

SPORT



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New-look Oz for BD tour?

AGENCIES, Melbourne

Reeling under a spat of retirements, Australia are ready to give their Test cricket team a facelift. And the focus, surely, is in the batting department.

According to reports, Cricket Australia have all but finalised their top three batsman for the upcoming two-Test tour of Bangladesh.

News Corp reported that Joe Burns and Shaun Marsh would be given the opening roles while Usman Khawaja is expected to bat first down, thus allowing Steve Smith to bat in his favourite fourth.

Chris Rogers retirement and David Warner's recent thumb injury have caused Australia's opening woes.

The report also claimed that uncapped Cameron Bancroft is set to be named in the Test squad. The Western Australian batsman impressed during Australia A's recent tour of India.

All-rounder James Faulkner is also expected to get a Test recall following his impressive county stint.

With Brad Haddin's retirement, the wicket-keeper's position is all but assured for Peter Nevill, who impressed in the Ashes tour.

In the spin department, Fawad Ahmed, Ashton Agar and Stephen O'Keefe are likely to fight for the second spot and join Nathan Lyon in the attack, considering the nature of pitches in Bangladesh.

India plans biggest stadium

PTI, Ahmedabad


After reconstruction and a make-over, the Sardar Patel Cricket Stadium will be the biggest cricket stadium in the world in terms of seating capacity, Gujarat Cricket Association said.

"The stadium will be converted into Melbourne-like cricket stadium, which will be the biggest cricket stadium in the world," said a statement.

The new stadium will seat 1,00,000 people.

The ultimate match-up

AFP, New York



A dreary weekend forecast calls for a 65 percent chance of thundershowers on Saturday and a 75 percent chance for the same on Sunday for the men's final between top-ranked Novak Djokovic and second-ranked Roger Federer.

Rain had forced the men's final to be delayed until Monday from 2008 through 2012, pushing the US Open to construct the new roof, the superstructure framework for which stands around Ashe this year.

Federer hopes to ride a wave of emotion as he targets a sixth US Open title and 18th major Sunday in a "straight shootout" against world number one Djokovic.

Federer, 34, is bidding to become the oldest champion in New York since 35-year-old Australian Ken Rosewall in 1970.

Federer also has the crowd on his side as he pursues his first Grand Slam title since Wimbledon in 2012.

"I definitely think if there would be more on my side that will give me a lift and extra energy and momentum possibly. That could swing the match a little bit," said Federer, aware that despite his



ROGER FEDERER		NOVAK DJOKOVIC	
21	HEAD TO HEAD	20	
5	US Opens Titles	1	
Single-handed backhand	Weak-Link	Second serve	
Forehand	Strongest Point	Backhand	
Most memorable US Open match: 2011 US Open Semifinals: Djokovic won 6-7(7-9), 4-6, 6-3, 6-2, 7-5			

status as world number one, Djokovic often struggles to command a crowd's respect.

"But other than that, obviously

Novak is a great player. Both of us have played in all tough conditions, and you've got to play well to beat him. There is no question

about that." There could be spiky sub-plots. Djokovic has been almost dismissive of Federer's new chip-and-

charge off a second serve.

"I haven't considered doing that. It's an exciting shot for him. For the player opposite side of the net, not so much. So I have nothing else to say about that," said the Serb on Friday.

Federer says he knows what to expect from Djokovic.

"With Novak it's been more straightforward. That's what I like about the rivalry. I feel like he doesn't need to adjust his game as much," said the Swiss.

"I think it's just a straight shootout, and I think that's the cool thing about our rivalry."

"It's very athletic. We both can handle each other -- whatever we present to one another, and I think our matches are very even."

Had it not been for Wawrinka defeating Djokovic and claiming the French Open title, the Serb could have been pondering history on Sunday with a calendar Grand Slam.

"We all know how consistent Roger is and how good he is in the latter stages of a Grand Slam and any other big tournament," said Djokovic, a nine-time major winner.

"He's always going to perform on a high level. Rarely he drops his level. He always makes you play your best."

Streak to coach BD A

SPORTS REPORTER

As four leading pacemen were included in the Bangladesh A team, the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) decided to appoint senior team bowling coach Heath Streak as the head coach of the second-string side during their fortnight-long tour of India.

During their two-week trip, the Bangladesh A team - led by Mominul Haque and featuring 14 international players out of 15 in team -- will play three one-day matches and one three-day against their Indian counterparts, and they will also play a three-day against Ranji Trophy champions Karnataka.

The four pacemen whose duty Streak has been entrusted with are Rubel Hossain, Taskin Ahmed, Al-Amin Hossain and Shafiqul Islam. The team think-tank considers the tour as an opportunity for some players to show their characters ahead of the two-match Test series against Australia at home.

The A side will leave for India tomorrow.

Feni face N'ganj in final today

SPORTS REPORTER



Feni and Narayanganj captains yesterday claimed that the extra 10 day break ahead of their BFF-Sailor National Under-15 Championship final has allowed the teams to recover from injuries and prepare well. The final of the nationwide competition, which was deferred from September 2 due to torrential rain and the resulting poor condition of the Bangabandhu National Stadium (BNS) pitch, will take place at the same venue today at 5:00pm.

State-owned Bangladesh Television will telecast the match live.

Feni captain Iftekhar Hossain Kounik said the final will be a big occasion and he wants it to be a memorable one.

"We have always watched the national players play at the BNS. Now that we will play at this venue in such a crucial match, we will try to make the most of the occasion by winning the final," said the right-back during a press briefing at the BFF House, adding that the 10-day break was a blessing in disguise.

Narayanganj captain Antar Kumar, who is also the goalkeeper of the team, said: "We are obviously a bit nervous ahead of the final as our district's hopes lie with us. Narayanganj has a rich history in football and we will play to win tomorrow [Sunday]."

The tournament featured 61 teams in the first round which started on June 29. The final round featuring eight zonal champions started in Dhaka from August 22.

Zia takes Russian GM to tie-break

SPORTS REPORTER


Bangladeshi Grandmaster Ziaur Rahman drew his reverse fixture of the first round against Russian Grandmaster Evgeny Tomashevsky in the Chess World Cup in Baku, Azerbaijan yesterday to take the match into a tiebreak, which will be held today.

Zia, seeded 117th, who had drawn the first game playing with white pieces against the 12th seeded Russian on Friday, forced a draw after 29 moves in yesterday's game, while playing with black pieces.

Zia was eliminated from the first round in last year's world cup after losing by 0.5-1.5 points against Israeli Grandmaster Boris Gelfand.

'Shahadat can't be spared'

SPORTS REPORTER



Bangladesh national pace bowler Shahadat Hossain, who has been accused of torturing a house-help, is likely to be suspended from taking part in any of the Bangladesh Cricket Board's (BCB) activities.

BCB president Nazmul Hassan Papon, during a programme yesterday, said that the board 'does not want to keep any attachment' with the 29-year-old until the investigation regarding the issue is finished.

"Shahadat Hossain's issue is very clear. Judging by what we have seen on the media, I don't think any one, let alone I, the BCB, or any other human being can spare him. It's absolutely unacceptable," said Papon.

"Many of you [media] probably already know this. He had come to see me. And I declined to meet him. It's something that I never do. What will I tell him? I have nothing to do here. The law will take its own course.

"If he is indeed guilty then I have to say that what he has done is absolutely disgraceful. Nobody will spare him

and there is no question of the BCB being different. As long as the investigation is on, we don't want to keep any attachment with him. We are quiet now and we want to remain quiet," added the BCB president.

Asked if the BCB would officially bar the bowler from taking part in the upcoming cricket competitions, Papon said, "The board will take a decision. But there is a high chance for him to stay out of cricket."

"If you ask me, then there's a huge possibility he will be barred from any cricketing activities until the final decision regarding the issue comes out," added Papon.

The president's statement indicates that the player in all likelihood will not be able to take part in the National Cricket League which is scheduled to begin next week.

Earlier last week, his 11-year-old house help alleged that Shahadat and his wife had tortured her. A case has also been filed with the Mirpur Police Station against the couple under the Women and Children Repression and Prevention Act.

The girl, ever since, has been receiving treatment at the Dhaka Medical College Hospital.

The pacer has been on the run ever since, with police trying to track him down.


Two days after the 11-year-old brought the charges, protests against the cricketer and his wife spilled over onto the streets.

The Network for Establishing Domestic Helps' Rights had formed a human chain in front of the capital's Jatiya Press Club on Tuesday, demanding arrest of the couple.

Shahadat, who played 38 Tests and 51 ODIs, suffered a right-knee injury while playing the second Test against Pakistan in May this year and has been out ever since.

Nat'l meet paints sorry picture

SPORTS REPORTER



With only four months remaining for the 12th South Asian Games, the athletes provided a sorry picture about Bangladesh's hopes with some dismal display in the 39th National Athletics Championship, which concluded yesterday. There were no new national records set in the three-day meet, which was held via hand-timing, as the electronic timer has been left unused for over two years.

Athletics coaches and officials of several teams expressed their disappointment about the overall status of the sport, while some questioned the timing of the meet.

"This was not an appropriate time for the national championship, which should have been held in winter. If it was held a few months later, the results might have been a bit better," said Brojogopal Saha, BJMC camp commander-cum-coach.

"Now it all depends on which players the federation chooses and how they prepare those athletes in the remaining time for the SA Games, but I don't see much hope for medals."

Kitab Ali, a former coach of the national team, said the overall standard of athletics has gone down drastically over the years.

"Contrary to the rest of the world, our current athletes produce timings which are far higher than what their predecessors used to produce 20-30 years ago. Late sprinter Shah Alam won the 100m gold medal in the 1984 SAF Games clocking 10.70 seconds, while the current fastest sprinter Mezbah (Ahmed) clocked 11.13 seconds in the World Athletics Championship recently," lamented the veteran organiser, citing a number of other examples.

Bangladesh won only two silver and four bronze medals from athletics in the 11th SA Games which was held in Dhaka back in 2010 and that too after more than a year's training. But this time the coaches are expecting lesser medals, if any, as the athletes are getting only five months to prepare.

Meanwhile, the meet ended yesterday with Bangladesh Army consolidating its dominance, bagging 56 medals including 20 gold, followed by Bangladesh Navy, who collected 28 medals including 15 gold.



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