

A Barisal surprise

ISPAHANI
MIRZAPORE TEA
7th National Cricket League

SPORTS REPORTER

Leaders Rajshahi looked the likely winners the other day, but fell on all fours in the second essay on the third day to present Barisal an unlikely victory.

Holders Dhaka and co-sharers of the top spot in the first-class table of the Ispahani National League also looked down the barrel while chasing a massive victory target of 337 set by visiting Sylhet.

The other fixture between Chittagong and Khulna were heading for a draw with runs continued to flow thick and fast from both teams.

BARISAL-RAJSHAHI

In one of those rare days when the hunted turned hunter, Barisal scored a surprisingly facile 115-run win against Rajshahi on their home

ground after left-arm paceman Anisur Rahman and Monir Hossain combined to shoo the visitors out for 112 in 42.2 overs.

Anis and Monir shared six wickets after a century stand for the fifth wicket between Nadif Chowdhury and Mashall Ayub saw Barisal setting a challenging victory target of 228 runs for Rajshahi.

Young Nadif and Ayub put on 101 runs as Barisal, resuming the day on 181-4, posted an impressive 320. Nadif scored 49 while Ayub struck 54 that contained six boundaries. Nasiruddin Faruk also contributed a useful 32 not out down the order.

Rajshahi, who scored 261 against Barisal's 168 in the first innings, never recovered after experienced paceman Anis ripped through the top-order to finish with 3-10 in his 10 overs.

Juaid with 24 was the top scorer for Rajshahi while first-innings centurion Naim could score only 18. Monir also finished

with impressive figures of 3-33.

It was Barisal's second win in six games. But despite the victory they remained at the bottom of the six-team table with 14 points. Rajshahi on the other hand remained glued to their previous collection of 20.

SYLHET-DHAKA

Sylhet closed in on to resist their third straight win and join Dhaka and Rajshahi at the top of the table when the visitors set the hosts a massive winning target of 337 at the under-prepared Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur.

Dhaka, who were shot out for 152 in their first innings, laboured to 22-1 at stumps on the penultimate day.

Resuming the day on 82-4, Sylhet reached a fairly safe total of 286 all out thanks to a fine 84 by wicketkeeper-batsman Golam Mabud.

Starting the day on 3, the right-hander struck eight four in his

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REMEMBER, YOU HAVE TO FACE HIM: (L) Bangladesh coach Dav Whatmore (R) gives some batting tips to opening batsman Nafees Iqbal while (R) master Sri Lanka off-spinner Muttiah Muralitharan hones his skills during their respective training sessions at the Chittagong Divisional Stadium on Sunday.



PHOTO: STAR



Did U Know?

The Olympic medals are designed especially for each individual Olympic Games by the host city's organizing committee. Each medal must be at least three millimeters thick and 60 millimeters in diameter.



Habibul Bashar

(Bangladesh cricket captain)
"It was not demoralising at all. I rather believe that we have established ourselves as a team and we can give anyone a tough time. There has been a transformation in our mentality as we are now going into a match thinking about winning." After losing the 3rd ODI against Sri Lanka.



7th Nat'l Cricket League
Four-Day Matches (Day Four)
Dhaka vs Sylhet
Venue: Sher-e-Bangla Nat'l Stadium, Mirpur
Chittagong vs Khulna
Venue: Khulna Divisional Stadium

PCB may turn to American fielding coach

PTI, Islamabad

Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) is contemplating the name of an American fielding coach ahead of former South African fielding great Jonty Rhodes for the national team's series against England.

Mike Young, a former baseball player, coach and manager, is presently working as a consultant with the New Zealand team on three-week contract after being credited to produce good results with the World Champions Australia in the recent VB series.

"The feedback about Young is that he is an excellent coach and has produced good results with the Australians and New Zealanders," a PCB source was quoted as saying by the News.

PCB's ad-hoc committee last week decided to hire a fielding coach for Pakistan team and captain Inzamamul Haq suggested that he should be hired three to four weeks before the England tour in mid-June.

Aussies' late recovery

Cricket

AFP, Centurion

Michael Clarke and Michael Hussey shared a century partnership and Brett Lee hit out powerfully as an injury-hit Australian team reached a competitive total in the first one-day international against South Africa at Centurion Park Sunday.

Australia, who were without captain Ricky Ponting, made 229 for eight in an innings reduced to 47 overs by rain.

Clarke (53) and Hussey (56) rescued the side from a shaky start and Australia were 162 for six when rain stopped play after 40 overs.

When play resumed more than an hour later, Lee hit an unbeaten 38 off 28 balls as Australia made 67 runs off the remaining seven overs.

Ponting suffered an abdominal strain while batting in the nets Saturday and withdrew Sunday morning, joining all-rounder Andrew Symonds (thigh) and Stuart Clark (rib) on the sidelines and leaving the tourists with just 11

fit players.

Stand-in captain Adam Gilchrist decided to bat after winning the toss but his side were soon in trouble as South African opening bowlers Shaun Pollock and Makhaya Ntini took advantage of helpful, overcast conditions.

Australia slipped to 25 for three before Clarke and Hussey put on exactly 100 for the fourth wicket.

Clarke and Hussey were starting to get on top, taking 43 runs in seven overs of spin from Robin Peterson and South African captain Graeme Smith, when Smith brought back Pollock.

With the second ball of his new spell, Pollock had Clarke superbly caught by a diving AB de Villiers at cover. He followed up with the wicket of Hussey, caught at deep midwicket, in his next over.

Pollock finished with three for 23 from ten overs.

Lee and Shane Watson added 51 for the seventh wicket as Australia finished strongly.

Andre Nel, in his first match since suffering a foot injury in early January, conceded 21 runs off his final over, which included two sixes by Lee and three wickets.

Ntini gave an improved performance after conceding 44 runs in three overs in a 20-overs international in Johannesburg on Friday in his first match since suffering a knee injury in Australia in December.

He had figures of two for 25 off eight overs but his ninth and final over cost 17, including two sixes by Nathan Bracken.

Australian physiotherapist Errol Alcott said Ponting had suffered a low grade strain which made movement painful.

"He will undergo intensive treatment and will be reassessed late next week," said Alcott.

Symonds had been expected to play Sunday but Alcott said it had been decided to give the player five more days to be fully fit for the second match of the five-game series in Cape Town Friday. Clark is also expected to be fit by Friday.

SCOREBOARD

Scoreboard in the first one-day international between South Africa and Australia at Centurion Park on Sunday:

AUSTRALIA
Gilchrist c Nel b Ntini 14

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Pakistan clinch hockey series with India

PTI, Rawalpindi

India fought back from 0-3 down to hold arch-rivals Pakistan to a creditable 3-3 draw in the sixth and last Test of the bilateral hockey series at the Army Hockey Stadium here on Sunday.

By holding the Pakistanis in this match, India managed to win the second leg 1-0 and thereby narrow down their series loss to 3-1.

After bowing down to the superior skills and better team work of the Pakistani side in the first-half, India rallied in the second, striking well in time to notch a draw.

Sandeep Singh (54th), Shivinder Singh (61st) and Vikram Pillay (62nd) scored the goals for the visitors after they were nearly outplayed by Pakistan through Tariq Aziz (4th), Mohammed Saqlain (27th) and Shabbir Hussain (43rd) goals.

Gavaskar tells Ganguly to play on

BBC ONLINE, undated

Legendary Indian batsman Sunil Gavaskar has on Saturday urged Sourav Ganguly not to retire from playing despite being overlooked for the first Test against England.

The 33-year-old has been in and out of the team and the centre of a public row with India coach Greg Chappell.

But Gavaskar, who made 10,122 runs in a Test career that he ended at the age of 38, says Ganguly should keep playing.

"Thirty-three is no age to quit. I'd only remind Sourav to let his bat do the talking," the former opener said.

Ganguly says he will continue to play in domestic cricket for West Bengal for the immediate future, but there have been suggestions he might quit if he fails to make an international return soon.

But Gavaskar, like Ganguly a former India captain, insists "there is still some cricket left in Sourav".

He added: "If 33 was the number where you stop, then I would have not gone on to score my 34th Test hundred."

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Bashar exudes confidence

REUTERS, Chittagong



Bangladesh have the opportunity to put their dismal Test record against Sri Lanka behind them with the start of two-match series on Tuesday.

The hosts will be in confident mood after claiming a four-wicket victory in the second match of the just concluded one-day series in Bogra on Wednesday, which snapped a 15-game losing streak against Sri Lanka.

While they lost the series 2-1, Bangladesh will have taken encouragement from putting up 231 for nine in 50 overs in chasing a score of 309-7 in the third and final one-day here on Saturday.

"We know our Test record is not good at all against Sri Lanka. But that all happened in the past,"

Bangladesh skipper Habibul Bashar said.

"This time we are confident that we can do something what we showed in the one-day series."

Bangladesh have recalled teenage batsman Mushfiqur Rahim in a 15-man squad for the two-Test series. Mushfiqur, who made his Test debut against England last year, led Bangladesh in the Under-19 World Cup, which ended in Sri Lanka last week.

The squad, announced on Saturday, also includes batsmen Nafees Iqbal and Shahadat Hossain as well as spinner Enamul Haque.

Fast bowler Mashrafeeq-Bin-Mortuza is to be rested and misses the series.

Sri Lanka captain Mahela Jayawardene said his team will need to work hard to translate their one-day success into a Test series

win against the hosts.

"A Test match is different altogether. You need to have a lot of patience and temperament, especially in this sort of slow wicket. We have to work hard to do well in Test series," he said.

Jayawardene said star spinner Muttiah Muralitharan could make the difference.

"He has taken 580 odd wickets in Test cricket. So every team will want to have him in the side," Jayawardene said. "His presence here for the Test is of course a big encouragement for us."

Sri Lanka have beaten Bangladesh in all five Test meetings between the two sides, all taking place in Sri Lanka.

The first Test starts at the Chittagong Divisional Stadium, the venue for the third ODI, on February 28 and the second will be played in Bogra from March 8.

Coach backs selectors

Cricket

REUTERS, Baroda

India coach Greg Chappell is backing the selection process that will pit a youthful squad against an experienced England side in the first Test of their three-match series starting in Nagpur on Wednesday.

"I think the selection committee has made a decision along the lines of what we have seen with the one-day side," he told this news agency.

"The energy and the application the young boys have brought to the one-day squad have been encouraging for everyone."

"It is all part of the policy to regenerate the team," the former Australia captain added.

"While we have got some experienced players, we need to be able to bring young players in and let them work their way in and get some experience and learn from the seniors."

In picking the squad for the Nagpur Test, the Indian selectors made the bold move of dropping former captain Sourav Ganguly as well as regular bowlers Ajit Agarkar and Zaheer Khan.

Drafted into the side are uncapped fast bowler Vikram

Rajvir Singh and 17-year-old leg-spinner Piyush Chawla, while seamer Shanthakumaran Sreesanth and batsman Suresh Raina were both rewarded for exceptional one-day form with Test match selection.

Since taking over last September, Chappell has transformed the one-day side with the introduction of talented young players, who have also helped improve the

Pakistan this month, helping lift morale after losing the Test series.

"Everybody has to start somewhere," Chappell said. "You don't get experience sitting on the sidelines. It is important that they get picked when they are ready."

Indian selectors are keen to offer young players enough opportunities to gain experience in the build-up to next year's World Cup in West Indies.

"We have a fair bit of experience in the bowling line-up with (Irfan) Pathan, Anil Kumble and Harbhajan Singh, so I am not unduly concerned," Chappell added.

"We worked out that we need some pace and we need some bounce and we looked to some young bowlers to provide that for us."

Although India have not won a Test series against a major side away from the sub-continent since 1986, Chappell is not concerned.

"We have not been unsuccessful in Tests," he said.

"We won a Test series against Sri Lanka at home recently and we had a very close series in Pakistan."

"The infusion of youth and enthusiasm will help take us forward in our process of reinvigorating our Test team."



GREG CHAPPELL

standard of fielding. India have won 12 of their last 16 one-day internationals, thrashing Sri Lanka 6-1 at home last year and easing to a 4-1 series win in

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