



TIGERS ROAR AGAIN: Man-of-the-match Aftab Ahmed raises his bat as his fellow teammates celebrate their victory over Sri Lanka in the second ODI at the Shaheed Chandu Stadium in Bogra on Wednesday.

Aftab hungry for more

SPORTS REPORTER from Bogra



Aftab Ahmed didn't appear in the boisterous presentation ceremony in front of a roaring crowd at the Shaheed Chandu Stadium to receive the man-of-the-match's award as he was complaining of breathing problem.

The 21-year-old Chittagongian however came to the post-match briefing to announce that he might have missed it this time but a plenty of it will come in the future.

"You know I have just recovered from jaundice and that's why I'm having some problem with my fitness. It is frustrating that I could not appear in the presentation party to receive the man-of-the-match award. But I am looking forward to receiving such awards in the days to come," said a beaming Aftab.

"I have a dream that one day I will be one of the best players in the world and I have the confidence,"

said an excited Aftab, who scored an unbeaten 22-ball 32 and took 1-24 in Bangladesh's four-wicket win against Sri Lanka.

"Today I have got excellent support from Alok (Kapali) and it was only because of him I was successful. I played a big shot just to relieve the pressure of run-rate. I just played my natural game," he revealed.

The right-hander's huge six against paceman Ruchira Perera over the long-on reminds his great one-stroke brilliance against Australia fast bowler Jason Gillespie in the final over at Cardiff.

"I never thought who the bowler was. I never missed the opportunity to punish the bad balls. Yes, the six against Gillespie is a memorable one in my life but you know I always love to play big shots. But now I can also understand that I should settle in the middle before playing my natural game," he explained.

Kapali was also satisfied with the fact that he at least tried to serve

the purpose of the team strategy.

"You all know that I had a different job this time. I tried my best with the ball and play the new role as a batsman down the order. But I have to go a long way to justify my recall in the team," said the talented all-rounder, who returned to international cricket after more than a year.

Mohammad Ashraful might be the highest scorer in the Bangladesh innings but he looked frustrated with the way he threw his wicket away after completing his seventh ODI fifty.

"It was an opportunity for me to stay till the end but I muffed it again by playing a wild shot. But now I am happy that at least my innings didn't go in vain. I had a brilliant partnership with Sumon bhai (Habibul Bashar) in the Cardiff match and now we shared another innings which is really fantastic for me," said the ace batsman.

Young paceman Syed Rasel said that he was successful because he never tried to do anything special.

"It is really a fantastic experience for me. Actually I always try to bowl in the right area and maintain a discipline line. I think my success in domestic cricket helped me to get the confidence at the highest level," said the left-arm paceman, who gave Bangladesh the early breakthrough.

Javed Omar said he couldn't understand why some people dislike him.

"If my innings serves the team purpose then what's wrong with that. I am happy that my small innings helped Bangladesh to overcome the bad record against Sri Lanka," said the opener, who scored a fine 40.

Mashrafe Bin-Mortuza believed that he was the lucky guy in the team.

"We need much more of this kind of happy afternoon. It was really nice to see the Sri Lanka cricketers upset during the presentation party. I enjoyed it. You know I am a lucky guy," said the Narail Express, who has just returned to action after six

Some scenario changed, some not

HASIBUR RAHMAN from Bogra

A 100 Taka ticket for only 50, 50-Tk ticket for 15, you won't get anything cheaper than this," a black marketer was shouting yesterday to invite cricket fans shortly after the start of the Bangladesh-Sri Lanka second one-day international at the Shaheed Chandu Stadium.

However, just before the start of the game, tickets were being sold double the original price.

It was a total contrast to the scene of the first match on Monday when thousands of people with valid tickets were chased out of the stadium by the law enforcing agencies because the venue was jam-packed.

Mukit, a ticket tout who sold 25 tickets on Monday for Tk 200 each at double price, managed to convince only six customers yesterday even after reducing the price.

Rubel travelled from Gaibandha to watch the match, prepared to spend Tk 200 for a 50-Tk ticket but he was very, very fortunate, as he got one for only Tk 15.

Local spectators, however, remain frustrated after failing to get inside the venue during the first match despite having tickets.

The disarray by the organisers that bothered fans and journalists in the first match continued with the latter suffering for lack of facilities. The telephone and fax charges were sky high, the televisions in the media box could be switched on eight overs into the match while there was no sound system for the scorer's announcements.

Meanwhile, the District Sports Association finally woke up following media reports that the family of Shaheed Chandu, after whom the stadium is named, did not receive any complimentary tickets.

The DSA officials made amends of the mistake by handing over four tickets to the family of Chandu for the second match.

Mirpur Stadium opens to NCL

SPORTS REPORTER

The Sher-e-Bangla Stadium in Mirpur -- new home of Bangladesh cricket -- will host its first National Cricket League match today when Dhaka take on visiting Sylhet in the sixth round limited-overs match.

The Mirpur venue, originally a football stadium, is being turned into an exclusive cricket stadium and is still under construction. However, the ground has been prepared long ago and this will not be the first cricket match here.

Dhaka are now second in the table after suffering their maiden defeat in the previous round following a four-match winning run. Table-toppers Rajshahi, who have won all their five games, will play their first away match in the competition when they meet Barisal at the Barisal Stadium. In the other match, Chittagong are pitted against Khulna at the Khulna Divisional Stadium.

The first-class fixture will start tomorrow.

Tigers all smiles

BISHWAJIT ROY from Bogra



It was not an easy or pleasant task for Bangladesh captain Habibul Bashar to face the press after a grand victory against Sri Lanka. Bangladesh have recorded some great victories under his leadership and undoubtedly he enjoyed those moments but the job was not at all comfortable.

That is why when the 33-year old Bangladesh skipper had expressed his hopes on Tuesday that the side would bounce back in the second game despite a heavy defeat in the first, many eyebrows were raised. Most of the doubters took his comments as customary, told time and again by the Tigers.

But in the end, Bashar had the last laugh as his team pulled off a four-wicket victory against Sri Lanka in the second game to level the series 1-1. And he appeared at the post-match briefing with a mood that he had not come here just to tell the same old story.

"Yes, I am happy that it would not be the same story I have been telling for long. Believe me I am always confident with my team because I know my boys are capable to do anything," said an ever-smiling Bashar.

He, however, was not ready to think that their job was done in the series, rather he believed that the

win gave them an opportunity to make the series against Sri Lanka an interesting one.

"We always go against Sri Lanka with the thought in the back of our minds that we are not good enough for them but surely the win has changed the mood. Why shall we not think about series triumph from here? I am confident of that," said Bashar, who dedicated their success to the language martyrs.

"Now our main challenge is to win matches on a regular basis. I must say our five-wicket victory against Australia in Cardiff is a memorable one in my life and I want to consider the victory against Sri Lanka as an important one. Because from now on you can't write that we have always played badly against this particular team. It means we have opened up a new chapter."

The Tigers skipper was all praise for his bowlers as he said that they had laid the foundation of the victory.

"Hats off to the bowlers. It was a tremendous effort. Mashrafe-Bin-Mortuza and Syed Rasel exploited the early morning conditions with the new ball and then what Alok Kapali and Aftab Ahmed did was unbelievable. Their efforts helped us to restrict Sri Lanka to their lowest total against us. It was not an easy task to stop a batsman like Sanath Jayasuriya from playing shots," explained Bashar.

"Our ground fielding was brilliant and I want to give the credit to our local fielding coach Salahuddin who worked hard with the boys," he added.

Coach Dav Whatmore, who guided Sri Lanka to World Cup

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BANGLADESH'S ODI WINS

List of Bangladesh's 11 one-day international victories:

Date	Venue	Result
17.05.98	Lal Bahadur Shastri Stadium, Hyderabad	bt Kenya by 6 wks
24.05.99	Raeburn Place, Edinburgh	bt Scotland by 22 runs
31.05.99	Northamptonshire	bt Pakistan by 62 runs
10.03.04	Harare Sports Club	bt Zimbabwe by 8 runs
16.07.04	Sinhalese Sports Club, Colombo	bt Hong Kong by 116 runs
26.12.04	Bangabandhu National Stadium, Dhaka	bt India by 15 runs
26.01.05	MA Aziz Stadium, Chittagong	bt Zimbabwe by 40 runs
29.01.05	Bangabandhu National Stadium, Dhaka	bt Zimbabwe by 58 runs
31.01.05	Bangabandhu National Stadium, Dhaka	bt Zimbabwe by 8 wks
18.06.05	Sophia Gardens, Cardiff	bt Australia by 5 wks
22.02.06	Shaheed Chandu Stadium, Bogra	bt Sri Lanka by 4 wks



AKRAM INSWINGER

bish. His duty is to play cricket and not to think about which teams will play at this level. Mr. Ponting, you just keep your mouth shut and look back to what they did against you people in Cardiff last year and take a note of the latest one against Sri Lanka. And I would suggest everybody: Don't think you are going to play a warm-up game when you take on Bangladesh.

Players like Mohammad Ashraful, Aftab Ahmed and Alok Kapali have rare qualities to dominate world cricket. Is there any doubt about Ashraful's world-class calibre? I don't think so. Any cricket fan certainly would love to spend money to watch the little boy's batting, who is just 21 years old.

In the match, I think Bangladesh showed against Sri Lanka what actually 'team spirit' means. It was not easy for Sri Lanka to bounce back in the match after a frustrating five-wicket defeat in the first game but they played the second game with big heart. Their bowling, fielding and sensible batting were excellent and I must say Bangladesh never allowed their opponents to come back in the match after an early damage.

As a bowler I am really impressed by the bowling of young left-arm paceman Syed Rasel who set the team's tempo early in the match. They way he spotted the ball in the right area and maintained accuracy was simply unbelievable. Yes, his pace is not up to the mark as a new ball bowler but I believe he can improve it by play-

ing much more in the longer-version games.

I would like to make a humble request to the Bangladesh cricket authority to concentrate more on their first-class structure. I know Bangladesh are trying to set a standard first-class structure but you have to do it in great pace and of course sincerely.

I am confident about Bangladesh's cricket because see how their under-19 boys recently performed against the top teams and I have learnt that there are lot of talents to serve the national side.

It was fantastic to see such kind of athletic ground-fielding which put huge pressure on the strong Sri Lanka batting line-up. Even Sanath Jayasuriya struggled to play his natural game against disciplined bowling and fielding.

But the bowling of Kapali and Aftab as part-timers actually shattered the rival hopes to put a challenging total and I think their bowling took the game away from Sri Lanka.

When Bangladesh went to bat definitely there was nervousness following their first match debacle, but Javed Omar kept his cool to give Bangladesh a perfect start and then Ashraful and captain Habibul Bashar batted sensibly on the foundation.

But I was really frustrated the way the two set batsmen threw their wickets at a very crucial stage. It was not a good sign, especially the captain's dismissal was unacceptable

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Mashud fined

SPORTS REPORTER from Bogra

Match referee Alan Hurst of England yesterday fined Bangladesh vice-captain and wicketkeeper Khaled Mashud 20 per cent of his match fee for hiding information about the catch off Sri Lanka opener Jehan Mubarak in their second ODI at the Shaheed Chandu Stadium.

Hurst found him guilty of not correcting the mistake when the batsman was given out although Mashud had not appealed when he gloved the ball on the bounce.

Exhibition cricket today

SPORTS REPORTER

An exhibition limited-overs cricket match between the Foreign Diplomats and Bangladeshi MPs will be held today at the Old DOHS ground.

The match will start at 9.30 am. Ian Simmons of the British High Commission will lead the Diplomats while Water Resources Minister Maj (ret'd) Hafizuddin Ahmed will skipper the home side.



7th Nat'l Cricket League
One-Day Match
Dhaka vs Sylhet
Venue: Sher-e-Bangla Nat'l Stadium, Mirpur
Barisal vs Rajshahi
Venue: Barisal Stadium
Chittagong vs Khulna
Venue: Khulna Divisional Stadium

Ganguly dilemma again



AFP, Vadodara

Former India captain Sourav Ganguly faced an agonising 24-hour wait as the national selectors gathered here to pick the squad for the first Test against England on Thursday.

The left-hander's future has generated heated debate across the cricket-mad nation ever since he was sacked as captain and dumped from the one-day squad in October

following a public spat with coach Greg Chappell.

Ganguly, 33, was selected for the first two home Tests against Sri Lanka before being axed from the third and was a controversial selection for the subsequent tour of Pakistan.

In Pakistan, Ganguly did not get to bat in the first Test in Lahore, was dropped for the second in Faisalabad and made 34 and 37 in the third in Karachi which Pakistan won by 341 runs to clinch the series 1-0.

He was not picked for the one-day series which followed, in which

India recovered remarkably after losing the opening match to win the next four games.

Ganguly, with 5,221 runs from 88 Tests and 12 centuries behind him, was considered an automatic selection for the first Test against England in Nagpur from March 1 after the in-form Yuvraj Singh was ruled out with a hamstring injury.

But recent statements from the powers-that-be in Indian cricket sounded an ominous warning for the most successful Indian Test captain ever.

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JOY UNBOUND: Jubilant supporters at the Shaheed Chandu Stadium in Bogra hail the Tigers' victory over Sri Lanka in the second ODI on Wednesday.

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