



End of Mark Ramprakash: The stylish right-hander is clean bowled by an Athar Ali delivery in the second limited-over exhibition cricket match between England A and the Bangladesh national team at the Dhaka Stadium yesterday.

England A beat locals again

Sports Reporter

Temperamental inadequacy proved the bane for the umpteenth time as Bangladesh went down fighting to the visiting England A team in the second and final exhibition one-day match at the Dhaka Stadium yesterday.

A workmanlike century earlier in the day by English opener and man-of-the-match Nick Knight was pushed to the background as Bangladesh, who had lost the first one-dayer against the visitors by 58 runs in a virtual no-contest on Monday, were brought back in the game by highly enterprising batsmanship of Aminul Islam.

The tiny, dark right-hander scored a beautifully paced half-century before falling to a superb catch to herald the end of a remarkable act of resurrection.

In his Lazarus act, Amin was wonderfully backed by the un-gainly yet highly effective Rafique, who remained unbeaten when Bangladesh, chasing 236 for victory in 50 overs, were all out for 215 but not before conjuring an adrenalin-pumping partnership of 82 runs for the seventh wicket after the middle order, in an appalling exhibition of misapplication, threw away the initiative wrested by the openers.

In a welcome change of pattern observed in the recent times, Bangladesh were given an unusually sound start to their chase of what at the outset seemed a study in abstraction.

On a flat wicket, a very different one from the one on which the first match was played Athar Ali Khan and recently-blooded Javed Omar Belim raised 79 runs before a gem of a swinging yorker knocked the compact and neat right-hander's leg stump.

His 36 off 69 balls was embellished with some lovely cuts particularly off Ian Salisbury, the right-arm leg-break bowler now engaged in a hectic campaign to win back his place in the main England team.

Athar's solid 46, studded with some firm strokes in front of the wicket, came to an end because of the batsman's all-too-familiar callousness to usher in the three run outs that considerably undermined the possibility of what would have been watershed in the history of Bangladesh, one of the more fancied ICC Associate Members.

It was not merely want of

concentration or dearth of technical competence that led to Bangladesh's doom. Lack of vision, on the part of the captain and the manager, played a major role too. With the team so well placed at a score of 79 for one in the 21st over the management had the gumption of trying a debutant like Zakaria Imitiaz at number three when infinitely seasoned campaigner like Minhazul Abedin, Aminul Islam or for that matter the skipper Akram himself were there to build on an excellent foundation.

Although Zakaria, otherwise a competent and informed bat, did not hang around too long to find his feet and Minhaz, the most accomplished among the local batsmen, came in at number four, the momentum was lost to some extent.

Minhaz's adventurism in trying to cut a straight ball from slow left-armed Richard Stiepm and Akram's indecision against the same bowler did not help matters and to cap and afternoon of insanity resembling March madness Enamul Huq was bowled for no rhyme or reason playing Weekes too far outside the line.

At 103 for five, it looked all over and a dejected commotion in the stands signalled the obvious end of local interest.

In a heart-warming display of resilience, Amin, pairing with a highly unorthodox Rafique, raised the visions of an improbable victory.

Amin scored a bright 52 off 57 balls including five well-struck boundaries before Weekes pulled off a stunner at point to send the batsman on his way to the pavilion.

Left-handed Rafique, who has been included in the team mainly as a left-arm spinner, kept on frustrating the English bowlers with some agricultural blows all over the ground and the gap between a memorable victory and Bangladesh was narrowed to 33 runs from three overs.

But two run outs, both avoidable, drove the nail in Bangladesh's coffin.

Earlier, England, sent in to bat by Akram, rattled up 235 for eight with left-handed opener Knight hammering 117 off 133 balls with the help of four fours and three sixes.

Knight, who forged a 99-run partnership with Hemp (52) for the third wicket, was twice let off on his way to the three-figure mark that came to an end in the last over.

Poor bowling by the Bangladeshi spinners, particularly by left-armed Enamul Huq, allowed England to proceed towards a satisfactory total.

However, Athar Ali bowled well among the local bowlers, claiming three for 30.

The tourists play their last match, a three-day one, against the same opposition at the same venue, starting from February 24.

Nirman cricket

Residential Model School and Mirpur Bangla High School set up a semifinal clash in the Dhaka zone when they won their respective matches of the 13th Nirman Schools cricket championships at different city venues yesterday.

At the Mirpur Outer Stadium, Residential Model School recorded a three-wicket win over Maple Leaf International.

Although Aminul Islam engineered a remarkable rear-guard action to steer Bangladesh painfully close to an improbable victory, having seen the touring England A team comprehensively beat the hosts, nobody in the stands really expected the boys to win. Nevertheless, the way the officials of the local selection accepted this, raises some menacing questions regarding country's cricket under their vigilance.

If the Bangladeshi cricketers lacked on-field application of cricketing sense, off the field, then, the manager and his host of advisors formed a group with no vision at all but with a bag full of excuses.

Roqibul Hasan, the newly-appointed Bangladesh team manager who replaced his former national teammate Tanveer Haider just before this series of exhibition matches, had, indeed, a game plan of his own, no matter how bizarre and senseless it might sound to the cricket buffs and he made sure there were excuses behind the way he handled the job.

With the local selection comfortably placed on 79 after the fall of Javed Omar Belim, Roqibul decided to send in rookie Zakaria Imitiaz when many felt Minhazul Abedin should have been given the chance. As predicted, Imitiaz, who made his national debut yesterday after a successful stint with the youth squad, indiscreetly went for his shots when all the team needed was to have the scoreboard ticking and got himself out.

Minhaz didn't fare better, being sent back cheaply, and his departure led to Roqibul's 'wise' decision of sending Akram Khan, the out of form Bangladesh skipper, in. Then left-hander Enamul Huq walked into the act while Aminul Islam, the technically sound middle-order bat, was held back padded up and ready to go for reasons only Roqibul could justify.

When Amin got his manager's nod things were already slipping out of the hosts' grips and the local charge could have fizzled into abject failure had Amin prematurely accepted the inevitable, like Roqibul did.

At the end of a long spring day, Bangladesh lost nonetheless leaving a big question hanging in the air — could they have won had Roqibul not massed up in his job as the manager?

At the post-match briefing, Roqibul appeared indifferent and even defiant when the vital question was asked, "Zakaria needed time to settle down and so I felt he should go in once Javed got back to the pavilion."

Then what prompted him to hold Amin back in the order? "Minhaz and Akram are better batsmen than Amin and therefore they went up the order," said the former national skipper.

Irrefutable a logic and equally adequate to surface the lack of cricketing senses for a man who have represented Bangladesh on so many occasions.

Solid batsman he was when he was at his peak but a judicious team manager, who knows and he has surely got a long way ahead to prove that.

Japanese govt okays it

TOKYO, Feb 22: Prime Minister Tomichi Murayama's cabinet today formally endorsed Japan's bid to host the 2002 World Cup soccer finals, Foreign Minister Yohei Kono said, reports Reuter.

SCOREBOARD

Scoreboard of the second limited-over exhibition cricket match between the touring England A and the Bangladesh national team at the Dhaka Stadium yesterday.

Indiscreet discretion

By Mir A Zaman

Although Aminul Islam engineered a remarkable rear-guard action to steer Bangladesh painfully close to an improbable victory, having seen the touring England A team comprehensively beat the hosts, nobody in the stands really expected the boys to win. Nevertheless, the way the officials of the local selection accepted this, raises some menacing questions regarding country's cricket under their vigilance.

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England A: N Knight c Khaled b Anis 117; M Vaughan c Minhaz b Athar 8; M Ramprakash b Athar 52; D Hemp lbw b Rafique 2; P Weekes c Amin b Athar Ali 2; D Cork c Enam b Anis 18; P Nixon b Hasib 7; G Chapple c Hasib b Anis 8; R Johnson not out 7; I Salisbury not out 7; Extras: (lb-8, w-4) 12; Total: (for eight wickets in 50 overs) 235; Fall of wickets: 1-37; 2-43; 3-142; 4-147; 5-195; 6-204; 7-228; 8-229.

Bowling: O M R W; Anisur Rahman 10 0 54 3; Athar Ali Khan 10 1 30 3; Md Rafique 9 0 44 1; Enamul Huq 5 0 37 0; Hasibul Hossain 9 0 37 1; Minhazul Abedin 5 0 17 0; Aminul Islam 2 0 8 0.

BANGLADESH: Athar Ali Khan run out 46; Javed Omar b Chapple 36; Zakaria Imitiaz c Vaughan b Weekes 4; Minhazul Abedin b Stemp 3; Akram Khan c Weekes b Stemp 0; Enamul Huq b Weekes 8; Aminul Islam c Weekes b Cork 52; Mohammed Rafique not out 43; Anisur Rahman run out 4; Hasibul Hossain run out 1; Khaled Masud c Knight b Johnson 0; Extras: (b-4, lb-5, nb-4, w-5) 18; Total: (all out in 48.3 overs) 215; Fall of wickets: 1-79; 2-93; 3-99; 4-99; 5-103; 6-125; 7-207; 8-209; 9-215.

Bowling: O M R W; Richard Johnson 8.3 1 43 1; Ian Salisbury 5 1 17 0; Paul Weekes 10 1 37 2; Dominic Cork 6 0 25 1; Glen Chapple 9 1 50 1; Richard Stemp 10 1 34 2.

Result: England A won by 20 runs.

Man-of-the-match: Nick Knight (England A)

Some solace for Indians

DUNEDIN, New Zealand, Feb 22: Navjot Sidhu scored an aggressive half-century Wednesday as India defeated Australia by five wickets in a century series limited-overs cricket match at Carisbrook, reports AP.

India scored 252 for five with 13 balls to spare in reply to Australia's 250 for six in scoring an impressive consolation win.

Australia went into the match assured of a place in Sunday's final, while India already were eliminated from contention after losing their opening two matches.

Australia, who ended the first round with a 2-1 record, will play the winner of Thursday's match between South Africa and New Zealand in Christchurch in the final.

Left-hander Vinod Kambli, one of the three half-centurians in the Indian team, smashed the winning boundary off medium-pace man Greg Blewett to finish unbeaten on 51 off just 55 balls with five fours.

Manoj Prabhakar (50) and Sachin Tendulkar earlier got India off to a blazing start by averaging eight runs an over in a 97-run first-wicket stand.

Tendulkar, who managed just 51 runs in his previous two innings, smashed 47 runs off 40 balls with the help of seven boundaries.

India reached the 100 in 18 overs but lost both openers in the space of three runs to fast bowler Jo Angel.

Tendulkar fell to a juggling catch by skipper Mark Taylor while Prabhakar charged and had his off stump dislodged.

The openers were particularly punishing on leg-spinner Shane Warne, who conceded 25 runs from his first two overs and 61 in all.

Australia were made to pay for dropping several catches as man-of-the-match Sidhu, who hit 54 runs off 70 balls for his 25th one-day half-century, and skipper Mohammed Azharuddin (25) joined the scoring spree.

"We weren't quite switched on," Taylor said. "We dropped six catches

start in partnership with Blewett.

Boon made 32 off 54 balls with five boundaries before falling to a brilliant outfield catch by Kambli, following which the innings lost momentum.

Blewett faced 103 balls for his 46 runs, inclusive of a six and four boundaries.

While Blewett missed out on his 50 Ponting reached his half century, making full use of a dropped catch on 36.

He was eventually dismissed holding out to long-on. He struck a six and a four off 91 balls.

SCOREBOARD

Scoreboard in New Zealand century series one-day international between Australia and India today.

AUSTRALIA: D Boon c Kambli v Vaidya 32; G Blewett c and b Tendulkar 46; R Ponting c Vaidya b Prabhakar 62; S Waugh c and b Kumble 23; M Waugh c Azharuddin b Srinath 48; I Healy not out 21; M Taylor b Srinath 0; S Warne not out 15; Extras: (w-2, nb-6, b-2, lb-3) 13; Total: (for 6 wickets, 50 overs) 250; Fall of wickets: 1-56; 2-103; 3-158; 4-207; 5-226; 6-226; Did not bat: T May, G McGrath, J Angel.

Bowling: O M R W; M Prabhakar 10 0 61 1; Srinath 9 0 49 2; V Vaidya 7 0 36 1; A Kumble 7 0 28 1; A Kapoor 9 0 38 0; S Tendulkar 8 0 33 1.

INDIA: M Prabhakar b Angel 50; S Tendulkar c Taylor b Angle 47; N Sidhu run out 25; M Azharuddin c Healy b Blewett 54; V Kambli not out 51; S Manjrekar c Healy b May 15; N Mongia not out 6; Extras: (w-3, nb-1, lb-1) 5; Total: (for 5 wickets, 47.5 overs) 252; Fall of wickets: 1-97; 2-100; 3-144; 4-213; 5-233.

Bowling: O M R W; G McGrath 9 1 45 0; J Angel 10 1 47 2; S Warne 10 0 61 0; T May 10 0 51 1; G Blewett 8.5 0 47 1.

Result: India win by five wickets.

Agassi awesome as ever

PHILADELPHIA, Feb 22: World number two Andre Agassi played blistering tennis to soundly defeat Swedish qualifier Jan Apell 6-4, 6-2 in just 51 minutes at the 714,250 dollars Comcast US indoor men's tournament on Tuesday, reports Reuter.

In other first-round matches, Brazilian Luiz Mattar defeated American Brad Gilbert, who is also Agassi's coach, 6-0, 6-4 and Brett Steven of New Zealand came back from a service break deficit in the final set to defeat Frenchman Fabrice Santoro 5-7, 6-1, 7-6 (7-4).

Once the second-seeded Agassi gained the early upper-hand by breaking the 93rd-ranked Apell's serve in the third game, he was never in trouble. The second seeded American broke serve twice in the second set — in the first and seventh games before serving it out.

"I was hitting the ball strong," Agassi said. "I just felt that I played better than he did. I returned well, I served well and I just felt I had a bit too much game for him."

Even though Agassi played well, he indicated he wants to improve all aspects of his game in an effort to displace Pete Sampras and attain the number one ranking in the world.

"There is not one shot that I have that I don't want to improve," Agassi said. "I want to improve my groundstrokes and my serve and volley game. I feel that I have a lot of room for improvement and that's what keep me going."

"It's not a question of being number one as a goal, being number one is a by-product of a lot of hard work."

Agassi said he would not be available to play Davis Cup for the United States in the quarterfinal tie against Italy set down for Palermo March 31st to April 2nd after Pete Sampras turned down an invitation from US Davis Cup captain Tom Gullikson.

"I can't afford to go play unless Pete does," Agassi said. "Because really I would be falling behind, if I go and he doesn't."

"Davis Cup can be very taxing. It takes three weeks out of your schedule, your preparation week, the week you are there and then the week to come down from it. It's a big sacrifice to go play."

"I can understand Pete's desire to not want to go, but I was a bit disappointed because I felt if we were to rally as a team, then let's do it. It's just as much a cost for me and for Jim Courier."

The match between Steven and Santoro was a seesaw struggle.

The Frenchman needed two service breaks to claim the first set, but then the New Zealand dominated the second to level the match.

Santoro raced to a 3-0 lead in the deciding set, but Steven rallied back and forced a tiebreaker which he won 7-4.

Singapore to quit Malaysian soccer league

SINGAPORE, Feb 22: Singapore will pull its football team out of the Malaysian football league, Singapore soccer officials said today, reports Reuter.

They said Singapore, under fire from Malaysia over match-fixing scandals, was withdrawing from the league for an indefinite period to develop its own league. The league comprises the Premier league, which includes teams from Singapore, Malaysia and Brunei, and the Malaysian Cup, which includes the same countries.



Nick Knight, the century-maker of yesterday's second limited-overs exhibition cricket match between the touring England A team and the Bangladesh national team, receives the man-of-the-match award from chief guest Health Minister Chowdhury Kamal Ibne Yousuf.

Cairns, Douglas included in NZ squad

CHRISTCHURCH, Feb 22: Chris Cairns passed a late fitness test and opener Mark Douglas was Wednesday called into the New Zealand cricket team to face South Africa in a crucial century series limited-overs match on Thursday at Lancaster Park, reports AP.

All roinder Cairns has recovered from a muscle strain in the rib area and will be available to bat and bowl, team manager Gren Alabaster said.

The winners of the match will face Australia in the tournament final in Auckland on Sunday.

Douglas, who made a century for provincial team Wellington against South Africa on Monday, gets his chance to open the batting with Mark Greatbatch.

Douglas replaces Martin Crowe, who is out with a thigh injury until the century Test against South Africa at Eden Park, which starts on March 4.

Test batsman Bryan Young, who didn't impress playing against Australia on Sunday, has lost his place in the side. He was named as 12th man.

South African skipper Hansie Cronje will not name his team until the morning of the match. His main decision is a choice between seamer Craig Matthews and spinner Pat Symcox.

"It's a good position to be in when you have so many players all knocking on the door," Cronje said. "It makes it hard for the selectors, but it's good position to be in."

Richardson to lead Windies against Aussies

BRIDGETOWN, Barbados, Feb 22: Richie Richardson will be back as West Indies captain for the forthcoming series against Australia in the Caribbean, reports Reuter.

The announcement by West Indies Cricket Board of Control (WICBC) on Monday comes after Richardson missed the recent tours of India and New Zealand because of acute fatigue.

Fast bowler Courtney Walsh, who led West Indies in India and New Zealand, was named vice-captain.

The vice-captain is traditionally chosen after the team has been selected, but WICBC said Walsh's appointment at this time was in recognition of his outstanding performance as captain both on and off the field during the period of Richie Richardson's unavailability.

Former Test fast bowler Andy Roberts is to be West Indies' manager for the tour by Australia which starts on March 5 and includes four Tests and five one-day internationals.

For West Indies' tour of England starting in May, former Test paceman Wes Hall has been appointed manager, with Roberts as coach.

Warwickshire retain Lara's services

LONDON, Feb 22: West Indies batsman Brian Lara today agreed a new three-year contract with English county champions Warwickshire, reports Reuter.

The deal, ending six months of talks, means that Lara will replace South African paceman Allan Donald as the county's overseas player in 1996. He is unavailable this season because West Indies are touring England.

Trinidadian Lara made a stunning impact in his first season in county cricket in 1994, scoring a world-record 501 in a championship match in June and completing 1,000 runs in a record seven innings.

His imperious form helped Warwickshire to the county championship, the Benson and Hedges Cup and the Sunday League title. "Brian is the world's best batsman and once he said he wanted more county cricket we were delighted to welcome him back for a further three years," said Dennis Amis.

"One possible proposal was for Brian and Allan Donald to alternate as the overseas player — but when Brian said he wanted a three-year contract we decided that was the best option for the club."

Amis said the decision had not been easy as Donald had been a great servant for Warwickshire.

"We would like two overseas players but that is not possible."

Amis said the club were considering the option of employing Donald as a bowling coach.



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