



PHOTO: STAR

BETTER PLAY FOOTBALL? South Africans enjoy some football during their practice session at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

Looking into batting blues

SPORTS REPORTER



The atmosphere in and around the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday can be best described as one of sheer

dejection.

Understandably the topic of discussion was Bangladesh's woeful batting in the opening match of the TVS Cup against India on Friday.

Some vented their anger by saying that the score of 77, Bangladesh's second lowest one-day total, reflected the true strength of our cricket. A few however opposed, saying that Bangladesh is capable of doing far better at the highest level if only they overcome their apparent mental block. While the debate raged on, the Bangladesh team arrived at the BNS.

The national players had a tough net session under unbearable heat and it was evident that the batsmen were under scrutiny. Coach Sarwar Imran even raised his voice a number of times in pointing out elementary mistakes in their technique.

The team management however decided to give the bowlers an off day appreciating their effort against India.

"We rested the main bowlers as we didn't want them to become exhausted," said Imran. The former fast bowler rolled back the years by bowling a few trademark outswingers in the nets which tested Javed Omar, Mohammed Ashraful and Co.

Imran said that he was more interested in focusing on the basics rather than going for wholesale technical changes.

"It is not possible to drop five or six players purely because they are not performing. My immediate task is to make some minor adjustments and try to make them play with a straight bat," said Imran.

"If the openers can see off the first ten overs then it would relieve the pressure on the rest of the batsmen," he added.

At the end of an hours training Bangladesh captain Khaled Mahmud faced a volley of questions on why the team had slumped to such a low and how they intend to regroup after such a nightmarish start.

"I have talked to the players and most of them said that they didn't have confidence," said Mahmud.

He also said that the team is going through a disaster-management phase.

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PHOTO: STAR

Bangladesh's Mohammad Rafique knocking in the nets at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

Proteas play today

SPORTS REPORTER



South Africa begin their TVS Cup tri-series mission when they take on India in a robin league match at the Bangabandhu National Stadium today.

The second day-night match of the two-tier preliminary round is scheduled for a 2 pm start with ESPN-Star Sports and Bangladesh Television broadcasting the match live. Bangladesh Betar will also provide ball-by-ball commentary.

Twenty-two-year old Graeme Smith will enter into the record books as the second youngest captain in one-day cricket after Waqar Younis when he goes down in the middle for toss along with his Indian counterpart Saurav Ganguly.

New Zealand's Billy Bowden, famous for his unique method of signaling, will make his first appearance as an elite umpire. M

Akhtaruddin from Bangladesh is the other official.

Both teams have gone through massive changes after the World Cup. And today's contest will help both parties assess each other's strengths and weaknesses.

South Africa is relatively a new side with a new captain. Apart from missing the services of Jacques Kallis, who opted to be with his sick father, the Proteas will also be without the services of match-winning all-rounder Lance Klusener who was not selected due to his poor form in the World Cup.

But the new South African skipper is not worried by the prospect of facing India with so many key players either missing or retired. He believed his teammates were hungry to put the World Cup fiasco behind them.

"Obviously it's a new side but don't forget it gives them a chance to show the world what they are capable of," said Smith.

Though he was fully aware that the Indians had read Dhaka wicket so

well in their match against Bangladesh, but the South African captain thought it not to be a serious factor.

"We have also enjoyed success here," added Smith reminding the Proteas' triumph in the Wills International Cup in Dhaka in 1998.

On the other hand, Saurav Ganguly thought the game would be a close-fought affair despite the presence of quite a number of new faces in each side.

"They are a changed team and we too are here not at full strength. So, anything can happen," said Saurav on Friday night after posting an comprehensive 199-run win over Bangladesh in the tournament opener.

The Indians opted not to have their scheduled practice yesterday. It was expected that the team would remain unchanged.

The South Africans, who warmed up with a 127-run win over local selection on Friday, had their final nets at the big bowl last evening. They also decided not to reveal their play-

ing eleven until Sunday morning.

The match will be the 44th meeting between the countries with South Africa holding the upper hand as they have won 27 times. The Indians have won 15 of them with one being a no-result.

PROBABLE SQUADS

INDIA (from): Virender Sehwag, Gautam Gambhir, Saurav Ganguly (captain), Mohammad Kaif, Yuvraj Singh, Dinesh Mongia, Parthiv Patel, Zaheer Khan, Harbhajan Singh, Ajit Agarkar, Aavishkar Salvi, Sharandeep Singh, Abhijit Kale and Amit Mishra.

SOUTH AFRICA (from): Graeme Smith (captain), Paul Adams, Mark Boucher, Allan Dawson, Boeta Dippenaar, Herschelle Gibbs, Andrew Hall, Neil McKenzie, Makhaya Ntini, Robin Peterson, Shaun Pollock, Jacques Rudolph and Charl Willoughby.

Umpires: Billy Bowden (New Zealand) and M Akhtaruddin (Bangladesh)

Premier League resumes today

SPORTS REPORTER

After a four-day break the GrameenPhone Premier Division Super League resumes today with two matches.

Title aspirants Mohammedan Sporting Club take on high flying City Club at BKSP ground and Abahani Krira Chakra meet Brothers Union Club at the Fatullah Cricket Stadium.

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Olympic qualifying Myanmar blank Bangladesh

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh lost their 2004 Olympic football first round qualifying away match to Myanmar 0-3 at the Youth Centre ground in Yangon yesterday.

Myanmar striker Yan Paing scored all the three goals in the 25th, 38th and 66th minutes of the match.

Bangladesh will now have to beat Myanmar by a four-goal margin in their home match at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium on April 19 in order to move into the next round.

AFP, Dhaka



South Africa's coach Eric Simons said Saturday he had full confidence in the abilities of new captain Graeme

Smith and hoped his team would once again be a force to reckon with.

"Smith is one of those few cricketers who have the real feel for the game," said Simons. "He is a tactical person and his leadership abilities have been tested for South Africa A and Western Province."

Smith will become the second-youngest captain in one-day history when he leads his team Sunday against India in the three-nation TVS Cup tournament here.

Smith, who has played just eight Tests and 22 one-dayers, has been entrusted with the task of reviving the fortunes of a team that could not make it beyond the preliminary league of the World Cup.

Batsmen Gary Kirsten and Jonty Rhodes as well as paceman Allan Donald have retired and the team is also without the experience of Jacques

Kallis and Lance Klusener.

Kallis, who is not yet here because of an illness in the family, is likely to join the team during the course of the tournament or for the two Tests to follow against Bangladesh.

Simons cautioned that Smith would take time to adjust to his new role.

"Smith will adjust at the helm and

Smith will be 22 years and 71 days old when he leads his young side against a new-look Indian team, breaking the previous South African record of 24 years and 105 days held by the late Hansie Cronje.

The youngest captain of a one-day international side is Pakistani paceman Waqar Younis, who was 21 years and 354 days when he led his team against the West Indies at Sharjah in 1993-94.

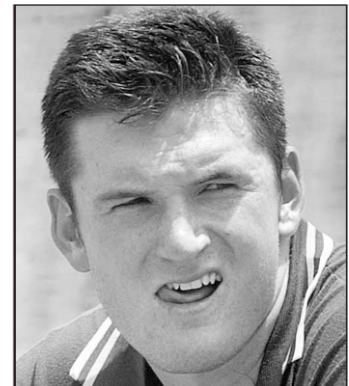
Simons said Smith would have to be on his toes as India, who finished runners-up to Australia in the World Cup, are always a dangerous side.

"The pressure may not be much because this is a low-profile tournament. But we are here to win and India can never be taken lightly, with or without Sachin Tendulkar," he said.

The coach said it was now up to Smith to justify the trust in him and for the younger players to make the most of their opportunities.

"Guys like Andrew Hall and Charl Willoughby have a good chance of showing their talent here," said Simons, adding it was time for the team to look ahead after their World Cup debacle.

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GRAEME SMITH

also bring out the best in his players, but it may take time. His is not going to be an easy job but we have full confidence in him," said Simons.

Aussies assume control

Cricket

AFP, Georgetown

Australia pushed for victory over the West Indies in the opening Caribbean cricket Test after amassing a formidable 252-run innings lead at the Bourda ground here on Friday.

Justin Langer and Ricky Ponting scored centuries in a record second-wicket stand and Adam Gilchrist smacked a lively 77 off 81 balls as Australia dwarfed the Windies' mediocre first innings of 237 with their effort of 489

two at the close.

The Australians seized control of the opening Test in the four-match series through the efforts of Langer, who claimed his 14th hundred with 146 and vice-captain Ponting 117, his 15th Test century.

Ponting and Langer put on a record 248 runs, an Australian record for the second wicket in the Caribbean.

Langer hit 19 fours and two sixes in his 270-ball knock before he was out to a catch behind to stand-in wicketkeeper Hinds off Vasbert Drakes.

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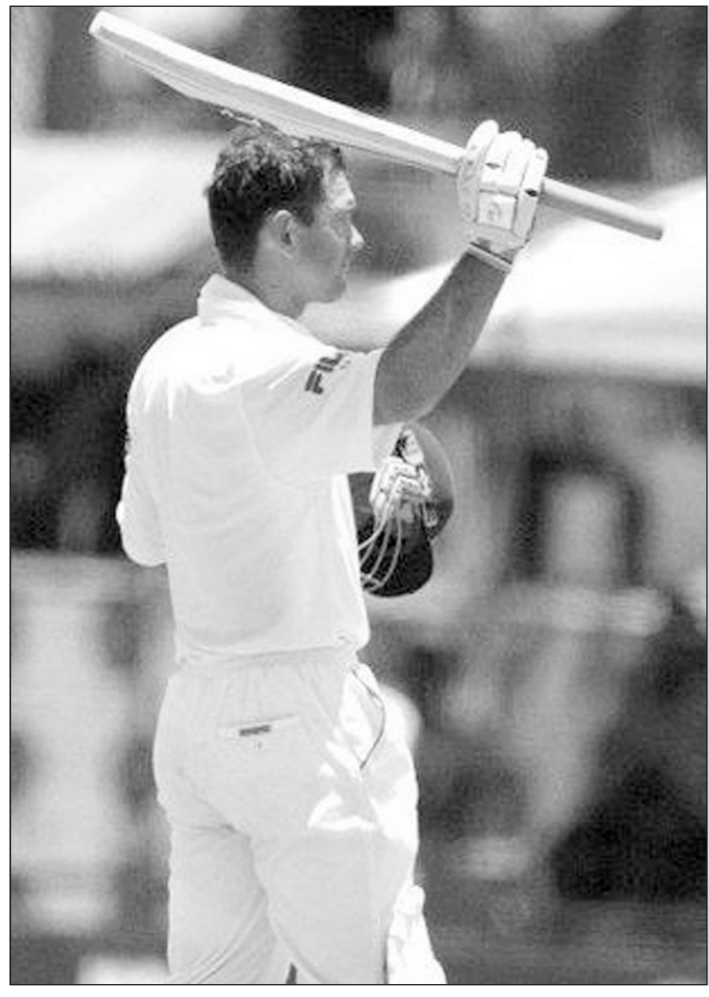


PHOTO: INTERNET

Australia's Ricky Ponting salutes the crowd after his century against West Indies on the second day of the first Test at Bourda on April 11.

Consecutive wins for ladies

SPORTS REPORTER

The Bangladesh women's have earned 6.5 points at the end of their 5th round engagement of the Asian Team Chess Championship for Women at the town of Jodhpur in India yesterday.

After defeating Sri Lanka 2-1 in their fourth round fixture, they outplayed Kyrgyzstan by 2.5-.5 points.

Drink-driving, Nel sent home

REUTERS, Johannesburg

Fast bowler Andre Nel has been withdrawn from South Africa A's tour of Australia after being arrested for drink-driving in Tasmania.

Latif lauds youths

Cricket

INTERNET, Sharjah

Captain Rashid Latif hailed the next generation of Pakistan stars following his side's victory over Zimbabwe in the Sharjah Cup final on Thursday.

The selectors gambled by leaving a number of established stars including Shoaib Akhtar, Inzamamul Haq, Wasim Akram and Latif's predecessor Waqar Younis at home.

But the new-look team won all four games at the desert venue, including an eight-wicket triumph in the final.

Latif described his side's performance as "very encouraging".

He said: "When we came here, we

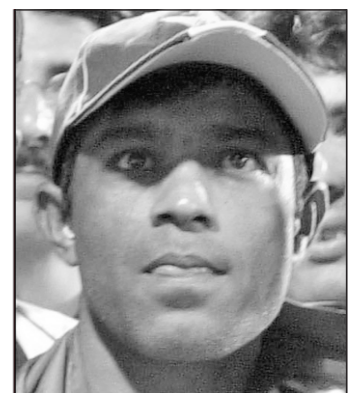
were without superstars, but we are returning home with new stars, who will become superstars.

"Mohammad Sami, in particular, is shaping up as a world-class seamer. He gave us the vital breakthroughs early in the game, which effectively swung the match in our favour."

The batting also looked good with six different players making half centuries during the competition, with two each from Yousuf Youhana and Younis Khan.

"I am proud the way the players performed over the last week. But now comes the hard part because they have to maintain this standard in the future."

"It's no use winning one tournament and failing in the next. We have to be consistent," coach Javed Miandad



RASHID LATIF

commented.

Pakistan now head to Sri Lanka,

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Lanka may have interim coach

INTERNET, Colombo

Sri Lanka look set to employ an interim coach for the forthcoming New Zealand Test series following current incumbent Dav Whatmore's request for early leave from his contract.

The Sri Lankan born Australian's contract expires at the end of May and the Board of Control for Cricket in Sri Lanka (BCCSL) has yet to decide upon a replacement.

With Sri Lanka due to start a two-match Test series against New Zealand on April 25 there appears no other option but to appoint an interim coach.

Whatmore communicated his willingness to step down early shortly after being informed that his contract would not be renewed

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Windies 110/2

SPORTS REPORTER

West Indies launched a rebuilding process as they reached 110 for two shortly before lunch on the third day of the first Test against Australia in Georgetown yesterday.

Debutant opener Devon Smith made a strokeful 62 before getting a faint edge off paceman Jason Gillespie and was caught by Adam Gilchrist. He shared a 58-run partnership for the second wicket with Daren Ganga after his opening mate Wavell Hinds went cheaply for 7.

Ganga, batting on 30, was joined by skipper Brain Lara.

of a flat, lifeless pitch.

At stumps on the second day, the West Indies had wiped off 16 runs without loss as captain Steve Waugh gave the new ball to his spinners Stuart MacGill and Brad Hogg to bowl five of the nine overs remaining before deteriorating evening light ended play.

Yet again the day's play ran into overtime because of a dawdling overrate.

Debutant Devon Smith was unbeaten on 13 with Wavell Hinds on

Ponting's plan working

Cricket

INTERNET, Georgetown

Ricky Ponting reckons Australia's performance against the West Indies in the first Test in Guyana is going perfectly to plan.

Australia finished the second day with a lead of 252 at the Bourda Oval in Georgetown.

Ponting and Justin Langer were the mainstays of a total of 489 all out, both batsmen reaching three figures in a partnership of 248 - an Australian second-wicket record in the Caribbean.

And Ponting, who captained his

country's one-day side to World Cup success in March, is hoping his work with the bat is complete for the match.

"Once we got them out quickly and we got off to a good start, we just wanted to ensure that we batted only once on this wicket," the 29-year-old revealed.

"I don't think there was any plan for any of us to be overly aggressive, we only tried to play our natural game."

Despite scoring a 15th Test century, Ponting was far from effusive about his knock of 117.

"I don't think I set the world on fire but it was a wicket that you had to be patient on," he added.

"We just waited on the bad ball,

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PHOTO: STAR

STUDENTS ATTENDING GIBBS SIR'S CLASS: Dashing South Africa opener Herschelle Gibbs imparts some tips to the players of the Shilighuri-bound under 13 team during a practice session.