



CONGRATULATIONS

Honorary citizen dishonoured

Syed Ashfaquul Haque

Needless to say, it turned out to be the toughest emotional encounter of his life in cricket. For the last few days away in England, Cuthbert Gordon Greenidge must be fighting with himself to get over an unbearable experience, blended with sheer triumph and absolute tragedy.

While his lowly rated boys turned the world cricket upside down at Northampton on May 31, the celebrated former West Indies opener was not there to share the spotlight with the ecstatic Bangladeshi cricketers, whom he coached for the last three years. The hailed and haunted cricket coach of the rank-outsiders, preferred to slip out of the media eyes, into the background, instead of letting himself bathe in glory along with his pupils.

Bangladesh pulled off the biggest upset in the history of the condensed version of cricket, comprehensively beating World Cup's hot favourites Pakistan by 62 runs.

When the players and a huge contingent of Bangladesh Cricket Board officials were basking in the unprecedented euphoria on the terrace of the Wantage Road bowl, a strong battalion of bewildered world press tried in vain to trace the moody legend at the county venue.

The famous man from Barbados, affectionately called 'Flash Gordon' by the cricketing world during his salad days, might think it is better to leave the field quietly so that the curious fourth state could not get the chance of making his life more miserable by asking question about his controversial chop by the Board. Hours before the great occasion, Greenidge was handed over a letter that read his services were no longer required. Only before the match, tour manager

Tanveer Mazhar Islam, who along with co-ordinator (a purposeless post created only to



avail him the trip) Dewan Safiul Arefin could not get on well with Greenidge, cited the reasons for the spur-of-the-moment sacking as his 'indifferent attitude'. But, in reality, there are wheels within wheels.

Although like a master charmer Greenidge won the hearts of the cricket-crazy crores, coaching an average Bangladesh team to two historic wins, a section of Board officials, especially those who do not have any cricketing credentials, always tried to belittle his sincerity and capability.

In his three-year tenure, Greenidge, appointed as the director of coaching, did not even have a chair to sit on at the Board.

Back home, to many, the fabulous feat equals the joy of

winning a World Cup. Some of the BCB officials and the government who did little for the sake of the game suddenly engaged themselves in an ugly race to make the most of the stupendous success. Such is the degree of their 'exhilaration', they couldn't wait any longer. Cricketers, who have some official engagements to attend and need to stay up to the final, will be flown back home today to accord an impromptu, mass reception at the National Parade Square and then will be sent back to England again.

This overkill greetings of the government is however nothing new to the cricket connoisseurs of the country. After the ICC Trophy victory, cricketers had had the same arduous reception, dominated by the politicians at the Manik Mia Avenue.

But, the irony of it all is that Greenidge, who was hailed as a national hero and awarded honorary citizenship after the Malaysia triumph, would not be around this time to receive any award or recognition from Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina.

The Board should have shown the minimum courtesy and respect to a man who had already intimated that he would be giving up the job when his contract expired in June.

Greenidge told the British press that 'he had upset the Board by saying that Bangladesh were not yet ready for the Test match status.'

"I was leaving anyway, but the way it has been done is in very bad taste. It would be nice if they could have been man enough to speak to me," said the shocked coach. Greenidge however might take some solace from the words of skipper Aminul Islam.

Aminul, being oblivious to the intention of the Board, said, "We must share this moment

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Who should be the next coach?

Rabeed Imam

Cricket in Bangladesh has never had it so good in terms of prospects. The expectation-belying showings in the World Cup have given fuel to suggestions that we are now ready to embrace the once elusive Test status with open arms. But are we?

News of the famous triumph over Pakistan on May 31 failed to over shadow another very thought provoking if not disturbing development—the sacking of coach Gordon Greenidge.

The unceremonious departure of the West Indies legend was reminiscent of the fate of former Indian star Mohindar Amarnath, the previous foreign coach of the national cricketers.

While Amarnath's dumping came as a result of the ill-fated ICC Trophy campaign in 1994, Greenidge's two and a half year tenure saw the biggest achievements in the history of cricket in this country. It only goes to show that being coach of the Bangladesh cricket team is a roller-coaster ride and not everyone's cup of tea.

Coming back to the topic of Test status, it was one of the least favourite subjects of Greenidge. During the World Cup, his frank opinions on the actual state of cricket in this country and why Bangladesh should not get the status, was a bit too naive for comfort of the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) hierarchy, and Greenidge was projected as an unholy influence in the team.

Barring a miracle, Gordon Greenidge is history. Now as we prepare to look ahead to a new beginning, the vacant position of the coach remains a matter of great intrigue and concern to genuine well-wishers of cricket.

Unconfirmed reports suggest that the BCB is seriously entertaining the idea of employing a Pakistani coach who will guide the national team to the World Cup in 2003. A few names short-listed by the BCB has also come up. Bangladesh captain Aminul Islam has even gone on record by saying that the team needs someone like Javed Miandad as coach.

BCB president Saber Hossain in a recent interview (June 1) with the BBC Bengali service said, "We are looking for someone who will be sharing our aspirations and will work with a mind to fulfil that target". It seems that the BCB is seeking a "yes man" who will do whatever the board wants him to do!

An unanimous board official complained about the lack of communication between the English speaking Greenidge and the players. This is one of the reasons why the BCB is in favour of a Pakistani who is supposed to understand the characters and communicate with the players better. We have a few questions:

a) If English is so difficult for the players (and officials), then what language is the Pakistani coach going to use? Certainly not Bengali? Urdu? Definitely not.

b) Since when did Pakistanis become good judges of Bangladeshi sentiment?

c) The credibility factor is another extremely important issue. No international cricket side has ever hired a Pakistani coach. Under the circumstances how could the BCB even think of recruiting someone without any proven track record specially after the Greenidge hiccup?

A coach from a sub-continental country, be it Pakistan, India or Sri Lanka, is never a wise solution simply because none of the neighbouring super powers over the past few decades have ever sincerely come forward to help the cause of cricket in Bangladesh. Why should we take a risk?

Before the next coach is appointed, the BCB should get its priorities right. It has to admit that Bangladesh is in no position to claim Test status yet and stop giving the general people lofty ideas of our abilities.

The job of the new coach should centre on forming the nucleus of the World Cup team of 2003. As the national team is

not expected to be in a training camp for four years on a trot, the coach's responsibility should be widened. The nurturing of young talents and making them ready for the next level of international cricket, maybe even Test cricket, has to remain planted in the back of the coach's mind.

We feel that whoever becomes the coach should be shown adequate respect and given a free hand in deciding his coaching strategy. Greenidge was never given the freedom, which is a pre-requisite for any civilised working arena.

It is also the duty of the BCB to make the new man feel comfortable in any condition that he finds alien. If required, an interpreter should be appointed for better communication.

What Bangladesh needs is a thorough professional with good adaptability. Perhaps the BCB should shift its focus to Australia, New Zealand, England or even South Africa where the foundation is exemplary.

The selection of national See Page 14

Give cricket its old venue

Al-Amin

The stage is all set for a grandiose reception. The nation is eagerly awaiting the return of fifteen infant-terribles who have ignited an unprecedented euphoria in Bangladesh by defeating Pakistan in the seventh World Cup at Northampton on Monday.

The National Parade Square is ready to host the heroes in a befitting way.

It is a poem of a success for the national cricket team, which took the world by surprise, comprehensively beating cricketing giants Pakistan by 62 runs. The victory was the greatest achievement in the annals of country's sports.

It is, however, not the first time that our cricketers have brought a rare smile on every face across the country, that is mostly known for its diverse affiliation, political instability, corruption and economic stagnation. Two years ago, the cricketers, perhaps the most prevailing ambassadors to uplift the demoralising image of a country like Bangladesh, united the whole nation in one platform to celebrate the great occasion by winning the ICC Trophy in Malaysia.

Although their victory over Kenya in the final on April 13, 1997, was upstaged by their

stunning win against Pakistan because of the nature and stature of the opposition, but the appeal and the impact appeared as same as ever.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, who also welcomed the victorious ICC team in a grand reception at Manik Miah Avenue, is likely to grace the National Parade Square showpiece today.

The whole caboodle of ministers, government high-ups, organisers and hundreds of thousands cricket-zealots are ready to salute Aminul's conquering team. Bangladesh Television will cover the program live.

Few might argue, but it is going to be a replay of the reception two years back. There might be a few changes in cast of characters, but one thing is for certain that emotional speeches, words of wisdom, hollow promises, announcement of cash awards would not be short supplied.

But, for those, who cherish the dream of gaining the international glory, the event is expected to match the demands of sports in general, and cricket in particular.

Over the years cricket had to struggle for its existence. It became the most popular sport in

the country, when Bangladesh won the ICC Trophy. At that time it was expected that cricket should get a ground of its own. The mooted anticipation was that the Dhaka Stadium (Bangabandhu National Stadium), which was built exclusively for cricket in the fifties, should be quite righteously handed over to the cricket board. But it remained an apple of discord between the two rival boards, football and cricket, as the government, National Sports Council in particular, failed to feel pulse of the popular demand.

However, at least a stadium for the gentleman's game looked to be a reality when Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina (on April 14, 1997) proudly announced that a cricket stadium would be built at Moghbazar within a year amidst applause. But the promise of the premier was meant to be broken. No stadium was built at Moghbazar in two years. A vested quarter in the ruling party, who are alleged to have sabotaged the project in Moghbazar, came up with an ambitious plan of building a pair of stadiums for both football and cricket side by side at an awkward place like Fatulla. But their unrealistic

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