes Swiss Stan Wawrinka in their quarterfinals scheduled for 1900 GMT on Friday.

The old foes have met 15 times on clay with Nadal leading Federer 13-2 on his favoured red surface.

Federer admitted it will be a "huge challenge" to overcome the fancied Spaniard.

"Everyone who has played against Nadal knows he's the best mover on clay, on both



Roger Federer celebrates after beating Tomas Berdych in the Italian Open quarterfinals in Rome yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

Ganguly's new role

AGENCIES, New Delhi

BCCI's plans to improve Indian cricket by bringing in former captains Sachin Tendulkar, Sourav Ganguly and Rahul Dravid as advisors seem to be well on track.

NDTV has learnt that BCCI secretary Anurag Thakur has started the task of negotiating with the Big Three.

Ganguly's proposed role, said sources, would require him to work across the board. He is being offered the role of High Performance Manager of Team India, along the lines of Cricket Australia. He is understood to have been told to prepare a blueprint on how the Indian team can perform better abroad.

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