

Last shot at pride

SPORTS REPORTER



Hosts Bangladesh will be looking to better their last Monday's performance against South Africa when they the two sides meet in the return-leg of the TVS Cup tri-series at the Bangabandhu National Stadium today.

The match starts at the big bowl at 2pm.

Bangladesh reached 211 against the Proteas in the first phase of the tournament on April 14 to cross the two-hundred run mark after 16 matches.

The African, who arrived here hoping to erase the bitter memory of World Cup 2003, have had mixed returns in their two games so far.

Under new captain Graeme Smith, the South Africans were absolutely outplayed by India as they went down by 153 runs before bouncing back with an 83-run win a day later against the Bangladesh.

They spent two-and-a-half hours training at the big bowl yesterday morning. And other than fast bowler Makhaya

Ntini, the rest of the team were trying to practice how to bat at the death.

"That's the area we need to pay more attention because our batsmen have failed to slog so far. Otherwise, we should have made 300-plus on Monday against Bangladesh," said Smith after practice.

"Our objective is to play in the April 20 final," Smith said adding that his middle order batsmen were yet to find their feet.

"We are definitely missing the calming influence (Jacques) Kallis because he could guide the others through the difficult middle overs."

He hinted there might be one or two changes in the squad for Thursday's match.

While Smith was rather reluctant to comment about the home side, he still thought the Bangladesh players needed more time to cope with the big boys of international cricket.

"Ashraf is a talented player. He is particularly strong off the back-foot. Besides, there are some more talented cricketers who only need

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FINALLY! Bangladesh batsman Habibul Bashar turns Indian paceman Ajit Agarkar to the leg side during his half-century yesterday.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

SERIES SNIPPETS

HASAN MASOOD



Dav Whatmore is a strong candidate to become Bangladesh's next national coach.

A top Bangladesh Cricket Board official revealed this to The Daily Star Sport yesterday.

Whatmore, responsible for helping Sri Lanka win the 1996 World Cup, is said to be at the top of the BCB's short-list.

The post became vacant when Pakistani Mohsin Kamal was sacked last month after the team returned from a disastrous World Cup campaign. At the moment Sarwar Imran is acting as interim coach.

The unnamed BCB official also disclosed that former South African captain Kepler Wessels is the second choice among the four candidates vying for the post.

The same official spoke appreciatively of the latter.

"Although Whatmore may have enjoyed a prolific time as coach, but as far as I am concerned, I would prefer Wessels because he is a man of strong character.

"We are currently negotiating with Whatmore, if we fail, then we will

concentrate on Wessels," he added.

BCB president Ali Asghar recently confirmed that from an initial list of 20 provided by the International Cricket Council, they have selected four persons from Australia and South Africa for the job.

The new coach will take over from



DAV WHATMORE

May 1.

A VIRTUAL A TEAM

When the Indian team sheet was made available to press box, it caused them to say "It's virtually an A team playing Bangladesh today."

With back-to-back wins and a place in the TVS Cup on April 20 virtually

assured, not only did skipper Saurav Ganguly decide to take a well-earned break but their New Zealand coach John Wright also made a number of changes to squad.

Out went Yuvraj Singh, Harbhajan Singh and Zaheer Khan.

Though it must be said left-arm paceman Zaheer had slight hamstring problem.

In their places came Sanjay Banger, Abhijeet Kale, Avishker Salvi and Sarandeep Singh.

Of them, Kale, the 20-year-old right-handed batsman from Maharashtra, was set to make his one-day debut.

NO THANKS: BOUCHER

Mark Boucher in his first reaction to the sacking of Shaun Pollock as South African skipper said on the Wisden Cricinfo website on here Tuesday that he would have refused the captaincy had he been offered the job.

"I would have said no to it," said the South African wicketkeeper.

Boucher was relieved as vice-captain before the Bangladesh tour for reasons still to be revealed by the South African board.

He brushed aside the issue of

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MSC, Abahani sail



SPORTS REPORTER

Leg-spinner Shahed Mahmud bowled title aspirants Mohammedan Sporting Club to a 120-run win over City Club in a crucial GrameenPhone Premier Super League clash at the BKSP ground yesterday.

The Pakistani wrist-spinner captured seven wickets for 79 as City Club, set to score 345 for a win, were bowled out for 224.

It was a memorable match for Mahmud, who also captured seven wickets for 45 runs in the first innings. His match-haul of 14 for 124 not only fashioned a vital win, but also brought Mohammedan strongly back into the title race.

City Club tumbled despite a brilliant 113 by opener Moniruzzaman and a fighting 41 from Mazharul Haq.

Unbeaten on 53 at the close on the third day, the unheralded right-hander achieved a personal milestone with glorious shots all around the wicket.

With that win, Mohammedan joined City Club and Abahani in second position behind leaders Victoria Sporting Club in the six-team Super League table.

The three clubs have collected 56 points from 14 matches each.

Away in Fatullah Cricket Stadium, Mohammedan's bitter rivals Abahani also registered an easy nine-wicket win over Brothers Union Club.

On the final day, Abahani, needing 54 in their second innings to win, reached the target in only 10 overs for the loss of opener Imran Nazir who scored 13.

Opener Hannan Sarkar and one-

down Imran Ahmed were not out on 24 and 13 respectively.

SCOREBOARD

Final scorecard of the two GrameenPhone Premier Super League matches held at different venues yesterday.

Mohammedan vs City Club

Venue: BKSP

MOHAMMEDAN: First innings 345 all out in 87 overs (Ehsanul 120, Naimur 66, Anwar 41; Alamgir 4/67, Mashrafe 2/60, Saifulah 2/73)

CITY CLUB: First innings 181 all out in 62.3 overs (Mazharul 50, Moniruzzaman 36, Jamal 36; S Mehmud 7/45)

MOHAMMEDAN: Second innings

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INDIA-B'DESH SCOREBOARD

Scoreboard of the India-Bangladesh TVS Cup tri-series return-leg match at the Bangabandhu National Stadium on April 16:

BLADESH	R	M	B	4	6
Mohammad Ashraf b A Agarkar	7	18	12	1	0
Mehrab Hossain c A Agarkar b S Bangar	30	52	35	6	0
Habibul Bashar c M Kaif b A Agarkar	50	116	94	5	0
Javed Omar c and b Sarandeep Singh	1	6	5	0	0
Alok Kapali c D Mongia b Sarandeep Singh	9	31	25	0	0
Akram Khan lbw b V Sehwaq	35	78	61	4	0
Khaled Mashud c P Patel b A Mishra	12	15	14	0	0
Khaled Mahmud c V Sehwaq b A Agarkar	23	35	29	3	0
Mohammad Rafique b A Salvi	4	14	10	0	0
Tapas Baishya run out (Mishra/Patel/Bangar)	15	16	13	1	0
Tareq Aziz not out	3	13	8	0	0
Extras: (b-4, lb-2, w-4, nb-8)	18				
Total: (All out in 49.4 overs)	207				

Fall of wickets: 1-15 (Ashraf), 2-49 (Mehrab), 3-53 (Omar), 4-78 (Kapali), 5-124 (Bashar), 6-139 (Mashud), 7-163 (Akram), 8-182 (Rafique), 9-182 (Mahmud), 10-207 (Tapas)

Bowler	O	M	R	W
Avishker Salvi	10	0	51	1
Ajit Agarkar	10	2	36	3
Sanjay Bangar	8.4	0	31	1
Sarandeep Singh	10	0	34	2
Amit Mishra	9	1	38	1
Virender Sehwaq	2	0	11	1

INDIA	R	M	B	4	6
Virender Sehwaq c T Aziz b M Rafique	43	51	44	8	0
Gautam Gambhir c K Mashud b Alok Kapali	71	145	89	9	0
Parthiv Patel lbw b A Kapali	27	47	51	3	0
Mohammad Kaif run out (Kapali/Mehrab)	20	28	28	1	1
Sanjay Bangar lbw b M Rafique	7	11	11	0	1
Abhijeet Kale c K Mahmud b M Ashraf	10	20	22	1	0
Dinesh Mongia not out	16	18	12	2	0
Ajit Agarkar not out	4	2	2	1	0
Extras: (lb-1, w-7, nb-2)	10				
Total: (For 6 wickets in 42.5 overs)	208				

Fall of wickets: 1-69 (Sehwaq), 2-117 (Patel), 3-164 (Kaif), 4-178 (Bangar), 5-178 (Gambhir), 6-204 (Kale)

Did not bat: A Salvi, A Mishra, Sarandeep Singh

Bowler	O	M	R	W
Tapas Baishya	8	0	42	0

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Pollock plays it down



AFP, Dhaka

South Africa's former captain Shaun Pollock on Tuesday said the comments of fellow players had been blown out of proportion during this year's World Cup.

"I thought things were not said the way they were made out to be," said Pollock, who lost his captaincy after South Africa bowled out at the first stage of the 14-nation tournament.

Opener Herschelle Gibbs had praised Hansie Cronje's captaincy at the beginning of the mega event while Jonty Rhodes and Allan Donald had dedicated their World Cup campaign to the late captain.

"I don't think they said I was not a good captain. Even I have great respect for Cronje but the timing of those comments was unfortunate," said

Pollock, here for a three-nation tournament also featuring India and Bangladesh.

The 29-year-old all-rounder, who has been replaced by 22-year-old Graeme Smith, said he was proud of his captaincy record.

"I had a good captaincy record and am among the top ten in both Tests and one-dayers according to my success rate. I achieved certain results and players like Makhaya Ntini and Herschelle Gibbs have done better under me."

Pollock, who took over as skipper in April 2000 following Cronje's implication in match-fixing charges, said he did not agree with the view that he was too good a person to bring out the best in his players.

"Some say I was too good a person, some say I was too hard. Some feel I was very vocal about what I did not like. It is all a matter of opinion and how you judge it."



SHAUN POLLOCK

Pollock said he was getting reconciled to the idea of being just another player in the team rather than being their leader.

"It takes time to adjust because you are used to marching the troops

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Bracewell turns SL offer down

AFP, London

New Zealand coach John Bracewell, currently director of cricket at English county Gloucestershire, has ruled himself out of the running to be Sri Lanka's new coach.

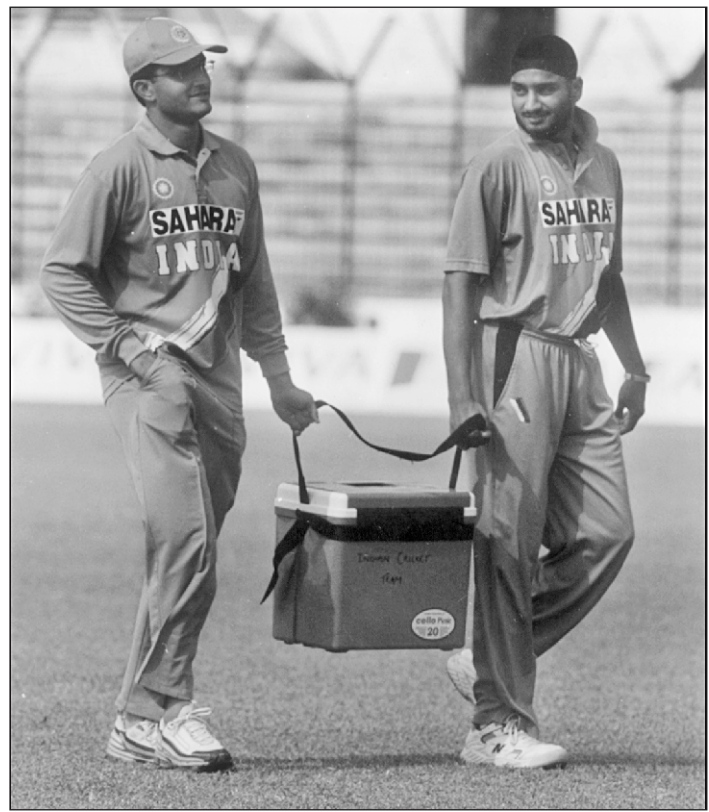
The New Zealander had been short-listed alongside Australian Steve Rixon and former South Africa coach Graham Ford for the post soon to be vacated by Dav Whatmore.

But Bracewell said Tuesday: "I thanked Sri Lanka for their interest but the timing is not right for me."

"I was flattered to be ranked in such company as Steve and Graham, who have strong international reputations. But I feel obligated to continue with the team for at least this season."

"I can't wait to get to work in the mornings and I've been delighted with the attitude of the players in pre-season. I'm also excited about working with Jonty Rhodes and learning from that."

"The main issue of all was the family one. I would probably have had to live apart from them while the contract with Sri Lanka was on and I didn't want that."



LET'S NOT MAKE THIS A HABIT! Indian captain Saurav Ganguly (L) and off-spinner Harbhajan Singh, who did not play against Bangladesh yesterday, carry the drinks for a change.

PHOTO: STAR

Olonga won't seek political asylum



REUTERS, London

Former Zimbabwe fast bowler Henry Olonga says he will not accept offers of political asylum despite living in fear after protesting against President Robert Mugabe's regime during the World Cup.

Olonga, who has arrived in England after being granted a work permit to play club cricket and do TV commentary, said he had heard of offers of asylum from Australia and New Zealand.

"It has never appealed to me," Olonga, who made headlines during this year's World Cup when he and batsman Andy Flower wore black armbands to "mourn the death of democracy" in Zimbabwe under Mugabe's rule, told Reuters in a telephone interview on Tuesday.

"If there was a legitimate way for me to work then that is what I wanted to pursue."

The 26-year-old Olonga, who has a six-month work visa, said he felt safer in England than he had done in South Africa, where he went into hiding after the World Cup amid reports that the Zimbabwean secret police were looking for him.

He said that he had received threatening e-mails, which made it unsafe for him to return to his home country.

"I believe that England is a bit further down the line with regards to being a free country and allowing people to express themselves," added Olonga, who announced his retirement from international cricket after Zimbabwe's final World Cup match.

"It's a lot more tolerant about people being outspoken and allowing people to speak their minds (so) I don't feel at as much risk as I would have done in South Africa."

Olonga, the first black cricketer to play for his country, said his World Cup experience had soured his taste for cricket and he was not interested in pursuing a first-class contract.

"To be honest, it was a particularly unpleasant experience over the last few months and I'm not keen on playing (first-class cricket)."

"I'll just get back into it with my village cricket."

Olonga said he had received plenty of support from England and from his family throughout the time he was in hiding.

"The support has been great from a wide variety of people," he said. "It was really how I was able to deal with the situation."

He is now looking forward to playing for pub exhibition side Lashings, who are based in the English county of Kent.

"I have some television commitments and a bit of a dodgy knee, but once that all gets sorted I'm looking forward to playing for Lashings," he said.

The Lashings club has a history of attracting internationals to play for them in exhibition matches against counties, universities, schools and other invitational sides.

Windies dealt double blow

AFP, Georgetown

Wicketkeeper Ridley Jacobs and fast bowler Jermaine Lawson are both unavailable for the West Indies' second Test against Australia starting Saturday in Port of Spain.

Jacobs was ruled out with a torn groin muscle after tests in Port of Spain, while Lawson has chicken pox.

"Ridley will remain in Trinidad for a few days to start rehabilitative work before he returns to his native Antigua on Saturday," Ricky Skerritt, manager of the West Indies team, said Wednesday.

He added: "Jermaine will return home and we hope that he will recover in time for the third Test in

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Winning start by BCB U-15s

SPORTS REPORTER

The BCB Under-15 team got off to a winning start with an exciting one-run win over Bagha Jatin under-15 in their opening robin league match at the Shiliguri Stadium in West Bengal, India yesterday.

Batting first, the visitors scored 117 for nine in the stipulated 40 overs with Nazimuddin hammering highest 33.

In reply, the Indian colts were all out for 116 in 39.2 overs.

Marshal Ayub of BCB under-15 was the wrecker-in-chief taking four wickets for eight runs.

The tourists will take on Shiliguri Agragamee tomorrow and Cricket Association of Bengal (CAB) Under-15 in their last match on Sunday.

Smith too young: Woolmer



REUTERS, Dubai

Former South Africa coach Bob Woolmer thinks the team's new captain Graeme Smith is too young and inexperienced to lead his country.

"Graeme is a good cricketer, but I

Woolmer said.

"I fail to understand the logic behind bowling him to late. A ridiculous decision indeed since Shaun is a wonderful bowler with the new ball," the Englishman added.

Woolmer, the ICC's high performance officer, thinks there was no reason to sack Pollock.

"It was like disarming the team," he said. "South Africa over-reacted to certain things that happened during the World Cup."

A combination of poor performance and bad luck led to the hosts' first-round World Cup exit, according to Woolmer.

"South Africa, like Pakistan, are going through a transitional phase," Woolmer said. "All the sides in the World Cup went according to their form. New Zealand could have done better had they gone to Kenya."

"Australia are the best in the world because they don't have many issues to tackle with. They have no financial problems unlike many other teams. The players are treated as product and their administration

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BOB WOOLMER

don't think he should captain the side," Woolmer, who is in Dubai to conduct a coaching clinic for young players, told reporters on Tuesday.

"Graeme is too young and hasn't done his apprenticeship yet. To be the captain of an international side, one needs to go through the apprenticeship period and do a lot of hard work to get there," he added.

The 22-year-old Smith was appointed South Africa captain last month after Shaun Pollock was sacked following the team's poor showing as