

Abahani's red-letter day

Mohammedan thrashed 5-1

SPORTS REPORTER

The season's first onslaught of the nor'wester almost had the match postponed but when the traditional clash of the titans finally took off, it was Mohammedan Sporting Club who were on the receiving end of another monsoon storm in the form of Abahani that tore them to smithereens.

For the record Mohammedan were annihilated 5-1 at the Bangabandhu National Stadium, the biggest losing margin in matches between the arch rivals. Abahani, who had scored just five goals in their last six matches this season, went on to become Group-B champions.

It was a long cherished revenge for the Sky Blues, who had suffered a 4-0 defeat to Mohammedan exactly 30 years ago in a league match at the same venue.

There was only academic interest left in the game following Dhaka Wanderers' defeat to Arambagh Krira Sangha in the day's first match. That result confirmed Abahani's passage into the semifinals alongside Mohammedan even before the start of the prestige match. But as soon as the two sides prepared for kick-off before a 10,000-strong crowd, a severe rainstorm stopped all proceedings.

So powerful was the wrath of the wind that a window in the hospitality box -- the temporary press box on the top tier of the stadium was shattered and a number of TV journalists received cuts and bruises.

But after the skies calmed down, the game got off following an 80-minute delay with about a half of the expectant crowd still present.

Zahid Parvez opened the account for Abahani in the very second minute when the national under-17 midfielder's 50-yard shot took a wicked deflection off Mohammedan defender Nazrul and gave no chance to goalkeeper Biplab.

Striker Mehdi Hassan Ujjal then

doubled the margin after a superb move in the 27th minute. The young striker exchanged passes with his senior partner Farhad and finally, dribbled past last defender Hassan to make it 2-0 with a neat placing shot from inside the box.

Mohammedan's Liberian forward Dolley, on loan from Farashganj, pulled one back ten minutes from the short whistle. Manju backheaded a long ball from their own half to set up Dolley who rocketed in a right-footed volley.

The second half was all Abahani. Even after Ghanaian striker Ibrahim, Farhad and Ujjal missed sitters, they managed to score thrice in the last nine minutes.

Substitute striker Tipu, who replaced Farhad in the second half, fired in from an acute angle in the 76th minute while Cameroonian medio Ndem Kiyek received a freekick by Parvez inside the danger zone before drilling the ball home six minutes later.

Ujjal's second goal of the match completed the humiliation six minutes from time when he finished a brilliant solo run with a low angled shot.

In the day's first match, second half goals by Imrul and Ridon helped Arambagh record a consolation 2-0 victory over Dhaka Wanderers.

Yellow cards: Joy, Ndem (Abahani) and hassan, Scylla, Zahid (Mohammedan).

TEAMS

ABAHANI: Nizam, Obaidur (Parvez), Pradeep, Shipon, Lajuk, Zahid, Ndem, Ujjal, Ibrahim and Farhad (Tipu).

MOHAMMEDAN: Biplab, Hassan, Nazrul, Scylla, Munna, Arman Aziz, Zahid (Sentu), Manju, Mintu (Kaiser), Alfaz and Dolley.

Referee: Mansoor Azad.

GROUP-B TABLE

Teams	M	W	D	L	GF	GA	Pts
Abahani	3	2	1	0	6	1	7
MSC	3	2	0	1	4	6	6
Arambagh	3	1	0	2	3	3	3
Wanderers	3	0	1	2	1	4	1



THE GOALGATE OPENS: Abahani's Farhad (R) celebrates his team's first of five strikes against archrivals Mohammedan during their Tibet 20th Federation Cup football tournament clash at the BNS on Monday.

PHOTO: STAR

Why England should beat the drum for Bangladesh



TANYA ALDRED, *The Guardian*

Medieval Europeans thought paradise lay over the mouth of the Ganges. The cricket world does not see things the same way. Some time in the next two weeks -- the actual date is still uncertain -- Bangladesh fly into Heathrow for possibly the least anticipated cricket tour in history.

England's first Test visitors of the summer start their warm-up against the British Universities at Fenners on May 10, but already this country's mind is on the Ashes, the Ashes and the Ashes. County cricket reports are dominated by the form of Australians or potential England batsmen who might combat Glenn McGrath. In interviews England players are asked about the possibility of overwhelming the world champions in late August. None dwell much on the team flying in from Dhaka.

Even a visit by Zimbabwe, battling it out with Bangladesh in cricket's dingy basement, gets some publicity -- if only of the anti-Mugabe kind. But Bangladesh's problems are overlooked. Natural disasters, yet another flood, or yet another monsoon; a literacy rate of 43%; a criticised human rights record.

Poor Bangladesh, once the flourishing artistic arm of the sub-continent, is now seen as the poor stepbrother of superpower India. The home of the Bengal tiger, the longest beach and the largest littoral

mangrove forest in the world does not get a good press.

Of course their cricket record is abysmal. A succession of crushing defeats has prompted calls for Test cricket to be split into two divisions. But things don't look so bad when you compare them to India and New Zealand at a similar stage. Bangladesh gained Test status in November 2000 and won their first Test and series -- against a weakened Zimbabwe -- in January. It had taken four years and 35 Tests. New Zealand took 45 matches and 26 years to win a game, and India 25 games over 19 years. And neither of them had the pressure of a Test schedule that spares no blushes for the weak.

What bodes well for Bangladesh is the sheer volume and enthusiasm of their cricket following. Over 138 million live in the world's most densely populated country. Within minutes of Bangladesh's first Test win, Dhaka was swamped with thousands of drumming, flag-waving fans. A similar celebration followed when they shocked Pakistan in the 1999 World Cup and the nation was on the edge of a street party when they came within a rice grain of beating the same opposition in a Test last September.

It is unlikely they will win their first overseas Test this summer. The ECB has designed the toughest schedule possible for their debut Test tour here. Their batsmen, uneasy against the moving ball, will probably be greeted by seaming pitches at Chester-le-Street and Lord's. This will be followed by a

triangular one-day tournament. The third side is Australia, leaving Bangladesh as the limp lettuce in a crispy baguette. Perhaps it is all revenge for England's tour two years ago when the team flew into a torrential downpour and were nearly embarrassed at Dhaka.

So the chances of Bangladesh making an impact are minimal. Even their one trump card, Dav Whatmore, may be out of commission by the time the series begins. Last week the coach signed a two-year extension to his contract but remains "very interested" in the juicier job with India.

The ECB should be praised for their choice of venues -- tickets are selling fast at the Riverside, mainly for the prospect of Steve Harrison rattling through the tourists, and a Lord's Test is still unforgettable. It is just a shame they will find the conditions so alien. Had it not been for television demands (it would have made more sense to play the Ashes earlier (incidentally before Shane Warne could exploit the dry pitches) and host Bangladesh at the end of August -- when they had a chance of making a noise over the din of the Ashes.

But it is we who need to show the most patience and understanding: to put on hold the Ashes obsession and enjoy what is here. Habibul Bashar is leading a young team eager to learn and one that will have thousands of keen supporters here. Less than six years ago we were the worst Test nation in the world -- but we still wanted, and expected, our voice to be heard.

Nel nails Windies



AFP, Bridgetown

The West Indies' decline however, was swift and, as they say in these parts, 'they did not last as long as a sno-cone'.

Makhaya Ntini, Nel's new-ball partner, snuffed the early life out of the West Indies' fightback with two wickets in the same over before lunch.

The visitors strengthened their grip on the match, when Ntini removed opening batsmen Chris Gayle and Ramnaresh Sarwan off successive balls, before Nel added the wicket of left-hander Wavell Hinds to leave West Indies at 36 for three at lunch.

By the time tea arrived, South Africa were within sight of victory and the Sir Vivian trophy, and the writing was on the wall for the West Indies. Four wickets, two to Nel, saw West Indies lose their way and crumble to 119 for seven at the break.

Earlier, South Africa batted for another half-hour, after they resumed on their overnight total of 521 for seven. Gayle with three wickets for 85 runs from 27 overs, and Daren Powell with three for 103 from 31 overs were the most successful bowlers for West Indies.

BRIEF SCORES

WEST INDIES: First innings 296 (Lara 176, Chanderpaul 53, Bravo 26, Sarwan 10, R Hinds 10, extras 10; Zondeki 4-50, Nel 4-56, Kallis 1-37, Ntini 1-61) and second innings 166 (Browne 68, Chanderpaul 31;

Nel 6-32, Ntine 2-40) **SOUTH AFRICA:** First innings 548 for 9 declared (De Villiers 178, Smith 104, Kallis 78, Dippenaar 71, Boucher 28, Prince 23; Gayle 3-85, Powell 3-103)

Result: South Africa won by an innings and 86 runs and take winning 2-0 lead in the 4-Test series.

Man-of-the-match: Andre Nel.

Pathan hopes to improve

PTI, Rajkot

Paceman Irfan Pathan, who had a poor Test series and struggled to find form in the one-day matches in the just concluded Indo-Pak series, was hoping to improve his performance in the future.

Talking to reporters here on Sunday after prize distribution ceremony at the Kieran More International Cricket Academy (KMICA), Pathan who played just one game in the six-match one-day series, said he had learnt a lot from his mistakes in the Indo-Pak series and would not repeat the same in future.

"One receives a lot of praise when the performance is good. But when you fail everyone criticises you," the Baroda bowler said adding that he would work hard for an improved performance in future.

What to WATCH

ESPN

Football Focus
Live at 6:30 pm
Sportscentre
Live at 8:30 pm
UEFA Champions League
Ac Milan vs Psv Eindhoven
Semifinal-1, Leg-1
Live at 12:30 am (Wednesday)

STAR Sports

Sportsline
Live at 8:00 pm
English Premier Football League
West Bromwich vs Blackburn Rovers
Live at 12:30 am (Wednesday)



Kapil Dev

(Indian cricket legend)

"My dad is 70, my mother is 60. The chances of another Kapil are close to zero."

On being asked when India will see another Kapil Dev.



Federation Cup Football
Sheikh Russel vs Youmen's (4:00 pm)
Muktijoddha vs Brothers (6:00 pm)
Venue: BNS

Wright points at wrongs



CRICINFO, undated

John Wright, who coached India for four-and-a-half years and learnt the intricacies of the board and the team, has criticised the national selection panel for their "appalling procedures".

During his tenure with captain Sourav Ganguly, Indian team selections were more consistent than before, but Wright believed that rules needed to be put in place to ensure even further consistency in the process.

Speaking to the Asian Age, Wright revealed how difficult it was with a constant chopping and changing within the Board of Control for cricket in India (BCCI).

"The selection committee is poor and needs to be streamlined. I have been with the team for the last four years and every year (when) the selection committee gets changed, new people come in with new sets of ideas, which makes things difficult. There should be a standard set of rules governing the selection procedure."

Previously, at his last press



JOHN WRIGHT

was taken away.

But here he told the Asian Age, "The coach too does not have much say in selection. I don't understand why a player like Mohammad Kaif

gets dropped. He is the best, as solid as wood, he should be included everytime."

Another sticking point for Wright was the belief that he was soft on the players.

"That is baseless. You can't be a coach if you are not tough enough. Tell them to ask Rahul Dravid, Anil Kumble or Virender Sehwag and the other senior players in the team and they will tell you how tough I was."

He opined that the next coach ought to be as tough as he was.

Wright said that he had not turned his back on coaching in the future. He had already been approached by the South African board as a replacement for Ray Jennings but the arrangement did not work out. It would not stop him from helping New Zealand if he was approached. He acknowledged that a need to be close to family had also influenced his judgement. "I have been away from my family and kids for four years. That is a lot of time."

Apart from being with the family, Wright said he would write a book. "It may be in the form of a memoir of my stay in India. I just love this place. Cricket is a passion here, unlike N e w

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Flintoff ahead of schedule

AFP, London

England hope Andrew Flintoff is ahead of schedule in his bid to regain full fitness for the Ashes series against Australia.

The Lancashire all-rounder, who has never played a Test match against Australia, returned to action after ankle surgery in a one-day game against Middlesex on Sunday.

He played as a specialist batsman but Lancashire manager Mike Watkinson thinks he will be able to bowl to a reasonable level in a few weeks.

"If you said that being fit for the Ashes series is the target, then he's ahead of schedule," said Watkinson.

Flintoff's last taste of competitive action had been in the fourth Test against South Africa in Johannesburg on January 17.

Following his operation, he has been swimming and hill walking as

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Smith hails bowlers



REUTERS, Bridgetown

Captain Graeme Smith on Sunday praised his bowlers after South Africa wrapped up the Test series with West Indies with one match to go.

South Africa won the third Test in Barbados by an innings and 86 runs on the fourth day, earning an unsailable 2-0 lead in the four-match series.

"Before the series everyone wanted to know how we were going to take 20 wickets in a match," Smith told a news conference.

"We've gone out there and made the pitches do things, we've hit these decks hard."

"You've really got to work hard on these pitches."

South Africa declared their first innings on 548 for nine early in the morning session leaving West Indies to score 252 to make the visitors bat again but the home side were dismissed for 166 in the 10th over after tea.

Fast bowler Andre Nel was the pick of the South African bowlers taking a career-best six for 32 in the second innings to complete match figures of 10 for 88, his first 10-wicket Test haul.

"We spent the first three days setting up the match, and this morning the bowlers came out and did the job," Smith added.

"It was outstanding to see the guys run in and bowl like that on a flat wicket."

The win over West Indies was South Africa's first away triumph since they beat Bangladesh in 2002-03.

"I think we've taken some big steps last year and over the last eight or nine months," Smith said.

"We'll certainly celebrate this win, because we've learnt that you can't take a Test win or your own form for granted."

Despite his superb figures, Nel refused to take the all of the credit.

"All of us bowled well, and I was lucky to pick up the wickets," Nel said.

The aggressive bowler took the key wickets of Brian Lara and Shivnarine Chanderpaul in consec-

utive overs after lunch.

"My tail was up after I got Lara and Chanderpaul out, Graeme struggled to get the ball out of my hand after that," he said.

Nel has now dismissed Lara eight times in the 12 Test innings.

"I like a challenge, and I try to raise my game to get the top players out," Nel added.

"That's the only way you can improve. I run in and try my best, and I play with my heart."

West Indies captain Chanderpaul was at a loss to explain his team's performance.

"Our bowling hasn't been good, and most of our batsmen haven't been focused," he said.

West Indies coach Bennett King said his team needed all-round improvement.

"It's very hard to win or even be competitive when your top three are making scores like 12 and 17," King said.

"We need to bowl like we did yesterday (on Saturday) and we would love to have a spinner who can take key wickets."

"That's a wish list."



MAN-OF-THE-MATCH: South Africa fast bowler Andre Nel (L) celebrates with teammates after they won the third Test against West Indies in Barbados on Sunday.

PHOTO: AFP