

Mission accomplished



Zimbabwe Tour of Bangladesh

After Bangladesh's four wins in a row, it seemed that only a miracle could save Zimbabwe from a white-wash yesterday. Finally, the struggling Zimbabweans failed to pull off any surprise though they came up with some resistance before going down to a three-wicket defeat in the fifth and final one-dayer of the five-match series.

And as expected Habibul Bashar's men completed the series whitewash at the Mirpur Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur to ensure some consolation for their recent 3-2 series defeat in Zimbabwe.

But what was the exception was the way the home side celebrated the 5-0 success against their southern African rivals as it seemed that the outcome was not anything surprising for the Tigers while taking into consideration their recent strength.

"We had a wild celebration when we recorded our first one-day series victory against them almost two years back at home but everything has changed after that as we are now getting used to winning matches. I don't think it was anything unexpected," said a delighted Bashar, who celebrated his 50th one-day match as captain in style.

Bashar played an important unbeaten 60-ball 32 in his special game as Bangladesh raced to 194 for seven in 49 overs in reply to Zimbabwe's 193 for 8 in their stipulated 50 overs.

"People will ask how much difference there is between Zimbabwe and us. Our main target is to play good cricket as per our ability to display the difference against the bottom team and I am happy that we were quite successful in the series to give this impression," he added.

Zimbabwe captain Prosper Utseya admitted the home side's supremacy in the series but he said that he was finally happy with the way his team played in the final game.

"I think Bangladesh played good cricket in the series but I am finally happy that our boys at least showed character in the last game. We put a decent total on the board on a difficult pitch and our bowlers responded brilliantly though Bangladesh finally snatched the victory," said the promising off-spinner.

"Our young side is now just moulding at this level and I am hopeful that we can overcome this bad time soon," he promised.

The 33-year-old Bangladesh skipper however said that he would only be happy if they could beat their southern African rivals in their own den as their 3-2 away defeat still haunts him.

"We would like to disprove their proud record of being superior on home soil. I will be really happy when we can achieve it. I still believe that the 3-2 series defeat was an accident. We also proved our worth against the big team to give the cricket world an impression that our team is in the process of gelling," promised Bashar.

The most successful Bangladesh captain said that the thought that they could lose a match in the series had never crossed his mind.

"We were very confident about making it 5-0 although we had a very cautious approach. Many might have thought that the last game was most difficult in the series but I must say the third game at Bogra was more difficult for us," informed Bashar.

"After another bright opening start we experienced a sudden batting collapse, especially two unnecessary run outs put us in trouble but we always had the control in the match," he said adding that they promoted Mohammad Ashraful (4) at number four to create an opportunity for the ace batsman.

The significant fact was that long-standing wicketkeeper Khaled

Mashud, who had an involvement in Bangladesh's every achievement, only acted as 12th man in the match. Skipper Bashar was however delighted by his replacement.

"I must say Mushfiqur (Rahim) was excellent in keeping and batting. It would be nice if he can continue it in future because we desperately need a backup stumper in the side," he pointed out.

There was a debate whether it was fair to adjudge a batsman for the man of the series award when bowlers, especially the Bangladesh left-arm spinners, dominated the proceeding all through the series but the man in form Shahriar Nafees was not ready to agree that the bowlers only dominated the series.

"I think the team work helped us to sweep the series. Undoubtedly our bowlers did excellent job but the batsmen also made contribution to clinch the series easily," said the southpaw opener, who scored 274 runs in five games with one hundred and a half century.

The Bangladesh vice-captain showed a rare consistency with the bat in the series but he said that he was not at all happy with his last two innings.

"I got off to good start in the last two games but failed to carry on which was not good. In Bogra a brilliant catch however played the role behind my dismissal. It was not easy today to bat in this wicket," explained Nafees.

He assured everybody that the recent success will not go to his head as he was very much aware of his job.

"I am aware of the fact that nobody will notice me if I failed to score runs. I'm very much conscious about a batsman's job at the highest level of the game," he said.

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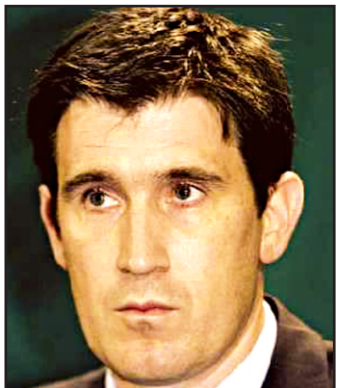
PHOTO: STAR

5-0: Bangladesh team celebrates their 5-0 whitewash of Zimbabwe after their win in the final one-day international at the Mirpur Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium yesterday.



Did U Know?

George Giffen of Australia who was known as the W G Grace played 31 Tests and all against England.



James Sutherland
(Cricket Australia chief executive)
"Damien's (Martyn) decision has come as a surprise to us but I fully respect his decision to retire on his terms."



ESPN
English Premier Football League
Chelsea v Arsenal
Live at 9:55 pm
Primera Liga
Valencia v Deportivo
Live at 1:55 am (Monday)

Poor Asiad continues

SPORTS REPORTER

Siddik Rahman finished two under par with 142 points in the men's individual golf competition in 15th Asian Games at the Doha Golf Club yesterday.

He is the lone Bangladeshi

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PREMIER CRICKET LEAGUE FROM DECEMBER 19 Transfers start today

SPORTS REPORTER

The players transfers for the Premier Cricket League of the 2006-07 season begin at the Bangabandhu National Stadium today.

The three-day bourse was due to start on December 5 but the Cricket Committee of Dhaka Metropolitan (CCDM) had to postpone it due to the political unrest and the countrywide blockade.

The transfers begin this afternoon and will run until December 12.

This year's Premier Cricket League will be divided into two parts, a Twenty20 tournament starting from December 19 followed by the main limited-overs league from January 10.

In a peculiar twist, the inter-club transfers of the footballers remain in limbo as almost the same clubs who are taking part in the cricket transfers have time and again refused to participate in the booters' bourse.

Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) has also repeatedly proved their tentativeness towards pursuing

these clubs to take part in the transfers whereas the CCDM have only postponed it once due to the countrywide blockade programme.

With the likelihood of Bangladesh travelling to Zimbabwe for a one-day series in February, the national players who are part of a 16-man pool are scheduled to play till the eighth round, if the tour goes through.

It is expected that two-time defending champions Old DOHS will once again be the team to beat as reportedly, they have retained most of their old players including pool members Abdur Razzak, Mehrab Hossain and Shahadat Hossain apart from confirming young guns Enamul Haque, Nazmul Hossain, Nadif Chowdhury, Dollar Mahmud, Nabil Samad, Shamsur Rahman and seasoned campaigner Ehsanul Haque. Veteran Akram Khan is expected to lead the side.

Last season's runners-up Sonargaon Cricketers kept most of their players as well as the inclusion of Mohammad Sharif, Marshall Ayub, Alok Kapali and Dhiman Ghosh. They let go off left-

armer Nabil and seamer Tapash Baisya who moved over to his old side Mohammedan, informed club president Wasiq Rafiq.

After the last few years in the wilderness, Abahani are expected to give their fans a cause to wake up by confirming the services of 'Narail Express' Mashrafe Bin Mortaza and batsman Tushar Imran from the 16-member national pool and bringing back old guard Khaled Mashud to guide players such as Nazmul Sadat, Jahurul Islam, Mahmudullah Riyad and Gazi Salahuddin.

Mohammedan are likely to lose strength of the youngsters but hung on to Habibul Bashar and Aftab Ahmed and bring Saquibul Hasan to complete the pool-quota. Pacemen Hasibul Hossain and Monjurul Islam, all-rounder Faisal Hossain and wicketkeeper Sahagir Hossain have all confirmed their place in the side that has not lifted the crown in the recent past. Add to that, Mohammedan lost the likes of Mashud and Mashrafe to arch-rivals Abahani.

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Tigers may go to Zimbabwe in February

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) has proposed to play a one-day series in Zimbabwe next February as part of the Tigers' World Cup preparation.

After their next assignment against ICC associate member country Scotland at home, there will be no international fixture for the Tigers before the World Cup in March-April in the West Indies what the BCB thought was not good for the team.

"We already sent a proposal to Zimbabwe Cricket for arranging a one-day series before the World Cup. It has yet to officially decide anything, but we are hopeful that we will get positive response from Zimbabwe," said Mahmudur Rahman, chief executive officer of BCB, yesterday.

"We were trying for big names but unfortunately there is no time in the schedule for them that's why we requested Zimbabwe to arrange the series. We are however not sure whether it would be a three- or five-match series," he added.

Bangladesh yesterday completed a five-match series at home after the away series last August.



PHOTO: STAR

Tigers opener Shahriar Nafees (R) is all smiles as he receives his cheque for the man of the series from the managing director Ahmad bin Ismail (C) and chairman Salahuddin Kasem Khan (L) of AKTEL at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur on Saturday.

Vaughan back and running

AFP, Perth

Former captain Michael Vaughan made his long-awaited return to the England side here Saturday.

The 2005 Ashes hero took another step in his comeback when he fielded all day in the tour match against Western Australia (WA) at the WACA Ground, even winding back the clock by taking over the reins of the team for two overs when acting captain Andrew Strauss was off the field.

Having blown away a few of the cobwebs with two one-day matches for the England Academy, Vaughan returned to the senior side against WA and appeared to move well in the field.

He will be hoping to improve on his scores of nought and nine for the Academy as he continues his comeback from the knee surgery that has sidelined him from first-class cricket since April.

Vaughan will almost certainly get his chance with the bat on Sunday, but England fast bowler Sajid Mahmood said it was just great to have the former skipper back in the mix.

Mahmood said Vaughan's leadership had been evident on the field against WA.

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