



Did U Know?

Bangladesh provided the second instance of a team winning a five-match ODI series after losing the first two. South Africa had lost the first two ODIs at Lahore and then won the next three at Faisalabad and Rawalpindi (twice) in 2003-04.



Habibul Bashar
(Bangladesh cricket captain)
"The way we finished the demanding series was fantastic. It was an amazing experience. We tasted our maiden Test victory in Chittagong, managed to draw the second Test from a difficult situation and finally clinched the one-day series from being 2-0 down. I couldn't have asked for more."

After winning the five-match ODI series against Zimbabwe 3-2.

Selectors' focus domestic front

Cricket

SPORTS REPORTER

With the successful end to the international season, the national selectors are now focusing their attention on strengthening domestic cricket.

The Bangladesh selectors will play a role in the picking the final teams of the six divisions in the upcoming fifth National Cricket League.

The country's only first-class competition involving six divisions Dhaka, Chittagong, Rajshahi, Khulna, Barisal and Sylhet, is scheduled to begin from February 7 at three different venues across the country.

"We will not be directly involved with the selection procedure but we will advise the respective divisions to make some changes if it was found that certain players who have the quality, have been kept out of teams. To ensure maximum competitiveness, the best possible squads should be selected for this domestic competition," said chief selector Faruque Ahmed.

Faruque added that the board was keen to improve the standard of the competition as it was the lone four-day event.

"If we want to improve our standard at the international level we should make the domestic tournaments more competitive. We feel that a player should at least have Premier League experience to be considered eligible for the National League but if there are any extraordinary young talents, they should be considered also," said the former national skipper.

The fifth edition of the national league will retain last year's format which means a one-day match will be followed by the four-day fixture.

Dhaka, the holders of the four-day championship, will meet Sylhet at the Bangabandhu National Stadium in one of the three matches on the inaugural day.

Rajshahi will host Chittagong,

defending champions of the one-day competition, while Khulna take on Barisal at their own ground in the day's other fixtures.

But already the league stands to lose a lot of its charm as most leading players will miss the majority of matches. The Bangladesh A team is now on a 42-day tour to UAE and Zimbabwe while a number of star names will leave for India in just under three weeks to play in the Duleep Trophy competition.

The selectors will announce a 15-member Bangladesh Cricket Board squad for the first class competition soon. Some fringe players and a few out-of-favour cricketers like Al-Shahriar, Hannan Sarker and Naimur Rahman are expected to be picked for the BCB team.

"We have decided to form the side with a mixture of young players and experienced campaigners who are now out of the main fold but have a good chance of returning to the Bangladesh team. We will also consider the performances in the recently concluded Premier League," informed Faruque.

Bangladesh coach Dav Whatmore is expected to accompany the team

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Dev cricket on

SPORTS REPORTER

Old DOHS and Brothers Union pulled off emphatic victories in the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) development competition (Under-13) at different venues in the city yesterday.

DOHS inflicted a 99-run defeat on City Club at the Gulshan Youth Club ground. DOHS scored 229-9 in the stipulated 50 overs and dismissed City for 130 in 33.2 overs.

At the Dhanmondi Club ground, Brothers defeated Mohammedan Sporting Club by eight wickets when they raced to 103-2 in 15.5 overs chasing Mohammedan's 102 for eight in a 40-over game.

MR KERANIGANJ



Bangladesh star Mohammad Rafique finds himself engulfed by excited children at the Aganagar Government Primary School in Keraniganj yesterday. Rafique, a hugely popular figure, paid a visit to his old school, which is just beside his house upon returning home after completing a successful series against Zimbabwe where he was one of the standout performers.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

Pakistan pip Windies

AFP, Perth



West Indies threw away three wickets for nine runs Tuesday to hand Pakistan a 30-run victory and a berth in the finals of the triangular VB Series limited-overs competition against Australia.

The Windies, chasing Pakistan's big total of 307 for 8, had been going well until the 33rd over when, at 194 for 3, Ramnaresh Sarwan started the rot which cost them dearly.

The vice-captain, facing spinner Shahid Afridi, made a reckless attempt to hit him over mid-wicket but was fooled by the wrong 'un, allowing wicketkeeper Kamran Akmal to complete a tidy stumping.

Sarwan had provided the backbone of the West Indies innings and his dismissal for 87 off 91 balls gave Pakistan the lift they needed.

Just four runs later Shivnarine Chanderepaal, who was on 58 from 64 deliveries, spooned a chest-high catch to Pakistan captain Inzamam-ul-Haq at extra cover.

The slower delivery from Iftikhar Anjum had fooled Chanderepaal but it

would have been close to being called a wide had he chosen to leave it.

Dwayne Bravo then came to the crease and also misread a delivery from spinner Afridi to be bowled on middle and off stump for just one, with the Windies suddenly in deep trouble at 203 for 6 in the 35th over.

Wavell Hinds and Courtney Browne steadied the innings, putting on 54, and for a while it looked like the Windies would steal the show.

But Hinds holed out to Inzamam - who had a splendid day in the field with two good catches - for 30 and the Windies were on 257 for 7 with the tail exposed.

Pace bowler Ian Bradshaw

Pakistan's performance came hard on the heels of their impressive three-wicket win over the previously unbeaten Australians at the same venue on Sunday. It is sure to boost them for Friday's first final in Melbourne.

After winning the toss and sending Pakistan in to bat, the West Indies missed several opportunities to put them under pressure.

They paid a heavy price after failing to capitalise on two-clear

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STANDINGS

Final standings in the limited-overs international VB Series between Australia, West Indies and Pakistan on Tuesday:

Team	P	W	L	NR	BP	Pts
Australia	6	4	1	1	4	27
Pakistan	6	3	3	0	2	17
W Indies	6	1	4	1	2	10

Note: Five points for win, three for a no result, one for a bonus point.



MAN-OF-THE-MATCH: Pakistan's Yousuf Youhana steers one towards third-man on way to scoring a match-winning 105 against West Indies in Perth yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

AFC Cup Brothers play Nisa FC Mar 9

SPORTS REPORTER

Brothers Union will make their Asian club competition debut when the National and Premier League champions host Nisa FC of Turkmenistan in the AFC Cup match in Dhaka on March 9.

Brothers, who have never competed in a competition organised by the Asian Football Confederation (AFC), have been drawn in Group C also featuring Nijmeh FC of Lebanon. Both these foreign clubs toured Bangladesh last year to play their AFC Cup group matches against Mukhtodda Sangsad.

Federation Cup champions Mukhtodda, meanwhile, open their campaign this year against a stronger rival from the other side of the border when they meet Kolkata giants East Bengal in an away match in Group A on the same day.

Al Faisaly of Jordan and Nebitchi FC of Turkmenistan are the Group A teams.

Both Dhaka clubs are scheduled to play their home matches at the Bangabandhu National Stadium where football is due return from March 1.

The Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF), however, wanted the Bangladesh Cricket Board to hand over the venue by this month

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Rajshahi Stadium goes multipurpose

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

The Rajshahi Stadium has been dug up to accommodate a council meeting of the ruling Bangladesh National Party (BNP) followed by a month-long fair.

The local District Sports Association (DSA) approved the two non-sporting events in the lone internationally reputed venue in the country's northern headquarters apparently to entertain the interests of the ruling party and to raise funds for the cash-starved DSA itself.

Witnesses said that the workers of Rajshahi City Corporation have been working round the clock to set the stage for the February 9 union representatives divisional council, which BNP's first joint secretary general Tarique Rahman is likely to attend as chief guest.

Concrete toilets and makeshift hotels have sprung up like mushrooms inside the stadium, which was renovated by the National Sports Council (NSC) a couple of years ago.

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Aftab, Manzarul top Tigers

SPORTS REPORTER



Bangladesh ended a gruelling four-month home season with a rare Test and one-day international series triumph over Zimbabwe on the last day of January.

The Tigers prepared for hosting four nations during a hectic schedule but were relieved after Sri Lanka's tour in November was cancelled.

After a meek surrender to New Zealand in October, the home side began to get its act together in the series against mighty India where they were trounced in both Tests but showed signs of improvement.

The one-day series against the Indians was by no means one-sided as Bangladesh for the first time defeated their neighbours to square the series 1-1. Though Habibul Bashar's men lost the ODI series, their maiden home victory in the shorter-version of the game seemed to be a perfect tonic ahead of the eagerly awaited series against Zimbabwe.

Having won the Test series 1-0, the hosts were brought down to earth by Tatenda Taibu's young and experienced side who stormed to a 2-0 lead in the five-match limited-overs series.

However, Bashar's side refused to just sit back and let Taibu take the

trophy. Amazingly, they won all remaining three games to pull off one of the most remarkable fightbacks in the history of one-day cricket.

The series was dominated by youngsters on either side.

Aftab Ahmed, who had been struggling early in the series but never lost the faith of the selectors, finished atop the Bangladesh batting following his masterful 81 net

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D-ZIM ODI SERIES AVERAGE

Batsman	Country	Inns	NO	50s	100s	HS	Runs	Avg
B Rogers	Zim	5	0	3	0	84	251	50.20
A Ahmed	Ban	5	1	1	0	*81	179	44.75
T Taibu	Zim	5	1	1	0	*64	169	42.25
H Bashar	Ban	5	1	0	0	44	159	39.75
N Iqbal	Ban	5	0	2	0	58	159	31.80
R Saleh	Ban	4	0	1	0	77	125	31.25
B Taylor	Zim	5	0	1	0	58	149	29.80
E Chigumbura	Zim	5	1	0	0	41	106	26.50
M Ashraf	Ban	4	0	0	0	42	101	25.25
H Masakadza	Zim	5	0	1	0	54	122	24.40
S Matsikenyeri	Zim	5	0	1	0	50	104	20.80

Bowler	Country	O	M	R	W	Best	Avg	Econ
M Rafique	Ban	20	1	67	6	4/33	11.17	3.35
M Islam	Ban	39	2	137	9	4/34	15.22	3.51
B Taylor	ZIM	12	0	77	5	3/54	15.40	4.42
N Hossain	Ban	31	1	148	6	2/34	24.67	6.77
D Hondo	Zim	31	0	150	6	3/36	25.00	4.84
C Mpofo	Zim	31	1	153	6	2/19	25.50	4.92
T Panyangara	Zim	40	1	197	7	2/31	28.14	4.91
P Utseya	Zim	49	3	172	6	2/33	28.67	3.51
K Mahmud	Ban	32	1	148	5	2/42	29.60	4.62
E Haque	Ban	30	1	129	4	2/37	32.25	4.30
M Bin Mortuza	Ban	35.5	2	160	4	2/38	40.00	4.50

NEXT ASIA CUP IN PAKISTAN

PCB for changes to tour of India

Cricket

REUTERS, Karachi

Pakistan has asked India for changes to the proposed itinerary of next month's Test and one-day series in India.

Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) chairman Shaharyar Khan did not elaborate on the proposed changes to reporters but a source within the PCB said there were concerns over Ahmedabad hosting the second Test.

Pakistan are due to tour India from February 25, playing three Tests and five one-day internationals. Ahmedabad, in the state of Gujarat, was the site of some of the worst communal riots in India in 2002.

LANGEVELDT RULED OUT

Second ODI in S Africa today

REUTERS, Durban

Fast bowler Charl Langeveldt has been ruled out of South Africa's next three one-day matches against England because of a fractured left hand.

"Langeveldt has left the squad and gone home," South African media manager Gerald de Kock said from Bloemfontein where the second one-day international will be played on Wednesday.

"He will undergo a scan, and the hope is that he will be able to play in the last three games."

The third and fourth games of the seven-match series will be played in Port Elizabeth on Friday and Cape Town on Sunday.

Fast bowler Langeveldt sustained the injury to his non-bowling hand while batting in the third Test in Cape Town, his debut. He took five for 46 in the first innings.

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