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# The Island Sports

Monday 23rd November, 2009

## Congress wants ban on Azhar lifted, MPs meet Pawar



Mohd Azharuddin

**November 21, 2009, New Delhi:** The Indian Cricket Board is under pressure from the Congress party to revoke the life ban on former skipper Mohd Azharuddin for his alleged involvement in the 2000 match-fixing scandal.

Azharuddin, who is now a Congress MP from Moradabad in Uttar Pradesh, was banned for life after the BCCI found him guilty of being involved in the scandal that rocked Indian cricket.

But Congress leaders from Uttar Pradesh argue that the ban on the former captain should be lifted now because several other players, who faced similar charges, have been allowed back into the game.

In fact, some of these MPs, including Jitin Prasad, BCCI's finance committee chairman Rajiv Shukla, who is also a Congress spokesman, and actor-turned-politician Raj Babbar met ICC vice-president and former BCCI president Sharad Pawar yesterday to put forth their demand.

"I spoke to BCCI president Shashank Manohar, and he said that if Azhar himself shows interest in wanting the ban lifted, then it can be moved forward to the Annual General Meeting and then the AGM will decide," Shukla said.

"The ban on Azharuddin can be lifted only if the BCCI AGM deems it fit," he added. (PTI)

# Dilshan says setting targets changed his fortunes



Tillekeratne Dilshan

**Rex Clementine**  
reporting from Kanpur

Opening batsman Tillekeratne Dilshan, who scored his fifth Test hundred this year, believes a combination of factors, including setting personal goals has helped him to turn his inconsistent career into a successful one.

Ever since making his debut in 1999, the 32-year-old has been in and out of the side as he struggled to be consistent. At times, although he was not getting big scores, the selectors persevered with him due to his excellent fielding skills and the ability to bowl off-spin in One-Day games.

Dilshan requested to open the innings in ODIs and T-20 Internationals early this year and it has paid off, as he has produced match winning performances consistently.

He won the Player of the Tournament award in the ICC T-20 Championship in England and was named Sri Lankan Cricketer of the Year at the inaugural CEAT-SLC

Cricket Awards.

"There are various factors that have worked for me. At the start of the year, I wanted to complete 1000 runs in both forms of the game in the calendar year. These goals have helped me to turn things around. I will set fresh targets again for next year and will see how it goes," Dilshan said, speaking to journalists, yesterday.

"When I asked Mahela to let me open, he encouraged me and asked me to first try it in domestic cricket. In the very first game I got 188 runs. I thought that's the most sensible cricketering decision I have made. Had I batted at number six, I don't think I could have even scored something like 500 runs in the whole year," he added.

His personal decision has helped the team as well in more ways than one. With him opening, the team now can balance the side and play an all-rounder in Tests at number six. Sri Lanka have brought in Angelo Mathews to that slot and in a very short time period he has been impressive. "My decision to open has helped us to play the extra bowler. Had I played at six, we would have played four bowlers, a strategy that India has been forced to follow this series."

"At school, I used to open the innings and even at club level I used to open. But when I came into the national team first, there was an established pair in both forms of the game and I was made to bat in the middle order. Although a bit late, I think I have got the place where I can be most effective," Dilshan added.

Dilshan also revealed that on certain occasions, teams have played into his hands by adopting defensive tactics like India did in the last Test. "There's a bit of risk involved in opening. But I have seen fielding sides going defensive right away when they bowl to me. Instead of setting a field where a batsman can be dismissed, teams want to restrict my shots. Some teams for example, position a deep cover, a deep square leg and earlier on in the innings, that takes the pressure off."

He also attributed his success to his actress wife Manjula Thilini, whom he married in 2008. "She's been a huge source of strength. She doesn't know much about cricket, but always tells me not to play the hook shot. When we first met, she didn't even know that I was a cricketer. She didn't know how many balls made an over. But since then, along with my parents, she has become my number one supporter," he added.



Tyson Gay



Usain Bolt

## Bolt, Gay set for 3 showdowns in Diamond League

by Graham Dunbar

**MONACO (AP)** - Sprint stars Usain Bolt of Jamaica and Tyson Gay of the United States will race each other at least three times at elite Diamond League meetings next year.

Athletic's governing body said on Saturday that the two fastest men in history are contracted to compete in seven of the 14 cities in Asia, Europe and the United States featured in the inaugural global series.

The rivals must decide which meets will host their showdowns, over 100 or 200 meters.

"The only thing I know is I will be racing Bolt at least three times or more," Gay said before a Diamond League launch ceremony on Saturday.

The new circuit will be the top tier of track and field in 2010 with no Olympics or World Championships on the schedule.

Bolt, a three-time Olympic champion, took Gay's 100 world title in a record time of 9.58 seconds at Berlin in August, leaving the 27-year-old American with silver despite a lifetime best of 9.71.

Gay then ran 9.69 - equaling the 23-year-old Jamaican's previous world mark set in the Beijing Olympic final - at Shanghai in September.

At least one among Bolt, Gay and Asafa Powell, the third fastest man in history, will be a star attraction at each meet on the circuit.

Other elite athletes committed to seven Diamond League appearances are distance runner Kenenisa Bekele, pole vaulters Yelena Isinbayeva and Steve Hooker, 400 runner Sanya Richards, high jumper Blanka Vlasic and javelin thrower Andreas Thorkildsen.

The Diamond League offers \$6.63 million (euro4.46 million) in total prize money across 32 track-and-field disciplines, each staged seven times over the series. A 4-carat diamond will be presented to the season-ending points leader in each event.

**THE 14 DIAMOND LEAGUE MEETS ARE:**  
Doha, Qatar, Friday May 14;  
Shanghai, Sunday May 23; Oslo, Friday June 4;  
Rome, Thursday June 10; New York, Saturday June 12; Eugene, Oregon, Saturday July 3; Lausanne, Switzerland, Thursday July 8;  
Gateshead, Britain, Saturday July 10;  
Paris, Friday July 16; Monaco, Thursday July 22;  
Stockholm, Friday Aug. 6; London, Friday-Saturday Aug. 13-14; Zurich, Switzerland, Thursday Aug. 19;  
Brussels, Friday Aug. 27.

It opens at Doha, Qatar, in May, and stops at Shanghai, New York City and several European capital cities before concluding with two finals each at Zurich and Brussels in August.

The new series replaces the six-city Golden League that offered athletes a share of a \$1 million jackpot for six victories. However, the series never left Europe and could not find room for some less glamorous events.

Diamond League vice chairman Patrick Magyar said the

old system didn't work for athletes or meet organizers.

"The idea is to bring back competitiveness to the meetings ... and also to bring back all disciplines," he said.

Magyar, who runs the Zurich meet, said all 14 cities were working together with broadcast partners to develop a unified Diamond League image.

Season-long rivalries between athletes would be developed as storylines, he said, while the calendar was planned to avoid direct clashes with World Cup football matches being played in South Africa next June and July.

Kristian Hysen, a marketing executive for the IMG agency, said the revamped series had drawn stronger interest from European and Asian broadcasters and new attention from Latin America.

by Maverick

Germany's number one goal keeper Robert Enke committed suicide a few days ago, as he could not deal with depression. Germany mourned, the world of soccer was devastated and those who thought they knew everything about

uttered, proved that we all are incapable of saying the right things at the right time, although we try to do the best, given the circumstances.

Here in Sri Lanka, we have journalists who claim they have a sacred

**Ramblings...**  
duty to perform, but who harbour agendas and hidden agendas.

Some of them have, with vigour pitched into Sri Lanka cricket captain Kumar Sangakkara and his predecessor, Mahela Jayawardene.

Sangakkara and

Jayawardene, some parties say, should not appear in advertisements and endorse any product.

These parties often dangle the name of former Sri Lanka cricket captain Arjuna Ranatunga as the model to be followed.

But, those parties/individuals who are critical of Sangakkara and Jayawardene are in the 'Vanguard' of certain movements, who have their own agendas.

To be critical of others does not require much effort. Turn the light inwards...that applies to all of us.

## Collingwood inspires England win in South Africa

by Jon Barbuti

Paul Collingwood put in a brilliant all-round performance as England won the second one-day international against South Africa by seven wickets.

Collingwood hit an unbeaten 105, took a superb catch off AB de Villiers and had figures of 2-24 from six overs.

The 33-year-old found able support from Jonathan Trott, who hit 87 and bowled seven tight overs for 21 at Centurion.

Alviro Petersen and Hashim Amla hit half-centuries, but the hosts failed to end a miserable run against

England.

England went into the match having won the last five completed meetings in this format, but with a much-changed line-up from the teams' last clash.

Paul Collingwood was named Man of the Match for his outstanding all round performance.

**Brief Scores:**  
South Africa 250-9 (A. Petersen 64, Amla 57, J.P. Duminy 41; Anderson 3-60, Collingwood 2-24, Bresnan 2-46)  
England 252-3 (P. Collingwood 105 not out, J. Trott 87; Langeveldt 2-46)

