

'We want to dominate from ball one'



RABEED IMAM

The New Zealand cricket team arrived in Dhaka yesterday on a four-week tour fully focused on not letting complacency stand in the way of a comprehensive victory in the Test and one-day international series against the Tigers.

Although captain Stephen Fleming acknowledged that on paper it was probably the easiest series for them in a while, he was quick to point out that success won't come easy if they do not acclimatise to the very different conditions of the subcontinent within a short time.

The 31-year-old however felt that his side was well covered on all fronts to come up trumps in both versions of the game on their first-ever tour of Bangladesh.

"I'll tell you whether this is the easiest series at the end of it. What we have to acknowledge is the difference in conditions and the adjustments we have to make and that's the greatest challenge. If we are to tour India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka or Bangladesh we have to make those changes. It's a short tour with only one warm-up match. So the challenge is to get up to speed.

"Now Bangladesh haven't performed well in Tests and are looking for their first Test win. It's our job to not let them do that and win this series comprehensively. I guess complacency is a word that is probably used often in this country. But we don't want to be too cautious.

"We want to be confident with what we do. You could be a little bit tentative when you play against a side you are expected to win against well but we want to play with confidence and exert dominance from ball one," said Fleming during a crowded official press conference in the afternoon at the Sonargaon Hotel where the Black Caps are staying.

Fleming, widely regarded as the best captain in international cricket, dismissed suggestions that his side

would target victories within three or four days in the Tests against the weakest team in the world.

"We have come to win the Test series. The question of how long it will take is irrelevant if we play well enough to win it.

"If you start thinking about how fast you can win a game or how you should be winning, you make mistakes. You become emotional, get frustrated and you open the opportunity for the opposition to play well. What we're going to do is just try and be professional, do the things that we do well. We came off losing 3-0 against England. We are in no position to take any Test match lightly."

Fleming added that they have done the necessary homework on Bangladesh and was relishing the prospect.

"It's easy to follow international cricket these days. So we have come over here with knowledge of your

cricketers. It's not like we haven't seen them before and we have experienced these conditions before.

"It's great to expose players to all sorts of conditions. We think we have the players who can deal with all types of scenarios. We have some youngsters in the side looking to make their mark. There will be opportunities so this is an exciting tour for us and for a number of individuals on this trip who are pushing for places on the tour of Australia and then the home series. There's a lot of cricket coming up and there's a chance for young players to put their hands up."

The longest serving skipper in international cricket said the primary challenge was to overcome the climatic factor.

"I think the main difficulty is heat. It's about getting used to the heat and playing in this type of humidity and also the pitch conditions. We have had a camp at our academy in Christchurch but I think our winter is so different from what we face here that most of our preparations will have to be done over the next few days and that makes the first game (three-day warm-up against Bangladesh Cricket Board XI from October 14) very important."

With Bangladesh's Test status being continuously attacked in the international media these days and the powers that rule the game warn

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PHOTOS: STAR
(Top) New Zealand captain Stephen Fleming addresses a press conference while coach John Bracewell looks on at the Sonargaon Hotel yesterday afternoon. (Above) Kiwi cricketers (L-R) Nathan Astle, Jacob Oram and Daniel Vettori upon their arrival at the Zia International Airport earlier in the day.

A separation for good BNS officially football's

AL MUSABBIR SADI

Finally the Bangabandhu National Stadium will no longer be a source of argument. The premier venue of the country will cut its ties with cricket and be recognised as the home of football from March 1, 2005.

State Minister for Youth and Sports Fazlur Rahman penned the historic decision in a simple ceremony yesterday fulfilling Bangladesh Football Federation's burning demand to have exclusive rights to the all-purpose venue.

Rahman, in his capacity as chairman of the National Sports Council (NSC) that owns of the half-a-century-old venue, handed over the authorisation papers to the BFF general secretary Anwarul Hoque Helal. Bangladesh Athletics Federation general secretary Shah Alam was also present on the momentous occasion.

The BAF will also have the opportunity to use the venue as soon as a new athletics track is built here.

The 36,000-capacity venue in the heart of the city has been the subject of a tug-of-war between cricket and football for ages but the separation definitely comes as a big sigh of relief for football lovers.

Bangladesh Cricket Board decided to forsake their claim to the venue after the NSC awarded the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur as the future home of Bangladesh cricket.

"It ended a long dispute over the use of the ground but I feel that our responsibilities have increased now," said Helal to the Daily Star last night in his first reaction.

"I thank the sports minister, the cricket board officials and other persons who helped us reach this point. The BFF now has to make full use of an exclusive ground. We can plan and fulfil the demands of our domestic calendar, which we could not do in the past. We hope this will in a major way help to revive football's lost glory," said the elated football official.

But awarding the venue to football could be looked at a cruel twist of history. Originally built for cricket in the 50s, the Big Bowl has outgrown to be popular place for football after the War of Liberation in 1971. Cricket however overshadowed football since Bangladesh was granted Test status in 2000 and the BNS won worldwide recognition as a major cricket venue after it successfully staged the Mini World Cup in 1998.

"Cricket's sense of belonging is at the Bangabandhu Stadium," told chief cricket selector and former national captain Faruque Ahmed after hearing the news.

"Our cricket journey began here and it was designed specifically for cricket. But with a heavy heart we are still ready to move to Mirpur and plan the next chapter of Bangladesh cricket. I wish football the best of luck and hope that both football and cricket authorities would be able to fix an uninterrupted calendar in the

future," added Faruque.

Another ex-captain and a member of the current national team Khaled Mahmud could not conceal his emotion.

"I have been playing here for the last 20 years. It's hard to think that I will not play here anymore. Many big tournaments have been played here and it is a popular international cricket stadium. I don't know whether this decision would backfire or not. I think it would have been better if football and cricket both could coexist at the Bangabandhu Stadium," the all-rounder said.

Bangladesh captain Habibul Bashar also recalled fond memories, especially the maiden Test match against India in November 2000.

"It has seen the rise of cricket. Still, I will be happy if sport, in general, benefits from the separation," said Bashar.

But in reality football has been losing valuable ground after being forced to play at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur. Crowd turnout has fallen dramatically with the top clubs frustrated at the state of affairs.

The footballers believe that Tuesday's historic handover will usher a new beginning.

Bangladesh's SAF Games football gold winning captain Jewel Rana welcomed the decision saying that the separation of cricketers and footballers would be better for both the games.

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GP Corporate Cricket League Mind-boggling schedule

SPORTS REPORTER

The Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) yesterday released a hectic fixture for the second Grameen-Phone Corporate Cricket League (CCL), which will also mark the introduction of Twenty20 cricket in the country for the first time.

The competition for the 12 corporate houses will commence on October 15 but the organisers have allotted only three days to complete 18 first round games at three different city venues.

Bangabandhu National Stadium (BNS) will stage only six matches on the opening day before getting ready for the first Test between Bangladesh and New Zealand on October 19.

But rest of the matches would be shared between Dhanmondi Cricket Stadium and the BKSP in Savar.

Defending champions Araf Apparels will launch their campaign

against Gazi Tank in one of the six opening day's matches at BNS at 9:30 pm.

Twelve teams, split into two groups, will take part in the competition and three top finishers from each group will qualify for the Cup race while the lower half will contest for Plate honours.

Although the launching of the Twenty20 in the Corporate League this year was not accepted wholeheartedly by the participants as well some well-known cricketers, however CCL chairman Khondokar Jamiluddin told reporters that the innovation was only intended as an experiment this year.

"We haven't enough time to arrange Twenty20 cricket as an additional competition in the domestic calendar that's why we have included it in the Corporate League," said Jamiluddin at a pre-launch briefing yesterday.

"You see our boys don't know how to use the long handle in the first 15 overs of a normal 50-over match. So, we believe the new look competition will help them to improve their big-hitting skills," said the CCL chairman adding that the three-hour package would generate enthusiasm among fans of all ages.

He however said that the CCL would get its soul back next year.

"The Corporate League will revert to its old 50-over format once we start the 20-over competition separately from next season," he said.

But Jamil said they might not use the name Twenty20 until in the title until they get the green signal from the ECB, who launched this competition successfully last year.

Ghalib Ahmed Ansari, head of marketing of the sponsors GrameenPhone, also spoke on the

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Billy Bowden

(ICC's elite umpire)

"Everybody makes a mistake. There are ups and downs in everyone's career. You have to move on. After the match I talked with (Virender) Sehwag and said sorry. He replied: 'It's okay'."

While admitting that his decision to give the Indian opener out lbw in the second innings of the Banga-lore Test was a wrong one.



TEN Sports

2006 WC Football Qualifier
Brazil vs Colombia
Live at 6:30 am (Thursday)
Argentina vs Chile
Live at 8:45 am (Thursday)

ESPN

Sportscentre
Live at 8:30 pm

Sachin almost ruled out

REUTERS/AFP, Madras



AUSTRALIA II INDIA 2004-05

Sachin Tendulkar is set to miss the second Test against Australia starting on Thursday in Madras.

"It is very, very unlikely he will play," coach John Wright said on Tuesday. "The team physio will release a statement...later this evening."

Tendulkar missed the first match of the four-Test series in Bangalore last week because of a nagging pain in his left elbow. Australia won by 217 runs.

The 31-year-old, sidelined since the Asia Cup final in August because of the problem, has been complain-

ing of muscle weakness in his hand.

Wright said Tendulkar was being assessed daily. "It is very frustrating for him," he told reporters.

Wright was hopeful Tendulkar would recover for the last two Tests in Nagpur and Mumbai. The third Test starts on October 26.

On Tuesday, Tendulkar bowled in the nets but did not bat or field as the team trained at the Chepauk ground.

A desperate Tendulkar said on Tuesday he wanted to play the second Test despite not recovering fully from a tennis elbow injury.

"It is very, very frustrating to wait on the sidelines," Tendulkar told the ESPN-STAR Sports television channel.

"I am tired of waiting. Its 50:50 for me now and I honestly do not mind taking a chance at Madras and playing the game."

"However, it all depends on how the muscles cope and how much of

pain I can take."

Team India also desperately want him back for the second match, but few are willing to predict he will be fit enough to play.

Some doubt if the 31-year-old will take part in the series at all.

But he said lack of practice would not be a worry if picked for the match after a strenuous fitness test on Wednesday.

"I do not bother if I play a Test without match practice," Tendulkar told the channel.

"I know it is tough but I really want to play."

"You would not know how sad I feel sitting in the dressing room. Earlier, I would pad up and get ready to bat. But now, I wait to see how fast I can put my pads on."

Tendulkar has been doing regular exercises under team physiotherapist.

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Shamsul lifts Spl Chess title

SPORTS REPORTER

Shamsul Islam emerged unbeaten champion in the Sixth Special National Chess Championship after the end of the seventh and last round at the chess federation auditorium yesterday.

He finished with 6.5 points after sharing point in the last round with Ferdous while Abied Hossain became runner-up by virtue of a progressive score after he and four others -- Ferdous, Nawab Ali, Nayem and Kamrul ended up with six points each.

A total of 108 players from different districts and organisations took part in the seven-round Swiss-league meet, organised by Bangladesh Braille Chess Association.

Women's soccer Dhaka, Ansars to fight it out

SPORTS REPORTER

Dhaka set up a final clash against Bangladesh Ansar in the women's football tournament as both sides won their respective semifinals at the Bir Shreshtha Shaheed Mostafa Kamal Stadium in Kamalapur yesterday.

Shila scored a hatrick as Dhaka stormed into the title match by an emphatic 6-0 victory in the first semifinal against Khulna. Laboni struck twice and Khushi had the other goal.

In the second game, Ansars handed VDP a 3-0 defeat. Bilkis, Maleka and Yasmin shared the goals.

The final kicks off at 3:30pm at the same venue today.

Armstrong inspires India

AFF, Madras



AUSTRALIA II INDIA 2004-05

Lance Armstrong may never have watched a cricket match in his life, but India is seeking inspiration from the legendary cyclist to launch a series-levelling quest against Australia.

Sourav Ganguly's men watched a documentary on the American, who overcame testicular cancer to win a record six Tour de France titles, ahead of the second Test which

starts here on Thursday.

"Few sportsman inspire as much as the great man," said Ganguly. "His determination and single-minded devotion to his sport is what anyone would want to emulate."

Ganguly was confident India will fight back in the four-match series despite the heavy 217-run defeat in the first Test at Bangalore on Sunday.

"We have done it before and I am sure we will do it again," he said. "We lost the first Test by the third day when we were bowled out for 246 and gave Australia a lead of over 200 runs."

"I am convinced that if we can put up runs on the board we will do it."

"The wickets for the remaining three Tests will have more bounce

than at Bangalore and that will help our spinners."

"I think the bowlers did extremely well, it is now the turn of the batsmen to deliver."

During the last Australian visit in 2001, India came back from a three-day defeat in the first Test to win the remaining two matches despite being made to follow-on 274 runs behind in the second Test.

But with star batsman Sachin Tendulkar sidelined with a tennis elbow injury -- he remains doubtful for the second Test -- and the world champions on a high, India need a dramatic turn in fortunes.

All is not lost however. The dogged resistance by tail-enders in both

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'I don't want captaincy'



REUTERS, London

Australia's stand-in captain Adam Gilchrist says he has no ambition to

replace Ricky Ponting on a full-time basis.

Gilchrist, leading the side in India after skipper Ponting broke his thumb before the start of the tour, said: "It's a bit too much to take on but the main reason is I don't have a

huge interest in captaincy."

The 32-year-old wicketkeeper-batsman told the November issue of The Wisden Cricketer magazine: "There are a number of other guys like Ricky, Shane Warne and Darren Lehmann who are so astute in their cricket knowledge."

"I don't see myself like that." Australia beat India by 217 runs in the first match of a four-Test series on Sunday. Gilchrist scoring a rapid first-innings century in Bangalore.

Made vice-captain in August 2000, he has captained Australia four times as a stand-in during his 57 Tests, winning three of them.

His one slip-up came against England in 2001 when, standing in for the injured Steve Waugh, he made a sporting declaration only for Mark Butcher to score a match-winning 173 not out. Australia won the five-match series 4-1.

Gilchrist's international career has run in parallel with that of Australia coach John Buchanan, both making their debuts in the same game.

Buchanan is regarded as one of cricket's most innovative thinkers but Gilchrist told the magazine: "He has some amazing ideas and he's got some absolutely rubbish ones as well, which we tell him."

"But he's got a hell of a lot more good than rubbish. He never forces anything on you."

Chittagong TT

CU CORRESPONDENT

Tasmia, Nun Jarujit, Safwana and Prianka reached the semifinals of the Royal Cement District Table Tennis League after winning their respective second round matches at the Chittagong Jila Krira Sangstha gymnasium yesterday.

In the boys' under-12 competition, Rigan, Anik and Avi moved into

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PHOTO: AFP
HUMANE: Australia cricket captain Adam Gilchrist holds a child in his arms during a visit to a slum in Chennai yesterday. The Australian team led by Gilchrist is now in the city to play the second Test against India that starts on October 14.