



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

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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 109 (97 balls, 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

Kapil hit his second hundred in the meet – a 77-ball 101 – to give Sylibet 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 156 n.o., Al-Shahri 59, Nazmul 56 n.o., extras 19).

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

Result: Dhaka won by two runs.

RAJSHAHI: 329-6 in 50 overs (Junaid 104, Rafiqul 38, Anisur 106 n.o., Musifqur 47, extras 13; Tareq 2-37, Younis 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, Kapil 101, extras 14; Arif 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

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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

AFP, St John's



Australia's ruthless form at the World Cup has been no more than captain in 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).

England's men were not at full 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."

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
Ashraful 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 wkt 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.

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."

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BANGLADESH

Tamim c Hogg b Bracken 3

Lara still

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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 outclassed 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 equation to allow us to get there (semifinals) but it would depend a lot on other teams."

Minnows matches

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

Pollack is particularly worrying, having conceded 83 in ten overs against Australia and 46 off eight in the match against Sri Lanka. He was also wicketless 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, Makhaya Ntini, Robin Peterson, Shaun Pollock, Ashwell Prince, Roger Telemachus.

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.

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 Nayemuddin, 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.

Cops study poison theory

AFP, 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' 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</