



PHOTO: AFP

THOUSAND CHEERS FOR MURALI: Sri Lanka's spin wizard Muttiah Muralidaran delivers the ball to Mohammad Ashraf (not in picture) on the third day of the first Test against Bangladesh at the Chittagong Divisional Stadium on Thursday.



Did U Know?

Mohammad Ashraf scored 136 runs from 184 balls in the first innings of the first Test against Sri Lanka at Chittagong Divisional Stadium. It was his third century, second against Sri Lanka.



TALK TURKEY



Pele

(Brazilian football legend)

"Ronaldo has proved to be a good player with all those titles but he tends to lose his way. He could have been an even better player had he not been affected by troubles off the pitch."

What to WATCH

ESPN

South Africa vs Australia
2nd ODI
Live at 6:30 pm

STAR Sports
Bangladesh vs Sri Lanka
First Test, Day Four
Live at 9:15 am

DD National
India vs England
First Test, Day Three
Live at 10:30 am



Bangladesh vs Sri Lanka
First Test, Day Four
Venue: Chittagong Divisional Stadium
7th Nat'l Cricket League
Four-Day Matches (Day One)
Rajshahi vs Khulna
Venue: Rajshahi Divisional Stadium
Barisal vs Dhaka
Venue: Barisal Divisional Stadium
Chittagong vs Sylhet
Venue: Dhanmondi Cricket Stadium

An opportunity lost

BISHWAJIT ROY from Chittagong



It is not new for Bangladesh to take a tumble after looking brilliantly competitive only the other day. And the third day of the first Test at Chittagong was no exception. The Tigers started the day with a lot of promise, mopping up the Sri Lankan tail quicker than anybody's expectation. But they also showed the amazing ability to collapse after an inspiring start with their batsmen barring a couple showing little or no application before being bowled out for 181, giving the Lankans a simple victory target of 163.

It was told and discussed time and again that they should be careful to deal Muttiah Muralidaran on a difficult third day pitch. Although wicket did not turn as expected, Bangladesh batting still flourished courtesy to self-inflicted pressure. Khaled Mashud might claim that

he was extremely unlucky to be declared out, but it was not the case for the others.

Murali took six wickets in the second innings to destroy Bangladesh to make his 1000th Test a memorable one that saw him becoming the only bowler in the world to claim 1000 international wickets.

Mashud was his landmark victim and the spin wizard ruled out any controversy behind it.

"It could be controversial to you. But umpire has given him out, so he is out. It is very much simple," said Murali, who took five or more wickets against Bangladesh for the fifth time.

"I am very much happy that I'm the first bowler to capture 1000 international wickets. But what is most important for me that my effort put my team in a position to win the match," said Muralidaran.

The champion spinner still believed that the wicket was very good for batting.

"It is a slow pitch and still good for

batting. We didn't get too much assistance from the surface. But I am happy that I was able to do that on such a track," he added.

He however did not want to blame the Bangladeshi batsmen rather he found a lot of improvement in their performance.

"They put pressure on us. Bangladesh have passed only five years at this level and they have to go a long way. But I am really impressed by the improvement of this side. The country's future is good because I saw Bangladesh Under-19 team's performance in Sri Lanka recently," he informed.

Bangladesh coach Dav Whatmore also echoed the sentiment of Murali but he said that the performance of his boys could have been lot better.

"It could have been a lot better day for Bangladesh after a brilliant start. We wanted to score lot more runs in the second innings obviously but it did not happen. Still, I

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Murali's 1000th-Not Out

ARCHITECT DR NIZAMUDDIN AHMED

If the Test match at Chittagong is being played in a competitive spirit, the standard of umpiring during Bangladesh's second innings has been at best diabolical; apologies to the French for borrowing their word to explain a phenomenon called cricket.

On the third and crucial day, poor decisions, not seen or acceptable even in domestic cricket, by umpires flown in from thousands of miles away have all gone the Sri Lankan way. Is it the fate of any Test babes against a team superior on paper?

The cases in point: Javed Omer leaped to defend a riser, rapped high on the pad. Given lbw.

Khaled Mashud ball did not touch either the glove or the bat. Given out caught.

Kapali ball pitched outside the line of off stump and turning slightly away. Given lbw.

Words like controversial and unfortunate for Khaled Mashud's dismissal and unlucky for Kapali's from the TV commentators do not help the cause of Bangladesh, whose present mission is to justify

ICC's decision to grant them the Test status.

A team in Bangladesh's position, already successful to a great extent in proving the likes of Richie Benaud, Shane Warne, Javed Miandad and Ian Botham wrong, can be badly affected by such poor decisions, all going against them. Those critics want to kick Bangladesh out of top-level cricket and we have asked them to keep their "hands off our Test status". (Daily Star Sport, 2 June 2005)

One would have assumed that the verbal abuse to a lonely batsman by fielder or bowler, as introduced by Australian and English cricketers had seen its day. But the Sri Lankans can be heard loud on the telly. Their body and verbal language gives the impression that they perhaps cannot accept the cricketing progress of Bangladesh, a team they used to bowl out for less than a hundred runs only the other day.

The Sri Lankans have complained against Bangladesh pacer Shahadat Hossain's "peculiar noise" when bowling (DS 2 March). These very Sri Lankans are making more than their share of strange noises when a local batsman is out there. Who will complain against them? I

believe we have a captain, a manager and a coach.

With the benefit of camera replay not available to them, the two lbw decisions may be overlooked but in the spirit of the game and for the millions of children watching cricket for inspiration, the Sri Lankan fielders should have called Khaled Mashud back, as should have the leg umpire Steve Bucknor. With due credit to all his previous 999 victims, the "controversial and unfortunate" wicket must have robbed Murali of the pleasure of reaching a landmark no other man has ever touched.

Umpire Asad Rauf, responsible for injustice to Khaled Mashud, it seemed wanted to take the credit of putting his finger up when the world's most successful bowler claimed his thousandth scalp. That comedy reminds me of a goalkeeper, who had 1000 printed on the vest under his jersey in a match against legendary footballer Pele. The goalkeeper took his jersey off when Pele scored his thousandth goal.

The author is former Advisory Sports Editor, The Daily Star

Rajshahi closing in on title

ISPAHANI MIRZAPORE TEA
7th National Cricket League

SPORTS REPORTER

Defending champions Rajshahi came within sight of retaining the coveted national one-day title when they recorded their seventh consecutive victory in the Ispahani Seventh National Cricket League yesterday.

Rajshahi snatched a two-wicket win over Khulna to stretch their collection to 14 points after seven rounds which left them just one victory away from the crown. With three rounds remaining, they have opened up a six-point gap with Dhaka, who led the table till the fourth round but crashed to their third successive defeat, losing by

five wickets away at Barisal.

In the other match, Sylhet coasted to a 36-run home win against Chittagong.

RAJSHAHI-KHULNA

A 49-run eighth wicket partnership between Mushfiqur Rahman (16 not out) and Sohrwardi Shuvo (26) spearheaded Rajshahi to 188-8 after Shafaq Al Jabir had destroyed Khulna for 184 at the Rajshahi Divisional Stadium.

Paceman Shafaq grabbed five wickets for 24 as Khulna, well placed at 131-2 with in-form opener Nazmus making 64, lost their last six wickets for 24 runs. Shafaq was adjudged the man-of-the-match.

Rajshahi were staring at a defeat when they slumped to 127-7 but seasoned all-rounder Mushfiq and his junior partner Shuvo guided

them home with two overs to spare.

DHAKA-BARISAL

After electing to bat at the Barisal Stadium, Dhaka recovered from a precarious 84-6 to score a respectable 190. Number six Mehrab Hossain Jr hammered 56 off 46 balls with half a dozen boundaries while Mohammad Sharif contributed a 16-ball 29 in the slog overs.

Khulna banked on a good start to reach 191-5 in 38.2 overs, thanks to opener Imran Ahmed's 66. The man-of-the-match, who shared 63 runs with Hannan Sarkar during a 52-ball opening stand, cracked 11 fours in 99 balls. Nadif Chowdhury played a significant role with his 42 not out featuring six fours.

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MSC veterans win friendly

SPORTS REPORTER

Mohammedan Sporting Club veterans defeated Pakistan Sonali Oti 4-2 in an exhibition football match at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

The winners led the first half 2-1. Salam Murshedi, who holds record of scoring the highest goals in Dhaka League in a season, struck twice while Badal Roy and Mahub Hossain Roxy added one goal each.

Jabbar and Tarif reduced the arrears for the visitors.

Blatter to arrive on Mar 31

SPORTS REPORTER

FIFA president Sepp Blatter will be present at the opening ceremony of the AFC Challenge Cup which kicks off in Dhaka on April 1.

The 16-nation meet will be staged in Dhaka and Chittagong from April 1-16.

Blatter is expected to arrive in Dhaka on March 31, informed Bangladesh Football Federation general secretary Anwarul Hoque Helal yesterday.

Alcott warns Ponting

AFP, Sydney

Captain Ricky Ponting risks aggravating a stomach muscle strain if he plays in the remainder of the five-match one-day cricket series in South Africa, team physiotherapist Errol Alcott has warned.

While Ponting is an outside chance of returning to lead Australia in the second day-night match in Cape Town Friday, medical opinion is that he will miss the game and also Sunday's match in Port Elizabeth.

With a schedule of five Tests in South Africa and Bangladesh in as many weeks coming up, there is a reluctance to expose any likely member of the Test squad to unnecessary risk.

Alcott said he was far less optimistic than Ponting about the skipper's chances of playing this weekend and conceded he risked aggravating the stomach strain in the more frenetic pace of limited-overs cricket.

"Definitely, all soft tissue injuries are in that category with one-day cricket," Alcott told The Australian newspaper Thursday. "It's a faster game and, especially a guy like him (Ponting), he's like a little pocket dynamo and everything he does he's 100 percent."

"He's still pretty tender in the spots that showed up on the (MRI) scan."

"He's very optimistic each day and then I have a session with him and it brings him back to reality again."

"In his everyday movements he's feeling improved but, as far as being out in the middle playing for Australia, that's a different stress."



WHEN the match started on the third day it was obviously evenly poised. And the first session belonged to Bangladesh who captured quick wickets and made a good start to their second innings. But inexperience showed all around in their batting as they called for trouble on a very, very flat wicket. The bowling

AKRAM INSWINGER

was fine what they needed was just one or two partnerships to stay alive in the game. But nobody really seemed to bother and play with patience.

Mohammad Ashraf, after his brilliant first innings hundred, was unlucky to be dismissed to a superb catch at forward short-leg. I think that was all over for the home side.

My congratulations to Muttiah Muralidaran for becoming the first cricketer to claim 1000 international wickets. What a great bowler he is! I see many more wickets coming to his already opulent bag. One of the all-time greats, Murali has proved that he is capable of taking wickets on any type of surface. He tore through the Bangladesh tail like any fast bowler does and finished with six wickets, just one short of another ten-wicket haul in a match.

It really does not matter that he was a bit lucky to scalp his 1000th victim when Khaled Mashud was given out by the umpire. It was a genuine mistake, which umpires commit now and again. But you just can't take away the credit from Murali. He is a history maker.

We often criticise umpires for their

mistakes but the sweet thing about neutral umpiring is that they are not favouring any side. The decisions actually made no difference today. Shahriar Nafees looked very good and well set until he played a rash shot. You have to learn quickly if you want to improve and win a Test match. I think Bangladesh have lost a great opportunity to put Sri Lanka under pressure. The players must have the mental strength and the belief that they can really do it. Test cricket is not about playing shots, it is about grinding runs. The key is to stay there and play sensibly. If you get out to a good delivery or a spectacular piece of fielding, that's ok. But if you throw wickets on the third day of a match, it is very, very wrong.

I think Sri Lanka's confidence will be sky-high after winning this Test match, which they should do within a very short time tomorrow. But they would no longer take their opposition lightly. It also means more hard work for Bangladesh in the next match.

Journeymen rule Day 2

Cricket

AFP, Nagpur

Indian opener Wasim Jaffer marked his comeback with a half-century after Paul Collingwood hit his maiden hundred to revive England in the evenly balanced opening Test here on Thursday.

Jaffer, returning to the team after three years, scored an unbeaten 73 as India survived an early blow to

reach 136-1 at stumps on the second day in reply to England's 393 all out.

Skipper Rahul Dravid was the other not out batsman on 40. He put on 125 for the unfinished second wicket with Jaffer after his team had lost opener Virender Sehwag.

Paceman Matthew Hoggard struck in his second over when he had hard-hitting Sehwag (two) caught by Kevin Pietersen in the covers off an uppitch drive.

England struggled for a break-

through in the last session as Jaffer and Dravid applied themselves well on a slow wicket. The opener has so far hit 13 fours in his fourth Test half-century and the captain six in his 114-ball knock.

The tourists' pace attack, comprising Hoggard, Steve Harmison and Andrew Flintoff, was inconsistent while left-arm spinners Monty Panesar and Ian Blackwell were unable to extract sharp turn off the second-day track.

But England had reasons to be pleased with their batting performance as they found Collingwood (134 not out) in fine nick, just when they needed a long-innings from a batsman to keep in the match.

The tourists were precariously placed at 246-7 overnight, but Collingwood received valuable support from tail-enders to help his team post a respectable total.

England, seeking their first Test series win in India in 21 years, thwarted the hosts for more than a session with determined batting as they put on 126 runs for the last two wickets.

Collingwood, a one-day specialist figuring in only his sixth Test, played a key role in rallying his team. He put on 60 for the ninth wicket with Harmison (39) and 66 for the last with debutant Panesar (nine).

The gutsy all-rounder was on 79 when Panesar came to the crease, but Collingwood strike intelligently to complete his hundred with a pair of bold shots off spinner Harbhajan Singh.

Collingwood, 53 overnight, danced down the track to loft the spinner over long-on for a six to reach 99 and then repeated the shot off the next ball, this time for three runs.

He went on the rampage in the afternoon session, severely punishing left-arm seamer Irfan Pathan. He stepped out to hoist the

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PHOTO: AFP

England batsman Paul Collingwood raises his bat after scoring a century on the second day of the first Test against India in Nagpur on Thursday.