

Ispahani shock Biman

SPORTS REPORTER

MM Ispahani Ltd snatched an exciting eight-run victory from the jaws of defeat against Bangladesh Biman in the GrameenPhone Corporate Cricket League at the Dhanmondi Cricket Stadium yesterday.

The match was carried over from Saturday after rain had halted play, with Biman — chasing 118 for victory — resuming on a comfortable 54-2.

After a late start due to wet ground, the national airlines lost three major batsmen Sanwar Hossain (23), Sajjad Kadir (13) and Mushfiqur Rahman (4) in the space of 17 runs and rest of the batting panicked.

Three more batsmen were run out as Biman crashed to 109 all out in the penultimate over of the 25-overs a-side match.

Saju Dutta and Mahmudullah Riyadh captured two wickets each for the winners.

Biman left-arm spinner Elias Sunny, who took 6-15 to destroy Ispahani for 117, was adjudged the man-of-the-match.

Lara still upbeat

BBC ONLINE, undated

West Indies captain Brian Lara says his team can still do well in the Champions Trophy despite being in a tough group.

The nine-wicket hammering by Sri Lanka means Lara's men will face hosts India, world champions Australia and England.

"We've had a good time against India this year and England are also a team we have a better record against over the last two years," he explained.

"So I'm optimistic about our chances. We just have to move forward with the idea of playing much better cricket."

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Tigers welcomed by India, not BCCI



BISHWAJIT ROY from Jaipur

"Mahmud bhai please give me an autograph," a young man requests after being given what he desired.

The Tigers team operations manager Mahmud got the most attention from the public, wherever he went in the Pink City. There was also immense interest in youngsters like Mohammad Ashraf, Mashrafe Bin Mortaza, and even

newcomer Sakib Al Hasan got some notice.

There was further evidence that the interest in the Bangladeshi players was on the rise as some of the promising players were given good coverage by the local media.

Habibul Bashar's men especially enjoyed their stay in Jaipur as they received warm receptions in all parts of the city and the players even expressed their desire to come back to the country soon.

But the problem was that the spectators were not showing up in large numbers during their matches in the preliminary round of the ICC Champions Trophy in Jaipur and Mohali. And this was enough for the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) to portray their lack of interest in hosting Bangladesh in a bilateral series.

A headline in the well-circulated newspaper Hindustan Times summed up a possible tour to India by the Tigers as 'Indian board to shut doors on Bangladesh'.

"We have witnessed a poor response from the spectators involving Bangladesh in Champions Trophy matches and prior to it. Since cricket is a spectators' sport, there is no point in hosting matches which don't even have few hundred people watching those," BCCI vice-president Inderjit Singh Bindra was quoted as saying in the report.

"In contrary, there will be packed stadiums if Bangladesh play India in their own backyard," he added.

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PHOTO: AFP

New Zealand left-arm spinner Daniel Vettori bowls in the nets during a practice session in Mumbai on the eve of the Kiwis opening Champions Trophy match against South Africa today.

Pro League to kick off in Dec

SPORTS REPORTER

The 12 participating clubs have agreed to kick off the inaugural Professional Football League this December.

After a discussion with the remaining club authorities, the four Dhaka based clubs conveyed the message to the Pro League monitoring committee that they are ready to start the league in the third week of December.

The clubs also suggested that a mid-November transfer would be suitable to serve their purpose. The transfer would be on for five weeks, till the start of the league.

The Bangladesh Football Federation is expected to announce dates for transfer and the start of the league after its tomorrow's executive committee meeting.

Rusty NZ up against SA



AFP, Mumbai

New Zealand return to competitive cricket after a six month absence to take on formidable South Africa in their opening Champions Trophy match here on Monday.

In an era of non-stop cricket and excessive player workloads, the Kiwis are an oddity, having last played a one-day international way back on March 4 against the West Indies in Auckland.

They now come to India from bitterly cold winter conditions at home to literally face the heat in stifling conditions that will test both the fitness and mental resolve of the players.

Captain Stephen Fleming, one of the shrewdest captains in the modern game, chose to put a positive spin on the challenge awaiting New

Zealand in the group B opener at the Brabourne Stadium.

"The long break has actually been a blessing in disguise," said Fleming. "We have had ample rest and the boys are raring to go again."

"It's not that we did not play at all. Eight of us played county cricket in England while the bowlers took it easy."

With pace spearhead Shane Bond ruled out of the opening match with a stiff back, the fortunes of the 2000 Champions Trophy winners in Kenya will rest on how versatile left-arm spinner Daniel Vettori performs on the slow Indian wickets.

Fleming said it was "hugely disappointing" to lose his premier fast bowler at the start of the 10-nation tournament.

"The good thing is that maybe the injury will not affect us so much on the slow wickets in India. It gives the other bowlers a chance to grab their chances."

South Africa, meanwhile, are determined to live up to their status as the number two team in limited-

overs cricket after world champions Australia.

Captain Graeme Smith stressed his team was not distracted by the drama surrounding Herschelle Gibbs's appearance before the New Delhi police last week to answer charges of his involvement in match-fixing in 2000.

"The Gibbs probe is over and he and the rest of us can finally get back to doing what we do best, that is play cricket," said Smith.

South Africa need the seasoned Gibbs at his best as they aim to take one of the two semifinal spots from the group that includes Pakistan and in-form Sri Lanka.

When South Africa successfully chased Australia's 434-4 in an astonishing one-dayer in Johannesburg in March, Gibbs lashed 175 off 111 balls with 21 boundaries and seven sixes.

South African coach Mickey

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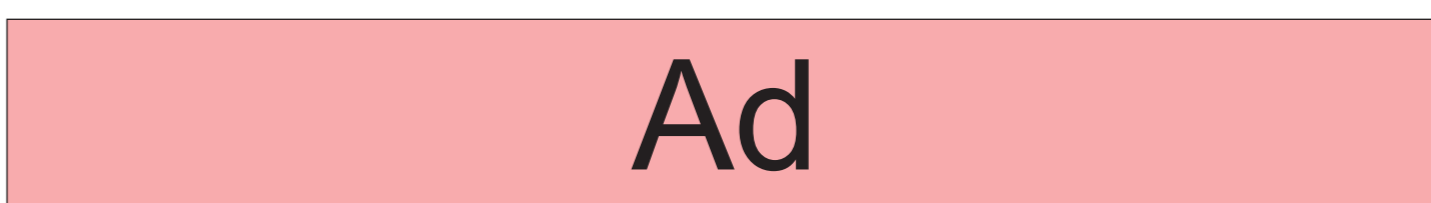


PHOTO: AFP

India left-arm pacer Irfan Pathan (R) appeals successfully for a leg before wicket verdict against England captain Andrew Flintoff (L) during their ICC Champions Trophy match at the Sawai Mansingh Stadium in Jaipur yesterday.



Did U Know?

Shahriar Nafees scored 123 not out from 161 balls against Zimbabwe at Sawai Mansingh Stadium in Jaipur on October 13, 2006. It was his second century, both coming against Zimbabwe.

What to WATCH

BTV & SET Max

ICC Champions Trophy
New Zealand v South Africa
Live at 2:45 pm

ESPN

Sportscenter India
Live at 8:30 pm

English Premier Football League
Fulham v Charlton Athletic
Live at 12:55 am (Tuesday)

Festivity all around

SPORTS REPORTER from Jaipur

Rajasthan is not a household name in Indian cricketing history as the northern state has hardly produced any big star to be proud of. But support for the game here is as big as it is in other parts of India.

They never missed the opportunity to come in maximum numbers to cheer on their side whenever they got the chance and there was no exception with the match between India and England yesterday.

The atmosphere was electric at the Sawai Mansingh Stadium which previously got few chances to stage international matches. The ground was already jam-packed even two hours before the start of the Champions Trophy proper opener. And the presence of Bollywood heartthrobs Shahrukh Khan and Priyanka Chopra added to that excitement among the audience.

The huge crowd couldn't stop screaming from the very beginning of the match as Indian new-ball bowlers Irfan Pathan and Munaf Patel roughed up the English top-order. England were then shot out for a meagre 125 with 13 overs still to be bowled although the venue is a happy hunting ground for the batsmen, with the average run-rate in ODIs in excess of five runs per over.

The English were found wanting against the Indian attack to prolong their agony in one-day cricket after home team skipper Rahul Dravid invited them to bat first in the day-night match on a wicket which saw the ball keeping low at times.

Under-pressure left-arm pacer Irfan Pathan got some sort of rhythm back as he claimed two wickets including the prized scalp of Andrew Flintoff.

But it was his new-ball partner Patel who started the carnage, removing opener Ian Bell for four and then sending back Michael

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Sachin warns mates



BBC ONLINE, undated

India batting maestro Sachin Tendulkar admitted a few more runs would have been difficult for his team to score.

England mustered only 125 in the opening match of the Champions Trophy proper at Jaipur yesterday but India won by just four wickets and took 29.3 overs, with Tendulkar top-scoring with 35.

"A slightly bigger total would have made it a very close game because the wicket had started to play uneven and the odd ball kept low," he said.

"Around 175 would've been a fighting total because the ball was up and down, but overall it was good for us."

Having chosen to field first, India soon reduced England to 55-5 in the

19th over and Tendulkar added: "We started very well."

Irfan (Pathan 2-20) bowled a wonderful spell, Munaf (Patel 3-18) got some wickets then we had Harbhajan (Singh 1-27) and Ramesh Powar (3-24) backed by some very good fielding.

Chasing their small target, India twice lost two wickets in an over.

"I felt we were rushing a bit too much so I just had to back off a bit and hang in for a while and not go for big shots," Tendulkar explained. "It was important there was a partnership."

India now have 11 days before their next match, against West Indies in Ahmedabad, but Tendulkar sees the gap as a positive aspect.

"You can lose momentum or gain it," he said. "Sometimes it doesn't help to practice for days in a row so it's nice we can get a break where you can get back home and spend some time with the family."

On the other side of the coin, England captain Andrew Flintoff said good bowling from India rather than the Jaipur pitch was the key to

the defeat in their opening Champions Trophy game.

Flintoff made a duck as his side were shot out for 125 and he said: "I don't think you can take anything away from Irfan Pathan and Munaf Patel."

"They bowled fantastically at the start and made it difficult for the batters."

"There was a little bit of invariable bounce but the bowlers put it in the right place to exploit that."

Flintoff says his players will draw on that going into the must-win games against world champions Australia next Saturday and West Indies on 28 October.

"India got off to a flier but I was pleased with the character the lads showed. We never gave up, we kept coming and pegged them back in the end."

"We've got to learn from this, we'll talk about it and come back stronger."

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PHOTO: AFP

Bollywood heartthrobs Shahrukh Khan (R) and Priyanka Chopra take time out from silver screen to watch the ICC Champions Trophy match between India and England at the Sawai Mansingh Stadium in Jaipur yesterday.

Mohammedan tame Bima



SPORTS REPORTER

A late rally by Sonali Bank was not enough to stop local heavyweights Mohammedan Sporting Club from winning yesterday's Green Delta Insurance Premier Hockey League match 4-2 at the Maulana Bhasani National Hockey Stadium.

The bankers, down 4-0 and virtually out of the match, got the better of the tired rival defence in the last ten minutes, scoring twice, but it was too late a comeback.

Mohammedan got off to a fine start when Ariful Haque Prince found the net after 14 minutes while another prolific scorer Maksud Alam Habul doubled the lead within ten minutes.

The Black and Whites looked like runaway victors when defender

Mashiur Rahman Biplab converted a penalty corner in the 29th to give them a 3-0 cushion at the break.

Pakistani midfielder Mohammed Irfan sealed three points and Mohammedan's fourth win in five games from a 45-minute penalty corner as the Club Cup champions

began to relax. Mohammedan pushed their collection to 13 points after five rounds.

Bank, who have now faced all the big names and lost them all in spite of having three foreigners, pushed hard and forced four penalty

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PHOTO: STAR

Action from yesterday's Premier Division Hockey League match between Mohammedan and Sonali Bank at the Maulana Bhasani Stadium.

