



Did U Know?

The 6-ball over was first introduced in cricket in 1900.



Frank Rijkaard

(Barcelona coach)

"Ronaldinho is a genuine genius."

What to WATCH

BTV & Channel i

Bangladesh v Zimbabwe

Fifth ODI

Live at 9:00 am

ESPN

English Premier Football League

Man United v Man City

Live at 6:40 pm

Tottenham v Charlton Athletic

Live at 8:55 pm

Primera Liga

Barcelona v Real Sociedad

Live at 12:55 am (Sunday)

Sevilla v Real Madrid

Live at 3:00 am (Sunday)

STAR Sports

English Premier Football League

Liverpool v Fulham

Live at 8:55 pm

Bolton Wanderers v West Ham

Live at 11:10 pm

New Zealand v Sri Lanka

First Test, Day Four

Live at 3:30 am (Sunday)

Aftab getting better

Bashar's 50th match as captain today



SPORTS REPORTER

said smilingly and added that it was not easy to bat on the slow pitch.

The right-hander sparked the cheering crowd hitting four big sixes, one off pacer Christopher Mpofu over mid-wicket in the very first delivery he faced in the innings and two against left-arm spinner Sean Williams over mid-on beside another over mid-wicket off Keith Dabengwa, and three boundaries.

The lack of competitiveness might have disappointed the local fans but Bangladeshi skipper Habibul Bashar was understandably happy as his side stayed on course to whitewash the opponents and make their dream come true.

"A 5-0 victory was in our mind before the start of the series but we never discussed this in public due to our previous experience. Now there is no confusion about the difference between the two teams. We will have our celebrations after winning the last game tomorrow," said Bashar.

"It's a wonderful feeling to appear before the press as a winning captain because it is not very common in our cricket history. I think the series at least has given the impression that our team is shaping. What impressed me most in the series is the killer-instinct of our players," he added.

Bashar also said that it would be nice for him to celebrate his 50th one-day match as captain with a big win.

"Actually I was not aware of the fact. It would be really fantastic for me to secure a big win in my 50th match as a captain," said the most successful Bangladeshi captain with 18 ODI wins.

After Bangladesh's four wins in a

SEE PAGE 18 COL 2

series.

UP, UP AND AWAY: Bangladesh batsman Aftab Ahmed whacks Zimbabwe left-arm spinner Sean Williams (not in picture) for a huge six over mid-on as wicketkeeper Brendan Taylor looks on during the fourth one-day international at the Mirpur Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

Fitting arena for Tigers



MOHAMMAD ISAM

Seeing Bangladesh win is happiness itself but when victory comes at such a pleasant cricket ground, the feeling just goes up a notch. It just seemed that the right team was at the right place, but probably

against too much of an ideal opponent on the day. The domination shown by the Tigers against Zimbabwe yesterday must have put them above their opponents in terms of class and skill and so has the cricket ground.

The Mirpur Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium made a great first impression on the 30,000-strong crowd as the seventh international

venue of Bangladesh made its official international debut.

Doubts over its completion were rife but the last-minute work has paid off and the 'home of cricket' as the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) wants it to be known, has started to give Bangladesh a changed image.

Starting with the ground itself, it looked picture-perfect where the green and red brigades were all over the southern African strugglers.

The pitch, prepared in due time, held firm and there was no hint of uneven bounce. In fact, even if it wasn't a featherbed for the batsmen, it looked to be sporting to say the least.

Tigers' skipper Habibul Bashar

echoed the view of everyone in the post-match conference: "It was brilliant playing here today (on Friday). The crowd was wonderful and the ground has impressed me a lot."

One of the biggest advantages this ground holds over the other six in Bangladesh is that there is a guaranteed crowd every time big matches will take place, regardless of its stature. Three roads converging on the street that leads to the stadium makes it more accessible than the previous home of cricket.

And best of all, international cricket is back to Dhaka after nearly two years. The crowd yesterday were boisterous and flocked into Mirpur not just to watch the match.

"We are sure to win; what we came to see is this ground," said a college student from the neighbourhood.

"We have seen construction work going on for such a long time so now we should see how it is like."

What he saw was beautiful but the ground was not the only attraction. The VIP stand gives it a grand

SEE PAGE 18 COL 1

one.

Having conceded a first

innings deficit of 52, the Sri

Lankans were 44-1 but lost six

wickets for 60 in 16 overs.

Only Kumar Sangakkara

defied the home attack, smashing

eight fours in an unbeaten 63 from

97 deliveries.

Earlier, Muttiah Muralidaran

Reza and Rasel to play today

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh will make two changes for the fifth and last one-day international against Zimbabwe to be held at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur today, bringing in both the players not used in the series so far.

The team management has decided to pick all-rounder Forhad Reza and left-arm pacer Syed Rasel in place of ace left-arm spinner Mohammad Rafique and Shahadat Hossain.

"We just gave Rafique and Shahadat rest," informed skipper Habibul Bashar yesterday.

Bowlers call the shots

CRICINFO, undated

The Indian seam bowlers dominated the opening two sessions on the second day of the tour game against Rest of South Africa at Sedgars Park in Potchefstroom. Sreesanth finished with 4 for 53, and VRV Singh had figures of 3 for 35 as Rest of South Africa were bowled out for a paltry 138, with only Vaughn van Jaarsveld's brilliant counterattacking 52 providing any resistance.

Instead of enforcing the follow-on, the Indians decided for batting practice, and Mornmata Hayward struck two telling blows in the space of three balls as the Indian top order once again came unstuck.

Having resumed after tea at 31 for 2, the Indians lost Tendulkar leg before, playing across the line, and Ganguly caught

SEE PAGE 18 COL 5

the second ball.

The essence of the decision can

be understood if the selection

committee chief's evaluation is

"There is no doubt that as a

wicketkeeper Mashud is still unpar-

alleled in the country, but in one-day

cricket the demand is that the

keeper should also wield his bat

often. I think Mashud's recent form

has not been good enough to fulfil

the second demand."

"A wicketkeeper now holds a very

important batting position at number

six or seven in the one-day game

where he has to score at least a run-a-ball.

Unfortunately Mashud has been

going through a long bad patch to

The Mashud question



SPORTS REPORTER

Giving a player rest is nothing uncommon in international cricket because of the busy schedule that is prevalent these days.

However there is a key difference between giving a player a break and dropping him from the team altogether. And in the case of Khaled Mashud it is still murky whether the long-serving wicketkeeper has actually been given a rest or whether the selectors have tried to send him a subliminal message about his fate.

The team management has kept him in the squad for the last two games against Zimbabwe but Mashud has been safely tucked away in the dressing room paving the way for young stumper Mashfiqur Rahim.

When the question was raised, chief selector Faruque Ahmed had a very diplomatic explanation about the issue. On one hand he said that Mashud had been given rest and on the other hand he also took pains to point out the 'keeper's recent poor form with the bat.

The essence of the decision can be understood if the selection committee chief's evaluation is "There is no doubt that as a wicketkeeper Mashud is still unparalleled in the country, but in one-day cricket the demand is that the keeper should also wield his bat often. I think Mashud's recent form has not been good enough to fulfil the second demand."

"A wicketkeeper now holds a very

important batting position at number

six or seven in the one-day game

where he has to score at least a run-a-ball.

Unfortunately Mashud has been

going through a long bad patch to

seriously think about putting him in this position," he added.

The recent dip in form with the bat, especially against Zimbabwe in the third match of the ongoing series in Bogra, forced the selectors to draft a replacement in the slot.

Faruque was however not ready to accept the fact that they had actually dropped the 30-year old keeper, who only missed four one-dayers in 130 matches since he debuted against India at Sharjah in 1995.

"We can't write off anybody's chance but I think the time has come to prepare a backup wicketkeeper. That is why we are trying an alternative solution against Zimbabwe and that too only when the series will has been confirmed. It's only natural that with the World Cup in such close proximity the question of his (Mashud) selection for the tournament will be raised. In that regard I can only say when will say what will happen," he explained.

The selection panel has so far stressed the fact that Mashfiq is only a back-up to Mashud. The Bogra lad, however, has yet to make any significant impression, in both local cricket and his few international opportunities either with bat or gloves, to put him in the frame as a long-term option to succeed his senior colleague.

"We picked up Mashfiq because we thought that he has the potential to fulfil our desire batting at number six. No doubt he has a long way to go to prove himself a good keeper in the international arena. Some other keepers are also on our mind

and we will definitely try them out if we feel that Mashfiq has failed to do his job," he assured.

Captain Habibul Bashar also expressed his concern about Mashud's recent batting form but said that there was no one right at the moment to replace him.

"In one-day cricket, the wicketkeeper's batting is very important and Mashud's form has not been satisfactory in that regard. But the problem is that there is no one who can pose a real challenge to him. He should prove this point in the domestic competition before the World Cup," said Bashar.

The man in question, Mashud was however quite unhappy with the way he was ignored for the last two games against Zimbabwe.

"I am not sure whether they have given me a rest or dropped me. To give a player a rest is not uncommon in the highest level but I think in that case it is important to talk with that particular player before taking the decision," said Mashud, who had last missed a one-day game during Bangladesh's tour to Australia in 2003 due to a thumb injury.

"I will welcome the challenge of a second wicketkeeper. But do you honestly think there is anybody who can replace me now? Yes, there is a question about my recent batting form but I honestly don't think it was too bad," he said.

"I know that renewed performance is the key to keeping my place in the team and I definitely want hold on to it with good performances," he added.

NZ stay on course



BBC ONLINE, undated

New Zealand's seamers produced a devastating burst to regain control of the first Test, Sri Lanka closing day two in Christchurch 73 ahead at 125-8.

Having conceded a first

innings deficit of 52, the Sri

Lankans were 44-1 but lost six

wickets for 60 in 16 overs.

Only Kumar Sangakkara

defied the home attack, smashing

eight fours in an unbeaten 63 from

97 deliveries.

Earlier, Muttiah Muralidaran

claimed four wickets as Sri Lanka fought back to dismiss the New Zealanders on