



PHOTO: AFP

Australian star Jason Gillespie holds aloft his trophy during the presentation ceremony at the end of the second and final Test against Bangladesh at the Chittagong Divisional Stadium on Thursday. Gillespie was named both man-of-the-match and man-of-the-series.

Tushar takes Manzarul's place

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh have made one change in their one-day squad for the three-match series against Australia which begins in Chittagong on April 23.

Middle-order batsman Tushar Imran replaces all-rounder Manzarul Islam from the side that whitewashed Kenya 4-0 in the Tigers' last limited-overs assignment.

"We have a better record in one day cricket. It will be difficult but not impossible to beat Australia. We can do it. We have the capacity to win a match against the world champions," told captain Habibul Bashar after the end of the second and final Test on Thursday.

The second and third ODIs will be held at the Fatullah Stadium in Dhaka on April 26 and 28.

SQUAD

Habibul Bashar (captain), Khaled Mashud, Javed Omar, Shahriar Nafees, Mohammad Ashraf, Rajin Saleh, Aftab Ahmed, Tushar Imran, Alok Kapali, Mohammad Rafique, Abdur Razzak, Mashrafe Mortaza, Shahadat Hossain and Syed Rasel.



Did U Know?

Australian spinner Daniel Cullen became the 597th player to represent Australia in Test matches, while Abdur Razaq was the 45th player from Bangladesh. Both spinners debuted in the second Test match at Chittagong.



Younis Khan
(Pakistan cricket vice-captain)
"Whenever I am out of form, I get to play against India and I regain my form."
After his 71 not out led Pakistan to victory in the first ODI at Abu Dhabi on Tuesday.

A series to remember

SPORTS REPORTER



The series victory against Zimbabwe and a draw against the West Indies in the Caribbean put aside, the Test series against Australia would be remembered as Bangladesh's best ever performance at home or abroad considering the strength of the opposition.

Bangladesh also came close to beating Pakistan in Multan in 2003 when they lost by one wicket only but many believe that the weakest Test nation really came of age against the world champions, especially in the first Test in Dhaka.

The second Test, marred by brutal police attacks on journalists on and off the pitch was rather anti-climactic but the Tigers managed to salvage some pride with a decent second-innings performance, which they would have welcomed in the first Test in a bid to make history.

"The team doesn't really know how close they came to causing a major upset. The batting sometimes remains an area of concern. It was a total contrast between the first and second innings of the Test matches. The first innings in Dhaka was good, the second innings not so good," said Bangladesh coach Dav Whatmore adding that the opposite thing happened in the Chittagong Test.

"So we need to be a bit more consistent in getting those runs," tigerscricket.com quoted him as saying.

Captain Habibul Bashar thinks that the biggest achievement of the series was regaining the self-belief.

"We feel now that we can push any team in the world. We are show-

ing improvement which is most important. As Dav has said, we have to be more consistent with our batting, but we have improved."

"There have been some positives like, Shahriar Nafees' batting, Rafique's bowling and batting. But I am not satisfied with the performances of a couple of guys. We need not just one batsman to score runs but one or two around him should do the job too. I also think we need someone to support Rafique when he is not taking wickets, someone who can cover for him."

Bashar said that he had expected Nafees, who scored most runs in the series, to score a lot of runs but admitted Jason Gillespie's double hundred was a surprise.

"We have seen how someone in their team inevitably contributes when needed. Our tail can learn a great deal from Gillespie. Not only his double century, he was also involved in a big partnership with Adam Gilchrist in the first Test when they were in a corner and Brett Lee also took the game away from us with his batting in the second innings. The bottom line is we all need to work a bit more harder."

"The wicket was too flat. There was no turn for us. They had two wrist spinners and they could spin the ball on any surface. For us it was difficult because our spinners are finger spinners," he said defending his bowlers who struggled in the match.

Australian captain Ricky Ponting, whose magnificent effort swung the match their way in the first Test, talked about changes after the first Test.

"After the first Test we all felt that we needed to be a lot better in a number of areas. I think we came here a lot fresher. I said to the boys before the game started that I

thought we can win this Test by an innings and they managed to do that," said Ponting adding, "Dizzy (Jason Gillespie) making 200, that was the only amazing thing that happened here."

"The wicket was great and there were no excuses if you were a batsman and you got out on that wicket against that attack."

Ponting was full of praise for Bangladesh's performance. "I think like we all have said, they played very well in the first Test and caught us on the hop there. I know we were nowhere near our best or even ready to play a Test match when that day came around. They have improved dramatically since I last played them. What I would like to see though is how they do in our condition. If they are to become a force in world cricket then they have stand up and do the job in other conditions around the world."

SCOREBOARD

Final scoreboard on the fifth day of the second and final Test between Bangladesh and Australia at the Chittagong Divisional Stadium on Thursday:

BANGLADESH: First innings 197 (Saleh 71, Mashud 34 not out; Gillespie 3-11, Warne 3-47, MacGill 3-68)

AUSTRALIA: First innings 581-4 declared (Gillespie 201 not out, Hussey 182, Jacques 66, Ponting 52; Rafique 2-145)

BANGLADESH: Second innings (overnight 195-4)
Omar lbw b Lee 19
Nafees c Gilchrist b Warne 79
Bashar c Hayden b Warne 49

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National school soccer starts today

SPORTS REPORTER

The banglalink Tiger Trophy National School Football Championship begins today in the city with 130 institutes taking part in the inaugural nationwide event.

Matches will be played at six venues in the first phase with 12 games due on the opening day in Sylhet, Mymensingh, Cox's Bazar, Meherpur, Thakurgaon and Patuakhali.

The second stage matches will be held in Comilla, Sirajganj, Nilphamari, Feni, Faridpur and Pabna from May 5-12 while the third stage in Tangail, Kurigram, Narail and Natore from May 15-22.

Finance and Planning Minister M Saifur Rahman will inaugurate the Sylhet zone competition at the Sylhet Stadium as chief guest.

U-14 booters off to Islamabad

SPORTS REPORTER

The Bangladesh under-14 football team left for Islamabad yesterday to take part in the Asian Football Confederation (AFC) Under-14 Festival of Football.

Bangladesh have been grouped with Bhutan, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Pakistan and Pakistan A. The team is led by Dewan Arshad Ali, who is also the manager. Bayezid Alam Zubair is the head coach.

The team will return on April 29.

StanChart nat'l school cricket

SPORTS REPORTER

Abu Taleb High School defeated Mirpur Residential High School by two wickets in an exciting first round match of the Standard Chartered young tigers national cricket tournament at the City Club ground yesterday.

Mazhar and Raisul hit half-centuries to help their school reach the target with three overs to spare. Amjad of the Mirpur school took four for 26.

Shaheed Nabi High School also won a low-scoring encounter by two wickets against Happy Times International School at the Iqbal Road ground, despite a brilliant effort by Kadri, who took five wickets for the losing side.

Badda Alatunnesa High School and Government Laboratory High School also won their respective matches.

Premier v'ball

SPORTS REPORTER

Sonali Bank beat East End Club in straight sets in the United Commercial Bank Premier Volleyball League at the volleyball stadium yesterday.

The old Dhaka outfit are languishing pointless at the bottom of the table, while Sonali Bank are on three points.

Bangladesh Rifles are at the top of the table, joint at seven points with Titas Club and Police.

Mind is the matter

ARCHITECT DR. NIZAMUDDIN AHMED

Thanks again to the psychophysical condition of our cricketers, not their ability, some of us were able to rise from a late breakfast and others could start preparing for lunch on the fifth day, which effectively could have been the fourth day of a rain-marred second Test match against Australia.

Ignominy of defeat by an innings and more or 10-wickets is something we have learned to live with despite the broken record played by our captain before, during and after each match -- we will do this, get that, win one out of two, batting collapsed, bowling failed, lost early wickets, could not make a breakthrough... His unforgivable run out had almost everything to do with our inability to save grace in the first Test match. But how could we? We are a mentally defeated side even before a match begins. We must concentrate more heavily on that aspect than the fundamentals of the game. To us, the mind is matter. The role of the Bangladesh coach in this light must come to be questioned.

Dav Whatmore has given Bangladesh some memorable wins,

which arguably may have been within our quota by probability because we are playing so much more. But, after having been in charge of a team for over three years, Whatmore must start taking responsibility for having failed to break through the mindset of our players. That singular lacking is costing us matches and hurting our pride because of the margin of defeat.

Our players, save the occasional sparkle as by Shahriar Nafees in the Fatullah Test, seem yet unable to distinguish between the two versions of the game. Some of them apply themselves in an ODI as if they have to save a Test match and three days of play remains -- 5 runs from 50 balls, while others seem to be exercising unfounded bravado, when remaining at the wicket could have seen the match to the fictional sixth day.

Patience is not one of the virtues of a Bangalee. This is perhaps the only tip a foreign coach needs to know about our cricketers. From that characteristic mannerism, for example, Khaled Mashud would miss the line with a so-called cross bat and Mohammad Ashraf would maintain the nagging 'khochha' -- fish outside the off, for our foreign readers. After so much of coaching, one wonders how we can still shamelessly throw away wickets. No one is

being spared the adulation -- financially, commercially, media-wise and otherwise.

The decision of our batsmen to give the Aussies a catch practice and the could-not-care-less attitude of middle and tail went to show how our coach failed to remind them to learn a lesson or two from the ten-hour long forbearance of Jason Gillespie on the same wicket.

As for Mohammad Rafique's uncalled-for showmanship, if we were looking for entertainment we would have switched on to an action movie. Gillespie's enduring innings was hardly entertaining, at times it was boring, but his resolve won his country the match, and handsomely. Who stands taller then?

We are bad learners, as our political heritage goes to show. But a coach is there to take his wards under his wing and point out the lessons that need to be picked up, or sharpened, or memorised.

In trying our best, which we rarely do, a coach must be ready and willing to sniff the bouquet as well as take the lion's share of the brickbats.



PHOTO: AFP

India captain Rahul Dravid (L) and his Pakistan counterpart Inzamamul Haq (R) together hold up the trophy after the second and final ODI of the DLF Cup at the Zayed Cricket Stadium in Abu Dhabi on Wednesday.

Honours shared in UAE



AFP, Abu Dhabi

Skipper Rahul Dravid led from the front with a responsible 92 as India defeated Pakistan by 51 runs in the second and final one-day international here on Wednesday to level the series 1-1.

He put on 138 for the opening wicket with Virender Sehwag (73) to help India post a challenging 269-5 before his bowlers restricted Pakistan to 218 despite a fighting 79 from captain Inzamamul Haq.

Left-arm seamer Irfan Pathan and off-spinner Ramesh Powar each grabbed three wickets.

Inzamam posed the main threat to India's total with a 91-ball knock but his run out in the 43rd over, brought off by Dravid, dashed his team's hopes.

Pathan jolted Pakistan with two wickets in successive overs, trapping Imran Farhat leg-before for his 100th victim in one-dayers and then uprooting the middle-stump of Shahid Afridi.

Pakistan were reduced to 45-3 when seamer Ajit Agarkar removed Younis Khan, who was caught behind for five. They were under pressure after losing three wickets in opening 12 overs.

Opener Shoaib Malik (45) and Inzamam steadied the innings before India struck back with a hat-trick of superb catches.

Yuvraj Singh dived to his right at square-leg to hold the ball inches off the ground to account for Malik and Suresh Raina timed his jump to perfection to take an overhead catch at short mid-wicket to dismiss Mohammad Yousof.

Venugopal Rao then broke a dangerous 50-run stand for the

eight wicket with a well-judged catch at long-on boundary to remove Rana Navedul Hasan, who smashed a 71-ball 27.

The Dravid-led side on Tuesday lost the first of two day-night games held here to raise funds for victims of last year's Kashmir earthquake, but gave a better batting performance when it mattered most.

India, shot out for 197 in the first game, were bolstered by Dravid, Sehwag, Mahendra Dhoni (59) and free-stroking Yuvraj Singh (24) after winning the toss.

Dravid looked set to complete his 12th hundred when he inside-edged seamer Mohammad Asif's delivery on to his stumps, but not before setting a stiff target for Pakistan.

India made a strong start when Dravid and Sehwag put on 138 for the opening wicket. The Indian

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Gunners' slim advantage



AFP, London

Arsenal were restricted to a 1-0 victory over Villarreal here on Wednesday but Arsene Wenger's men did enough to justify their status as favourites to advance to next month's Champions League final.

A close-range strike from centreback Kolo Toure, four minutes before half-time, secured the narrowest of first leg leads.

But on the evidence of a one-sided encounter here they will travel to Spain confident of adding to their tally, which would make life extremely difficult for a Villarreal side that seldom threatened to ruin the last European night at Highbury.

"It's a big advantage because we didn't concede a goal," said Arsenal skipper Thierry Henry.

"In the second leg, I would like to see them have a go at us because

we can play on the counter-attack. "We got the goal we deserved tonight. They made it difficult for us but I think 1-0 is a good scoreline."

Wenger's pre-match pledge to mark the occasion with a display of attacking flair was not entirely reflected in a starting line-up that featured a five-man midfield, Robert Pires taking on the responsibility for getting forward to support Thierry Henry in the absence of the suspended Jose Antonio Reyes.

But there was nothing hesitant about Arsenal's opening onslaught.

Cesc Fabregas set the tone by nutmegging Alessio Tacchinardi with humiliating ease in the centre circle and Villarreal's discomfort was reflected in the brutal challenge with which centreback Cesar Arzo floored Mathieu Flamini on the edge of the area in only the third minute.

The resulting free-kick triggered a panic on the edge of the Spaniards' six-yard box which offered Toure a sight of goal, but the defender stabbed his shot wide.

Gilberto Silva and Philippe Senderos both failed to hit the target with free headers from corners that Villarreal were struggling to cope with.

In contrast, Henry's 12th-minute finish from a Robert Pires pass was exemplary but the Frenchman had strayed fractionally offside.

Up until then, Villarreal had been restricted to an optimistic volley from Diego Forlan that finished high in the North Bank.

But the Spaniards finally bared their teeth, the pace of striker Jose Mari almost embarrassing Senderos shortly before a free-kick from Juan Roman Riquelme bounced out of Jens Lehmann's arms, Germany's new number one gathering at the second attempt. There was another scare when a slip by Toure allowed Diego Forlan in behind the Arsenal defence and the centreback was

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PHOTO: AFP

Villarreal playmaker Juan Roman Riquelme (L) tries to hold off the challenge of Arsenal's Alexander Hleb (R) during the Champions League semifinal first leg game between the sides at Highbury on Wednesday.

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