

Another Bashar surprise

BISHWAJIT ROY



One would be inclined to think that fielding after winning the toss was the most shocking decision in the second and final Test but even that was overshadowed by Bangladesh captain Habibul Bashar's decision about his future plans.

The under-performing Bashar told the press yesterday after losing the series deciding match by an innings and 239 runs inside three days that he wants to quit one-day captaincy but will be available as player for both versions of the game.

"I expressed about my desire to a board official today. It's up to the board whether they will continue me as a captain in the Test team or not. As a player I will be available for both one-day and Test teams. Captaincy is not the last thing to me rather I think the time has come to prepare someone for the job," said the most successful Bangladesh skipper.

But the fact remains that he has not been criticised as a captain rather came under scrutiny because of his extended bad patch with the bat, especially from the World Cup he looked completely out of sorts as batsman and fielder in the one-day game and his batting in the Test series added more misery to his wounds.

"I have taken the decision of quitting one-day captaincy because questions have been raised that I was in the team because of captaincy. Because of this I want to prove myself as a batsman. If I can improve myself

then I will stay in the one-day side," he explained.

"I don't want to keep my position in the team as a captain rather I want to stay here as a performer," declared the right-hander.

His decision simply threw a challenge to the board as well the selection panel led by Faruque Ahmed ahead of next month's Sri Lanka tour where the Tigers will play three Tests and as many one-day internationals.

Many believe that except experience, he has nothing more to offer and has to battle for a place with players like inform Tushar Imran and Aftab Ahmed.

Regretting the decision to field first, Bashar however said that he was not the only captain in the world to make such a blunder.

"I must say we should have batted first. In the morning there was some moisture in the pitch but soon it appeared as so easy for batting. But everybody should understand that

sometimes your decisions might backfire. I am not the only captain to make mistakes and if I am not wrong, many others did the same kind of mistakes previously.

"The pitch was absolutely okay but our shot selection was poor. I think the long 13 months' break from Test cricket was one of the main reasons behind repeating the same old poor batting. We have had very impressive performance in last two years before going into a long break."

Bashar said that they had a plan in the second innings to finish the match with some pride but it did not happen as his side were bundled out for 253 in the second essay after being dismissed for 118 in the first.

Bangladesh vice-captain Mohammad Ashraful made an entertaining 41-ball 67 but if the dismissal of Bashar was pathetic in both innings, then the way his

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BANGLADESH-INDIA 2ND TEST SCOREBOARD

Final scoreboard on the third day of the second and final Test between India and Bangladesh at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur on Sunday:
INDIA: First innings 610-3 dec'd (Dinesh Karthik 129, Wasim Jaffer 138 ret'd hurt, Rahul Dravid 129, Sachin Tendulkar 122 not out; Mohammad Rafique 2-181)

BANGLADESH: First innings (overnight 58-5)	R	B	4s	6s
Javed Omar c Dinesh Karthik b Zaheer Khan	0	1	0	0
Shahriar Nafees b Zaheer Khan	2	5	0	0
Habibul Bashar c Mahendra Dhoni b Rudra Pratap Singh	4	6	1	0
Rajin Saleh c Wasim Jaffer b Anil Kumble	20	29	4	0
Mohammad Ashraful lbw b Zaheer Khan	0	1	0	0
Shakib Al Hasan lbw b Zaheer Khan	30	47	4	0
Mohammad Sharif lbw b Anil Kumble	13	38	1	0
Khaled Mashud c Mahendra Dhoni b Anil Kumble	25	64	2	0
Mashrafe Bin Mortaza c Anil Kumble b Ishant Sharma	2	4	0	0
Mohammad Rafique b Zaheer Khan	12	23	1	0
Syed Rassel not out	2	12	0	0
Extras: (lb-2, nb-6)	8			
Total: (All out in 37.2 overs)	118			

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PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

FUTILE FIFTY: Bangladesh batsman Mohammad Ashraful plays one over square leg for six during his 41-minute stay at the wicket on the third day of the second and final Test at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday. Even though it was the fastest fifty in terms of time, his effort did little to stop Bangladesh from suffering an embarrassing innings and 239-run defeat against India.

Dav parts with fond memories

SPORTS REPORTER



Whatmore, who directed the Tigers for the last time at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium yesterday, contrast will be the central recurring theme from his start in Darwin to his end at Mirpur in Dhaka.

The Sri Lankan-born Australian had desired before the start of his last game that his charges play some good and sensible cricket. But there was nothing encouraging in his side's performance in an innings and 239-run defeat in the second and final Test match against India.

It was his thirteenth innings defeat in 27 Tests since he has taken the helm of the Tigers in June 2003. True, he had experienced innings defeats in his first assignment in Australia but still there

was something, under the leadership of Khaled Mahmud, to cheer about in that occasion, especially the performance in the second Test at Cairns.

"It's obviously disappointing (the performance in Mirpur). But these things happen when you have a big score to chase. My first Test in charge of Bangladesh was against Australia in Australia. There were some encouraging signs there but we did not win; we did not play that well here either," was the reaction of the portly man when he was asked to remark about his swansong.

But the 53-year old coach said that he has found signs of improvement in the performance of the Tigers during his four years stint.

"But along the way there has been some real encouragement. We do not always play against strong teams. We do play against other teams that are not quite strong as Australia or South Africa."

Under his guidance Bangladesh have won only one Test against Zimbabwe at Chittagong and drew four matches including a creditable one in West Indies. In his second assignment Bangladesh were very close to their maiden Test victory in Multan before

Pakistan snatched the win by one-wicket.

Whatmore however rated highest the performance against World Champions Australian in Fatullah in April last year.

"On our day we can really push them (big teams). We can even push Australia also. We had a very good four days (Fatullah) and we were little bit unlucky not to make that game closer if not win it altogether against the number one ranked team. So we have improved, no question about that," he summarised.

Whatmore said that the team's performance in the World Cup in West Indies was the greatest satisfaction he derived during his four-year tenure with the Tigers.

"There are a lot of fond memories I will recall. Lot of interesting things along the way, but more or less lots of fond memories. Beating some of the big teams are the sweetest memories. Certainly progressing in the World Cup was a big effort and a very pleasant case," he said.

The one-day record of the Tigers is much better with 33 wins in 89 matches, although 18 of those came last year mostly against the minnows.

There were also landmark successes against teams like Australia, India (twice), Sri Lanka and South Africa.

"We have a long way to go, no question about that. How we became more competitive in the longer game that's a very good question that needs careful thinking. But we certainly need to play more than what we did, in this case 13 months went by without playing a Test series," he said expressing his opinion over Bangladesh team future in the highest level of the game.

"Everybody in the cricketing world wants Bangladesh to become competitive in the longer game," he added.

Despite the recent poor batting performance, Whatmore praised his captain Habibul Bashar with whom he brought the country much to cheer.

"He (Bashar) has been the best player for Bangladesh in Tests. He made lot of runs, averaging over 30.34 I think, which is pretty good. He was a big effort and a very pleasant case," he observed.

He also spoke about yesterday's breezy knock by Bangladesh vice-captain Mohammad Ashraful.

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PHOTO: STAR

India captain Rahul Dravid (L) holds aloft the winners' trophy while master batsman Sachin Tendulkar, who scored centuries in both Tests, poses with the man-of-the-series award at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday. India won the two-match Test series 1-0.

Effort pleases Dravid

SPORTS REPORTER



After a torrid few months, India captain Rahul Dravid felt relieved to have left Bangladesh with wins under his belt.

India clinched the one-day series 2-0 and the Test series 1-0 after the entire Chittagong-leg of the trip was hampered by rain. But the 34-year-old knew that anything short of a win against Bangladesh would have been unwelcome by their demanding fans back home.

"It was always a lose-lose situation. Had we not done well, people would have said, 'what's happening?' Had we won, it's not a big deal. So it was tough in that sense."

He declined to talk at any length about their disastrous World Cup where they lost to Bangladesh and Sri Lanka to exit the event after the first round. Rather he preferred to talk about the positives and the tour ahead to England next month.

"The World Cup is behind us and there's nothing we can do about it. We came here to get our rhythm, confidence and form back. We played good cricket in some tough conditions here," said the Indian captain.

"I don't get excited by most situations. My belief is to keep things in perspective whether it is victory or defeat. We will take some heart from this win, some positives."

Positives came in the form of opener Dinesh Karthik who struck his maiden Test century, Wasim Jaffer's reply with a hundred after going for a pair in the first Test in Chittagong and the collective bowling effort of the fast bowlers.

"They have given me confidence. Wasim's comeback has been good for India. He's got some big scores, some low scores. The challenge for him would be to be consistent, put a string of good scores together, which is what a good opener should do. Dinesh (Karthik) hasn't put a foot wrong in the last three games. He shows character, attitude, hunger, and desire. He's already started thinking ahead about what the challenges are going to be in England," said Dravid who is expected to continue leading India to England.

"Having batted on it for a long time, we had figured out what line and length to bowl. We knew that the new ball was going to be critical. All our bowlers, especially Zaheer, did a great job."

Dravid, one of the finest batsmen in this era with a Test average of 57, had some words of solace for

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BKSP oust hosts to reach final

SPORTS REPORTER

BKSP set a final clash against Tangail when the Savar sport institute came from a goal down to thrash hosts Sathkira 4-1 in the second semifinal of the Western Union National Youth Football Championship yesterday.

Pritam slotted a hat-trick and Sabuj added the other for BKSP who were held goalless at halftime at the Sathkira Stadium and conceded the lead three minutes after resumption through local boy Jahir.

The final is slated for tomorrow.

Chittagong kids going to France

SPORTS REPORTER

Chittagong will represent Bangladesh in the Danone Nations Cup to be held in France this June-July when they emerged champions in the qualifying competition (10-12 years) organised by Bangladesh Football Federation.

Chittagong defeated Khulna 2-0 in the tiebreakers after a goalless draw in yesterday's final at the Bangabandhu National Stadium.

Noble Laureate Prof. Dr Muhammad Yunus distributed prizes as chief guest.

Mohammedan runners-up Akram's last bow

SPORTS REPORTER



Mohammedan Sporting Club finished runners-up in the Kai-Altech Premier Cricket League when they recorded a 25-run win over Abahani yesterday to spoil the league champions' celebration party.

In a low scoring final round match, Mohammedan defended a paltry 165 on a sultry day at the Fatullah Stadium to end on 24 points, one adrift of Abahani - who had sealed the championship in the previous round - and three ahead of Sonargaon, who crashed to Super League bottom-table Old DOHS.

Abahani, who regained the title after seven years and five leagues, were seventh last season while Mohammedan, who dashed Sonargaon's hopes to hold on to their second place, had a fifth-place finish.

Two-time outgoing champions DOHS ended a disappointing season with a five-wicket victory

but their captain, the legendary Akram Khan, scored only three off eight balls in his last competitive game.

A former national captain,

Akram ended his more than two decades of domestic cricket to start a new innings as a national selector from next month.

Bangladesh Biman also moved

up the table, retaining fourth place after huge nine-wicket win against last year's third Victoria, who slipped to fifth place.

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What to WATCH

ESPN
England v West Indies
Second Test, Day 4
Live from 4:00 pm
STAR Sports
French Open
First Round
Live from 3:00 pm



Dinesh Karthik

(India batsman)
"Self-belief is definitely a big part in all this."

After scoring his maiden century in the first innings of the second Test against Bangladesh.



PHOTO: STAR

END OF AN ERA: Former Bangladesh captain and Old DOHS skipper Akram Khan (L), who drew the curtains on his 23-year domestic career yesterday, receives a bouquet of flowers from Sonargaon captain Al-Shahriar as another former national captain Khaled Mahmud (C) looks on prior to the final Premier League match at the Dhanmondi Cricket Stadium.