

Whatmore, Faruque try to make sense of it



AL MUSABBIR SADI from Colombo

With the Tigers staring down the barren, the Bangladesh team's think-tank however conceded that the damage had already been done on the opening day of the first Test.

That was the view of coach Dav Whatmore and chief selector Faruque Ahmed after the second day's play at the Premadasa Stadium on Tuesday.

"We handed the opportunity to the opposition instead of posting a total in excess of 250-270," rued Whatmore about Bangladesh's first innings debacle.

"We only got 188 in the end but the Sri Lankans batted really well on a tricky wicket when they came together. They were 130-3 when Mahela (Jayawardene) and Thilan (Samaraweera) came, they batted extremely well. We also stuck at our task. The effort was really there and getting nine wickets was the reward," said Whatmore who was happy at the performance of a relatively inexperienced attack.

"It was not a bad pitch, we expected the ball to turn. Losing three wickets today looks worse bad but the damage was done yesterday, quite clearly.

"Being the home side, they were able to pick the length, sent the ball through the gaps and lofted the ball at the right time. If you are particularly skilled in that area, you can still get runs on this wicket," Whatmore told in appreciation of Sri Lanka's adaptation to the conditions.

"Our bowling effort was commendable and we missed only one stumping chance today. But Tillakaratne Dilshan's life was not costly like it often happens for us in other games.

He was also pleased that no Sri Lankan batsmen managed to score a hundred.

"It's absolutely an achievement. Rasel was playing his first match and Shahadat his second. They both did a good job with intensity

and desire to get the ball past the bat. Rasel hasn't got pace like Shahadat but he was able to direct the ball more or less in the right area."

"Obviously Rafique with his experience outlasted today and yesterday, in conditions that are pretty warm. He was justly rewarded for his effort. Young Enamul bowled a lot better than

his figures show. He was unlucky on a couple of occasions.

Whatmore, talking about Bangladesh's repeated debacles in final sessions, thought that indiscretion was the order of the day.

"We lost three today and two of those wickets were more or less not playing a shot. I still think Shahriar

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PHOTO: AFP

THE LONE TIGER: Bangladesh spinner Mohammad Rafique, who took five wickets, celebrates dismissing Thilan Samaraweera on Tuesday.

BCB picks 38 for U-15 camp

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) picked up 38 players on Tuesday for the under-15 camp that will begin from September 26.

The selected players are: Jewel Rana, Mamun Islam, Ashraf Aziz, Tanvir Hyder, Sony Khan, Ariful Haque, Mominul Islam, Abdur Rahman, Subrato Kumar, Md. Aminur Rahman, Mahadat Amin, Baizid Imran, Shazada Abu Yousuf, Chowdhury Labbaieak, Md. Ruman Ahmed, Islamul Ahsan, Makin Abedin, Mortuza Zoaddid Islam, Masud Rana, Sajjad Hossain, AM Faisal, Jitu Alam, Mol. Azim, Mejbur Rahman, Taposh Ghosh, Mahfuz Arif, Anindo Dey, Md. Furkan, Md. Jabid Hossain, Iftekhar Ali, Mir Faizullah Khan, Asaduzzaman Prince, Sharier Rubayet, Rocky Bormon, Mazharul Haque and Numanur Rahman

The players have been asked to report on September 25 at BKSP.

A typical day's Test



AL MUSABBIR SADI from Colombo

For those who still believe in the game uncorrupted by the influence of limited-overs cricket, it was a typical Test match day at the Premadasa Stadium.

All the elements of the good old game -- slow and cautious batting, batsmen waiting for the loose delivery, long spells from the spinners, very few appeals, a short interruption due to rain and virtually no one to watch slumbering cricket -- were reproduced on the second day of the first Test between Sri Lanka and Bangladesh.

The home batsmen dug in deep in an effort to consolidate their position with big partnerships and compared to about 350 runs scored on the first day, the 246 on the second day was as dull as a net session.

Despite forced to field an inexperienced attack, Bangladesh saw the back of Sri Lanka's top batsmen who showed lack of concentration

on the first day.

But the younger ones, more determined to cement their places in the side, rose to the occasion under the guidance of Mahela Jayawardena, the vice-captain who completed 5,000 Test runs just before the close of play on the first day.

Jayawardena, who shared a 101-run fourth wicket stand with Thilan Samaraweera to make up for the early losses of Marvan Atapattu, Sanath Jayasuriya and Kumar Sangakkara, was dismissed for 63 but new generation Lankan batsmen Samaraweera and Tillakaratne Dilshan went on to play significant roles to keep the islanders on course for a taking a considerable lead.

Samaraweera made his second half-century against Bangladesh while Dilshan, playing his first Test against the Tigers, top-scored with a fluent 86.

Habibul Bashar, playing rookies Sheikh Rasel and Shahadat Hossain in the absence of his frontline pacers,

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Hometown pubs free for Flintoff

AFP, London

Global fame and fortune may be beckoning, but Andrew "Freddie" Flintoff insists the best thing about winning the Ashes is that he will be able to drink for free in his hometown pubs.

Flintoff, the charismatic all-rounder who did more than any other player to help beat Australia, is set to make millions in the wake of England's first series victory over their oldest rivals in 18 years.

But he insists he has no intention of embracing the celebrity lifestyle enjoyed by the likes of England football captain David Beckham.

"I'd never make a decent celebrity," Flintoff said Tuesday, joking: "I'm ugly, I'm overweight, but I'm happy."

Predictably, Flintoff led England's victory celebrations with the same energy he injected into his bowling and batting throughout the nail-biting series.

As dawn broke over London, Flintoff was sipping his umpteenth gin and tonic, puffing on a giant cigar and telling anyone who would listen just how much the Ashes triumph meant to him.

"What is most exciting about it is that I'll be awarded the freedom of Preston (his home town in Lancashire, northern England)," he said.

"That means I can drive a flock of sheep through the town centre, drink for free in no less than 64 pubs and get a lift home with the police when I become inebriated."

"What more could you want?"

Warne undecided on Test future

AFP, London

Shane Warne insisted he'd had no thoughts about quitting international cricket after bowling out of Test match action in England as a member of the losing side for the first time.

Although Warne, 36, dropped man-of-the-match Kevin Pietersen when he was on 15 and then saw his Hampshire teammate score 158, no Australian had done more than the legendary leg-spinner to retain the Ashes.

In the series as a whole he took 40 wickets and scored 249 runs while in the fifth Test he all but kept Australia in the game with a match return of 12 for 246 including a marathon 31 overs unchanged on Monday.

There had been speculation that Warne, now captaining Hampshire, might bow out from Test cricket at the end of what had been widely

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NFL 2nd round venues finalised

SPORTS REPORTER

The venues for the second round matches of the Nitol-Tata sixth National Football League was finalised yesterday.

The first phase of the second round will be held from November 16-20 at Khulna and then it will take place at Rangpur (November 25-29), Chandpur (December 4-8) and Cox's Bazar (December 13-17).

A total of 52 teams, split into six groups, will take part in the preliminary round at six zonal venues that will begin tomorrow and six group champions will join four Dhaka giants Brothers, Muktijoddha, Mohammedan and Abahani in the ten-team second round.

After completion of the second round six teams will play in the final round at Dhaka.

Uttara Club tennis

SPORTS REPORTER

The men's singles semifinal line-ups in the Uttara Club Open National Tennis tournament was completed yesterday.

Amol Roy, who scored a hard-fought 6-4, 2-6, 6-1 victory over Shah Newaz, will take on Prithul Mondal in the first semifinal. Mondal beat Alamgir Hossain 6-2, 7-6(3).

Dipu Lal will face Laxman Lal in the second semifinal on the same day. Dipu beat Hira Lal 6-4, 7-5 and Laxman beat Kabir Hossain 6-3, 6-4.



PHOTO: AFP

RIDE OF A LIFETIME: The England cricket team travels on a red open-top bus along Fleet Street in London on Tuesday.

London erupts



REUTERS, London

Cheering fans packed the pavements of London 20-deep on Tuesday to hail England's conquering cricketing heroes for beating arch rivals Australia.

"It has been an incredible rollercoaster ride of emotions," said team star Andrew Flintoff after thousands of people poured onto the streets of the capital to greet the cricketers parading in a red open-topped London bus.

The team, tasting cricket triumph against Australia for the first time in almost two decades, linked arms to sing William Blake's fervently patriotic hymn "Jerusalem"

A crowd of 25,000 in Trafalgar Square, traditional epicentre of London street parties, sang "Rule

Britannia" before launching into "Land of Hope and Glory".

In glorious September sunshine, fans jumped into the fountains, draped in the red and white flag of England's patron saint George.

It was London's biggest spontaneous celebration since 750,000 people poured into London to celebrate England's Rugby World Cup victory over Australia two years ago.

"I knew it was going to be big but I didn't think it would be this big," said fast bowler Steve Harmison after England won the nail-biting cricket series 2-1.

Crickets captain Michael Vaughan raised in triumph a replica urn of the Ashes -- the piece of wooden cricket gear burned after a humiliating English defeat at the hands of Australia in 1882.

Then he raised a glass of champagne to the crowds, batsman Kevin Pietersen sprayed them with bubbly and Flintoff drank straight

from the bottle.

Many players sported sunglasses -- and that was not just to protect them from the glare.

After partying all night, Flintoff admitted tongue-in-cheek "What is most exciting about winning the Ashes is it means I'll be awarded the freedom of Preston, my hometown."

"That means I can drive a flock of sheep through the town centre, drink for free in no less than 64 pubs and get a lift home with the police when I become inebriated. What more could you want?"

Vaughan was staggered by the turnout in a land where soccer has long been king.

"This is incredible. It is very hard to describe what the emotions are. To see a turn-out like this for cricket really shows what the summer has been all about. They are hanging o u

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Ashes reward for Fletcher

AFP, London

England cricket coach Duncan Fletcher has reportedly been rewarded for winning back the Ashes from Australia with a long-cherished British passport.

Fletcher, a Zimbabwean, has twice previously been turned down for British citizenship because he spent too long abroad -- coaching the England team on tour.

Home Secretary Charles Clarke told the Daily Telegraph last week he might use his discretion to override technical objections to Fletcher's 14-year struggle to obtain a British passport.

And reports on Tuesday said Clarke had indeed intervened to grant the passport, ensuring the row did not sour the team's success.

"It is right to say the home secretary used his discretionary powers and he possessed discretionary powers to grant the passport, ensuring the row did not sour the team's success."

Fletcher, 56, born in Zimbabwe of two British parents and four British grandparents, has twice been rebuffed in applications for citizenship by unsporting Home Office bureaucrats because he spends more than 90 days abroad annually.

His time abroad has been spent rebuilding the global reputation of English cricket.

But last week Clarke confirmed he possessed discretionary powers to review all such cases of alleged injustice.

Interviewed on the sidelines of an anti-terrorism summit at the European Parliament, he said he could not comment on individual immigration cases.

But he added: "But let me just take the opportunity to pay tribute to the fantastic work that he (Fletcher) has done in developing the England cricket team into the world's leading cricket team."

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What to WATCH

TEN Sports
Bangladesh vs Sri Lanka
First Test, Day Three
Live at 10:30 am

ESPN
UEFA Champions League
Real Madrid vs Olympique Lyonnais
Repeat at 5:30 pm
Arsenal vs FC Thun
Live at 12:30 am (Thursday)

STAR Sports
India vs Zimbabwe
First Test, Day Two
Live at 2:00 pm

BD-SL SCOREBOARD					
Scoreboard at stumps on the second day of the first cricket Test between Sri Lanka and Bangladesh at the R Premadasa Stadium in Colombo on Tuesday:					
BANGLADESH: First innings 188 (Bashar 84; Herath 4-38, Murali-tharan 3-42)		306, 7-337, 8-345, 9-370			
SRI LANKA: First innings (overnight 160-3)		Bowler			
Jayasuriya c Afkib b Shahadat	46	Rasel	19.2	2	67
Atapattu lbw b Rasel	18	Shahadat	20	0	75
Sangakkara c Ashraf b Rafique	30	Rafique	37	9	114
Samaraweera c Mashud b Shahadat	78				
Jayawardene c Mashud b Rafique	63				
Dilshan b Rasel	86				
Vaas lbw b Rafique	5				
Herath c Mashud b Rafique	13				
Muralitharan c Mashud b Rafique	3				
Fernando not out	1				
Extras: (lb-6, nb-20, w-1)	27				
Total: (For 9 wickets declared in 110.2 overs)	370				
Fall of wickets: 1-41, 2-97, 3-130, 4-231, 5-295, 6-					

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