

A collective non-effort

BISHWAJIT ROY



A batsman who scored a first-ball duck had to appear at the press meet yesterday to say all about his side's lack-luster efforts in the second and final Test. It was of course Bangladesh vice-captain Mohammad Ashraful.

The ace right-hander at least could claim that he showed the courage in facing all the uncomfortable questions from the reporters when his captain Habibul Bashar, for the second successive day, escaped to save his blushes.

While everybody were eagerly trying to know of Bashar's version about his outrageous decision to field first, the 34-year old skipper preferred to throw in his deputy into the heat giving him an impression of the tough times that are ahead. And what came from the future Bangladesh captain was all contradictory.

"Their bowlers did an excellent

job but our defence was also poor," was the explanation of his team's top-order collapse.

Although he dismissed that fatigue was behind the disaster, the ace right-hander however admitted that they learned another lesson of how tough Test cricket is.

"It is just another lesson for us that anything can happen in Test cricket," observed Ashraful.

What happened on the second day of the final Test at the Mirpur Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium yesterday was not unexpected after Bangladesh think-tank's brainless decision of not batting first at the tailor-made pitch in hot and humid conditions.

India buried the home side under a mountain of runs (610-3) and then as expected, got the exhausted Bangladesh top-order out in the middle wanting to ensure that the Tigers had experienced their worst possible time in their return to Test cricket after 13 months.

After having fielded for almost two days under extreme heat, the local boys looked completely out of sorts when Rahul Dravid asked

SEE PAGE 18 COL 2

BANGLADESH-INDIA 2ND TEST SCOREBOARD

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

INDIA: First Innings (overnight 326-0)	R	B	4s	6s
Dinesh Karthik c Habibul Bashar b Mashrafe Bin Mortaza	129	212	16	0
Wasim Jaffer retired hurt	138	229	17	0
Rahul Dravid c Javed Omar b Mohammad Rafique	129	176	15	1
Sachin Tendulkar not out	122	226	8	1
Sourav Ganguly c Rajan Saleh b Mohammad Rafique	15	32	1	0
Mahendra Dhoni not out	51	50	3	4
Extras: (b-7, lb-7, w-5, nb-7)	26			
Total: (For 3 wickets dec'd in 153 overs)	610			

SEE PAGE 18 COL 3



PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

NOWHERE TO HIDE: Bangladesh captain Habibul Bashar (C) walks back to the dressing room after he was out for just four runs on the second day of the second Test at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.



Self-belief inspires Karthik

SPORTS REPORTER



Dinesh Karthik's knock stood out amongst the ton of runs plundered by the Indian batsmen at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium, as it was the player's maiden Test hundred.

For master batsman Sachin Tendulkar (37th) and India skipper Rahul Dravid (24th) it was just another century in their prolific run spree in Test cricket but the 129-run innings of the Tamil Nadu batter meant much more than that.

Among all of the stalwarts the 21-year old batsman showed his character in tough conditions during his five and half an hour stay at the middle to give the impression that he could be a good solution for the struggling opening slot.

"I'm trying my best to become a very good opener," declared the

young batsman, who looks shy off the field but maintains a remarkable contrast of stroke making on it.

"I'm trying to be as consistent as possible and that can be done if I work a lot with my batting in terms of footwork and in terms of mindset. Another very important thing is the transition from ODI's to Tests. So, I am definitely working on that and I am happy with the way things are going now," he explained as the reason behind his success.

"Self-belief is definitely a big part in all this," he added.

Karthik had to leave the ground on the first day with cramps while not out on 82 runs and only returned to the field yesterday after his skipper Dravid was the first victim in the innings, to give the much-awaited breakthrough to the home team.

"It was tough because the condition was really hard and you know I was running a bit of a temperature. But I was taking it very

easy and I couldn't probably feel the cramps in my hamstring if I told myself to keep playing in a sense that I was close to my 100. It was important and I'm happy at the time," said the soft-spoken wicketkeeper cum batsman.

Karthik had a lucky escape on the second day, after an early survival in the first day when wicket-keeper Khaled Mashud put him down, on 126, though he did not last long adding three more runs before miscuing a pull against Mashrafe Bin Mortaza that found Habibul Bashar at midwicket, took a cheeky single against Rafique to complete his hundred in 180 balls that contained thirteen sweetly-timed boundaries.

"Actually because the ball wasn't coming onto the bat it was not easy to play some shots which I should have played," he said.

Despite the fact that his side tightened the grip on the home team, Karthik was not ready to predict that they are going to finish

SEE PAGE 18 COL 2

LOCAL SNIPPETS

SPORTS REPORTER

Tangail reached the final of the Western Union under-18 National Football Championship after a hard-fought 2-1 win over Noakhali at the Sathkhira Stadium yesterday.

After trailing to a second-half goal from Noakhali striker Shahidul Arif, Tangail created enough chances as Mohammad Awwal struck a penalty to level the scores in the 86th minute. After nine minutes of extra time, Rafiqul Islam struck the winner for Tangail in the 99th minute after seeing another penalty being smartly saved by Noakhali goalkeeper Dildar Islam.

A goalless first-half saw some chances created by Tangail but the game sprang to life when Tangail's Riton Mia had his headed goal disallowed by the referee for having collided with the goalkeeper.

The second semifinal will be played today at the same venue between hosts Sathkhira and BKSP.

GRANDMASTERS CHESS

Local Grandmasters, International Masters and FIDE Masters along with other international Grandmasters will take part in the eighth United Insurance and Leasing Grandmaster Chess tournament at the NSC conference room from today.

The event will be held in ten rounds of Swiss League system and a total of 5,000 US dollars will be given as prize money.

All this was revealed at a press conference ahead of the event where president of Bangladesh

SEE PAGE 18 COL 1

Vaughan savours comeback ton

Cricket

APP, Leeds

England captain Michael Vaughan said scoring a century on his return to Test cricket was as "fine a feeling as I've ever felt in the game".

Vaughan marked his return to the Test arena after 18 months on the sidelines with 103 in front of his Headingly home crowd -- something he said he felt "destined" to achieve -- as England scored 365 for 6 on the opening day of the second Test against West Indies here Friday.

The 32-year-old batsman hadn't played a Test since appearing against Pakistan in Lahore in December 2005 after a career-threatening knee injury and a hamstring problem left him a frustrated spectator.

And just when it seemed he was about to return to the team, a broken finger sustained while batting in the county championship kept him out of the side for the drawn first Test of this four-match series at Lord's.

But Vaughan made good on his decision to bat first after winning the toss with his 16th century in his 65th Test, his fourth against West Indies and first at this level at Headingly.

He wasn't alone with Kevin Pietersen, who put on 163 with his

captain, 130 not out at stumps.

"That's as fine a feeling as I've ever felt in the game, the England captain told reporters after stumps.

"It was almost destiny for me to get a hundred on comeback on my home ground. I had 18 months out of Test match cricket. I know I'm a good player, but you still have to go out there and do it."

"When you've had such a long lay-off, of course there are doubts in the back of your mind -- whether you're going to see the ball, whether you'll react, whether the feet are going to move under pressure."

And in the final session captain Rammareesh Sarwan had to leave the field with a shoulder injury after falling heavily while trying to stop a boundary.

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Sarwan was subsequently taken to hospital where he underwent a scan. "We still don't know what the scans will reveal but we are very optimistic he will be able to join us in this game," said West Indies vice-captain Daren Ganga.

"We are going to remain optimistic until we hear what's happening."

He added: "England are definitely in front but we are still in the game. Getting five wickets today (Friday) still puts us in the reckoning in terms of getting them out for a total we can overhaul."

Pietersen plunders Windies

APP, Leeds

Daren Powell, Corey Collymore and Jerome Taylor all conceded more than 100 runs each.

Pietersen, 26, was eventually out when he carved medium-pacer

SEE PAGE 18 COL 6



PHOTO: AFP

England's Kevin Pietersen (L) celebrates his first double century during the second day of the second Test against the West Indies at Headingly yesterday.

Knighthood awaits Botham

Cricket

CRICINFO, undated

According to a report in Saturday's Daily Mirror, England great Ian Botham is set to receive a knighthood in the Queen's Birthday Honours next month, in recognition of his tireless campaigning for Leukaemia research, for which he has raised more than £10million through 11 arduous charity walks over the course of 22 years.

A senior Whitehall source told the Mirror: "Ian Botham was a fabulous cricketer but his selfless charity work is out of this world. His fund-raising is first-class and no one, absolutely no one, deserves an honour more than him."

"At a time when the honours system has been in the spotlight, his knighthood will be deserved

recognition of outstanding public service."

Botham was inspired after visiting a hospital in Taunton, Somerset, to have treatment for a broken toe. He walked into a children's ward and was told they were dying of leukaemia. The fatality rate was 80 per cent then, but these days it is 20 per cent, thanks in part to research his efforts have helped to fund.

His first charity walk was in 1985, a 900-mile trek from John O'Groats to Land's End, and he was on another last year, after turning 50, when Cricinfo's Andrew Miller joined him for the London leg.

Miller recalls: "Botham's natural walking pace would put most of London's joggers to shame. By the end of the walk, Piers Morgan (the former Mirror editor) looked

SEE PAGE 18 COL 5



IAN BOTHAM



Kai-Altech Super League Cricket
Abahani v Mohammadan
Venue: Fatullah Cricket Stadium
Victoria v Biman
Venue: BKSP
Sonargaon v Old DOHS
Venue: Dhamondi Cricket Stadium