

Moeen, Finn injured ahead of tour opener



PERTH: England's Ashes preparations were hit on Thursday with pace bowler Steven Finn (knee) and Moeen Ali (sore left side) sustaining injuries during training.

Finn, who replaced all-rounder Ben Stokes in the touring squad, injured his left knee while batting during Thursday's session in Perth, while 30-year-old Moeen skipped practice due to a sore left side.

Both players will undergo scans on Friday to discover the extent of their injuries and are expected to miss the two-day warm-up match against Western Australia in Perth this weekend.

Ali has played 44 Tests for England and his exclusion from any part of the five-Test series could prove costly for the visitors as they aim to retain the Ashes.

PCB conditionally allows Inzamam to purchase T-10 outfit, work with Qalandars

LAHORE: The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) on Thursday gave permission to chief selector Inzamam-ul-Haq to purchase any team of the proposed T-10 League besides allowing him to become the mentor of Lahore Qalandars, one of the five outfits of the Pakistan Super League (PSL), under certain conditions.

Apart from Inzamam, National Cricket Academy (NCA) bowling coach Mushtaq Ahmed has also been allowed to coach a team of the T-10 League which will be held in Sharjah from Dec 21-24, well-informed sources told Dawn.

Inzamam met with chairman PCB Najam Sethi here on Thursday, requesting him to grant permission for the two projects.

The burly former captain informed the PCB chairman that Lahore Qalandars are interested in hiring him as mentor and he is also keen to jointly purchase a team in the upcoming T-10 league with one of his cousins. However, the sources said that the PCB conditionally allowed Inzamam to undertake



both the projects. According to the sources, Inzamam was told by Sethi that during his role as mentor of the Lahore Qalandars, he will not be getting his monthly salary from the PCB. Furthermore, Inzamam will not be allowed to sit in the players' draft or in the dugouts like Sir Vivian

Richards - the mentor of the Quetta Gladiators. Similarly, Mushtaq's salary will also be deducted during his coaching period with the T10 league team, the sources further said. Sources further said that in the first attempt, the PCB did not allow Inzamam to be involved in any

other activity which was annoying for Inzamam as the former captain is very passionate about having a role in the T-10 league which could also become very popular in the future like the T20 games.

The sources added that the PCB does not feel that Inzamam's new

roles could fall under the 'conflict of interest' clause as both the events - PSL and the T-10 league - are shorter period events.

"If the PCB feels Inzamam's services are needed for the national team during the period of the two events, the chief selector will be asked to report for national duty, the sources said.

It may be mentioned here that Pakistan team's head coach Mickey Arthur is also the coach of PSL outfit Karachi Kings, so it would not have been possible to restrict Inzamam from his involvement in the two projects since he is on the PCB's pay roll as consultant.

Arthur, before joining the national team, had informed the PCB that he would continue his role as coach of the Karachi Kings, too and his demand was accepted by the PCB. The T-10 league is being held in Sharjah next month in which retired cricketers from around the world including Shahid Afridi, Virender Sehwag, Kumar Sangakkara and Eoin Morgan are also participating.

We are preparing for life without Stokes, says Bayliss

PERTH: Ben Stokes' participation in the Ashes would be an "absolute bonus" but England are preparing contingency plans after writing off the all-rounder for the series, coach Trevor Bayliss said.

Vice-captain Stokes was arrested in September after an incident on a night out in Bristol following a One-day International. He was released without charge, but remains under police investigation and is suspended by England.

England, who arrived without Stokes for the series with Australia, had hoped the 26-year-old would join them later on in the tour but Bayliss suggested the team was now gearing up for life without him.

"If it turns up it's an absolute bonus," Bayliss told a news conference late Wednesday. "If he did happen to turn



up, I'm sure he would slip back in easily." Stokes faces an ECB disciplinary investigation following the police probe and Bayliss had "no clue" when he would next be available for selection.

"It's totally out of our hands. We have just got on with preparing as best we can. I have [written Stokes off]." Stokes is a vital part of the team and key to England's hopes of avoid-

ing a repeat of a humiliating 5-0 Ashes whitewash on their last trip to Australia four years ago but Bayliss said England had the players to fill his shoes. "Having to replace Ben and the combination that we come up with requires doing a bit of both [batting and bowling]," he said.

"Moeen Ali batting as low as eight for the last couple of years... that's a waste. It's a combination that we will get to as the team develop. We have had problems at the top of the order so having Mo at eight and [Chris] Woakes nine suited us.

"The way Stokes has been playing, he's developing into a world-class number five. Those three, in whatever combination, that's a pretty good five, six, seven with Woakes at number eight. I think that's what we were working towards anyway."

Sarfraz rejects Chandimal's 'witchcraft' claim; says Test series lost due to 'poor batting'

LAHORE: Pakistan skipper Sarfraz Ahmed has dismissed Sri Lankan Test captain Dinesh Chandimal's claim that the Lankans won the Test series because of "witchcraft" and receiving blessings from a sorcerer, the Hindustan Times reported. "We lost the two Tests because of our poor batting and that is all," Sarfraz said. "If they could win Test matches because of witchcraft or magic, then they should have also won the ODI and T20 series."

Earlier this week, Chandimal told reporters he had received a special blessing from a meyni, or sorcerer, ahead of the two-match series in the United Arab Emirates.

"I am always ready to accept the blessings of anyone - whether it is a meyni or any clergy," Chandimal told reporters after re-

turning to Colombo. "You can have talent, but without this blessing, you can't move forward," he had said a week after Sri Lanka's sports minister denied ordering the struggling national team to use witchcraft ahead of the Test series. Responding to the claim, Sarfraz said today: "I believe in the Quran and also that there is magic in the world; but we just batted badly and lost our chances to win." While luck plays a role in cricket, matches are won and lost on the field, he said. Pakistan came back strongly after losing the Test series 2-0 to Sri Lanka, going on to whitewash the Lankan tigers in the five-match ODI and two-match T20 series. Pakistan's T20 series win has also helped the side clinch the top T20 spot in ICC rankings.

Ashes 2017-18: Craig McDermott thinks Ian Botham could regret Australia jibes



SYDNEY Craig McDermott thinks Ian Botham's scathing verdict on Australia's Ashes credentials will come back to bite him.

Former England captain Botham declared that Steve Smith's side are one of the poorest he's seen in a long time, fanning the flames ahead of the upcoming five-Test series.

The outspoken Botham was particularly damning when it came to as-

sessing Australia's batting line-up, saying they are far too reliant on captain Smith and his deputy David Warner.

Ex-Australia paceman McDermott, the bowling coach for his country when England were whitewashed on their previous Ashes tour, believes Botham could be made to eat his words.

McDermott told Omnisport: "That means we will score 400 every time, he shouldn't have said that [about Australia's batsmen]."

"I think [Usman] Khawaja is capable of playing long Test innings, him being in such great form at the start of the summer is a real plus for Australian cricket. "Whilst we do depend upon the likes of Stevie [Smith] and Davey Warner, Matt Renshaw is another who can play a long innings.

"In 2013, when we won 5-0 the last time, the Poms came here, we made runs and their bowlers didn't perform that well, they bowled too short.

"Jimmy Anderson has always struggled in Australia with the Kookaburra ball and our bowlers should go well. If they bowl a good full length, mixed up with good aggressive short stuff, we can certainly take the Poms on from a batting perspective.

"It should be a good series, I think we can win it 3-1."

The first Test gets under way at the Gabba on November 23.

Patrice Evra charged with violent conduct for kicking fan during warm-up

NYON: UEFA has charged Marseille defender Patrice Evra with violent conduct for kicking a fan and says he will be banned for at least one game.

European football's governing body says its disciplinary body will meet on November 10 to rule on the incident, which occurred before a Europa League game on Thursday.

Evra got into a verbal argument with Marseille supporters who scaled barriers to confront the team before the match against Portuguese club Vitoria.

Evra was seen aiming a kick at the head of one of his own club's fans and then being ushered away by a teammate before being sent off. Evra was due to be on the bench as a substitute. Olympique de Marseille have opened an internal investigation into the scuffle which took place before the Europa League game at Guimaraes in Portugal, the Ligue 1 club said on Friday.

"Olympique de Marseille has noted



the altercation between an individual and Patrice Evra during the warm-up at the game against Guimaraes (on Thursday)," a club statement read.

"An internal investigation has been opened to establish responsibilities."

Video footage showed a Marseille player aiming a kick at a group of fans during a scuffle behind one of the goals but the club did not mention the kick.

France fullback Evra has been regu-

larly targeted by Marseille fans since joining from Juventus during the close season and his poor performances have led coach Rudi Garcia to drop him from the starting line-up. "Pat has experience and he must not react. It's obvious," Garcia said. "Patrice is more than experienced and we can't respond, obviously, to insults as low as they might be and as incredible as they might be because they come from one of our supporters."

Why Virat Kohli is not good for young cricketers, explains this great

NEW DELHI: Virat Kohli's consistency and aggressive style have become the highlight of the Indian cricket team in the past couple of years. Their No. 1 status in Tests and a winning streak of seven ODI series prove that the 28-year-old captain is guiding the side in the right direction.

That Kohli never fails to give it back to rivals when faced with harsh words has only added to his aura. But former Australian wicketkeeper Adam Gilchrist feels the India captain's in-your-face attitude should be copied by his teammates with discretion.

"If I were in his team, I wouldn't be identical to him on the field.

You have got to do whatever comes naturally to you and what you believe in. It doesn't mean every player who doesn't act like Virat questions him," Gilchrist told Hindustan Times.

"If it's a false bravado, at some stage it will let you down. You will get caught because you will be pretending so much that you'll forget to play the game of cricket."

Former India captain Rahul Dravid echoed similar sentiments recently when he said that Kohli is 'outrageous' at times and that he 'cringes on reading his statements before a series.'

"Aggression should come from within. Usually your personality

says a lot about the way you play your game. Virat is a passionate, energetic and determined person. Clearly, his batting shows that. It reflects even in his leadership and his desire to achieve success," Gilchrist added.

Dhoni undervalued? Gilchrist feels Kohli's aggressive and young team also boasts of a calm personality in MS Dhoni. The former India skipper's presence is benefiting India in more ways than one, feels Gilchrist.

"He (Dhoni) is so versatile that he could possibly play anywhere between No. 3 and No. 7 and have an impact. I don't see any evidence that he is letting the team down.



I think they (India) probably benefit more than they realise by him just being around," said the veteran of 96 Tests and 287 ODIs on the sidelines of 'Royal Stag

Barrel Select Perfect Strokes'.

"I love Virat and the young Indian players, and all their passion. But it's always nice to be balanced with some experience.

I wonder if people are undervaluing that experience and calmness (of Dhoni)."

With Kohli going on record saying that every ODI series from now on will be played keeping the 2019 World Cup in mind, a big question is whether Dhoni, who will be 38 then,

Should be the No. 1 choice for wicketkeeper.

"He has always carried out his duty for his country without any issue. I don't know if there is someone in the wings who adds more value to the Indian team than MS. In the next two years, anything can happen. I think MS will make the right decision when

the time comes."

Records under danger

The Australian great, who has played with Kohli in international cricket as well as Indian Premier League, added that the India captain is on the right track to break every batting record. In ODIs, Kohli has 32 tons, second only to Sachin Tendulkar's 49 centuries. In Tests, Kohli has 17 tons.

"I think every batting statistic is in danger across all formats. It's extraordinary. He is a world-class batsman. Even if he doesn't break all the batting records, he will certainly get close to all of them," Gilchrist said.