

BANGLADESHI TEAM IN PROTEST CONCEDES 92 OFF 4 BALLS

DHAKA: A Bangladeshi cricket team conceded 92 runs in just four balls to deliberately lose a match in what they called a protest over biased umpiring in their league. In the 50-over match of Dhaka Second Division League on Tuesday, Lalmatia Club were dismissed for just 88 off 14 overs before opponents Axiom Cricketers reached 92-0 off just four balls.

Lalmatia's opening bowler Sujon Mahmud sent down 13 wides and three no-balls in the first over and all of them raced to the boundary, costing his side a further 80 runs. Axiom opener Mustafizur Rahman struck three fours in four legitimate boundaries to take his side home in

just 0.4 overs to complete a 10-wicket win in the capital's City Club ground. Lalmatia Club secretary Adnan Rahman said his player bowled the wides and no-balls deliberately as a mark of protest for poor umpiring. "Throughout the league we were subjected to poor umpiring," Adnan said.

The secretary alleged the umpires did not even allow the team captain to see the coin after toss. "They tossed the coin and said: Okay you bat. Very soon we found our team had lost five wickets for just 11 runs inside seven overs," he said.

Another club official claimed to AFP on condition of anonymity that umpires were biased against Lalmatia throughout

the season, as at least one of its leading lights is linked to the main opposition party. The match angered the Bangladesh Cricket Board, which organises club cricket in Dhaka. The president of the BCB is a lawmaker in the ruling party and is close to Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina. "This is very unusual ... so many wides and no-balls," BCB spokesman Jalal Yunus told AFP. "We have asked match officials to submit a report in this regard. Once we've received the report, we will launch a formal investigation."

Meanwhile, cricket umpires have been given the power to eject disobedient players while tethered balls will be permitted to protect wicketkeepers from

eye injuries as part of a series of law changes coming into effect from Oct. 1.

The new 'Players conduct' rule will allow on-field officials to remove a misbehaving competitor temporarily or permanently and award five penalty runs to the opposition, the Marylebone Cricket Club (MCC) has said.

If a captain refuses to remove his offending player, the umpire can award the match to the opposition. If both captains refuse to comply, the contest can be abandoned.

The MCC, the custodians of the game's laws, also merged "handled the ball" offence with "obstructing the field", thus reducing the number of possible dis-

missals from 10 to nine. It also ratified the proposal of tethered balls to protect wicketkeepers from the type of injuries that ended South African Mark Boucher's career in 2012. Boucher was hit in the eye by flying balls in a tour match in England, which forced him into retirement.

"Law 8.4 has been changed, to help prevent injuries, to allow specially designed mechanisms which tether the balls to the stumps, thereby restricting the distance that they can fly off the stumps but without limiting their ability to be dislodged," the MCC said.

The MCC also approved bat restrictions and allowed substitutes to keep wicket. — Agencies

GOLF

LPGA FACING QUESTIONS OVER THOMPSON PENALTY

KAPOLEI: The Lotte Championship is set to begin later, 10 days and 2,500 miles from the stunning end of the ANA Inspiration, won by So Yeon Ryu in a sudden-death playoff with Lexi Thompson at the LPGA's first major of the year.

Enough time and space, apparently, for some LPGA players to move on from any outrage over the four-stroke penalty given to Thompson coming off the 12th green on the final day.

Thompson was punished for mis-marking her ball on No. 17 the day before, a foul noticed by a TV viewer who emailed the LPGA about it Sunday. Six golfers were asked about the incident Tuesday at a press conference ahead of the \$2 million event at Ko Olina Golf Club, and all dodged the question. Later, away from the group, 2014 Lotte champion Michelle Wie opened up a bit, saying it all hit close to home.

She was disqualified from her first tournament as a professional, the 2005 Samsung World Championship, when she was 15. She took a drop and one-stroke penalty on the seventh hole of the third round and ended up fourth on Sunday. Then a writer said he thought Wie had dropped closer to the hole on Saturday. LPGA officials agreed and she was disqualified. "I got DQ'd a couple times," Wie said. "My first reaction was at least she (Thompson) wasn't DQ'd."

"It was a shock when it happened to me because they told me in the middle of the golf course. A rules official came up to me and I was 10 under at the time. I had been seven shots behind and thinking it was kind of impossible, but all of a sudden I was three shots behind and thinking I had a chance. At that moment I was dumbfounded. I said, 'I did what?'"

That was pretty much Thompson's reaction. And Dustin Johnson's at last year's U.S. Open, when he was told on the 12th tee that he might be penalized for causing his ball to move on the fifth green. He was assessed two strokes after his round was over, but won anyway.

A few weeks after that, Anna Nordqvist got a two-shot penalty for inadvertently touching the sand with her club in a bunker during a playoff with Brittany Lang. The violation was also proven by TV replay. Nordqvist lost by two shots.

"I just want to know what number people are calling," Wie said. "What is this mysterious number people are calling?"

Incredulity over the call even spilled over to The Masters, with Jack Nicklaus saying he believes penalties should not be assessed after a round is done.

No tour officials were available for comment Tuesday, but LPGA Commissioner Mike Whan said on Fairways of Life with Matt Adams that the situation was "frustrating and embarrassing, it's one of those situations where the penalty just doesn't match the crime." But, Whan concluded, "for 67 years the LPGA has been following the rules as written" and he didn't want to rush into changes simply because of the "anxiety and pain" after the ANA.

The field this week features 80 of the world's Top 100 female golfers, including defending champion Minjee Lee. The 2012 US Girls champion from Australia fired a bogey-free 64 in the final round last year to win by a shot. She played the final eight holes in 6-under par.

Wie, who is from Hawaii, is the only American to win Lotte in its first five years. Her last win came at the 2014 US Women's Open. — AP

MOTOR RACING

ALONSO TO MISS MONACO GP TO RACE AT INDY 500

MONACO: Two-time Formula One champion Fernando Alonso will race for McLaren at the Indianapolis 500 on May 28 in a surprise switch that will see the Spanish driver miss the Monaco Grand Prix on the same day. It will be Alonso's first drive in the biggest car race in the United States as he steps up his bid to win what he regards as the "Triple Crown" of motor sport: the Monaco GP, the Indianapolis 500 and the Le Mans 24 Hours race.

"It's a tough challenge," said the 35-year-old Alonso, who has twice won in Monaco and hasn't competed at Le Mans. "But I'm up for it."

McLaren made the announcement yesterday, saying the Monaco GP will be the only Formula One race that Alonso will miss. The British-based team hasn't announced who will replace Alonso for the most glitzy race on the F1 calendar.

McLaren will be racing in the Indianapolis 500 for the first time in 38 years. Its entry will be a Dallara DW12 chassis, run by the Andretti Autosport team headed by Michael Andretti - a former IndyCar champion who raced in Formula One for McLaren in 1993.

Alonso will fly to Indianapolis immediately after the Spanish Grand Prix on May 14 to get in two weeks of IndyCar practice. "I've never raced an IndyCar before, and neither have I ever driven on a super-speedway, but I'm confident that I'll get to grips with it fast," he said.

"I've watched a lot of IndyCar action on TV and online, and it's clear that great pre-

cision is required to race in close proximity with other cars on the far side of 220 mph (354 kph). I realize I'll be on a steep learning curve."

Andretti will have six cars in the Indianapolis 500, including Alexander Rossi, the former F1 test driver who was the surprise winner of last year's 100th running of the classic. The Andretti team has shown much improvement from last year, when Honda was dominated all season by Chevrolet. But Honda drivers have won the first two races of the season, and the Andretti cars have been competitive.

There had been rumblings in the paddock in Long Beach that IndyCar officials were trying to bring in a "showstopper" for this year's race, but nothing could be confirmed. Alonso was one of the names being floated, and the pairing makes sense now that McLaren is run by Zak Brown.

Brown ran an Indianapolis-based marketing firm for years before his gradual move into Formula One. He's often been consulted by IndyCar management on a variety of issues, and was even in talks for an official role with the series.

"Could Fernando win this year's Indy 500?" Brown said. "Well, I wouldn't be so silly as to make any such rash prediction, but I expect him to be in the mix."

In 1966, F1 champion Graham Hill won the Indianapolis 500 as a rookie. The most celebrated F1 driver to take part in the race in recent years was Nigel Mansell, the then-defending champion, in 1993. Mansell finished third. — AP



PROVIDENCE: Sarfraz Ahmed of Pakistan celebrates winning the 3rd and final ODI match between West Indies and Pakistan at Guyana National Stadium, Providence, Guyana, on Tuesday. — AFP

CRICKET

MALIK TON AS PAKISTAN DOWN WEST INDIES TO TAKE SERIES

PROVIDENCE: Shoaib Malik scored an unbeaten century as Pakistan beat West Indies by six wickets to clinch victory in their one day international series in Guyana on Tuesday. Malik sealed the win-and his ton-in spectacular fashion, smashing a six off West Indies captain Jason Holder to wrap up victory with nearly seven overs to spare.

Malik's 101, which included two sixes and ten fours, was matched by an assured 81 from Mohammad Hafeez as Pakistan finished on 236 for four in reply to the home side's 233 for nine. "I can't thank Hafeez enough for the way he played because he took all the pressure off me," said Malik after collecting both the "Man of the Match" and "Man of the Series" awards.

"West Indies fought hard and credit to them but this really gives us encouragement going into the Champions Trophy," Hafeez completely dominated their partnership, his innings coming off 86 balls with two sixes and eight fours before a miscued sweep off Ashley Nurse found Veerasammy Permaul on the backward square-leg boundary. Permaul, the left-arm spinner brought into the match at the expense of fast bowler Alzarri Joseph on a turning track, proved expensive while leg-spinner Devendra Bishoo also lacked potency in helpful conditions. "I felt we had a decent enough total but we just couldn't put enough pressure on Malik and Hafeez after the early breakthroughs," said Holder. "I've got no regrets about the decision to bat first because I think we recovered well and should have made a better effort of defending that total." West Indies were indebted to Shai Hope (71) and Jason Mohammed (59) after their top-order once again crumbled.

Mohammed's excellent run of form in this Caribbean season continued with a fluent 59 off 64 balls with two sixes and five fours, his fourth half-century in six ODI innings. The pair put on 101 for the fourth wicket and lifted the home side from early discomfort to a degree of competitiveness. However they lost vital wickets in the quest for quick runs over the final overs of the innings, managing just 29 over the last five in which Ahmed resorted to his faster bowlers to good effect.

Junaid Khan, who had accounted for Evin Lewis at the start of the innings, returned to separate the pair of Hope and Mohammed, having the latter caught at the wicket. Hope fell to Shadab Khan via a catch at long-on, although the leg-spinner endured the most expensive effort of his young international career, conceding 57 runs off eight overs.

Not surprisingly on a worn, turgid track used for the third consecutive match, finger spinners Imad Wasim and Hafeez were difficult for the West Indies to get away, Wasim conceding only 24 runs from his full allotment of ten overs for the wicket of Kieran Powell, who was deceived and stumped. — AFP

SCOREBOARD

PROVIDENCE, Guyana: Scoreboard of final fixture of a three-match One-Day International series between the West Indies and Pakistan at the National Stadium in Guyana yesterday.

West Indies Innings		Khan 8-0-57-2 (1w)	
E. Lewis c Hafeez b Junaid Khan	16		
C. Walton b Ali	19		
K. Powell st Ahmed b Wasim	23		
S. Hope c Malik b Shadab Khan	71		
J. Mohammed c Ahmed b Junaid Khan	59		
J. Carter b Shadab Khan	11		
J. Holder c Shadab Khan b Amir	12		
A. Nurse not out	10		
V. Permaul c Hafeez b Aamir	8		
D. Bishoo run out	0		
Extras (lb-1, w-3)	4		
Total (9 wks, 50 overs)	233		
Fall of wickets: 1-31 (Lewis), 2-40 (Walton), 3-68 (Powell), 4-169 (Mohammed), 5-192 (Carter), 6-211 (Hope), 7-219 (Holder), 8-231 (Permaul), 9-233 (Bishoo)			
Did not bat: S. Gabriel.			
Bowling: M. Aamir 9-0-41-2, J. Khan 10-0-60-2 (1w), H. Ali 6-1-29-1, M. Hafeez 7-0-21-0 (1w), I. Wasim 10-1-24-1, S.			

HAMILTON WANTS REAL BATTLE IN SAUDI WITH RIVAL VETTEL

MANAMA: Lewis Hamilton is keeping his fingers crossed that he and Ferrari rival Sebastian Vettel can have a proper battle in Bahrain on Sunday after last year's race did neither of them any favours.

Vettel, now joint leader of the Formula One championship with Mercedes' Hamilton after two races, was unable to start the 2016 grand prix at Sakhir due to an engine failure on the formation lap.

The German, who had qualified third behind the then-dominant Mercedes drivers, has been alongside Hamilton on the front row so far this year. "It (the title battle) is going to go right down to the end of the season, and I hope there's nothing mechanical that will come in between our sheer battle through ability," said Hamilton after winning in China last weekend.

"I really, really hope it's just an out and out fight through stubbornness, through mental stability, through fitness, composure...," he added. Vettel, a four times world champion with Red Bull, and triple champion Hamilton have 43 points apiece after one victory and second place each. Unless both draw a blank, the deadlock must be broken on Sunday at a desert circuit where both are two times winners and returning in rather better mood than they left last year. There is a real sense of anticipation about the emerging scrap between two great rivals with a huge determination to win and no less mutual respect of each other's talents and achievements. "He is at his best and he is phenomenally quick," Hamilton said of Australian Grand Prix winner Vettel. "Ferrari are at their best in years. We're at our best as a team, and I feel like I'm at my best." The ultimate fighter always wants to

go up against the best battle he can have because then when you come out on top, it's so much more satisfying. I love this fight."

Last year's race in Bahrain does not hold great memories for either of the current Mercedes drivers, either. Hamilton made a slow start from pole and collided on the first lap with the Williams of Valtteri Bottas, his new team mate this season, who was punished by stewards for his move.

Bottas, who has replaced last year's winner and retired world champion Nico Rosberg, will not want reminding of that as he seeks to move on from a spin behind the safety car that cost him points in China.

Mercedes should be favourites, after winning the last three races at Sakhir, but Ferrari are sharp on strategy and have shown they flourish in hotter conditions.

"I think they will be very, very quick in the next race but there's a lot of straights there as well and we've obviously got, I think, still the strongest power unit on the grid," commented Hamilton.

"So I think that will come into play, for sure." The race will also see the return of Sauber's Pascal Wehrlein, who has missed two races due to fitness issues, and of former commercial supreme Bernie Ecclestone, attending a race for the first time since his ouster by Liberty Media.

The 86-year-old Briton told Reuters that a Vettel v Hamilton battle was win-win for the sport. "They are both good friends of mine so I don't care who wins. It would be nice to see Ferrari win... I'd like to see Sebastian win, but it would also be nice to see Lewis put another notch on his gun," he said. — Reuters



MONACO: This file photo taken on May 22, 2015 shows McLaren Honda's Spanish driver Fernando Alonso in the pit lane of the Monaco Formula One street circuit during the Monaco F1 Grand Prix. McLaren's former two-time world champion Fernando Alonso will miss next month's Formula One Monaco Grand Prix to race for them in the Indianapolis 500, the British-based team said yesterday. — AFP