



Did U Know?

Australian spin legend Shane Warne will make his first appearance in a Test match against Bangladesh today at the Fatullah Cricket Stadium. Previously he has only played one ODI against the Tigers.

What to WATCH

BTV & STAR Sports

Bangladesh vs Australia
1st Test, Day One
Live at 10:00 am

BTV

AFC Challenge Cup
Quarterfinal
India v Nepal
Live at 3:30 pm

BTV World

AFC Challenge Cup
Quarterfinal
Palestine v Kyrgyzstan
Live at 3:30 pm

DD National

India vs England
5th ODI
Live at 9:30 am

ESPN

English Premier Football League
Chelsea vs West Ham
Live at 4:55 pm
Liverpool vs Bolton Wanderers
Live at 7:00 pm
Man United vs Arsenal
Live at 9:00 pm



Mashrafe Bin Mortuza

(Bangladesh paceman)
"Believe me 'scare' is not the word for us whatever the team status is."
When asked about his mindset on facing Australia.



Bangladesh vs Australia
1st Test, Day One
Venue: Fatullah Cricket Stadium
AFC Challenge Cup
QUARTERFINALS
Palestine v Kyrgyzstan (3.30pm)
Venue: Bangabandhu National Stadium
India v Nepal (3.30pm)
Venue: M A Aziz Stadium, Chittagong

CA bosses in city

SPORTS REPORTER

Creagh O'Connor and James Sutherland, chairman and chief executive respectively of Cricket Australia (CA) arrived in the city yesterday as part of a ceremony to mark Australia's reign as the top Test cricket side in the world.

Ricky Ponting's side will receive the LG International Cricket Council Test Championship Trophy at a ceremony before the start of the second day's play at the Fatullah Cricket Stadium on Monday.

Bangladesh Cricket Board president Ali Asghar will hand over the trophy on behalf of the ICC, to Ricky Ponting. Besides the coveted trophy, the Australians will also receive 500,000 dollars for being the official champions of Test cricket for the last five years.

The ICC introduced the World Test Championship in May 2001 in partnership with electronic giants LG for a five-year period that ends just before the first Test at Fatullah.

We aren't scared, sounds Bashar

SPORTS REPORTER



CricketPhoto
Habibur Bashar

Bangladesh captain Habibur Bashar called for tenacious efforts from his boys to make their mark in the two-match Test series against Australia, terming it as the toughest challenge they have ever faced at home.

Bangladesh suffered innings defeats in both their previous meetings, in 2003, to the world champions but Bashar was not ready to draw any comparison between present and past.

"Our main target was to survive against the world's best side during our maiden tour to Australia. But this time we are going to perform against them," said the confident Bangladesh captain during a press briefing yesterday after their final training session at the Fatullah Cricket Stadium.

"I think it is difficult to make any plan successful against a team like

Australia. We will better concentrate on our own game," said Bashar.

The 33-year old said that they were very much aware of Australia's strength, especially in the longer-version game, but he thought that The Tigers' recent impressive performance has given them the self-belief to be competitive against any team.

"No team could be compared with them but we are counting on the good cricket we've played recently. I have little doubt about the ability of my players and I want stubborn efforts from them," said Bashar, one of the members to tour down under three years ago.

However the Bangladesh captain made a very interesting comment when he was asked about his target in the series.

"Tell me what can be better than a win? But you have to be realistic when you meet a team like Australia. What I can assure you is that we respect them as the top-

ranked side but we are not scared," he quipped.

Bangladesh have improved their one-day stature beating the world's formidable sides like India, Sri Lanka and Australia over the past 16 months but they still have only a solitary Test victory against Zimbabwe in 42 attempts.

"What we want to do in the series is to put on our best performance. If we consider our one-day graph, definitely the Test performance is not up to the mark. It would be a real achievement if we can stretch the toughest opponents in Test cricket," he explained.

Bashar said that they would try to overcome their second-innings weakness in the series.

"We were top for sometime in the previous series but we just lost the way because of second-innings disasters. I think everybody realises it but surely it will not be easy to overcome within one or two series," he added.

Aftab again a Test batsman!

SPORTS REPORTER



CricketPhoto
Aftab Ahmed

There was no surprise when Bangladesh announced their final team yesterday for the first Test against Australia but the inclusion of dashing batsman Aftab Ahmed raised many eyebrows.

Many found it unfair to see the talented right-hander being out-of-favour in the Test series against Sri Lanka, but chief selector Faruque Ahmed had then tagged him as a one-day specialist, considering his habit to play too many shots.

It was obvious that the team think-tank would face the question at the press conference about its U-turn about Aftab's inclusion, but Faruque Ahmed was not present when the team announced.

Rather it was coach Dav Whatmore, also part of the selection committee, who explained the situation.

"Aftab looked good in the nets

over the last week. He was temporarily dropped to realise what is required in the longer version. But now it's a selection committee decision that he has been given the chance, not an individual decision," said the Sri Lanka-born Australian.

He, however, said that they were desperately looking for a genuine all-rounder.

"The ideal situation is to have an all-rounder... pacer or spinning all-rounder who bowls and bats a lot. We do not have it and we are desperately searching for that player. No change in the format of the squad since I came in as coach. And this time we have four bowlers with Rajin and Aftab helping out the lot," said Whatmore.

He also defended the exclusion of in-form left-arm pacer Syed Raseel, who served his side best in absence of injured Mashrafe-Bin-Mortuza and made it a habit to give early breakthroughs.

"Rasel and (Shahadat Hossain) Rajib are different types of bowlers. Rajib has a lot more to offer with the

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Bangladesh skipper Habibur Bashar (R) speaks as coach Dav Whatmore looks on during a press conference at the Fatullah Cricket Stadium on Saturday.

PHOTO: STAR

Tigers face Aussie music

SPORTS REPORTER



CricketPhoto
Adam Gilchrist

It would be a testing time for Bangladesh as Australia have decided to break the tradition of playing four bowlers by picking up five for the first Test.

"We've gone with five bowlers rather than our usual four, having taken into account the workload on the three bowlers who were heavily used in South Africa and the expected conditions here," said Australian skipper Ricky Ponting yesterday.

"Michael Clarke gets another opportunity at Test level, having been the 12th man in South Africa. We believe he's progressed in the last twelve months. Stuart McGill has been brought back to exploit the conditions in Bangladesh, which are likely to favour spin bowling," said Ponting who skipped training on the eve of the

first Test. MacGill, who played both the Tests against Bangladesh in the series in Down Under, will join hands with master spinner Shane Warne.

"Jason Gillespie has been rewarded after a summer's hard work in domestic cricket. He has been an outstanding performer in the past for Australia and will be looking forward to this Test match," he added.

Australia preferred to have light training instead of serious practice as only six cricketers -- vice-captain Adam Gilchrist, Michael Hussey, Jason Gillespie, Stuart Clark, Mitchell Johnson and Phil Jacques -- attended the session at the Mirpur Stadium.

The small contingent also consisted of coach John Buchanan. They chose the main ground of the stadium after finding the indoor facilities inadequate.

After a light warm-up, Jacques, Gilchrist and Hussey batted for a while on the newly-laid wickets at

Mirpur. The wicket had good pace and bounce, but it is a complete contrast to the one that the tourists will be facing at Fatullah Stadium.

Fast bowler Gillespie, minus his trademark mullet, was struggling with an injured shoulder and had it wrapped up while leaving.

Gaibandha cricket

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Gaibandha

Gaibandha Cricket Coaching Centre defeated Sunrise Sporting Club by one wicket in the Super League stage of the Naheed Cotton First Division Cricket League on Saturday.

Winning the toss Sunrise Sporting batted first and compiled 207 runs for the loss of six wickets in 50 overs. In reply Gaibandha sneaked home by scoring 208 runs with one wicket remaining.

Ghagot Kira Chakra will face Mohammedan Sporting Club in today's Super League match.

Smith returns for S Africa

BBC ONLINE, undated

Graeme Smith has been cleared to lead South Africa in the first Test against New Zealand, which starts next Saturday at Centurion Park.

Smith missed the final match of the recent home series against Australia after injuring a finger in practice.

Jacques Kallis reverts to the role of vice-captain in an unchanged 16-man squad named by the selectors.

"They deserve another opportunity against New Zealand," chief selector Haroon Lorgat commented.

"We believe the experience (of playing Australia) will stand them in good stead.

"We will, however, monitor performances carefully as we seek to build a successful Test team."

The Proteas lost five successive Tests home and away against Australia and are eager to stop the

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PHOTO: STAR

REMEMBER YOU ARE A CRICKETER: Australia's Adam Gilchrist (R) tries to draw the attention of Mike Hussey during a practice session at the Fatullah Cricket Stadium on Saturday.

Sri Lanka A win ODI series

BDNEWS, Khulna

Sri Lanka A clinched the three match one-day series 2-1 by inflicting a massive 134-run defeat on hosts Bangladesh A in the third and final match at the Bir Shrestha Shaheed Lt. Matiur Rahman Stadium in Khulna Saturday.

Bangladesh A were bundled out for paltry 111 in 35.5 overs, chasing Sri Lanka's 245 for eight in the stipulated 50 overs.

The visitors earlier recorded a five-wicket win over Bangladesh A in the second match following a 30-run defeat in the first match in Bogra.

K Silva hammered an unbeaten 83 as the visitors piled up a challenging total after opting to bat first. Daniel contributed with 40 while Udawatte added 20.

Farhad Reza grabbed four wickets for the home side conceding 39 runs.

In reply, Bangladesh were crushed cheaply with Mushfiqur Rahim topscoring with 36 not out and skipper Tushar Imran contributing 27 runs.

Chandana, Ganegama and Suraj Mohammad took two wickets each for the visitors.

Sri Lanka cruise to semis



SPORTS REPORTER

Sri Lanka cruised into the semifinal of the inaugural AFC Challenge Cup when they crushed injury-hit Chinese Taipei 3-0 at the MA Aziz Stadium on Saturday.

After a quiet first 20 minutes, Sri Lanka came alive but Jayasuriya shot the ball straight to the hands of goalkeeper Kun-Chi Lu after being set by Chathura Weerasingha. Eight minutes later, Izzadeen Nauffer's weak effort failed to trouble Lu.

Defender Izzadeen finally opened their account in the 44th minute when his powerful volley from 20 yards found the back of the net. Izzadeen was in the thick of things when the rival backline failed to clear his corner properly in the 70th minute, allowing Lankan defender Sanjaya Pradeep Kumara fire the ball past Lu from the edge of the box.

Substitute Jeewantha Ratnayaka sealed the fate of the quarterfinal on the stroke of the final whistle.

"We changed our strategy for this match and played an offensive game. The absence of three key Taipei players helped in our cause," said an elated Lankan coach Sampath Perera.

"As far as I remember this is the biggest achievement of Sri Lankan football. We were confident ahead of this game and I feel we are capable of making it to the summit clash." Chinese Taipei's Japanese coach Toshiaki Imai said his players failed to perform up to the mark.

"Sri Lanka are a very strong side and our defenders failed to stop their front line. Their penetration and organisation was better than us," he said.

Sri Lanka will take on winners of today's quarterfinal between India and Nepal in the April 12 semifinal at the same venue.

Australians no crowd-pullers!

SPORTS REPORTER

The much revered and equally admired Australian cricket team may be in town but even the star names of Shane Warne, Ricky Ponting and Brett Lee have not been enough to pull the people from the river port town of Narayanganj out of their slumber and daily routines.

Ticket sales for the first Test have been abysmally low and turnout for the match at Fatullah is expected to be no different. The situation is not wholly unexpected as crowds for Test matches have failed to emulate the widespread interest of the ODI game.

However most thought it would be different in the case of the world champions being in town.

It has not however and Mohammad Boduazzaman, senior asst vice-president and manager of City Bank, Tanbazar branch relates a sorry state of affairs.

"The demand for tickets have been very poor. We had expected the Australians to bring the crowds in by droves but unfortunately that has not been the case."

When queried about numbers he replied, "Only about 150 tickets have been sold so far from my branch and the situation is not much different in the other branches around the city."

Umps' training camp ends

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

A five-day Rajshahi divisional umpires training camp ended here at the Dinajpur Stadium today afternoon. The training had started on April 4 at the same venue.

The training camp was organised jointly by Bangladesh Cricket Control Board and the Dinajpur Sports Association.

40 umpire trainees from 8 districts of Rajshahi division are taking part in the training.

Ziaul Islam Masud and Manjurul Hossain jointly conducted the training camp. During the concluding ceremony, certificates were distributed among the trainees.



PHOTO: STAR

Chinese Taipei goalkeeper KC Lou looks back at his nets in despair after conceding a goal against Sri Lanka in their AFC Challenge Cup quarterfinal at the MA Aziz Stadium in Chittagong on Saturday.



SPORTS REPORTER

Palestine look like the team to bet when they take on Kyrgyzstan in the quarterfinal of the AFC Challenge Cup at the Bangabandhu National Stadium today.

In the other quarterfinal in Chittagong today, SAFF Football champions India face neighbours

Nepal at the MA Aziz Stadium. Both matches kick-off at 3.30pm.

Having scored 16 goals in three group matches, Palestine have showed why they are the most feared side and the credit goes to none other than striker Fahed Attal, who has found the net eight times.

But coach Mohammed Sabah is not prepared to take victory for granted.

"Kyrgyzstan are a very strong and improving side and they have proved it after beating Tajikistan.

They will be playing nothing except for win. But we've come here to play the final and want to maintain our good form. I think we have a chance to go all the way," said Sabah, who will miss his first-choice rightback Ismael Amour.

The timing of the quarterfinals has been brought forward but Sabah thinks that it would not affect his team. "We've played all our matches at the same time. So it is an advantage for us. Moreover,

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