

Boys ready: Bashar

AFP, Bridgetown



Bangladesh hope their spin trio can bamboozle England, just like they did South Africa, and boost their bid for a World Cup semifinal place on Wednesday.

The left-arm trio of seasoned Mohammad Rafique, effective Abdur Razzaq and emerging Saqib Hasan spun Graeme Smith's side to a humiliating 67-run defeat in Guyana on Saturday -- their first ever win over South Africa.

The win was only Bangladesh's fifth over a major Test playing country in 155 matches and they now seek their first over England in eight matches.

"If we beat England we get closer to the semifinals but for that we have to work really hard," said Bangladesh captain Habibul Bashar ahead of the match against struggling England at the new-look Kensington Oval.

"Definitely we need to play consistent as well. We don't want to play one good game and then play three bad games. But the South Africa win has increased the confidence and morale in the team."

Bangladesh, who upset India by five wickets in the group stage to earn a second round place for the first time since their World Cup debut in 1999, have two points from four matches.

Bangladesh's win over South Africa, which also dethroned Smith's side as world number one, only increased their chances, but also threw open the race for semifinals.

"It was a historic win over South Africa and now we need to win three more matches to come into contention for a semifinal. The boys know it's hard work but they are ready for

it," said Bashar, who hoped his spinners come good once again.

"If we can get the same kind of wicket as we had in Guyana our spinners can repeat that, but England also have some pretty good players who score runs against spinners."

Michael Vaughan's team are in a tight corner after Sunday's seven-wicket defeat against Australia left them with two points from four games, and another loss will mean the exit door for them.

Their only win in the Super Eights came against Ireland.

The world's top batsman Kevin Pietersen struck a magnificent century but Australia put the brakes on the innings as from 164-3 in the 30th over, England managed just 83 runs in the last 20 overs to be bowled out for 247.

Australia reached the target with half-centuries from skipper Ricky Ponting and Michael Clarke.

"I think we are very close to being a really good one-day team," insisted Vaughan.

"We've lost games against Sri Lanka and Australia and we've put them under a lot of pressure.

"We are just not winning critical periods and doing enough during the whole game to win the match. That's disappointing and we'll need to play well against Bangladesh, South Africa and the West Indies and win those games, but we're certainly a team that can do that."

"We know we have to win the next three games now, so it's sometimes a good thing to know exactly what you have to do to reach the next stage."

For Vaughan, his own form, and that of all-rounder Andrew Flintoff, is a major worry.

Flintoff has managed 112 runs in the last 12 innings, including 12 in the last four World Cup matches.

Flintoff has 49 runs in four outings

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PHOTO: AFP

West Indies paceman Corey Collymore (C) celebrates with his captain Brian Lara after dismissing South Africa captain Graeme Smith during the World Cup Super Eights match at the Grenada National Stadium in St George's on Tuesday.

Hulks, Pups and Gollas

AFP, Bridgetown



Come April 28, Punter will fancy his chances of having his hands on the World Cup.

But Virgil also harbours similar ambitions.

In the colourful world of one-day cricket, players' nicknames are about as mystifying as a Muralidaran doosra.

Punter is Australia captain Ricky Ponting, a name earned due to his liking for a flutter while England captain Michael Vaughan is Virgil, not as a result of any epic performances, but because of a reputed likeness to a character from the Thunderbirds children's show.

"A lot of mind-power has gone into some nicknames," said Australian wicketkeeper and vice-captain Adam Gilchrist.

Glen McGrath's nickname, Pigeon, came courtesy of his New South Wales teammates early in his career, when he was a skinny country lad.

"They felt that somewhere in the world there was a pigeon flying non-stop, as he could not land while

they don't look at me like that anymore."

McGrath has also been dubbed Millard, in honour of a brand of caravan in which he first lived when he first moved to Sydney.

Gilchrist said he has picked up the name of Churhcy.

"A young autograph hunter once approached me and said: 'Excuse me Eric Gilchurch, can I have your autograph?'

However, the Australian team is most proud of fast bowler Brett Lee, sadly injured and not involved in the World Cup.

Amongst his many nicknames is Oswald.

Apparently at the start of one game, the batting order was being read aloud, comprising Brett Lee behind brother Shane and all-rounder Ian Harvey.

Former skipper Steve Waugh announced the names -- Lee, Harvey....and Oswald came out of the dressing room.

Matthew Hayden, with his dedication to physical fitness, is known as Hulk and Unit.

Michael Clarke has always been referred to as Pup for his youthful looks on his debut in 2003 as a raw 22-year-old.

"Being called Pup is fine," said the in-form Clarke last year. "But

Rejoinder

Golam Rasul Mollah, a member of Bangladesh Football Federation, in a rejoinder to two reports, headlined 'NSC begins reform' (Dated March 6, 2007) and 'Mollah and co trying to stay' (Dated March 13, 2007), published in the sports pages of The Daily Star has claimed that all information in those reports regarding him were 'false, fictitious, baseless or defamatory'.

He alleged those reports were 'yellow journalism' and 'misleading to readers and in the society of sports organisers' and was intended to 'injure his fame, honesty, dignity and position' and caused 'mental suffocation'.

Mollah also claimed that those reports defamed four other sports organisers -- Ali Imam Tapan, Shahiduzzaman Reza, Shamsul Alam Anu and Golam Kuddus Nabi - in the same manner.

OUR REPLY

While Mr. Mollah made general statement that the reports were false, he did not specifically state where the reports were wrong.

In 1998, a female athlete alleged that Golam Rasul Mollah sexually abused her aboard a flight to Dhaka from Japan after an athletic meet. A parliamentary investigation committee was formed and Mollah, then general secretary of the Amateur Athletics Federation, was found guilty. According to the

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BCCI to wait till April 15

PTI, Mumbai

The Indian team for next month's short tour of Bangladesh is to be chosen only after April 15, the Cricket Board said on Tuesday.

"I will discuss with (selection panel chief) Dilip Vengsarkar and decide when where a preparatory camp should be held while finalising the date and venue of the selection committee meeting," BCCI Secretary Niranjan Shah said.

The BCCI Working Committee has already given a directive to the selectors to pick a young team, but the manner in which the latter would fulfil the all-powerful panel's wish is unclear.

There is a likelihood of the selectors initially picking around 25 probables for the short tour.

The thorny issue of the players' contracts and the BCCI dictat over their endorsement deals, however, stand as a potentially big hurdle ahead of the team's selection.

The Board has directed all the players to submit copies of their existing endorsement contracts

Skipper Rahul Dravid has expressed a wish through the media statement on Monday for having a dialogue with the board officials on the raging issue.

On the other hand the BCCI is keen that the players sign the new contracts before departing for Bangladesh.

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TODAY'S MATCH

Team	Time	Venue
England v Bangladesh	7:30 pm	Barbados

EC clears CA-BCB deal

SPORTS REPORTER

The executive committee of Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) has decided in an emergency meeting yesterday to continue its deal with the Cricket Australia (CA) to get service in development programme of coaching and umpiring.

BCB president M Abdul Aziz, who is also the secretary of the agricultural ministry, called the meeting after questions were raised the way some high-ups

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PHOTO: TIGERCRICKET.COM

Bangladesh players stretch before the net session at the Windward Club ground in Bridgetown on Monday.