

Captain Courageous!

BISHWAJIT ROY



Nobody can expect a courageous or simply a right decision from a man who himself is in the lowest ebb of his confidence. So, it might not be surprising

that Bangladeshi captain Habibul Bashar made a titanic blunder at the Mirpur Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium on Friday.

At the end of the first day's play it is now clear that the home skipper gave his Indian counterpart Rahul Dravid a happy gift by inviting the vaunted batting line-up a chance to use the surface first, which even the word placid would not do justice to.

True, the grounds curator gave the team management a wrong impression of it being a bouncy and pacy wicket; a fact that even provoked Bangladesh to play three seamers. Yes, followed by heavy overnight rain there was an overcast condition in the morning to inspire a captain to consider the bowling advantages.

But it still bemused everyone how a captain could only believe in those two factors and completely disregard the history of the venue and his own experience of judging the playing conditions. And not to forget that he was also supported by a man like Dav Whatmore.

There was no single player in the India team who could have known about the conditions better than Bashar, who has played a few games in the venue and has inside knowledge of how the pitch here behaved in the four-day games. It is only a matter of associative memory to judge that a pitch does not change its characteristics overnight -- a fact that Bashar overlooked

completely.

Now the question has been raised whether the Bangladeshi skipper miscalculated the condition with pre-committed conception or he simply tried to hide himself and his top-order batting from a possible early hour disaster.

If the intention was to escape then hard times have fallen on Bashar who would then do well not to continue at this level any more. There is no use playing Test matches if you don't have the courage to at least survive some time in the crease in difficult circumstances when you all knew that it would be difficult to bat second under such immense heat and humidity.

It was impossible to know Bashar's version of the decision as he didn't show the courage to

defend it to the press. Rather the equally culpable Whatmore appeared in the scene to regret the erroneous decision.

"Oh yes, we regret the decision. Obviously if we knew the wicket was going to behave like that then certainly we would not chose to field first. We knew what the conditions were so we wanted to take the advantage of bowling first in the first session. But that did not work out," explained the outgoing Bangladeshi coach.

The portly Australian also tried to save his skipper by saying that it was a collective decision.

Bravo! But then why appoint a

SEE PAGE 18 COL 8

GLADESH-INDIA 2ND TEST SCOREBOARD

Scoreboard at stumps on the opening day of the second and final Test between Bangladesh and India at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur on Friday:

INDIA: Firstinnings	R	B	4s	6s
Dinesh Karthik retired hurt	82	153	12	0
Wasim Jaffer retired hurt	138	229	17	0
Rahul Dravid not out	88	131	11	1
Sachin Tendulkar not out	9	31	0	0
Extras: (lb-4, w-1, nb-4)	9			
Total: (For no loss in 90 overs)	326			

To bat: Sourav Ganguly, Mahendra Dhoni, Ramesh Powar, Zaheer Khan, Anil Kumble, Rudra Pratap Singh, Ishant Sharma.

Bowler	O	M	R	W	NB/W
Mashrafe Bin Mortaza	19.4	4	49	0	nb-1,w-1
Syed Rasel	13.4	0	64	0	nb-1
Mohammad Sharif	13.4	0	56	0	nb-1
Mohammad Rafique	22	2	85	0	nb-1
Shakib Al Hasan	13	1	33	0	-
Mohammad Ashraful	8	0	35	0	-

BANGLADESH: Javed Omar, Shahriar Nafees, Habibul Bashar, Shakib Al Hasan, Mohammad Ashraful, Rajin Saleh, Mashrafe Bin Mortaza, Khaled Mashud, Mohammad Rafique, Mohammad Sharif, Syed Rasel.

Toss: Bangladesh

Umpires: B Doctrove (West Indies) and D Harper (Australia)

TV umpire: Nadir Shah

Match referee: R Mahanama (Sri Lanka)



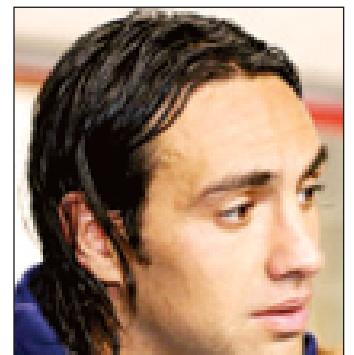
PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

Indian opening pair of Wasim Jaffer (R) and Dinesh Karthick are in mid-pitch while running a single during their 175-run opening partnership on the first day of the second Test against Bangladesh at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.



Vaughan's sparkling return

Cricket



Alessandro Nesta

(AC Milan and Italy defender)
"I have been criticised a lot in the past year. Some people even said that Italy won the World Cup because I was injured. But I have come back and I am delighted we won."

After winning the UEFA Champions League title.

What to WATCH

BTV & NEO Sports
Bangladesh v India
Second Test, Day 2
Live from 10:00 am

ESPN
England v West Indies
Second Test, Day 2
Live from 4:00 pm

STAR Sports

Primera Liga

Valencia v Villarreal

Live from 9:55 pm

Real Madrid v Deportivo

Live from 12:00 am (Sunday)

Barcelona v Getafe

Live from 2:00 am (Sunday)

SL row over 'ridiculous' series

AFF, Colombo
Sri Lanka's senior cricket officials on Friday clashed over this week's one-day series against Pakistan in Abu Dhabi, with the chief selector dismissing it as "absolutely ridiculous."

Anantha De Mel said the series was too soon after the World Cup, criticising Sri Lanka Cricket (SLC) which organised the lucrative one-day matches.

"I have never heard of a cricket match being played in 45 degrees Celsius (113 Fahrenheit) anywhere in the world," said De Mel.

"It is absolutely ridiculous. The

Donald given Eng coaching role

AFP, Leeds

Allan Donald, the South Africa pace bowling great, has been given a role with England's coaching staff, it was announced on Friday.

In a statement, the England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) said Donald would assist England's fast bowlers on a short-term consultancy basis from the lead-in to the third Test at Old Trafford through to the end of the one-day series against the West Indies in July.

The statement said the 40-year-old Donald, who has over 200 Test and one-day caps to his name, will work with the England squad and with other elite England qualified fast bowlers and will fall under the direction of England Head Coach, Peter Moores, and ECB Fast Bowling Coach, Kevin Shine.

Former English county bowler Shine has come under pressure since succeeding Troy Cooley as England's bowling coach.

England's pacemen failed to fire for much of their recent 5-0 Ashes drubbing and were largely off-target in the first Test of the ongoing four-match series against the West Indies at Lord's, their drop in form coinciding with the return of the highly-regarded Cooley to his native Australia.

"It is absolutely ridiculous. The

SEE PAGE 18 COL 8

SEE PAGE 18 COL 7

SEE PAGE 18 COL 8

Vaas out of Afro-Asia meet

AFP, Colombo

Sri Lankan pace spearhead Chaminda Vaas has opted out of next month's Afro-Asia one-day international cricket tournament.

Sri Lanka Cricket Secretary Kangadaran Mathivanan said Friday that Vaas, who is playing county cricket in England for Middlesex, informed the SLC that he will be unavailable.

The three-match ODI series between the combined Asian and African continent teams, organised by the Asian Cricket Council (ACC), is to be played in Bangalore on June 6 and in Chennai from June 9-10.

Sri Lankan skipper Mahela Jayawardena is billed to captain the combined Asian team picked by the ACC selection committee and made up of nominees from all four Asian test-playing nations -- India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh.

Vaas joined Middlesex to play for the Lord's-based county in the early part of the English season.

He is due to return to Sri Lanka mid-June to play in the home series against Bangladesh.

PHOTO: AFP

Jaffer battles it out

AL MUSABBIR SADI



Wasim Jaffer showed great spirit to come back from a plunge to become the 15th batsman in the world to shrug off a Test pair with a hundred when the Indian opening batsman hammered 138 before retiring hurt against Bangladesh yesterday.

Dismissed by Tigers pacers Mashrafe Bin Mortaza and Shahadat Hossain respectively in the two innings of the Chittagong Test before opening his account, the 29-year-old made his fourth Test century in the second and final match in Dhaka under extreme conditions with heat and humidity taking their tolls.

Floored on 40 by left-arm spinner Mohammad Rafique off his own bowling in the second ball after lunch, the right-hander concentrated hard to bat fluently to reach the three-figure mark with a boundary on the onside.

Like his opening partner Dinesh Karthik, the Mumbai batsman succumbed to dehydration midway through the final session and sought the cool of the dressing room.

The fast, in his 19th Test, also made him only the third player in history of Test cricket to sandwich a pair with centuries in consecutive

matches.

Jaffer had scored 116 against South Africa in Cape Town before the Chittagong ducks.

His compatriot and now Indian chief selector Dilip Vengsarkar scored 157 not out against West Indies in Kolkata in the 1978-79 home series, following it with a pair in Chennai and a 109 in Delhi.

Late West Indian batsman Clifford Roach did the same at home against England when he made 122 at Bridgetown, followed by two zeroes at Port of Spain and 209 at Georgetown.

From Jaffer and Vengsarkar, fellow Indians Yashpal Sharma and Mohinder Amarnath are also in the 15-member list of batsmen to score hundred after a pair.

The last man before Jaffer do it was Chamara Silva, the Sri Lankan who got a pair on debut and made 61 and 152 not out in the next Test in New Zealand in December 2006.

Expectedly, a tired but smiling Jaffer mentioned that getting a hundred in Test cricket is always pleasing.

"It's nice to come back after a pair and get a 100. I'm always determined no matter what the result is. But obviously I was double determined after a pair," Jaffer said at the post-match conference on Day One.

When asked about local conditions during this time of year, Jaffer said that it was something beyond his control.

"I mean playing and not playing is

not in my hands. The two boards are to decide to keep the matches. But obviously the condition is tough. As you know you can see that both Dinesh and I came with cramps and dizziness. The conditions will be tough for both the teams."

He admitted that there had been some pressure coming to the Dhaka game.

"Getting a pair is obviously not a very good feeling. I was determined to have a good score and I'm really happy. I'm also delighted that I'm playing. If I didn't play I wouldn't have got this score. Thanks to the committee for selecting and giving me a chance," said Jaffer, who now has two century-stands with Karthik.

"We have been doing the opening for the last three Tests and twice, in Cape Town and here, we've got 100 partnerships. We are really good friends. So that helps in having a good partnership."

Jaffer, the only specialist opener in the Test squad in absence of out-of-form Virender Sehwag, said manager Ravi Shastri's advice had also been a great help.

"It was more mental than physically. He was just telling me to be more positive in the mind and told not to worry about the pair because it happens to everybody," added Jaffer who was really surprised to be invited to bat on the surface.

"They (Bangladesh) obviously tried their best but things did not happen because the wicket did not support them."

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SEE PAGE 18 COL 8

SEE PAGE 18 COL 7