



Dhaka batsman and former national opener Mehrab Hossain Opee (2nd from R) laps up the applause following his sparkling 155 not out during their National League match against Khulna at the Dhanmondi Cricket Stadium yesterday.

Dhaka, Rajshahi

FROM PAGE 17 not ready to give up without a fight as they bounced back from 68-3 to 333-9 in 50 overs. Mazhar top scored 85 off 105 balls with eight fours and two sixes while Asadullah Khan (68 off 51 balls) and Fahim Muntasir (54 off 31 balls) were the other notable scorers.

RAJSHAHI-CHITTAGONG

Mahbubul and Dhiman smashed tons during a 290-run third wicket stand as Chittagong scored 333-6 in 42.5 overs on way to a magnificent four-wicket win over Rajshahi, who failed to defend a huge 329-6 in 50 overs.

Rajshahi's innings was built around Junaid's 104 (97balls, 4x10, 6x3) and Anisur's unbeaten 106 (98 balls, 9x4, 6x2).

Mahbubul clobbered ten fours and eight sixes to score 145 off 121 balls while Dhiman hit 19 fours and a six to score 147 off 100 balls.

BARISAL-SYLHET

Kapali hit his second hundred in the meet – a 77-ball 101 – to give Sylhet a fighting total of 288-8 in the curtailed 43-overs match.

But Nasiruddin swung the match Barisal's way with an 87-ball 115, laced with 16 fours and two sixes. Rokibul Hasan's unbeaten 93 also was inspirational as Barisal cruised to 293-6 in 37.4 overs.

SCORES IN BRIEF

DHAKA: 335-3 in 50 overs (Anwar 41, Mehrab 155 n.o., Al-Shahriar 59, Nazmul 56 n.o., extras 19).

KHULNA: 333-9 in 50 overs (Mazhar 85, Fariduddin 45, Asadullah 68, Fahim 54, extras 24; Nasmul 3-58).

Result: Dhaka won by two runs.

RAJSHAHI: 329-6 in 50 overs (Junaid 104, Rafiqul 38, Anisur 106 n.o., Mushfiqur 47, extras 13; Tareq 2-37, Younus 2-55).

CHITTAGONG: 333-6 in 42.5 overs (Mahbubul 145, Dhiman 147, extras 12; Rafiqul 2-40).

Result: Chittagong won by four wickets.

SYLHET: 288-8 in 43 overs (Mabud 60, Kapali 101, extras 14; Ariful 2-62, Raisul 2-47).

BARISAL: 293-6 in 37.4 overs (Faruque 115, Rokibul 93 n.o., extras 41; Hasibul 2-69, Rashedur 2-49).

Result: Barisal won by four wickets.

Akram hails

FROM PAGE 17 calibre and, as far as I'm concerned, it will take a huge effort from other teams to stop them from running away with their third World Cup title in a row."

Wasim, who led Pakistan to the runners-up spot when Australia won the 1999 World Cup, said Sri Lanka and South Africa must produce their best to stop Australia.

"If not Australia then it's Sri Lanka for me. I have been backing them since the start and the South Africans are also looking good."

Wasim, who retired after Pakistan's first round exit from the 2003 tournament, said Pakistan and India had both disappointed him in the current World Cup.

"Pakistan and India played badly and that led to their own downfall. They both need to lift themselves and they have the talent to do that," said Wasim.

The South Asian giants both made first round exits in the Caribbean.

Pakistan lost to the West Indies and Ireland in Group D, while India were upset by Bangladesh and Sri Lanka to go out from Group B.

A day after their upset defeat against Ireland, Pakistan also lost their coach Bob Woolmer, strangled to death in his hotel room in Jamaica.

"It was sad to lose a man like Woolmer. He was a great coach, a great human being and a great friend. The circumstances in which he died were unacceptable," said Wasim who added that the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) now needs wise planning to lift the game.

"What the PCB chairman Naseem Ashraf needs to do is to have wise advisers like Imran Khan (former captain) and pick the best possible coach like Waqar Younis or Aaqib Javed," suggested Wasim, who ruled himself out as coach.

"Coaching is a specialised field and I don't think my busy schedule with television would allow me to do that, but I am ready to help the youngsters in bowling. Whenever I am required I will go and train them."

Australia thrash Tigers

AFF, St John's



Australia's ruthless form at the World Cup has been no more than captain Ricky Ponting expected from the reigning champions.

The Cup holders' fifth win in as many matches at the tournament was achieved in devastating style with a 10-wicket hammering of Bangladesh here Saturday for a second straight Super Eights success following their equally one-sided 103-run rout of hosts West Indies.

Some believed Australia, bidding for a third World Cup triumph in a row, were vulnerable after a run of five straight one-day defeats at the hands of England (twice) and New Zealand (three times).

But Ponting's men were not at all strength for all of those matches and the captain was in no doubt his side would raise their game in the Caribbean.

"This is a World Cup, and a lot comes with playing cricket for Australia," said Ponting.

"When you cross that white line it's about giving 100 percent and doing your best for yourself and for your team, and so I'm not surprised with what we've done so far.

"We've got room for improvement, sure, but I think we're pretty sharp in all areas. It's early in the tournament and no trophies are being handed out now, so we need to keep a lid on things, have a look at how we're playing and keep trying to improve."

However, the sight of all-rounder Shane Watson -- who missed the recent 5-0 Ashes thrashing of England with a hamstring problem -- leaving the field against Bangladesh because of a calf strain could cause headaches for Australia as they look to maintain the balance of their side.

And such has been the overwhelming dominance of their top order, the likes of Andrew Symonds and Michael Hussey have had little opportunity to make any meaningful contributions with the bat at this tournament.

"At end of the day, if they don't get much of a hit, then we must be doing a great job through the tournament," Ponting said. "I'm sure they'll get runs if they get the opportunity."

Australia now have a week's break until their next Super Eights match when they return to face their surprise triangular series conquerors England in Antigua on Sunday, April 8.

England have looked anything but convincing in their matches so far and during the group stage lost decisively by six wickets to New Zealand in their only match so far against a Test match nation.

Ponting, looking ahead, said: "England played excellent cricket in Australia, but we were a long way off our best. We've got a little bit to prove when we play them on Sunday."

SCOREBOARD

Scoreboard in the weather-affected World Cup Super Eights match between Australia and Bangladesh at the Sir Vivian Richards Stadium on Saturday:

BANGLADESH Tamim c Hogg b Bracken 3

Nafees b McGrath 1
Aftab c Bracken b McGrath 11
Shakib c Gilchrist b Tait 25
Ashraf c Ponting b McGrath 6
Bashar c Ponting b Bracken 24
Mashrafe not out 25
Rahim not out 2
Extras: (w-7) 7
Total: (For 6 wkts in 22 overs) 104
Fall of wickets: 1-4, 2-8, 3-25, 4-37, 5-65, 6-97
Did not bat: Razzak, Rafique, Baisya

| Bowler | O | M | R | W |
|---------|-----|---|----|---|
| Bracken | 4 | 0 | 20 | 2 |
| McGrath | 5 | 0 | 16 | 3 |
| Tait | 4 | 0 | 28 | 1 |
| Watson | 1.4 | 0 | 4 | 0 |
| Hogg | 5 | 0 | 20 | 0 |
| Symonds | 2.2 | 0 | 16 | 0 |

AUSTRALIA
Gilchrist not out 59
Hayden not out 47
Total: (For no loss in 13.5 overs) 106
Did not bat: Ponting, Clarke, Symonds, Hussey, Watson, Hogg, Bracken, Tait, McGrath

| Bowler | O | M | R | W |
|---------|-----|---|----|---|
| Mortaza | 4 | 0 | 20 | 0 |
| Baisya | 2.5 | 0 | 35 | 0 |
| Aftab | 0.1 | 0 | 1 | 0 |
| Razzak | 3 | 0 | 15 | 0 |
| Rafique | 3 | 0 | 21 | 0 |
| Shakib | 0.5 | 0 | 14 | 0 |

Result: Australia won by 10 wickets.

Man-of-the-match: Glenn McGrath.

Toss: Australia.

Umpires: Aleem Dar and Billy Bowden.

Lara still

FROM PAGE 20 hope and that is the job we have to do."

The West Indies were let down by their batting as they could manage just 190 chasing a stiff 304-run target, with only Guyanese pair of Shivnarine Chanderpaul (76) and Ramesh Sarwan (44) offering resistance.

"There is a little bit of light at the end of the tunnel and we have got to go for that and be strong," said the West Indies captain.

"I know everyone is disappointed in the dressing-room at the moment and everyone is disappointed in the Caribbean."

Lara said he hoped the senior players would deliver in the remaining matches to sustain the team's hopes.

"I think the senior guys are understandably disappointed," he said.

"They understand the situation and we are in a crisis situation now. The guys know we have to dig ourselves out of that hole and move on."

Lara conceded his team were outplayed by Sri Lanka, saying left-handed opener Sanath Jayasuriya played a big role with his century.

"They were brilliant and out-classed us. They ticked all the boxes right. They have still got Australia and other teams to play and we now need to focus on ourselves," he said.

"Sanath was exceptional. It was 50-2 and we were trying to put pressure on them, but he built the innings and set the tone. Credit must be given to him."

Jayasuriya cracked a 101-ball 115 for his 25th century with the help of four sixes and 10 fours to help his team post a challenging total.

The West Indies faltered in reply as they lost three wickets for 42 runs, including that of Lara.

"We found ourselves in trouble, losing three early wickets before the innings reached any stage," he said.

"It is very disappointing, but there is still a slight edge to allow us to get there (semifinals) but it would depend a lot on other teams."

Tough task for Brothers

SPORTS REPORTER

Brothers Union look to exorcise the ghost of a shocking defeat to Khulna Abahani when the local giants face a confident Arambagh in today's B. League match at the Bangabandhu National Stadium.

Brothers, under ex-Indian national coach Syed Nayeemuddin, lost their home match 4-2 to the Khulna outfit despite fielding four foreigners.

The defeat saw the Oranges also slip down from the top-of-the-table and they are now behind Arambagh, who come to the game on the back of two successive wins.

After four games, Arambagh have seven points while Brothers, who have a match in hand, have four points.

The fifth week ends tomorrow with current leaders Sheikh Russel facing Farashganj.

McGrath plays down Akram comparison

AFF, St John's

Glenn McGrath played down comparisons between himself and Vasim Akram after breaking the Pakistan great's record for World Cup wickets.

McGrath, who had been one behind the legendary left-arm quick's mark of 55, took three for 16 in world champions Australia's 10-wicket thrashing of Bangladesh at the Sir Vivian Richards Stadium.

"Wasim Akram is one of the greatest bowlers of all time, a left-arm who swings it both ways with the new ball -- and so dangerous with the old ball too," McGrath said after Saturday's match.

"I guess to go past him is something special and something I'll always remember."

However, the 37-year-old McGrath, who has appeared in the last three World Cup finals -- the 1996 defeat to Sri Lanka and the wins in 1999 and 2003 over Pakistan and India respectively, said his longevity as a cricketer as much as anything else explained his latest record-breaking achievement.

National Chess GMs settle for draw

SPORTS REPORTER

Grandmasters Niaz Murshed and Ziaur Rahman drew their opening round match of the Mercantile Bank 33rd National Chess Championship yesterday.

Reigning champion International Master Enamul Hossain Rajib, however, got off to a great start when he defeated contender IM Abdullah Al Rakib in one of the seven games at the NSC chess hall-room.

Nine qualifiers and five automatic choices are participating in the meet. This year, the championship is being treated as a Grandmasters event with the participants eligible for GM and IM norms.

In other matches, GM Reefat Bin Sattar beat Abdul Maleq, FIDE Master Abu Sufian Shakil beat FM Sheikh Nasir Ahmed, FM Aminul Islam beat Mohammed Javed, FM Talbur Rahman shared points with national junior champion Minhazuddin Ahmed Sagar and FM Syed Mahfuzur Rahman Emon beat Mohammad Ali.

Revenge

FROM PAGE 20 we mustn't be overawed by the occasion.

Bayern have lost their last four meetings with AC Milan at the San Siro, the stadium where the German side were crowned European champions six years ago after beating Valencia on penalties.

Bayern have already visited the San Siro this season, beating AC Milan's fierce rivals Inter Milan 2-0 there in the group stages back in September, Bayern's first victory in Italy for 18 years.

Bayern will host AC Milan for the second leg on April 11, and the winner will play either Roma or Manchester United in the semifinals.

Minnows matches

FROM PAGE 17 get back to their lethal best after being lacklustre in the earlier matches.

Pollock is particularly worrying, having conceded 83 in ten overs against Australia and 46 off eight in the match against Sri Lanka. He was also witelless on both occasions.

Ireland captain Johnston said his team is not in awe of any opposition.

TEAMS

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, Makghaya Ntini, Robin Peterson, Shaun Pollock, Ashwell Prince, Roger Tellemaachus.

IRELAND (from): Trent Johnston (captain), Kyle McCallan, Andre Botha, Jeremy Bray, Kenneth Carroll, Peter Gillespie, Dave Langford-Smith, John Mooney, Paul Mooney, Eoin Morgan, Kevin O'Brien, Niall O'Brien, William Porterfield, Boyd Rankin, Andrew White.

Umpires: Daryl Harper and Simon Taufel.

Cops study poison theory

AFF, Kingston



Detectives leading the Bob Woolmer murder inquiry said Monday they are studying the possibility that

poison was used to incapacitate the burly Pakistan cricket coach before he was strangled.

Jamaica police deputy commissioner Mark Shields told AFP detectives were exploring whether the powerfully-built Woolmer was drugged before being murdered in his Kingston hotel room.

"I have said from the beginning that if he was manually strangled, there are certain aspects that don't quite add up," Shields said.

"There is a possibility that something was used to incapacitate Bob that could have enabled somebody to go into his room and kill him quietly. But I emphasise once more that we are keeping all lines of enquiry open."

Shields's comments followed a report in Britain's Sunday Mirror that police had received a tip that the cyanide-like poison aconite had been used to kill Woolmer, who was found dead at the Pegasus Hotel on March 18.

Aconite causes internal organ failure and forces the victim's breath

to slow until it finally stops. Death is usually by asphyxiation within 30 minutes, the report said.

Shields would not directly comment on the report, but acknowledged police had received information about a possible substance used to knock-out Woolmer.

"In the course of our enquiries we have received information about possible poisons that may have been used," he said. "But until we receive the toxicology reports it is pointless to speculate on what that substance might be."

The fact that detectives are still awaiting toxicology reports on Woolmer over two weeks after his death has led to questions over whether Jamaica's criminal justice system is capable of handling such a complex murder inquiry.

Four police officers from Britain's Scotland Yard are due to arrive in Kingston on Tuesday to review the course of the investigation.

Shields however insisted that the arrival of the officers should not be interpreted as an indicator that the local investigation was floundering.

"This is an entirely standard procedure in any major investigation," Shields said. "Once you get past the first seven to 14 days of the inquiry it is normal to retrace your steps and make sure nothing has been overlooked."

Detectives were continuing to

treat the investigation as murder, Shields said, following press reports in Britain casting doubt on the pathologists findings which said Woolmer had been "manually strangled."

Woolmer's murder has triggered a frenzy of speculation about a possible link to match-fixing in cricket, although detectives have so far said they have uncovered no evidence of corruption.

The killing of the coach is also the subject of the biggest and most complex murder investigation in Jamaica's history, with police revealing they are trying to trace up to 1,000 people as possible witnesses.

In Lahore on Sunday, Pakistan captain Inzamam-ul-Haq led a contingent of seven players among 400 mourners at the 100-year-old Sacred Heart Church, while officials lit candles and laid floral wreaths at a portrait of Woolmer.

Inzamam, accompanied by teammates Salman Butt, Imran Nazir, Shoaib Malik, Mohammed Asif, Mohammed Hafeez and Kamran Akmal, said Woolmer was an "excellent coach and above all things was an excellent human being."



PHOTO: AFP

Pakistan captain Inzamamul Haq (2nd from L) leads players and officials during a minute's silence at a memorial service for demised coach Bob Woolmer at the Sacred Heart Church in Lahore on Sunday.

Pakistan pay respects to Bob

AFF, Lahore



Pakistani players and dignitaries on Sunday paid their respects to cricket coach Bob Woolmer,

two weeks after his mysterious murder that shocked the genteel sport and stumped Jamaican investigators.

Captain Inzamamul Haq led a contingent of seven players among 400 mourners at Lahore's 100-year-old Sacred Heart Church, while officials lit candles and laid floral wreaths at a portrait of the late Englishman.

Archbishop of Lahore Reverend Lawrence Saldanha said Woolmer, found strangled in his hotel room on March 18, one day after Pakistan's shock World Cup exit to Ireland, was like a "second father" to his players.

"We pay tribute to his excellent qualities. He was known for his passionate interest in cricket. We salute him for his professional competency, as well as his sense of responsibility and commitment," Saldanha said.

"He was also a kind and gentle person who won the hearts of his players who looked up to him as a second father."

Inzamam, accompanied by teammates Salman Butt, Imran Nazir, Shoaib Malik, Mohammed

Asif, Mohammed Hafeez and Kamran Akmal, said Woolmer was an "excellent coach and above all things was an excellent human being."

"After Woolmer's family, the Pakistan team was the most aggrieved by his death," Inzamam said during the hour-long service.

Pakistan Cricket Board chairman Nasim Ashraf described Woolmer's death "a terrible tragedy" and said that he was a "rock of stability" who lived for cricket and loved the sport.

"He was internationally known and was the first modern coach of cricket. The world will follow his method and teachings," Ashraf said.

Kingston pathologist Ere Sessaiah has said his examination of the body showed that Woolmer was killed by "manual strangulation."

Woolmer's murder has triggered a frenzy of speculation about a possible link to match-fixing in cricket, although detectives in Jamaica have so far said they have uncovered no evidence of corruption.

The killing of the coach is also the subject of the biggest and most complex murder investigation in Jamaica's history, with police revealing that they are trying to trace up to 1,000 people staying at Kingston's Pegasus Hotel in the days leading up to the killing.

Jamaica deputy commissioner Mark Shields, the detective heading

the inquiry, has failed to announce any significant breakthroughs in the case and warned that the whodunit may take months to unravel.

A delegation of senior Scotland Yard detectives is to arrive in Kingston from London this week to "review" the progress of the investigation.

The team will consist of three detectives and a crime scene expert, London's Metropolitan Police told AFP Saturday. It was not clear when they would arrive.

"They will be looking to see if there is anything else we can do," Shields said on Friday. "You know when you're involved in any piece of work and you are right up against it, sometimes you can miss the most blindingly obvious."

The request for assistance from Scotland Yard has renewed media speculation about whether Woolmer was in fact murdered or died from natural causes.

Although Shields has said authorities continue to view the case "very categorically" as murder, British press were divided on the issue Sunday, with some reports saying police now believed Woolmer had died after a seizure, while others saying that he had been poisoned.

SL A clinch one-day series too

FROM PAGE 17

limited-overs series after winning the first game by five wickets. The disappointing trip for Tushar Imran's men comes to end with the third one-day match to be held at the same venue tomorrow.

Left-handed opener Warnapura struck nine fours and three sixes in his 104 off 113 balls as Sri Lanka A stormed to 207-4 with 33 balls to spare in reply to Bangladesh's 206.

The 27-year old Warnapura paired with Dilruwan Perera to lay the foundation for an easy sail by sharing 91 runs for opening wicket. Left-arm spinner Enamul Haque trapped Perera, who made 46 off 63 balls featuring eight boundaries, leg before wicket.

Earlier, Bangladesh A made a disastrous start after deciding to bat first as they lost three wickets for 10 runs before Tushar (38 off 55 balls) and Nadif Chowdhury (25 off 30

balls) contributed 46 for the fourth wicket to briefly repair the damage.

Number seven batsman Forhad Reza, the out-of-favour all-rounder, then smashed an 84-ball 82 with the help of seven fours and three sixes to give the total some respectability but still, the second string Bangladesh side were bundled out with five overs remaining.

Right-arm paceman Ishara Amerasinghe captured three wickets for 34 runs while leg-break Kaushal Lokuarachchi conceded 57 runs for three wickets.

SCORES IN BRIEF

BANGLADESH A: 206 all out in 45 overs (Jahurul 1, Mehrab 0, Nazmuddin 1, Tushar 38, Nadif 25, Riyad 0, Forhad 82, Sahagir 25, Sharif 5, Dollar 4 n.o., Enamul 0, extras 25; Ganegama 2-22, Dias 2-36, Amerasinghe 3-34, Lokuarachchi 3-57).

SRI LANKA A: 207-4 in 44.3 overs (Warnapura 104 n.o., Perera 46, Kapugedera 6, Kandamby 9, Mubarak 21, Lokuarachchi 2 n.o., extras 19; Riyad 2-28, Enamul 1-22, Mehrab 1-32).

Result: Sri Lanka A won by six wickets.

Bellamy boost

FROM PAGE 20 before deciding Tuesday whether he will figure against PSV.

Manager Rafael Benitez has no other injury problems with skipper Steven Gerrard, taken off against Arsenal due to tiredness, also in the party.

Steve Finnan and Sami Hyypia, rested on Saturday, were also in the squad. Mohamed Sissoko is suspended for the first leg.