

Bangladesh A need 325 runs to level series

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh A finished the third day of the final four-day brightly yesterday but were still facing an uphill task to level the series against Sri Lanka A at the Colts Cricket Club ground in Colombo.

Left-arm spinner Mosharraf Hossain grabbed five wickets but the home team managed valuable runs in their second essay to set a 341-run winning target for the visitors, who were 16 without loss at stumps.

Jahurul Islam (7) and Mehrab Hossain (6) successfully negotiated seven overs towards the end of play and the opening pair will resume the final day needing 325 more runs to win the four-day Test and square the series.

Earlier, Sri Lanka A declared their second innings on 184-6 with left-handers Kanchana Gunawardene and Jehan Mubarak making 51 runs each.

Tall spinner Mosharraf was the most successful bowler by claiming five wickets for 69 while fellow left-arm slow Enamul Haque, who captured six wickets in the first innings, took the other wicket.

Bangladesh A, overnight 201-7, conceded a 156-run first innings lead after bundling out for 239.

Slow left-arm orthodox Rangana Herath captured all three Bangladeshi wickets to fall on the day to return with figures of 5-45.

SCORES IN BRIEF
SRI LANKA A: 395 and 184-6 dec. in 55.5 overs (Gunawardene 51, Udawatte 43, Vandort 4, Kapugedera 7, Mubarak 51 n.o., Chandana 7, Silva 15, extras 6; Mosharraf 5-69, Enamul 1-47).
BANGLADESH A: 239 all out in 79.2 overs (Jahurul 23, Mehrab 51, Nazimuddin 4, Tushar 31, Nadif 0, Mahmudullah 48, Sahagiri 5, Sharif 20, Mosharraf 1, Nazmul 13, Enamul 5 n.o., extras 38; de Silva 2-44, Herath 5-45, Prasad 1-24, Chandana 2-71) and 16-0 in 7 overs (Jahurul 7 batting, Mehrab 6 batting).3

Unforgiving

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Ireland were unable to practice outdoors on Sunday and had to be satisfied with playing rugby on Monday at the Bourda Ground after rain prevented them from holding a nets session.

"We got here on Saturday (from Jamaica) but we haven't been able to do much because of the weather," Ireland coach Adrian Birrell told Reuters.

"We struggled on Sunday to even get started. On Tuesday we got started and it rained halfway. Instead we planned a gym session and a pool session after that.

"We're trying to keep busy and keep working away where we can. The other countries are all in the same boat as us and struggling as well. We've just got to keep at it and do what we can.

"We are going to go to an indoor hall that has a bowling machine so at least our batsmen should have a bit of a hit.

"It's frustrating but it's frustrating for everyone. It's good to know that the others are also struggling to keep busy and preparing for the big games."

LOCAL SNIPPETS

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The pair of Festa and Arif 21-14, 21-11.

In the women's singles event, Shapla and Konika won their respective matches against Rozina and Nabila.

BRITISH BUSINESS GROUP CRICKET
Standard Chartered Bank won the annual British Business Group six-a-side cricket competition when they beat HSBC at the British American Tobacco Bangladesh ground held on March 26.

Mehub was adjudged the man of the final.

Six teams -- BATB, British High Commission, Standard Chartered Bank, Unilever Bangladesh, James Finlay Bangladesh and HSBC -- took part in the day-long competition.

British High Commissioner Anwar Chowdhury was present during the prize distribution ceremony.

NATIONAL CHESS CHAMPIONSHIP
Nine players qualified to the final phase of the 33rd National Chess Championship at the federation hall-room.

FIDE Masters Taibur Rahman and Abu Sufian Shakil took the top two places while Mohammad Javed finished third in the qualification.

PRIME BANK GOLF
Major Faruq won the Prime Bank golf tournament at the Jessore Golf and Country Club in Jessore Cantonment on March 23.

102 golfers including 12 children and 19 ladies participated in the competition which began on March 21.



PHOTO: COURTESY

Standard Chartered Bank skipper Touhid receives the winners' trophy of the British Business Group annual cricket tournament from British Deputy High Commissioner Stephen Bridges and managing director of British American Tobacco Bangladesh Nicholas Hales at the BATB ground on March 26.

Nayeem shapes

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SYLHET-CHITTAGONG

Nabil Samad bowled Sylhet to a convincing victory as the left-arm spinner picked up four wickets for 33 runs to wrap up the Chittagong innings for 155 in 38.2 overs. Discarded national opener Nafis Iqbal top scored 56 for the southern division.

Sylhet, after choosing to bat first, rode on Imtiaz Hossain and Ijaz Ahmed's 36 each to score 215 in 50 overs.

SCORES IN BRIEF
RAJSHAH: 285-6 in 50 overs (Rabiul 32, Junaid 50, Nayeem 81, Anisur 63, Mahub 22 n.o., extras 24; Murad 5-50).
KHULNA: 213 all out in 48.3 overs (Nazmus 15, Kayes 26, Jamaluddin 20, Asadullah 78, Fahim 24, extras 12; Shahajada 2-42, Shafaa 2-46, Mushfiqur 2-25, Sajib 2-26).
Result: Rajshahi won by 72 runs.
BARISAL: 238 all out in 49.4 overs (Imran 47, Iftakhar 81, extras 21; Mahubul 3-36, Sharif 2-51, Marshal 2-47).
DHAKA: 239-5 in 46.1 overs (Anwar 39, Shamsur 39, Sharif 56 n.o., Sajjad 47 n.o., extras 25).
Result: Dhaka won by five wickets.
SYLHET: 215 all out in 50 overs (Imtiaz 36, Ijaz 36, extras 30; Sunny 3-27, Sabbir 2-40).
CHITTAGONG: 155 all out in 38.2

overs (Sunny 56, Salahuddin 34, extras 14; Nabil 4-33, Mawla 2-31).
Result: Sylhet won by 60 runs.

Smith knows

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more runs before being dismissed.

"It is to be expected that you will become dehydrated in these conditions," Smith said. "It's the first time it's happened to me. I've scored hundreds in these conditions before so it did come as a shock to me.

Smith said the South Africans would be more mindful about the hot and humid Caribbean weather in future.

"Our medical team are working at hydrating the team properly so it doesn't happen to us again," he said.

The last time Sri Lanka and South Africa met on the World Cup stage, in Durban in 2003, a tied match eliminated South Africa from the tournament in the first round.

"We haven't discussed it, but we haven't forgotten about it either," Smith said. "It has not been a major issue in the team since I have taken over the captaincy."

Shaun Pollock was sacked as captain and replaced by Smith in the wake of South Africa's shock early exit.

South Africa were greeted by rain when they arrived in Guyana on Sunday, and similar weather on Monday forced the cancellation of their planned training session.

Pietersen knocks off Hussey

AFP, Kingston

England's Kevin Pietersen has replaced Australia's Michael Hussey on top of the one-day international batting rankings, the ICC announced on Monday.

The 26-year-old Pietersen has scored 121 runs at an average of 60.50 at the World Cup including half-centuries against New Zealand and Kenya in Group C.

Pietersen is the first England player to top the rankings since Marcus Trescothick did so for one match in 2005 and only the third in history with Allan Lamb doing so back in 1989.

Hussey has dropped two places to third position while his captain Ricky Ponting moves up to second.

"His average speaks for itself," said Pietersen's England colleague Sajid Mahmood.

New Zealand seamer Shane Bond has climbed to second position in the bowlers table for the first time, illustrating the good form that the Black Caps are in at the World Cup.

Bond has moved up five places and is now level in second spot with Sri Lanka spinner Muttiah Muralidaran who is up seven places for his highest ranking for more than a year.

They are both, however, still a long way short of displacing South Africa's Shaun Pollock at the top.

Pollock, who conceded over 80 runs off his 10 overs on Saturday when South Africa were beaten by Australia, is still clear of Bond and Muralidaran at the top of the rankings.

- BATSMEN**
1. Kevin Pietersen (ENG)
 2. Ricky Ponting (AUS)
 3. Mike Hussey (AUS)
 4. Kumar Sangakkara (SRI)
 5. Graeme Smith (SA)
- BOWLERS**
1. Shaun Pollock (SA)
 2. Shane Bond (NZ)
 2. Muttiah Muralidaran (SL)
 4. Chaminda Vaas (SL)
 5. Glenn McGrath (AUS)

Pitch baffles

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SQUADS
SOUTH AFRICA (from): Graeme Smith (captain), Jacques Kallis, Loots Bosman, Mark Boucher, AB de Villiers, Herschelle Gibbs, Andrew Hall, Justin Kemp, Charl Langeveldt, Andre Nel, Makhaya Ntini, Robin Peterson, Shaun Pollock, Ashwell Prince, Roger Telemachus.

SRI LANKA (from): Mahela Jayawardene (captain), Kumar Sangakkara, Sanath Jayasuriya, Upul Tharanga, Marvan Atapattu, Tillakaratne Dilshan, Russel Arnold, Chamara Silva, Chaminda Vaas, Farveez Maharoof, Lasith Malinga, Dilhara Fernando, Nuwan Kulasekara, Muttiah Muralidaran, Malinga Bandara.

Umpires: Steve Bucknor and Dary Harper.



PHOTO: INTERNET

Australian great Shane Warne (C) getting ready for a shot with actors of TV serial Kath and Kim at a studio in Melbourne recently.

The power of prayers!

TIGERCRIKET.COM, Port of Spain

Mrs. Cotton is one of those sweet little old ladies with a big heart and all the affection of your model Grandma. On learning that a group of die-hard Bangladesh fans were looking for a place to invite the Tigers over for dinner Mrs. Cotton offered the extension of her place which she usually rents. This time however she would not charge a dime.

"You know I had prayed all day to God when you played India," Cotton was saying as she went from one player to another for autographs with the excitement of a star-struck teenager. "I said 'God, an upset please' and He listened. I also told all my friends at the church to pray for the Bangladesh team and they did," said Cotton.

There is a significant presence of Muslims in Trinidad also, some 10-12 percent I was told mostly of Indian descent. The Muslim community on learning that the Bangladesh players wished to say the Jum'a'a prayers on Friday arranged transportation for the cricketers to go the mosque. The Imam of the Nur Islam Mosque in downtown Port of Spain then offered special prayers for the Bangladesh team. The players were given gifts, offered snacks and ice-cool soft-drinks and had to oblige autograph seekers and well-wishers as the India Sri Lanka match continued to decide Bangladesh's fate at the Queen's Park Oval. Even grand old ladies and girls wearing the hijab just had to come and shake the players' hands after the prayers.

Divine intervention was going on all around it seemed. Pace bowler Tapash Baisya went to a local Hindu temple and sought blessings. He then proceeded to the Oval and saw Sri Lanka crush the Indian dream and revive the Bangladeshi one.

UNILIVER GOLF Lee, Moon clinch titles

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Chittagong

Golfers GB Lee and Moon clinched the title in men's and women's event respectively in the 5th Unilever Independence Day golf tournament held at the picturesque Bhatiary Golf and Country Club on Monday.

A total of 126 players including nine women golfers from home and abroad competed in this year's event.

Later in the evening, BGCC senior vice-president and GOC of 24 Infantry Division and Chittagong Area Commander Major General Sina Ibne Jamalgi gave away the prizes among the winners.

Winner: G B Lee, Runner-up: Md B Doza, Second runner-up: Ishmam Ahmed, Best gross: Jong Oh Be, Senior winner: MR Chowdhury, Ladies winner: Moon, Ladies runner-up: Sifat Yousuf, Nine hole winner: Col Jahangir Hossain Malik, Junior winner: Mashudul Karim Rashik, Best front nine: MA Hamid, Best back nine: MH Murad, Longest drive: Lt Col Mohiuddin, and Nearest to pin: Lt Col Mohammad Saidul Karim.

Yousuf, Younis

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round of the tournament after a stunning loss to Ireland, sparking protests by angry fans as well as speculation about a possible link between Woolmer's murder and match-fixing gangs.

"We have taken security measures and will ensure their security, but so far we are not sure on which flight they are coming," Karachi police chief Azhar Farooqi said.

Sources said the players might arrive on separate flights to Lahore and Karachi via Dubai.

Pak team set

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before the senate committee for sports about the team's poor performance at the World Cup, where Pakistan were dumped out by Ireland.

Senator Anwar Baig, a member of the committee, said, "We asked the chairman why no legal assistance was provided to the players in Jamaica when they were facing the investigation."

"Ashraf said the board will do it in future if required," Baig told AFP after the nearly two-hour hearing in Islamabad.

Jamaican police questioned the whole team once and captain Inzamam, caretaker coach Mushtaq Ahmed and manager Talat Ali twice after Woolmer's death. The squad also gave DNA samples and fingerprints.

SA wary of Murali

AFP, Georgetown



South Africa skipper Graeme Smith has said his team are well-equipped to deal with Sri Lankan spinner Muttiah Muralidaran in their World Cup game here on Wednesday.

"He is obviously Sri Lanka's massive weapon and the way we cope with him is going to be important. We have played against Murali quite a lot now. It still doesn't make it easy to face him. He's a world-class bowler," he said.

"Even though he took wickets in the Test series when we toured there with a lot of our young guys, the guys played him well. That was quite encouraging. I think most of the guys have had a reasonable amount of success against him."

Off-spinner Muralidaran is the second-highest wicket-taker in one-day internationals with 438, behind only retired Pakistani left-arm fast bowler Wasim Akram (502).

South Africa lost a two-Test series in Sri Lanka last year, but Smith said his team were prepared and ready for the challenge in the important game against Mahela Jayawardene's side.

The last Cup clash against Sri Lanka in 2003 ended in a big disappointment for South Africa, who failed to qualify for the semifinals after a tied group league match at home following rain.

But Smith said the team had learnt lessons from that game and were now trying to set new standards.

"I remember it being a pretty sad day. I remember the disappointment on the guys' faces when we knew we were not going forward in the World Cup. The team has moved away from that. We have learnt from those disappointments," he said.

"There are some guys who were

part of some of those disappointments, but we are trying to set new standards for ourselves, trying to take ourselves to new levels. It's now an important game and the 2003 has nothing to do with it."

Smith said it was necessary to do well in early Super Eights matches as his team had not carried points after losing to defending champions Australia in their last group match.

But he was not sure how many matches his team needed to win to make it to the semifinals.

"It's easy to sit here and plan with six games to go. What we have learnt in these tournaments is that nothing seems to be going according to plan," he said.

"We will just try to keep our focus on this part of the tournament and we know if we can have a successful part in Guyana, it takes a lot of pressure off us going to Grenada and Barbados when we take on other teams."

"Obviously, you would love to come with two points. It makes life simple. But you got to win games in Super Eights and enough games to get yourself into the semifinals. You know the games you need to win. It's pretty simple."

South Africa may not get enough practice ahead of their big match due to the uncertain weather here, but Smith said his team were mentally prepared for an abbreviated game.

"That (reduced-overs game) might become an issue here. It is something that we have discussed. We might not get a practice in if it carries on raining like it has been," said the South African captain.

"So that becomes very important, making sure that you are mentally prepared going into the game. It is pretty much out of our control, so we try not to worry about that as much as we can."

"I think we have got a lot of options there. We've got options in



PHOTO: COURTESY

Winners of the Prime Bank Cup golf tournament pose with chief guest General Officer Commanding and Area Commander of Jessore Major General Md. Rafiqul Islam during the prize giving ceremony at the Jessore Golf and Country Club on March 23.

Police checking laptop

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killing which has sent shockwaves well beyond the world of cricket.

"We heard on television that he was murdered, but we've not been officially told and we need to know the reasons for his death," Mir told reporters outside the hotel near London's Heathrow airport where the team were resting.

Mir said the team, who were set to fly to Pakistan on Tuesday, were looking forward to getting home "after the traumatic experience they have seen in Jamaica and the loss of their coach."

"They are all visibly disturbed,

and some of the players have broken down."

Mir also complained about the persistent rumours of match-fixing in connection with Woolmer's strangling.

"When a man has been murdered, to divert a murder inquiry into a match-fixing inquiry, that's not fair, because we have to find the killers, then we will know what's happened," he said.

A British press report said Jamaican police were searching for three of the Pakistan team's fans who spent a great deal of time with the players, in order to "eliminate them" from enquiries.

The three reportedly were close to the players and appeared with them at press conferences and after matches.

In Pakistan, foreign ministry spokeswoman Tasnim Aslam expressed concern over what she called "very malicious" rumours.

"Our players are already traumatized. They have lost somebody who was very close to them, who was very dear to them, and these speculations and rumours do not help. They aggravate their situation."

"They do not help the investigations as well," she said.

Russel, Mukti smile

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Mohammed following a draw and a loss, showed a better level of fitness and took control with lively passing.

Fullback Titu was in superb form at the left side and kept the rival backline under constant threat with his speedy runs but he spoiled a great chance midway through the first half. Chasing a Ghansah through from their own half, Titu poked the ball over the lone keeper from the edge of the penalty area but saw it miss the mark narrowly.

Abu Yusuf's boys finally got the breakthrough in the 28th minute when Arman Aziz scored with a glancing header on a fluke left-flank corner by Titu after Rahmatganj custodian Amjad had mishandled a harmless cross that was going out.

Amjad, however, made a fine save when he punched Moroccan midfielder Brahimi's effort over the bar. At the other end, Titumir was also brilliant when he went full

stretch to keep out a tremendous low drive by Milon.

Two minutes before the breather, Alfaz took a long through from Ghanaian defender Ghansah but the veteran, who almost lost possession under pressure from an onrushing Amjad and centre-backs Sony and Mahiuddin, recovered well to outsmart the trio and drive the ball into the back of the net.

The Reds were in total control and Alfaz struck his second nine minutes into the second half when he neatly placed the ball overhead Amjad from the top of the penalty box after meeting a defence splitting diagonal pass from Brahimi.

Alfaz, who retired from the national team last year, completed his treble with a simple nod after Titu, who switched to the right side minutes earlier, floated a pinpoint cross.

Rahmatganj got their first goal in the competition in the 85th minute when substitute Shoeb

mishit a left-wing cross by Babu, allowing the ball to run farther right to Hanif Pradhan who blasted the ball into the roof of the net, giving substitute keeper Himel no chance to react.

The old-Dhaka outfit, who have just one point, got a golden chance to reduce the arrears further but Emrul hit the sidebar from a penalty after Parvez Babu felled Hanif in the 90th minute.

Yellow cards: Parvez (Muktijoddha), Emon (Rahmatgani)

TEAMS
Muktijoddha: Titumir (Himel), Hassan Al Mamun, Ghansah (Parvez), Deen Mohammed, Titu, Arman Aziz (Biddut), Brahimi, Arman, Matir Munna, Alfaz and Moni.

Rahmatganj: Amjad, Mahiuddin, Sony, Shipon, Hanif, Babu, Mehedi, Emrul, Emon, Rizvi and Milon (Shoeb).

Referee: Mansur Azad.