

## England next for Langer?

REUTERS, Adelaide

Even before quitting on Saturday as coach of the Australian men's cricket team, Justine Langer was being mentioned as a candidate for the vacant England job.

A day earlier, England interim cricket director Andrew Strauss left open the possibility of Langer taking over as England coach in the wake of Chris Silverwood's departure.

"I know him well and on the surface he's done a very good job with that Australian cricket team, so I wouldn't rule him out," Strauss, Giles's temporary replacement, told media.

"I personally feel someone with an outside view who can check and challenge the thoughts within the dressing room is a healthy thing."



On the eve of his 37th birthday, Manchester United's Cristiano Ronaldo had produced one of his most ordinary showings as the forward missed from the spot and, along with Marcus Rashford, was culpable of failing to take golden chances in their FA Cup fourth round game against Middlesbrough on Friday. After the regulation time ended in a 1-1 draw at Old Trafford, the Red Devils were knocked out of the tournament as they lost 8-7 on penalties.

PHOTO: REUTERS

## Fresh health setback for Cairns

AFP, Wellington

New Zealand cricket great Chris Cairns revealed Saturday he has suffered a further health setback and has been diagnosed with bowel cancer.

Cairns was only discharged from hospital last week, five months after he underwent a life-saving heart operation and was then paralysed by a subsequent stroke.

"Another fight ahead but here's hoping this one is a swift upper cut and over in the first round," the 51-year-old, one of the world's top all-rounders in the early 2000s, said on social media.

"I was told yesterday I have bowel cancer... big shock and not what I was expecting.

"So, as I prepare for another round of conversations with surgeons and specialists, I keep remembering how lucky I am to be here in the first place."

AFP, New Delhi

India captain Rohit Sharma on Saturday ruled out drastic team changes in the wake of Virat Kohli's departure as skipper ahead of the hosts' 1,000th one-day international against the West Indies.

Rohit begins his tenure as full-time ODI captain in Ahmedabad on Sunday for the first of three matches after replacing Kohli.

A hamstring injury ruled out the 34-year-old from India's recent tour of South Africa, where they lost the

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Test series 2-1 and were whitewashed 3-0 in ODIs.

"We have played good ODI cricket over the course of few years, more than four years actually, so suddenly a loss of



series doesn't mean that there is panic," Rohit told reporters.

"South Africa series was a great learning (experience) for us as to what we didn't do collectively as a team," he added.

"What is important for us, moving forward, is the role clarity of certain individuals in the squad."

While Kohli was known for aggression in his seven-year term as captain across formats, Rohit, who has led the Mumbai Indians to five IPL titles, is known to lead with calm.

Rohit, called "Hitman" for his flamboyant batting and big

hitting, said he will not tinker with the template that Kohli created.

"When Virat was captaining, I was the vice-captain so we pretty much went about the team in a similar fashion," said Rohit.

"I just have to take it from where he left. The team pretty much knows what is expected out of them. And we want to continue the same template," he added.

"There is nothing that I need to come in and change drastically."

India's squad has been hit by Covid with four players

including Shikhar Dhawan and Shreyas Iyer testing positive ahead of the limited-overs series.

Rohit said Ishan Kishan remains the only opening choice in the first ODI, when India will become the first international team to have played 1,000 50-over matches.

The opening batsman said he wants to bring the spin combine of Yuzvendra Chahal and Kuldeep Yadav back into the fold.

Chahal, a leg-spinner, played the ODI series in South Africa but injury-plagued Yadav, a left-arm wrist-spinner, last played an international for India in July.

"These two guys have been great performers for us in the past and they have certainly created an impact in those years whenever they have played together," said Rohit.

"In the middle they were left out because of the combination we wanted to get... but it's certainly on my mind to get them back together, Kuldeep especially," he added.

"But we want to get him in slowly. We don't want him to rush into things."

## Mane, Salah face off in AFCON final tonight

REUTERS, Yaounde

One of world football's most exciting attacking duos will face-off against each other in Sunday's Africa Cup of Nations final as Mohamed Salah leads Egypt against a Senegal side spearheaded by Sadio Mane.

The Liverpool pair, a combined force at club level, will be taking on talismanic roles at opposite ends for their respective countries as Egypt seek to extend their record number of Cup of Nations triumphs to eight while Senegal look to win it for the first time.

Salah has made no secret of his burning desire to win a major trophy with Egypt, which has so far evaded him, while Mane beamed with joy and giggled with delight at the post-match press conference after his team won their semi-final on Wednesday.

Senegal, who are Africa's top ranked team, were among the favourites and overcame a languid start to reach the final for the third time.

They scored only one goal during the opening round but still finished top of their group and have looked efficient in overcoming their opponents in the knockout stage.



But their road to the final proved a lot easier than Egypt, who lost their opening group game to Nigeria and drew heavy criticism from home fans for their early performances.

But they have gained momentum, edging the Ivory Coast in a penalty shootout in the round of 16; Morocco 2-1 after extra time in the quarter-final and hosts Cameroon on penalties again in Thursday's semi-final.

## Dembele back in Barca squad

AFP, Barcelona

France international Ousmane Dembele has been named on the Barcelona squad for Sunday's crunch Spanish league match against Atletico Madrid despite his ongoing contract standoff with the Liga side.

Xavi Hernandez has opted to stick with the talented 24-year-old despite reinforcements -- Adama Traore, Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang and Ferran Torres -- signed in the winter transfer window as Barcelona face a fight to finish in La Liga's top four this season.

"Circumstances meant that we had to find a solution with Ousmane," Xavi told Saturday's pre-match press conference.

"He is part of the club and the squad. We met and we decided that he is part of the team. We can't afford to shoot ourselves in the foot. It's the club's decision and we'll use him when we think it's necessary. He's a player in the team like any other."

"A month ago, we decided one thing, but circumstances have changed," added Xavi.

## Sylhet eye turnaround on home soil

SPORTS REPORTER

The Sylhet leg of the Bangabandhu Bangladesh Premier League is set to begin tomorrow and Sylhet Sunrisers, who are struggling at the bottom of the table, will be eyeing to make a turnaround on home soil.

With just one win in six games, Mosaddek Hossain's Sylhet are yet to find momentum despite having some regular local performers like Mohammad Mithun and Anamul Haque.

West Indies batter Lendl Simmons was the first to score a century in this edition while Collin Ingram also made crucial contributions but Sylhet have still been unable to play as a unit.

Sylhet will be facing Khulna Tigers in the day's second fixture tomorrow. And Anamul, who is the leading run-scorer for Sylhet, thought that execution will be the key for his side to return to winning ways.

"I think we have got some very good performers in the side but the thing is we are unable to execute on the field. We were a bit unlucky too in the tournament with toss playing a big role. Obviously, we will be playing at home but the reality is we won't have the crowd support in the stadium as the spectators are not allowed due to Covid-19. But still, we will try to bounce back and give something to the people of Sylhet," Anamul told The Daily Star.

Sylhet would probably have to do the uphill task without their only national team representative Taskin Ahmed. Taskin missed Sylhet's last game due to a recurring back problem.

The Sylhet team management informed that it can't take any risks regarding Taskin as the pacer would be needed by the national side in their upcoming home series against Afghanistan later this month.



Rubel Mia sets off to celebrate his decisive goal as Chittagong Abahani came back from a goal down to beat Rahmatganj MFS 2-1 in a Bangladesh Premier League fixture at the Birshreshtha Matur Rahman Stadium in Munshiganj yesterday.

PHOTO: SAJJAD HOSSAIN

## Winning start for Ctg Abahani

SPORTS REPORTER

Chittagong Abahani took pole position with three points, alongside four other clubs, following a 2-1 win against Rahmatganj MFS as the first round of matches of the Bangladesh Premier League concluded yesterday.

The portside city side, who finished fifth last season, fought back from a goal down to register the first victory at the Birshreshtha Matur Rahman Stadium in Munshiganj. Rubel Mia scored the winning goal on 72 minutes after Ebimibowei Thankgod had scored the equaliser on 53 minutes, following Tetey Adjah's opener for Rahmatganj on four minutes.

The other match of the day in Tongi between Mohammedan and Sheikh Russel ended in a 1-1 draw. Souleymane Diabate gave Mohammedan a 23rd minute lead but Aizar Akhmatov equalised for Russel on 84 minutes.