

Ban for Pak players in BPL again?

PTI, Karachi

The Pakistan cricket authorities are employing the wait and watch policy with the Bangladesh Cricket Board. They will only allow their players to play in the Bangladesh Premier League if the BCB sends its women's team for the scheduled tour of Pakistan. Reliable sources in the PCB told PTI that the board has yet not taken a policy decision on whether to allow its players to sign up for teams in the BPL.

"The board wants to see first whether the Bangladesh board sends its national women's team to Pakistan later this month or in October," a source said.

The Bangladesh board is yet to give confirmation if they have accepted invitation of the PCB to send their women's team.

Relations between Pakistan and Bangladesh boards have not been very cordial since the last three years, the origin of the dispute being the failure of the BCB to send its national team to Pakistan for a limited over series in 2012/13. The PCB didn't take kindly to the BCB refusing to send its team on security grounds after a MOU was signed between the two boards under which Pakistan agreed to support the nomination of Mustafa Kamal for the ICC President's post in return for Bangladesh sending its team.

Time for 'A' BATTLE



It may be a series of the second-string sides, but excitement will be at full throttle when Mominul Haque (L) leads Bangladesh A against Unmukt Chand's (R) India A in the first one-dayer in Bangalore today. The match starts at 9:30am Bangladesh time.

SPORTS REPORTER

It may not be a battle between two national teams, but when the three-match one-day series between visitors Bangladesh A and India A kicks-off at the M Chinnaswamy Stadium in Bangalore from 9am local time, there will be no shortage of interest from cricket lovers.

It was said that this series had created an opportunity for the Bangladesh players to hog the lime-light ahead of their home series against Australia. However, under the leadership of Mominul Haque, it will be more important that the strong second-string Bangladesh

side uphold the reputation the senior team has achieved through an attacking brand of cricket they have been playing since the World Cup in New Zealand and Australia.

Everyone will be looking forward to seeing how the team -- which drafted 14 internationals in its 15-member squad -- performs away from home after the senior team's historic ODI series victory at home against MS Dhoni's India in June this year.

Can new batting sensation Soumya Sarkar continue his impressive form? How will skipper Mominul take the opportunity to revive his ODI career? These burning questions will be the centre of attention, apart from the other batsmen's showing in the series.

However, the most interesting aspect will be the performance of the pacers. For Al-Amin Hossain and Shafiqul Islam, it is a tour where they can rediscover themselves, while Rubel Hossain and Taskin Ahmed will attempt to continue their good form.

Coach Heath Streak, who joined the team yesterday after getting the visa on Monday, hinted at good news for the pacers.

"Everything is good. It was a nice training session today [Tuesday]. The wicket looked good. There was a little bit of grass. It has bounce and carry," Streak told The Daily Star over phone from Bangalore.

"If they bowl in the right areas then the pacers will come good. But I think once the ball gets old it will

be a spinning track."

"Everyone is fit and available for selection. We are going to go forward with the best possible team," he added.

Chief selector Faruque Ahmed, who is accompanying the team as manager, echoed his coach's sentiments.

"There is interest in this series. There were a number of local journalists present during the press sessions.

"Hopefully we can gauge the real interest once the match starts tomorrow [Wednesday].

"The weather is pleasant and we are looking forward to a good match. There is thin grass on an otherwise hard pitch, but I think it will be good for batting," informed Faruque.

NCL won't be a 'picnic'

SPORTS REPORTER



The National Cricket League (NCL), the country's premier four-day competition, is set to begin in a new format from Friday. However, there is no change in the competition's main sponsor as Walton bagged the rights yet again this year.

During a press conference arranged to announce the sponsors of the competition yesterday, tournament committee chairman Akram Khan said that the new format of the league, which will see the teams divided into two tiers, would increase the standard of the tournament.

The top four teams of the last NCL will be playing in Tier 1, whereas the bottom four will feature in Tier 2. This year, Rangpur, Khulna, Dhaka and Dhaka Metro will feature in Tier 1, while Chittagong, Sylhet, Barisal and Rajshahi will play in the lower tier.

The team finishing at the bottom of Tier 1 will be relegated to Tier 2 while the team finishing on top of Tier 2 will be promoted to Tier 1.

"It is true that the league has lacked competition in the past and the matches have often been referred to as 'picnic matches'. But I hope that with the new format in place, things will change because there will be a lot to play for," Akram told reporters in Mirpur yesterday.

One of the age-old complaints about the NCL has been regarding the wickets. Slow and low wickets have traditionally dominated the competition leaving virtually nothing in them for fast bowlers. The last edition of the league though was slightly better with batsmen pounding the runs. However, during that season there were complaints regarding the flatness of the wickets.

BCB media committee chairman Jalal Yunus, who was also present during the press conference, ensured that such questions would not come up this time.

"We have given instructions to provide sporting wickets this time. That was one of our major concerns before the tournament. The pacers will get something out of the wickets and so will the batsmen," he said.

CASH AWARDS

Champions (Tier 1)	TK 20 lakh
Runners-up (Tier 1)	TK 5 lakh
Champions (Tier 2)	TK 5 lakh
Participation money (Tier 1)	TK 5 lakh
Participation money (Tier 2)	TK 3 lakh
Match fee (Tier 1)	TK 21,000
Match fee (Tier 2)	TK 20,000

'No practice games'

TOI, Bangalore

Gearing up to play for India A in the three-match ODI series against Bangladesh A, starting today in Bangalore, middle-order batsman

Suresh Raina reckoned that the matches were far from being mere 'practice games' and acknowledged the need to play really well to beat a strong Bangladesh side.

Raina's wariness comes after MS Dhoni's men suffered a shocking 2-1 loss in Bangladesh in June this year. Bangladesh have named a strong A side, with a view to use the three upcoming matches as pre-cursor to their home series against Australia, later in October.

"It's good three quality international games. We need to go out there and play really well and we just need to be disciplined. I've been doing it for the last 10-15 years. It's a good practice game, I can't actually say it's a practice

game because we have lost a series to Bangladesh. And India A have done well in the last couple of series, so we need to play really well," Raina told reporters in Bangalore.

Raina's last international assign-



ment was the Bangladesh tour and the southpaw pointed out the need to play games ahead of the home series against South Africa, starting

October 3.

"We need to play games, we haven't played much after the Bangladesh series. For practice, I've played club cricket. It's a big opportunity and I'm very positive, I've worked really hard and I am getting ready for the big series," Raina said.

Raina also expressed his excitement at playing under the recently-appointed A team coach Rahul Dravid and revealed how the former skipper worked hard with the youngsters like him and Irfan Pathan, who came through during his reign.

"I'm very excited to play with him (Rahul Dravid). I worked really hard when he was the captain. He was very, very solid with the youngsters, especially me, Robin Uthappa, Irfan Pathan and lot of other youngsters who came into the team. During that time he worked really hard with Dinesh Karthik and myself too. It gives you lot of confidence and definitely I'll work with him in the future," Raina said.



Bangladesh under-16 captain Shawon Hossain (C) is flanked by his Saudi Arabia and UAE counterparts at the BFF House yesterday. Bangladesh will take on Saudi Arabia at the Bangabandhu National Stadium today. PHOTO: STAR

IN A NUTSHELL

ICC okays Warne-Tendulkar T20

The International Cricket Council (ICC) has given its clearance to the three-match Twenty20 series promoted by Sachin Tendulkar and Shane Warne in the United States.

The ICC's nod came after talks with the two legends, where they had to convince the board of their plans.

"It will be held in November and the ICC doesn't have a problem with that. It has spelt out a few conditions to Tendulkar and Warne and they have agreed to abide by them," a source close to the development told TOI.

"For now, it's one-off. If there are plans of expansion, those can be discussed later," the source added.

Sachin and Warne apart, 26 players, including Rahul Dravid, Glenn McGrath, Jacques Kallis, Adam Gilchrist, Sourav Ganguly, Brian Lara, VVS Laxman and Wasim Akram, and many more legends have been signed up for the series.

"These players have big market value and can bring the Americans to watch the game. It can only help the game to grow in the country," the source added.

Lara applauds Holder appointment

West Indies legend Brian Lara has welcomed the WICB's decision to appoint Jason Holder as the new Test captain and also compared Holder to former West Indies captain Clive Lloyd.

"I think it's an excellent choice. I saw the young man while working during the World Cup in Australia," Lara said.

"And the pressure that he came under, personally with his bowling and even as a captain, and the way he handled it. He's very eloquent and big in stature and he reminds me of another version of a Clive Lloyd."

ECB ropes in Mahela, Paul

The England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) on Tuesday said that Sri Lankan legend Mahela Jayawardene and former England cricketer Paul Collingwood would join the team as consultants.

The news was made official through England Cricket's Twitter account.

While Jayawardene will join the Test squad as a batting consultant, Collingwood will work with the ODI team.

Compiled by Star Sport Desk

AGE-GROUP SWIMMING Ariful leads record spree

SPORTS REPORTER

Ariful Islam of Bangladesh Krira Shikkha Protishthan (BKSP) grabbed five gold medals including three with record timing on the opening day of the Mir Akhter Hossain Ltd 31st National Age-group Swimming Competition at the National Swimming Complex in Mirpur yesterday.

Ariful (18-20 year) won gold in 100m breaststroke, 200m freestyle, 200m butterfly, 100m backstroke and 400m individual medley, with records in the first three events. Ariful's teammate Sonia Khatun (18-20 year) won four gold medals while the same institution's Rupa Khatun (10 year) won two gold medals in record time.

A total of 10 records were set in 36 events on the opening day, with BKSP leading the tally grabbing 23 gold, followed by Bangladesh Ansar with 13.

Hosts seek positivity

SPORTS REPORTER



Even though it will be a much harder competition compared to what they faced in the SAFF Championship, the regional champions Bangladesh under-16 team is determined to prove their mettle when they start their AFC U-16 Championship Qualifiers campaign against Saudi Arabia at the Bangabandhu National Stadium today.

The boys in red and green, who impressed one and all with some fearless attacking football on their way to lifting the SAFF title last month, are believed to be the underdogs in Group B, which also features United Arab Emirates. The winners and four best runners-up teams from 11 groups will feature alongside hosts India in the 16-team finals of this age-group competition next year.

Despite the obvious gulf of quality, the Bangladesh think-tank believes the players can carry their fighting mentality to come out with positive results here.

"I think the difference is less among age-group teams than it is among the senior teams. I just hope my boys will try to put up a similar performance to the one they did in the SAFF Championship. If that happens, we can expect positive results,"

hoped Bangladesh coach Syed Golam Jilani during a pre-match press conference at the BFF House yesterday.

"Our squad that played in the SAFF Championship was a balanced one, but we have lost three of our key players -- winger Sad Uddin, defenders Khalil Bhuiyan and Atiquzzman -- due to age bar and injury. However, we still have some good players to replace them," added Jilani.

The Bangladesh coach is apparently contemplating employing a counter-attacking strategy, with speedy striker Sarwar Zaman Nipu at the fore-front.

The Saudi Arabia team, Bangladesh's opponents in the first match, arrived here on September 10 to acclimatise with conditions, having played two regional tournaments where they recorded four wins, a draw and three defeats in eight matches.

The team's coach Mohammad Al Abdali has set his sights on finishing top of the group and said that these players are being groomed to represent the national team in the future.

FIXTURES

Match	Date	Venue	Kick-off
Bangladesh v Saudi Arabia	16-Sep	BNS	6:00pm
Bangladesh v UAE	18-Sep	BNS	6:00pm
Saudi Arabia v UAE	20-Sep	BNS	6:00pm

ASIAN U-14 TENNIS Top seeds into semis

SPORTS REPORTER

The top three seeds -- Fabiha Lamisa Suchona, Popy Akter and Eti Akter -- moved into the semifinals of the Bengal Plastic Asian U-14 Tennis Series winning their respective quarterfinal ties at the Ramna National Tennis Complex yesterday.

Top-seed Suchona outplayed Sraboni Biswas 6-3, 6-1; second-seed Popy beat Zerine Sultana 6-1, 6-4 while third-seed Eti blanked Aditi Shawdagar 6-0, 6-0.

In the boys' singles, Raki Hossain, Mohammad Ishtiaq, Aurnab Saha, Shadhin Hossain, Shaikat Shahrier, Naimul Islam, Mehedi Hasan and Hridoy Hossain moved into the quarterfinals after winning their respective first round matches.

The girls' semifinals, boys' quarterfinals and the quarterfinals of mixed doubles will take place today.