

Tests come next

SPORTS REPORTER



GrameenPhone Test Series 2003
Bangladesh vs South Africa

After a damp end to the TVS Cup tri-nation tournament, cricket fans in the country will focus their attention on the two-match GrameenPhone Test series.

The TVS Cup final between India and South Africa had to be abandoned after 17.1 overs on Monday at the Bangabandhu National Stadium. Both teams were declared joint champions after the little action saw India reduced to

46 for three before rain stopped the day-night match.

Saurav Ganguly's men might have been a little uncomfortable in their last match at Dhaka, but they were happy to return home yesterday morning.

South Africa, on the other hand, are ready to shift gears from the one-day version of the game to five-day cricket.

The Proteas led by 22-year-old Graeme Smith sounded very confident going into the first Test, starting at Chittagong tomorrow. The second Test will be played at Bangabandhu National Stadium from May 1-5.

The youngest-ever South Africa captain while admitting Monday's washout was the 'final' disappoint-

ment, still thought for the last ten days his new-look team got much-needed time to adjust with different conditions.

Both South Africa and India won once each in their two preliminary round clashes.

But it was Smith's side that marked a tremendous improvement since the 155-run defeat against India. And the South African captain said that his team wanted to carry the momentum in the Test series.

"I want to take South Africa to the top of Test cricket," said Smith referring to the Proteas' brief stay at the top of the ten-team table.

The South African team will fly to the port city today.

Khaled Mahmud's men however are already in the commercial capital to prepare for the opening Test after a disappointing show in the one-day tournament. Bangladesh bowed out of the meet losing all their four games.

Meanwhile, the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) arranged a press briefing in connection with the Test series at a local hotel on Tuesday.

Shah Nurul Kabir, secretary of the organizing committee, said that GrameenPhone had paid Taka fifteen lakh to win the title sponsorship rights.

The leading mobile phone operator of the country will also sponsor the match-of-the-match and man-of-the-series awards worth 1,000 dollars and 2,000 dollars respectively.

But there will be no prize money for the winning team.

Intekhab Mahmud, additional general manager (marketing) of GrameenPhone, also attended the briefing.



(L) Groundsmen roll the pitch as they are putting final touches to the MA Aziz Stadium yesterday. The first Test between South Africa and Bangladesh starts here tomorrow. (R) Bangladesh cricketers play football during a practice session at the venue.



PHOTO: ZOBAER HOSSAIN SIKDER



PHOTO: STAR

Organising secretary of the TVS Cup and GrameenPhone South Africa-Bangladesh Test series Nurul Kabir Shaheen MP briefs reporters at a city hotel yesterday.

City fight back

Cricket

SPORTS REPORTER

City Club took the attack to Abahani Krira Chakra on the third day of their Premier Super League match at the Fatullah Stadium yesterday.

Defending a modest total of 170, City Club reduced Abahani to 108-4 on a soggy wicket that offered only 16.4 overs before bad light stopped play.

Only Imran Nazir, a Pakistan Test discard, held the Abahani fort together with an aggressive 71 off 65 balls. The young right-hander six boundaries and a couple of sixes in his enterprising unbeaten knock. But Nazir apart the top-order collapsed with not a single batsman able to reach double figures.

Young paceman Tareq Aziz, dropped from the national team after playing two matches in the TVS Cup tri-

series, bowled with venom to finish with two wickets for 32 runs.

Abahani still needed another 62 runs to take an important first innings lead in a match, which is heading for a draw.

At the Dhanmondi Cricket Stadium, Brothers gave a fitting reply to Uttara Sporting Club in a battle of no-hoppers.

Brothers were 339 for six at stumps on the third day in reply to Uttara's first inning total of 260.

The experienced pair of Mahabubur Rahman and Halim Shah led the Brothers run chase after the Gopibagh outfit lost both openers cheaply.

Mahabub hammered a breezy 63 off 55 balls with the help of eight boundaries and two sixes. Halim scored a watchful 69 off 131 balls. He struck ten fours.

Mustakim also scored a vital 47 batting down the order.

SCOREBOARDS
Scoreboards on the third day of the GrameenPhone Premier

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PHOTO: AFP

India superstar Sachin Tendulkar receives a birthday cake made in the shape of a cricket ball from Ravi Shastri (L) and Harsha Bhogle during the recording of "Sachin A Special Edition" at ESPN STAR Sports' Riverdale studios in Bombay yesterday. The satellite sports TV channels are going to air the programme on April 24.

Rameez new PCB CEO

INTERNET, Lahore

Following a number of modifications in the national team and its management, the Pakistan Cricket Board itself has decided to ring changes as former Test skipper Rameez Raja is going to be appointed the chief executive officer.

The casualty of this attempt at shaking up complacency and restructuring the PCB to optimise performance at all levels has been its director, Chishty Mujahid. And Raja is all set to replace him before the end of this week.

Though Chishty has been offered a graceful exit, on the pretext of his family problems demanding his time, it is indeed a sacking, and the charge among others was his being mostly absent from the PCB headquarters.

Unimpressive Surrey start

Cricket

AFP, London

Surrey duo Ian Ward and Rizki Clarke both gave the England selectors an early reminder of their abilities by scoring centuries as the county champions began the defence of their title with a draw against Lancashire at The Oval here on Monday.

Ward (158), already capped at Test level by England, and Clarke (127 not out), England's young cricketer of the year last season but yet to make his Test debut, shared a record sixth-wicket stand of 144 that denied Lancashire victory.

Mahmud's men in Chittagong

SHAHIDUL ISLAM from Chittagong

Bangladesh captain Khaled Mahmud believed his team needs a brilliant start to turn their fortunes around when the first Test against South Africa starts at the MA Aziz Stadium on Thursday.

"I'm sure one good day would do the world of good for us," he said after the national team arrived at the Shah Amanat International Airport yesterday afternoon.

Bangladesh have lost 16 of the 17 Tests played so far with one being drawn.

After a brief rest at the Hotel Agrabad, where also the South Africans will be staying, the Bangladesh players headed for the stadium.

They spent two hours doing some light training and also played a game of football.

Mahmud, who took over from Khaled Mashud last month, hoped a good Test performance would erase the memories of a poor showing in the TVS Cup. Bangladesh were eliminated from the tri-nation meet losing all four games against India and South Africa.

"Our aim in the first innings will be to play 4 or 5 sessions, if we can do that then a score in excess of 300 runs is likely."

Bangladesh have had a poor track record of surviving a session without losing a wicket.

Mahmud agreed that Chittagong has been a favourite venue for the hosts. But he wants to make further improvements in the batting department during the opening Test.

Upset CJKS

SHAHIDUL ISLAM from Chittagong



GrameenPhone Test Series 2003
Bangladesh vs South Africa

With the first Test between Bangladesh and South Africa is just a day away, the mood in the bustling port city is not as buoyant as it should be.

Chittagong hosted three Tests matches since it became the second Test venue of the country. But ahead of the fourth Test, the local organisers, Chattagram Jela Krira Sangstha (CJKS), did not conceal their frustration at the prospect of a low turnout and more importantly poor response from the sponsors.

The CJKS were struggling ever since Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) and some of their regular sponsors had turned away.

The organisers earmarked an expenditure of Taka 12 lakh, but predicted a financial loss because of the poor response from the sponsors.

"Our major concern is now whether we will be able to realise the money that we have spent to hold the Test. The chances are very bleak," commented a CJKS official preferring anonymity.

CJKS general secretary Shahed Asgar Chowdhury also expressed his discontent over the sponsors' reluctance to bail them out.

"Some of our usual sponsors this time didn't fulfil our expectations," he said while talking to The Daily Star at the match venue.

"We received promises from a few sponsors. But we are not certain whether all of them will pay as promised," he said.

Another CJKS official observed that had the Board arranged a one-day international before the Test

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C'wealth chess

SPORTS REPORTER

Five players Grand Master Ziaur Rahman, fellow-GM Niaz Murshed, International Master Reefat -Bin-Sattar, IM Abdullah Al Rakib and FIDE Master Sheikh Nasir Ahmed earned two points each at the end of the third round in the Common-wealth Chess Championship at Bombay yesterday.

Zia beat CJ Arvind, Niaz defeated Kutwal Sasikant, Rakib edged out Rahul Sangma and Nasir won against Lakshmi Praneetha while Reefat suffered a setback against Kasimdzhanov.

Still Aussies on top

Cricket

AFP, Port-of-Spain

Australia remained firmly in charge of the second Test against the West Indies at the Queens Park Oval here on Monday as they built up a 199-run lead by the end of the third day with nine second-innings wickets in hand.

The Australians will look for a lead of around 450 runs sometime late on Tuesday's fourth day to press for victory and claim an unbeatable 2-0 lead in the Frank Worrell Trophy series after winning the opening Test by nine wickets.

At the close, Australia were 31 for one in their second innings with struggling opener Matthew Hayden on 15 and first-innings double-century maker Ricky Ponting on 10.

The West Indies made Australia bat again when they resisted for 119 overs to ground out 408 and trail the world's leading team by 168 runs on the first innings.

Brian Lara's team had 14 overs to bowl at the Australians in the final hour's play and grabbed the wicket of first Test man-of-the-match Justin Langer.

Langer was left shaking his head when he was given out for three in the sixth over in another dubious decision by Sri Lankan umpire Asoka de Silva.

The Australian left-hander was hit low on the back foot by Vasbert Drakes and after a delay de Silva raised his finger, but television replays showed that Langer was struck outside the line of off-stump.

It was the second time in the match that Langer had been the victim of a questionable lbw decision by de Silva.

Daren Ganga earlier thrilled his Trinidad fans with his second consecutive Test century and first on his home ground.

That followed Sunday's bitter disappointment of skipper and local hero Lara missing out on his elusive first century.

Ganga was out when he edged a Brett Lee out-swinging to Hayden at first slip for 117, his highest Test score and second straight century after his 113 in the first Georgetown Test.

Much of the remaining work to get

the West Indians past the follow-on fell to Marlon Samuels.

The languid Samuels, often criticised for indiscipline cricket which had his position in the team under threat, concentrated hard for 164 minutes before a lapse led to his downfall for 68.

He swatted leg-spinner Stuart MacGill to long-off where Andy Bichel took a two-handed catch.

Drakes ensured Australia would have to bat a second time when he pushed a single off MacGill 25 minutes after tea, but batting partner Mervyn Dillon continued his run of outs, dismissed for his 25th duck in 33 Tests, when he was trapped lbw by Jason Gillespie.

Drakes clubbed Brad Hogg for two sixes in the one over before he fell lbw to Lee for 24, ending a 24-run last-wicket partnership with Pedro Collins (seven

Aggression his forte

By his high standards Herschelle Gibbs has had a lean patch during the tour of Bangladesh so far. The aggressive opening batsman hopes to strike form during the Test series against the home side.

The right-hander handles the pressure like as if he were behind the wheel of an F1 racing car. He loves to be in the fast lane and is always eager to face new challenges.

It is ironic though, that as talented as Gibbs is, he has always been a newsmaker for not the right reasons.

First he was banned for his involvement in the Hansie Cronje match-fixing scandal, the 29-year-old Gibbs admitted it was a silly mistake and moved on to the next chapter. Then there was the famous dropped catch in the 1999 World Cup. Although Gibbs tends to believe it is ancient history now.

Away from all that he was scoring runs galore and had the chance to become the first player to complete four consecutive one-day international hundreds. But the feat eluded him when Alok Kapali bowled down the leg-side.

Yet Gibbs took it in his stride and turned his attention to the World Cup.

He rattled up 384 runs in six matches. Fortunately, bowlers could breathe a sigh of relief when his dream of lifting the coveted trophy ended with the hosts making a premature exit from the competition many

believed they destined to win.

Gibbs talked to **LENIN GANI** of THE DAILY STAR SPORT at the Sonargaon Hotel yesterday.

Daily Star Sport (DSS): What makes you such a destructive

Some players are born with it while others are more grafters and they take more time to score their runs. But at the end of the day you've still got to be able to find a balance between attack and defence. And in the last couple of years I've been finding it out.

DSS: Many believe you and Ricky Ponting are two of the best fielders in the world especially with the retirement of Jonty Rhodes. Would you share the view?

HG: Well, I think Jonty still stands head and shoulders above everybody else. The standards that he set in the 1992 World Cup won't be beaten. I don't think there will be another Jonty Rhodes for 10/12 years.

But still that is quite a big compliment for myself and Ricky. But obviously with Jonty not playing anymore I have to set certain standards. Over the last few years it was very beneficial working with him not only for me but the team as well. But as I said before he is not around more and so I have to keep a high standard.

DSS: Where do you get the motivation for fielding?

HG: I think a lot of it has to do

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HERSCHELLE GIBBS

batsman?

Herschelle Gibbs (HG): I think it's the way I have been brought up and taught how to play. I've always had an attacking streak in me. I see myself as an entertainer and to make it enjoyable for the spectators. And I think the attacking streak will always be there.

He knew it was coming

Cricket

AFP, Port-of-Spain

West Indies batsman Daren Ganga, who went 17 Tests without scoring a century but has now hit hundreds in each of his last two, says he always had confidence in his ability.

Written off by some pundits as he went into the series against Australia with an average of 22.96, Ganga said he had learned a lot from his earlier frustrations.

"I always knew I had the ability and capability to score at this level," Ganga told reporters on Monday after scoring 117 to help West Indies avoid the follow-on in the second Test.

The 24-year-old also became the first Trinidadian to score a ton in Port of Spain since Larry Gomes against India in 1983 as West Indies were bowled out for 408 in reply to Australia's first innings 576 for four declared.

The tourists were 31 for one in their second innings at the close of play on the third day.

"In those 17 Tests, I developed as a player and we are beginning to see that development transformed into scores," said Ganga.

"I would not say I was not ready but now I'm beginning to reap the rewards. It made me a tougher cricketer, it helped me develop.

"I wanted to do something special in front of my home crowd. I had good support from (captain) Brian (Lara) and the rest of the guys.

"All along I have taken my cricket very seriously...now I hope I can play a big part in West Indies cricket," said Ganga, who was eventually caught by Matthew Hayden off paceman Brett Lee.

Australia leg spinner Stuart MacGill reached a personal milestone on Monday, claiming his 100th Test victim in his 21st appearance when Carlton Baugh was out hit wicket for 19.

"I've never seen a hit-wicket in first class cricket and now we've had two in the same series," said MacGill.

"The thing that amazed me was how hard he hit it," added 32-year-old MacGill, who went on to pick up his 101st wicket when he had

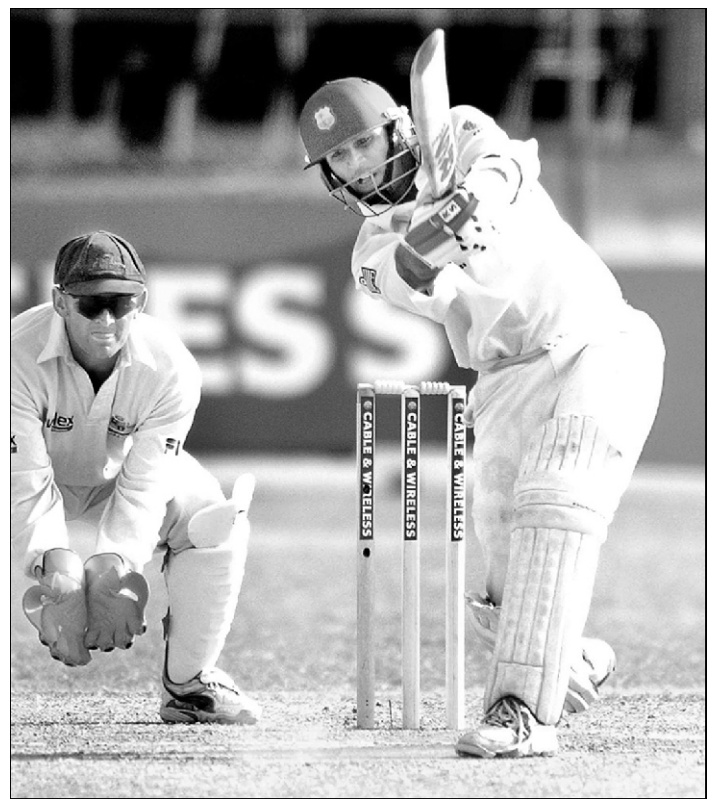


PHOTO: AFP

West Indies' Daren Ganga off-drives one on way to scoring a century against Australia at Port-of-Spain on April 21.