

Bangladesh loss costs SA dearly

AFP, Georgetown

South Africa suffered another blow to their morale on Sunday when they lost their world number one ranking following their shock 67-run defeat to Bangladesh.

The defeat means also that Ricky Ponting's Australia will regain their place at the top of the new rankings when the official figures are released later this week.

According to the International Cricket Council (ICC) one-day international predictor, South Africa lost one point after their defeat against Bangladesh and have now moved down to 125, while Australia moved on to 127.

Even a defeat in their latest Super Eight's match against England on Sunday would not displace Australia from the top as they will still go to 126.

In case they register a win over their archrivals they will strengthen their position with one more point (128), the predictor said.

South Africa topped the ICC one-day international rankings at its annual cut-off date on April 1, 2007 for the first time since the rankings were introduced five years ago.

That earned them a handsome cash award of 175,000 US dollars, while Australia pocketed 75,000 US dollars for being runner-up.

South Africa's promotion to the top spot was a reward for their good showing in one-day internationals over the past 12 months.

Their performances included a 3-2 series win over Australia on their own soil, during which they clinched the series by chasing a world-record 438-9 last year.

South Africa also reached the semifinals of the ICC Champions Trophy in India in October 2006, before winning 4-0 against India and 3-1 against Pakistan, both at home.

Barbados-leg

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Before the team left Guyana, World Cup volunteers scurried for autographs of as the team waited to board a chartered flight to Barbados on Sunday. A handshaking distance away the South African players were seated. Hardly anyone approached them.

Now the push for the semifinals starts although Bangladesh would prefer to go match by match. Just outside the airport in Bridgetown, an advertisement hoarding proudly acclaimed 'Barbados, where legends are born'.

A super three days here would have the same meaning for the Bangladesh team.

The Tigers had a swimming session at the Hilton's pool and then took to the clear blue sea on Sunday, preparing for yesterday's training at the windward ground, some 40 minutes' drive from the hotel.

Powerplay

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can be in your favour to take them later in an innings and today was one of those days."

Vaughan, who failed again with the bat making just five before he was dismissed by Tait, still believes England can make the semifinals.

"Not many of us are playing that well and we are making it difficult for ourselves. We will have to win our next three games if we are to get to the semifinals," he said.

Vaughan recognised that England wasted a golden opportunity to beat their old rivals.

"We were 164-2 and were looking at 280-290 which would have been a really competitive total. Even at 247 we were still in the game.

"We tried to get a few wickets and put the squeeze on them but all credit to them."

England's next match is against Bangladesh in Barbados on Wednesday while Australia, bidding for a third successive World Cup title, face Ireland, also in Barbados, on Friday.

Aussies beatable

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"(Mashrafe) Mortaza is a good opening bowler and the left-armer (Syed Raseel) at the top looks like he's quite hard to hit.

"They are a huge threat. Any team that's beaten India and South Africa in a World Cup have got to be taken seriously."

Vaughan's early exit after winning the toss meant he'd now scored just 83 runs from six tournament innings.

His form was thrown into sharper focus by Australia captain Ricky Ponting's composed 86, the skipper's third-wicket stand of 112 with Michael Clarke (55 not out) all but seeing his side home.

Vaughan was at a loss to explain his mediocre one-day international record -- he's yet to score a century in 83 matches.

"If I knew I'd have plenty of runs. It's as frustrating for me as it is for everyone watching. It's just not happening. That's sometimes the way batting goes."



PHOTO: AFP

An ecstatic England batsman Kevin Pietersen (L) punches the air to celebrate his century against Australia as Glenn McGrath walks during their Sunday's Cricket World Cup Super Eight's match at the Sir Vivian Richards Stadium in St John's.

Bangladesh inspire

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the semifinals, Johnston's men look for their first win in round two when they take on New Zealand here on Monday.

Ireland, making their debut in the World Cup, sent Pakistan crashing out of the World Cup with an upset three-wicket win in the group stage last month. They also tied their match against Zimbabwe to earn a place in the Super Eights.

Since then Ireland has been competitive in their two matches but lost to England by 48 runs and by seven wickets against South Africa.

When asked if Bangladesh's win put pressure on Ireland to make their presence felt, Johnston replied: "I don't think so, Bangladesh play a lot more cricket than us and have more experience."

"We would like to finish seventh rather than eighth (in the table) but for that we have to work hard. We will play Bangladesh (April 15) and will focus on what we can do," said Johnston.

Ireland meet defending champions Australia (April 13), Bangladesh

(April 15) and Sri Lanka (April 18) in their remaining matches.

Johnston said that not being able to repeat the performance which shocked Pakistan had been disappointing.

"We just want to do the best we can. It would be great if we can find the kind of performance we put in against Pakistan. We have sort of disappointed since then."

Indians befriend

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India will go on the three-week tour with an interim cricket manager in Test star-turned-commentator Ravi Shastri following coach Greg Chappell's decision not to renew his two-year contract.

Rahul Dravid will continue as captain, but India's cricket chiefs have instructed selectors to pick a "young team" in a bid to make a fresh start in world cricket.

Both WI, SA

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semifinal in India last November when Chris Gayle hammered an unbeaten century.

South Africa have injury concerns over batsman Herschelle Gibbs, who had to leave the field because of a calf strain during the Bangladesh match, and all-rounder Andrew Hall, who was rested because of what was described as a minor thigh strain.

PROBABLE TEAMS

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

WEST INDIES: Brian Lara (captain), Chris Gayle, Shivnarine Chanderpaul, Ramnaresh Sarwan, Marlon Samuels, Dwayne Bravo, Dwayne Smith, Denesh Ramdin, Ian Bradshaw, Jerome Taylor, Daren Powell.

Umpires: Mark Benson and Daryl Harper.

Tigers prove ICC right

AFP, St John's

ICC chief executive Malcolm Speed insisted on Sunday that the governing body had been right to stand by Bangladesh when many feared the Asian side were out of their depth.

Speed praised the progress made by Bangladesh who have defeated India and South Africa at this World Cup.

"We've been criticised for many years for including Bangladesh at the top table of world cricket. What they've done in the last couple of weeks is to justify their existence here," said the ICC chief.

Ireland, a non-Test nation, also beat Pakistan in the group phase -- a result that effectively knocked the 1992 champions out of the tournament and Speed added: "I've said on many occasions that the commercial powerhouse for cricket is India and Pakistan."

"India and Pakistan haven't made it through to the final eight here. If we go back to the 1999 World Cup (hosts) England didn't make it through to the final six and in 2003 (hosts) South Africa, West Indies, Pakistan and England all failed to make the last six."

"These things happen. From a commercial perspective there are some negatives there but if you lose matches you go home."

Tait impresses

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ball, but I controlled it a lot better today."

Ponting said there was no reason why, with veteran seamer Glenn McGrath due to retire after the World Cup, Tait and Lee couldn't play in the same one-day side.

"I'd love to have both guys in my team if they are going as well as they can. Glenn's obviously finishing up so a bowling spot's open."

"Brett's got away from the out-and-out strike bowler he's always been labelled as. Tait is that for us at the moment. But the more he plays the more he'll understand the ways to go about bowling in different conditions."

"Brett's a bit more advanced, he understands his game very well. He's taking wickets but doesn't go for runs. That always plagued him early in his career, when he was going around six an over but he's got that down a lot in the last few years."

"He's been the best bowler in the world in one-day international cricket for some time." Ponting said that while England had provided Australia with their "biggest test" at the tournament they should have provided an even sterner challenge.

"They should have made 270-280, no question."

"I'm not sure what it is about us. Brad Hogg (Australia's lone specialist spinner) got us a crucial breakthrough (having Andrew Flintoff stumped for four), as did Shane early on and McGrath through the middle."

Timing was right

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"You play what you think is your best combination. The conditions gave us the advantage because we had the spinners and we had the opportunity to bowl last on it."

Whatmore was all praise for middle-order batsman Mohammad Ashraful, who cracked an 83-ball 87 to help his side set a challenging target. He was also named man of the match.

"He has just shown what he is capable of. He hasn't always had the time to bat. He has been batting at number six. He has to learn a little about placing a value on his wicket," said Whatmore.

"He played straight and he was very innovative at the end. But generally, we have seen the value of Ashraful when he plays straight."

Real back

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relegation-threatened Celta Vigo.

A penalty apiece preceded a tumultuous last five minutes which saw four goals.

Romanian striker Laurentino Rosu pounced on Celta's wobbly defence to score twice in little more than two minutes to put Recreativo seemingly in control.

Nene then got one back for Celta in the dying seconds of normal time before Recreativo midfielder Cheli Gonzalez secured three points in injury time.

Relegation looks increasingly likely for Gimnastic Tarragona and Real Sociedad after they suffered 1-0 losses away from home.

Deportivo La Coruna's Iago Iglesias got the only goal of their game to beat bottom club Gimnastic, his free kick from just outside the area finding the net after 58 minutes.

Espanyol's Ferran Corominas inflicted the damage on Real Sociedad, scoring with his right foot after a pass from Jonatas Domingos on 57 minutes.

The two bottom clubs are now eight points away from climbing out of the relegation zone after Levante drew 1-1 with Real Betis.

Levante opened the scoring after 33 minutes when Inaki Descarga got his first goal in the top flight of Spanish football from close range but Betis' Brazilian striker Robert equalised 11 minutes from the whistle.

Nadif, Jahurul spare BCA blushes



SPORTS REPORTER

Half-centuries by Jahurul Islam and Nadif Chowdhury lit up an otherwise dour batting display by the Bangladesh Cricket Academy (BCA) who skittled out for 223 in their first innings against their Pakistan counterparts on the opening day of their four-day match yesterday.

Having elected to bat first at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium, the home side got off to a bright start but as soon as the 50-run opening stand came to an end, the Pakistan Academy bowlers got a stranglehold.

Najaf Shah in particular, was the most damaging in his very tight 17 overs. The visiting new ball bowler, who topped and tailed to take four wickets for 33, hit the inroads when he removed local captain Mehrab Hossain in the 17th over.

The out-of-favour Bangladesh international made 19 off 50 balls but his opening partner Jahurul kept cool while wickets tumbled at the other end. Jahurul, who made 52 with half-dozen boundaries, received some support during a 168-ball vigil in nearly four hours. He shared his second fifty-run partner-

ship with Rokibul Hasan (28), the only player in the country to have scored a first-class triple century.

After Jahurul's departure, number six Nadif launched against the rival attack to score typically combative 55, laced with nine hits to the fence in 81 deliveries.

It seemed that the tail -- featuring big hitters like Mahmudullah Riyad, Sahagir Hossain and Mosharraf Hossain -- would make up for the failure of the middle-order. But the tourists grabbed an opportunity following Nadif's dismissal as Bangladesh Academy lost their last half in the space of 16 runs.

Abdul Rauf, Sohail Tanveer and Atif Magbool each chipped in with two wickets for Pakistan, who lost opener Asad Rahim (three) to reach 13-1 at stumps.

SCORES IN BRIEF

BANGLADESH ACADEMY: First innings 223 all out in 81.2 overs (Jahurul 52, Mehrab 19, Nazimuddin 1, Nasiruddin 8, Rokibul 28, Nadif 55, Riyad 15, Sahagir 7, Mosharraf 0, Zia 8, Sajidul 0, extras 30, Rauf 2-29, Najaf 4-33, Tanveer 2-41, Maqbool 2-67).

PAKISTAN ACADEMY: First innings 13-1 in 6 overs (Rauf 3, Latif 4 batting, Zhoab 5 batting, Zia 1-4).

Ravi wants a happy team

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never want to shy away from a challenge...and if I can help, nothing like it."

Shastri said he agreed with Indian cricket officials that a young team should be picked for the Bangladesh tour with an experienced leader in Rahul Dravid in command.

"You have to look at youth in whatever you do, in whatever walk of life at some stage," he said. "There is a shelf period for everything and if you have got to experiment, then do it against Bangladesh."

"I am not saying that Bangladesh is weak. They have thrashed South Africa, they have laid India low in this World Cup, so you can never take them lightly."

"(But) there's going to be a lot of cricket to be played by India in the next 12 months, so if you want to give youngsters an opportunity then do it early."

"When you are playing a Test match, you would like to be playing with your strongest side. So, it's not that the seniors are out of it totally but I would like to see youngsters given opportunities and see what happens."

Shastri played down media specu-

lation of a rift in the team between the senior and junior players.

"I have read about it," he said. "When I reach Bangladesh I would try my best to clear everything out if there is a problem. No big deal."

Asked if he was confident of the team's revival, Shastri said: "A good team doesn't become a bad team in two weeks and a bad team doesn't become an excellent one in two weeks. Be patient."

Shastri, a right-hand batsman and left-arm spinner, retired in 1992 after playing 80 Test matches in which he scored 3,830 runs and claimed 151 wickets.

He also made 3,108 runs and took 129 wickets in 150 one-day internationals.

Widely hailed as possessing a sharp cricketing mind, Shastri led India in one Test match, securing victory over the West Indies on an under prepared wicket in Chennai in 1988 where debutant Narendra Hirwani grabbed 16 wickets.



PHOTO: AFP

PCB chairman Nasim Ashraf (L), former Pakistan cricket captain Inzamamul Haq (C) and former director of cricket operations Salim Altaf appear before the National Assembly Standing Committee on Sports in Islamabad yesterday.

Australia ride on Ricky

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control as he threw the ball back in over the boundary before crossing the rope.

Earlier, left-arm quick Nathan Bracken had an economical three for 33, fast bowler Shaun Tait three for 41 and Glenn McGrath, in what could be his last match against England before retirement, three for 62.

Just 51 runs came in the last 10 overs with Pietersen, whose fourth century at this level came off 117 balls with one six and six fours, scoring one boundary between fifty and a hundred.

England saw skipper Michael Vaughan (five) and Andrew Strauss, normally an opener but batting at three after Middlesex teammate Ed Joyce was dropped, both played on to Tait.

Vaughan's early exit after winning the toss meant he'd now scored just 83 runs from six tournament innings.

Pietersen, who had his tour of Australia ended when McGrath broke his rib in Melbourne in January, was dropped twice.

On 50 Ponting failed to hold a tough one-handed chance at mid-on and, with Pietersen on 63, Hayden somehow floored a seemingly simple two-handed catch at mid-off.

Australia, beaten 2-0 at home in England in the CB series finals before a five-wicket warm-up win in St Vincent last month, then regained control.

Bell drove McGrath straight to Michael Hussey at cover to end a

90-ball innings with nine fours and Collingwood (two) was caught behind off Tait.

Flintoff's wretched time with the bat continued when he misread left-arm wrist spinner Brad Hogg and was stumped by Gilchrist for four.

England, as happened in Wednesday's agonising two-run defeat against Sri Lanka, had seen

a promising position disappear.

Pietersen fell in the penultimate over when he holed out against Bracken to Clarke at long-off.

England play Bangladesh, shock conquerors of South Africa on Saturday, in Barbados on Wednesday with Australia in action there two days later against Ireland.

TRALIA V ENGLAND SCOREBO

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Bowler	O	M	R	W	NB/W
Bracken	10	1	33	3	w-1
Tait	10	0	41	3	nb-2, w-3
McGrath	9.5	0	62	3	w-1
Clarke	4	0	27	0	-
Hogg	10	0	36	1	w-1
Symonds	6	0	40	0	-
AUSTRALIA	R	M	B	4s	6s
Gilchrist c Collingwood b Flintoff	27	51	37	5	0
Hayden b Collingwood	41	91	50	6	0
Ponting run out	86	133	106	11	0
Clarke not out	55	130	63	2	0
Symonds not out	28	33	28	4	1
Extras: (b-1, lb-5, w-5)	11				
Total: (For 3 wickets in 47.2 overs)	248				
Did not bat: Hussey, Hodge, Hogg, Bracken, Tait, McGrath.					
Fall of wickets: 1-57, 2-89, 3-201.					
Bowler	O	M	R	W	NB/W
Anderson	10	1	49	0	w-3
Mahmood	9.2	1	60	0	w-1
Flintoff	10	1	35	1	-
Panesar	9	0	48	0	-
Collingwood	9	0	50	1	w-1
Result: Australia won by seven wickets.					
Man-of-the-match: Shaun Tait.					
Toss: England					
Umpires: B Bowden (New Zealand) and R Koertzen (South Africa)					
Match referee: M Procter (South Africa)					