

Barty to play in celebrity golf

AFP, Sydney

Former tennis world number one Ashleigh Barty will play in a golf exhibition tournament, organisers said Tuesday, heightening speculation that she could become a golfer after her shock retirement.

The three-time Grand Slam champion stunned the tennis world when she stepped away from the sport in March, with the multi-talented 25-year-old coy about her plans.

But Icons Series organisers revealed that she would be among the sports stars competing in the US event in June.

"We're thrilled to launch the Icons Series in America with a Mount Rushmore of the world's best athletes, all incredible golfers and fierce



competitors," Icons Series chief executive Thomas Brookes said in a statement.

US Olympic swimmer Michael Phelps, Manchester City manager Pep Guardiola and boxing legend Oscar De La Hoya are among other famous competitors due to take part at the Liberty National Golf Club in New Jersey.

The 28 competitors will be split into Team USA, led by Fred Couples, and Team Rest of the World.

"I'm excited to be part of the Icons Series and I hope through my participation in the series that we can encourage more women and girls to participate in golf around the world," Barty told the Sydney Morning Herald.

"It's such a unique opportunity to have fun, test yourself and compete against the world's greatest athletes in a sport that we are all so passionate about."



Bangladesh batter Liton Das inspects a few willows during the inauguration ceremony of a cricket equipment sales centre in Dhanmondi yesterday. Liton, who has played two matches for Abahani in the Dhaka Premier League after returning from South Africa, will look to make his willow talk during the remaining Super League matches.

PHOTO: STAR

Shakib's return opens door for five bowlers

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh are gearing up for the upcoming Test series against Sri Lanka, well aware of the challenges they faced in South Africa against the home side's spinners. Batting will be an area of concern, but in terms of bowling the Tigers have showed promise in the recently-concluded series despite injuries to Taskin Ahmed and Shoriful Islam. However, the workload taken on by the pacers has already grabbed attention and, in a five-day Test, the necessity of playing five specialist bowlers cannot be argued against.

Despite the evidence, reality does not always meet theory head on. In that regard, Shakib Al Hasan's return to the side will hold the key to a better team combination against Sri Lanka.

The all-rounder skipped the Test series in South Africa to attend to his close family members, who had taken ill, but is due in the country today. He also expressed his wish to play in the ongoing Dhaka Premier League. Although his side, Mohammedan, failed to make the Super League stage, Shakib was willing to join

another team in order to get back into the grind ahead of the Sri Lanka assignment. Mohammedan have obliged.

Mohammedan director AGM Sabbir yesterday informed the media that Shakib has already contacted Mashrafe Bin Mortaza-led Legends of Rupganj.

"Shakib is very much focused at the moment as far as I can see. When Rupganj approached him, he told us that he wants to play four matches to get into his flow. He wanted to prepare for the Sri Lanka series and, as part of preparations, wants to play the Super League," Sabbir told media yesterday.

Shakib's availability will ultimately rest with the BCB but the Tigers will find heart from his arrival. Selector Habibul Bashar spoke about the balance in the squad and also Shakib's arrival during a talk with The Daily Star.

Asked whether the team was comfortable with the idea of picking five bowlers, especially with Mehedi Hasan Miraz showing his calibre with the bat in ODI format, Bashar said: "Look, the thing is that Miraz's batting has been a relief for us. But in the Test arena, you need your top-order to score the runs. You cannot just rely on the lower-order."

"The concept of picking five bowlers looks good in theory, but without Shakib it's not really viable. Shakib is coming back so his return will bolster the side for the upcoming series. With his return, it would be viable to pick five bowlers as that would give our batting that extra depth," he said.

Bangladesh have played all four Tests this year away from home, drawing a series 1-1 in New Zealand before the 2-0 loss in South Africa.

But their record at home has not been good viewing recently. The Tigers won only one of their last five Tests at home, losing four on the trot. They struggled against West Indies and Pakistan in the last two series at home.

"Playing at home adds extra pressure. There are concerns about the batting but I feel that one shouldn't be so worried. This is still a team in transformation. We're looking at players from outside and we have also given chances in the national side. [Mahmudul Hasan] Joy struck a century in South Africa and [Nazmul Hossain] Shanto has shown promise. We still need time to sort the team out," Bashar concluded.

Bangladesh cricket loses 'a wonderful human being'

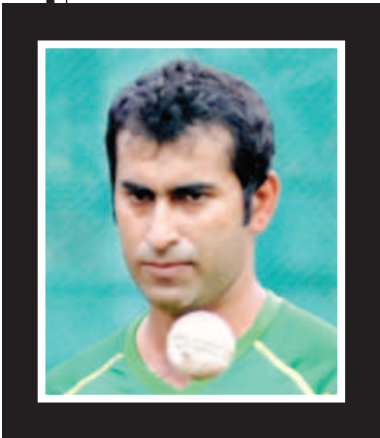
SPORTS REPORTER

A dark cloud engulfed Bangladesh's cricket fraternity after the passing of former national cricketer Mosharraf Hossain Rubel, who had been battling cancer for more than three years. Leading cricketers expressed their bereavement on social media with the likes of Mashrafe Bin Mortaza and Shakib Al Hasan paying their tributes.

Former ODI captain Mashrafe wrote 'stay well my friend,' after news broke yesterday that Rubel had lost his battle with cancer. The 40-year-old left behind many admirers and despite playing just five ODIs for the national team, had performed according to his talents in the domestic circuit.

"We are saddened by the death of our long-time teammate and one of the best spinners in the country, Mosharraf Hossain Rubel. We are praying for the forgiveness of the deceased and our condolences to the bereaved family," Shakib wrote on Facebook.

Soumya Sarkar wrote: "You will be missed." Mushhiquir Rahim, Mahmudullah Riyad and Tamim Iqbal all paid tributes along with many others.



Liton Das was attending a program for SG and talking to the press, when the news of Rubel's death came in yesterday. Immediately a dark cloud came over Liton as he struggled to come to terms with the news. "You have given me a very saddening news," Liton said. "I played with boro bhai for a long time and I will always remember wherever I have played with him,"

Liton reminisced before falling silent as he tried to gather himself. That was the love that Rubel garnered in Bangladesh's cricketing fraternity.

"He was a wonderful human being. Not many know of his sense of humour, but we know," selector Habibul Bashar told The Daily Star yesterday. "In our addas, he was the one with the jokes and humour. There was a time when we spent so much time together. Probably in 2007 or 2008, we used to go roam around and find various restaurants to eat at in the evenings. His cricket career should have been a lot bigger because he was a genuine all-rounder. It's difficult to talk about him, he was always missed and will be missed now. I know he was suffering a lot. It was difficult for me to watch him since I was so close to him. I couldn't take it. Those who got to spend time beside him or played with him will tell you that they don't know someone as charming as him," an emotional Bashar said.



Mohun Bagan midfielder Hugo Boumos leaves Abahani playmaker Daniel Colindres in his wake during their AFC Cup Playoff fixture at the Salt Lake Stadium in Kolkata on Tuesday. The hosts won the contest 3-1 to book a place in the group stages of the competition.

PHOTO: TWITTER

