

Curator of ‘shocker’ pitch replaced

AFP, New Delhi

A cricket stadium in India has replaced its chief groundsman after players and pundits complained about a “shocker” pitch at a recent international against New Zealand, an official said Tuesday.

The low-scoring T20 match saw India reach the modest target of 100 with one ball and six wickets to spare at Lucknow’s Ekana stadium on Sunday.

New Zealand had only managed to score 99 for eight in 20 overs.

It witnessed 30 overs of spin without a single six being hit in either innings, a highly unusual tally in the normally big-hitting format of the sport where pace bowling is used heavily.

“To be honest, it was a shocker of a wicket,” India skipper Hardik Pandya said.

“I don’t mind difficult wickets. I am all up for that, but somewhere down the line the curators or the grounds that we are going to play in should make sure they prepare the pitches earlier,” he said.



Legendary West Indies cricketer Sir Curtly Ambrose, who is now in Bangladesh as a commentator in the BPL, took to the stage to show his guitar-playing skills and sing a few lines from a Bob Marley song during the break of games at the Sylhet International Cricket Stadium yesterday.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

Bayern sign Cancelo on loan

REUTERS

Bayern Munich have signed full back Joao Cancelo on an initial loan deal from Manchester City for the rest of the season with an option to buy the Portugal international, the Bundesliga club said on Tuesday.

Cancelo made 16 league starts for City this season but has not played for the club since their derby loss to Manchester United earlier this month, missing the last three games.

He started only three of 10 games after the World Cup break and lost his place to Nathan Ake while 18-year-old Rico Lewis also emerged as an option for manager Pep Guardiola this season.

“We’ve signed him on loan now and have the possibility of signing him permanently in the summer,” said Bayern’s sports director Hasan Salihamidzic.

“Joao is a player we’ve been thinking about for a while now because we very much appreciate his qualities. He’s the optimal fit in our system with his attacking style of play and dynamism, and his mentality and experience fit very well in our team.”

Cancelo has been instrumental for City since his arrival in 2019, winning two league titles, while he was also named in the Premier League Team of the Year in the past two seasons.

The versatile 28-year-old has predominantly played as a left back but can also operate on the right flank.

Hathurusingha set to renew old ties

SPORTS REPORTER from Sylhet

Speculation regarding Chandika Hathurusingha’s return to Bangladesh had been going on for more than a week and the fire was fuelled further yesterday when the Sri Lankan left his role as assistant coach for New South Wales. Putting an end to all the speculation, the BCB confirmed in a media release yesterday that Hathurusingha had reached a two-year deal and would begin his second tenure with the Tigers from February.

BCB president Nazmul Hassan Papon said at a press conference in Dhaka that there would be no split-coaching duties and that Hathurusingha was arriving as head coach in all three formats on February 20th.

Hathurusingha left the Bangladesh job under bitter circumstances in 2017 following the series in South Africa, with two years of his contract unfulfilled and the relationship with a few players having soured.

Taking over the national team in what will be his second stint raises questions of how fruitful the latest journey will be, especially as many of the national team stars from his era have retired from one format or the other. The BCB president said that a few key stars had previously spoken positively about the Sri Lankan’s return.

“We had been talking to Hathurusingha and when we went to Australia for the World Cup last year, that was when we finalised it,” the BCB president said.



He added that they were looking for an assistant coach for Hathurusingha. Sridharan Sriram still remains in the equation but the BCB president informed that they “haven’t taken a final decision on him yet”.

Sriram was in charge of the Tigers despite being termed a technical consultant during the Asia Cup and the T20 World Cup while Russell Domingo was sidelined from the T20 unit before parting ways with the BCB in December last year.

“We are still talking to two others but it’s not like they will be coming in similar

roles. We are still talking and perhaps we will be able to confirm on the 24th or 25th about the second appointment and who might arrive. We are basically looking for someone who can be fulfil the post of an assistant coach. Given the frequency of tours, it’s not possible for one coach to oversee everything. But the head coach role is final and he will arrive on the 20th,” Papon informed. It was learned that the BCB had not yet approached Sriram with a specific role but BCB sources informed that he is expected in Dhaka.

The biggest reason for Hathurusingha’s appointment was his commitment to a single job, according to Papon.

“Our past experience with him [is a big reason]. The biggest thing is that whenever we are looking at a high level coach or even if we go mid-level, they won’t be able to stay for many days. They count the number of days and want to work for something like 100 or 200 days and many of them have franchise duties and will seek holidays. Hathurusingha doesn’t have issues like that and works on a single responsibility wherever he is. That is a big advantage. According to the agreement, he will have holidays. But apart from that, there are no other commitments,” he informed.

Hathurusingha was known as a strict character during his previous stint. Whether that quality was also important and how much responsibility he relinquishes to others will be seen in the future. What also remains to be seen is whether his charm will have the same effect and take the Tigers to new heights like his previous term.

MNM not hindering PSG, says Galtier

AFP, Paris

Paris Saint-Germain coach Christophe Galtier has denied that playing Lionel Messi, Kylian Mbappe and Neymar all together in the same side has a negative impact on the team’s balance, as the Brazilian was ruled out of Wednesday’s match at Montpellier.

PSG said Neymar is suffering from muscle fatigue and received treatment as he sat out training on Tuesday while the rest of his teammates prepared for the trip south following Sunday’s 1-1 draw at home to Reims in Ligue 1.

Neymar scored the opening goal against Reims but PSG conceded an equaliser deep into stoppage time as their lead over second-placed Lens remained three points.

PSG have won just one of four league games this month but Galtier rejected suggestions the presence of Neymar, Mbappe and Messi was hurting the team’s stability.

“We have at PSG three incredibly strong attacking players -- Kylian, Leo and Ney, with 55 goals and 34 assists since the start of the season,” Galtier said.



“To say that we have to leave one of them out to be balanced is a mistake. We’ve been able to play well and be solid with all of three of them.”

PSG face a run of six games in 19 days including the first leg of their Champions League last-16 tie against Bayern Munich on February 14.

“January hasn’t been good and everyone needs to have it in their heads that February will be better,” added Galtier.

London Marathon will be Farah’s last

AFP, London

British athletics great Mo Farah has said this year’s London Marathon will likely be his last as he contemplates the end of a brilliant career.

The 40-year-old is best known for his success on the track winning gold in the 5,000 and 10,000 metres at both the London 2012 and Rio 2016 Olympic Games, as well as several world titles across both distances.

And while his marathon career has reached nothing like the same heights, Farah is keen to run in London again after missing last year’s edition even though he will be 40 by the time of the April 23 race.

“It’s been an amazing career and taking part in the London Marathon is a very big deal,” he said in a statement issued by event organisers.

“I was gutted not to race last year and I just want to give it one more shot.

“It depends on my body. I just want to get to the start line and see what I can manage. I’m just taking one race at a time.”

He added: “I’m not a spring chicken any more. You can’t keep coming back in the right shape and, for me, I’d love to be able to finish it at home.”

Farah last ran in London in 2019, coming fifth, having finished third the year before.

Mohammedan, Sk Jamal, Rahmatganj into last eight

SPORTS REPORTER

Mohammedan moved into the quarterfinals of the Federation Cup as Group A champions despite twice surrendering their lead in a 2-2 draw against Sheikh Jamal at the Sheikh Fazlul Haque Moni Stadium in Gopalganj yesterday.

In the group’s other match, Rahmatganj came from behind to beat Azampur FC 2-1 to advance to the quarterfinals as Group A runners-up. Sheikh Jamal also booked a last-eight berth as one of the two best third-placed teams across the three groups.

Mohammedan, who have been inconsistent in the Bangladesh Premier League with only one win from six matches, remained solid in the cup, finishing the group stage with two wins and one draw.

The Black and Whites came into their group final match needing just a draw to finish as group champions. However, it was clear from the outset that both sides intended to secure an outright win, pressing across the field in an attempt to break the deadlock.

Midfielder Arif Hossain finally got the breakthrough, darting into the box from the left before beating Sheikh Jamal goalkeeper Rasel Mahmud Liton with a drive into the roof of the near post in the 28th minute.

But Sheikh Jamal hit back only 16

minutes later as Cornelius Stewart, despite being surrounded by three defenders, unleashed a powerful shot from outside the box to level proceedings in the 44th minute.

Mohammedan restored their lead in the 71st minute as Ashrafal Islam Asif drove a 30-yarder into an open net after capitalising on a clearance from goalkeeper Liton, who could not return to his line after coming out to clear a long ball.

But poor defending meant it lasted just five minutes. Gambian forward Sulaymane shrugged off his marker and found the back of Mohammedan net with a grounded shot from outside the box. The creditable draw ensured Sheikh Jamal’s last eight berth.

In Munshiganj, newcomers Azampur FC were on course for an upset following a 1-1 draw against Chittagong Abahani in the league last week, but they could not hold onto a sixth-minute lead provided by Rohit Sarkar.

Brazilian forward Valencia Silva sent Azampur FC goalkeeper Md Razib the wrong way from the spot to level the margin in the 71st minute after Mujahid Hossain pulled back Fatkhulo Fathulloev inside the box. Three minutes later, substitute Ashrafal Islam collected a corner and fired it into the top corner with goalkeeper Razib rooted to his spot.



Players of the Dhaka Twelve franchise pose with the champions’ trophy after defeating Techno Media by 23-22 points in a nail-biting final of the inaugural edition of Corporate Kabaddi League at the National Kabaddi Stadium in Paltan yesterday. Smriti Akter of Dhaka Twelve was adjudged as the best player of the meet. Narsingdi Legends finished third in the six-team meet.

PHOTO: COLLECTED