



Members of the Russian national team, including the hosts' coach Stanislav Cherchesov, donned jerseys of the 31 other teams participating in the FIFA World Cup next month as a welcoming gesture to the other nations. PHOTO: FIFA

Shooters get electronic targets

SPORTS REPORTER



Although certain disciplines in the country which have a higher standing in terms of Olympic events such as swimming and athletics continue to suffer without the use of electronic scoring boards, shooting, a medal-producing discipline at the international level, has gradually been equipped with electronic scoring targets (EST) in an attempt to give local shooters a taste of the environment abroad.

The installation of 10 such devices in the 10m range meant that the number of EST's in use has increased to 20, leaving 20 more targets to be equipped, while 20 and 12 EST devices were placed on the the 25m and 50m ranges respectively.

"The electronic target is more accurate than the paper or manual target. Our programme is being used in the Olympics and the EST is being used everywhere in the world, so it gives the shooters an edge to prepare at home," said Mathias Vogtli, the man who installed the devices in two weeks after arriving on May 13.

While the Bangladesh Shooting Sports Federation (BSSF) spent Tk 7.5 crore on setting up 42 ESTs in total this year with the help of sponsors, the Youth and Sports Ministry installed a total of 10 ESTs in the 10m range in two years.

"To be honest, we have recently won a few international medals at different levels because of the modernisation of the shooting range," BSSF secretary general Intekhbul Hamid Apu told The Daily Star yesterday. "As the events of 10m targets are less costly than the ones of 50m and 25m targets, we put emphasis on that and installed 10 ESTs before, and are now are getting the results in the 10m air rifle and air pistol events."

"However, this time we are also giving the attention to 25m and 50m targets and installed ESTs because the same shooters, who are competing in 10m targets, can also compete in 50m target easily," Apu said. "Besides, our Danish coach Klavs Christensen is also an expert in 50m shooting but could not train the shooters because of paper targets. Now, he has no problem in training the shooters in 50m target ranges."

Abdullah Hel Baki praised this initiative and no one knows better than the Commonwealth Games silver medalist about how different it can be to perform on an EST after training on paper targets at home.

"We had problems in aiming and seeing the picture on the paper or manual targets but we are not facing such problem since the installation of the 10m target two years ago. We now get the opportunity to practise on ESTs regularly and the installation of new ESTs will give more shooters the chance to practise at the same time here," Baki said while watching a competition among the young guns at the BSSF Complex yesterday.

"With the installation of electronic targets, the environment has changed a lot because it (the range) has now taken a flavour of a 10m international shooting range and we are easily matching different shooting ranges abroad," Baki explained. "The shooters will get the right impression of their scores and can shoot with accuracy."

The veteran shooter however believes that the country's shooting will improve rapidly if affluent rifle clubs install electronic scoring targets for their respective shooters.

Bankers down Wanderers

SPORTS REPORTER

Following two consecutive defeats, Sonali Bank handed a 3-1 defeat to Bangladesh SC in their Green Delta Insurance Premier Division Hockey League encounter at the Maulana Bhasani Hockey Stadium yesterday.

With a seventh win in nine matches, Sonali Bank are at fourth position on the table with 21 points, just three points behind third-placed Abahani, while Mohammedan SC and holders Dhaka Mariner Young's Club are at first and second position with 30 and 27 points respectively.

Sonali Bank, who lost to the Mariners and Mohammedan SC in their two previous outings, went ahead in the 13th minute with a strike from Marzan Hossain before Bangladesh SC bounced back to level the margin in the 18th minute through Sajib Hossain.

Sonali Bank then had to toil hard to restore the lead until Irfanul Haque converted a penalty in the 61st minute while Pushpinder Singh wrapped up the victory by scoring three minutes from time.

In the day's first match, Victoria SC came from behind to play out a 3-3 draw against Azad SC.

Can't fire every day: Soumya

SPORTS REPORTER



Soumya Sarkar had scores of 14, 24, 1, 10 and 1 in the T20I Nidahas Trophy against hosts Sri Lanka and India in March this year. The 25-year-old left-hander batted in four different batting positions -- as an opener, a number three, four and five -- in the competition, which reflects how vulnerable his position and form is in the context of the team.

With the right-handed Liton Das providing new hope in the traditionally troublesome role of seasoned campaigner Tamim Iqbal's opening partner, it has become more challenging for Soumya to reclaim his preferred role as opener despite so far being more successful as an opener

with 533 runs in 25 matches at an average of 21.32 and strike rate of 130.31.

Apart from the number six slot the southpaw has batted in every position from opener to number seven in his 33-match T20I career. Soumya however was not concerned about his place in the lineup but rather looking forward to getting back among the runs.

"You have to play at any position if you want to play. If a team wants you to bat at number five you have to bat there. The main issue is you have to perform... you have to score runs. I have to look forward and there is no scope to look back at what has gone," said Soumya during a press meet in Mirpur yesterday in response to a question about his thoughts regarding his batting position ahead of the three-match T20I series against Afghanistan.

"Everybody wants to perform well but it is not possible to do well everyday -- your desire will start diminishing if you try to make that happen. As I have been going through a bad patch I am now just focusing on hard work," he added.

When asked about the coming series against Afghanistan in India, he said: "We have three matches. The first target is to play good cricket and I also have a personal target. It will become easy if the start is good."

Soumya revealed that people always remind him about his form, or lack thereof, but he always tries to keep his focus solely on his practice.

"I didn't play well in the last few matches, so I am now putting in the effort to do well. With people talking about my form, I realise that I have been playing badly. It has reminded me of my poor form but I am trying to focus on my practice."



JOLLY GIANT: Much has been made of the Bangladesh cricket team's continuing lack of a head coach, but interim coach and West Indian legend Courtney Walsh's return to the training camp in Mirpur yesterday certainly served as a mood-lifter. PHOTOS: BCB

KKR ready for Sunrisers battle

PIT, Kolkata

Two-time champions Kolkata Knight Riders will be aiming to exploit Sunrisers Hyderabad's recent run of poor form when the two teams square off in what promises to be a high-octane second Qualifier of the Indian Premier League, here on Friday.

While KKR ticked all the boxes during the business end of the tournament with four wins on the trot, table-toppers Sunrisers -- with Bangladesh all-rounder Shakib Al Hasan in their ranks -- have slipped after finishing on top of the league table.

Sunrisers have lost four straight games, something that will be a cause of concern for Kane Williamson's brigade.

Arguably the best bowling attack in the tournament with Bhuvneshwar Kumar, Shakib, Siddarth Kaul and Sandeep Sharma delivering consistently along with the immensely talented Rashid Khan, Sunrisers will like to extract whatever juice is available from the Eden Gardens track.

But with the momentum strongly in favour of Dinesh Karthik and Co who will also heavily bank on home advantage, it will need a special effort from the Kane Williamson-led side to stop the Kolkata juggernaut and return to winning ways.

First to qualify for the play-offs eliminating Delhi Daredevils, Sunrisers' slide began in Pune, when their famed bowling attack failed to defend 180 against Chennai and then went on to lose to RCB, KKR and CSK in subsequent games.

Hyderabad's problem has been their batting which is heavily reliant on skipper Kane Williamson, the current 'Orange Cap' holder with 685 runs at a 57.05 average.

Their latest defeat will hurt them the most as they had their match in pocket with Chennai struggling at 113/8 inside 18 overs chasing 140 but Williamson's strategy to keep an over from Carlos Brathwaite at the death backfired.

Out for a 'golden duck' in the last match, Shikhar Dhawan (437 runs) will have to rise to the occasion but it is the middle order that has created problems for Sunrisers.

Both teams won each in the round-robin league. Since their defeat at home, Kolkata have come a long way and won in Hyderabad.

The winners will face CSK in the IPL-11 summit clash in Mumbai on May 27.

Injury rules Kohli out of county stint

AFP, New Delhi

India captain Virat Kohli on Thursday pulled out of a month long stint with English county Surrey because of a neck injury and is now in a race to be ready for his country's tour of England.

The key 29-year-old batsman will undergo rehabilitation that will decide when he joins India's games in England starting in July, the Board of Control for Cricket in India said in a statement.

Kohli was to play for Surrey in the English county championship in June to prepare for the tour.

Kohli suffered the injury while fielding for his Indian Premier League side Royal Challengers Bangalore in their match against Sunrisers Hyderabad on May 17, BCCI acting secretary Amitabh Choudhary said.

"Mr Kohli, who was scheduled to play for Surrey CCC in the month of June, has been ruled out from participating."

"This decision was taken following assessments by the BCCI medical team, subsequent scans, and a specialist visit."

"The Team India captain will now undergo a period of rehabilitation under the supervision of the BCCI medical team."

Border hails 'amazing' Cook

AFP, London

Australia great Allan Border praised the "amazing" Alastair Cook as the England batsman equalled his record of 153 consecutive Tests by playing in the series opener against Pakistan at Lord's on Thursday.

This was the 154th Test of opener Cook's career -- with only illness after he made a century on debut against India at Nagpur in 2006 interrupting a sequence where he has never been dropped by the selectors.

Border and Cook are both gritty left-handed batsmen, each having scored more than 11,000 Test runs and captained their respective countries to Ashes success.

They've also each won a County Championship title with Essex.

But at 33, Cook is some five years younger than when

MOST CONSECUTIVE TESTS			
PLAYER	COUNTRY	MATCHES	SPAN
AR Border	Australia	153	Mar 1979-Mar 1994
AN Cook	England	153	May 2006-May 2018
ME Waugh	Australia	107	Jun 1993-Oct 2002
SM Gavaskar	India	106	Jan 1975-Feb 1987
BB McCullum	New Zealand	101	Mar 2004-Feb 2016

Border played his 153rd Test, a reflection both of England's heavy programme and the increasingly congested nature of modern international cricket.

"I didn't realise anyone was getting that close in terms of consecutive Test matches, but it is an amazing thing," Border told Britain's Daily Mirror newspaper.

"I've been a great fan of his from a distance over the years. I don't know him well, but we've got that Essex connection."

"I spent two fantastic years playing there and so I've watched his progress as a former player from the club."

"To have stayed fit and able to play that many consecutive games is remarkable," the 62-year-old added.

But despite his 244 not out against Australia in the fourth Test at Melbourne in December, Cook came into the two-match Pakistan series under greater pressure than usual.

Pakistan rule Day One

AFP, London

Pakistan pacemen Mohammad Abbas and Hasan Ali took four wickets apiece as England suffered yet another top-order collapse at Lord's on Thursday.

Hopes that a return home and a rejigged top-order picked by new national selector Ed Smith would help rid England of the batting slumps that plagued them during a run of seven straight Tests without a victory in Australia and New Zealand quickly proved illusory as they were dismissed for just 184.

Abbas, in his first match at 'the home of cricket', finished with excellent figures of four for 23 in 14 overs.

Meanwhile the recalled Hasan, who did not play in Pakistan's win over Test debutants Ireland in Dublin concluded last week, took four for 51 in 15.2 overs.

Pakistan then consolidated the good work of their bowlers by reaching stumps having lost just Imam-ul-Haq to be 50 for one -- a deficit of 134 runs.

Azhar Ali was 18 not out and Haris Sohail, missed in the slips when Ben Stokes dived across Dawid Malan, unbeaten on 21.

Alastair Cook in his 153rd consecutive Test, which equalled Australia great Allan Border's all-time record for successive appearances at this level, was the only England batsman to play an innings of substance, the left-handed opener making 70.

England, who had been 165 for five at tea, lost their last five wickets for a meagre 16 runs in 27 balls.

SCORES IN BRIEF ENGLAND: First Innings 184 all out (Cook 70, Baird 27, Stokes 38; Abbas 4-23, Hasan 4-51)

PAKISTAN: First Innings 50 for 1 (Azhar 18 not out, Haris Sohail 21 not out; Broad 1-10)



England opener Alastair Cook with a gritty half-century provided the only resistance before being bowled by a beauty from Pakistan pacer Mohammad Amir. PHOTO: AFP