

4 join Rakib atop table

SPORTS REPORTER

International Master Abdullah Al Rakib lost solo lead in the 8th United Insurance and United Leasing Grandmasters Chess Tournament and shared the top position with four others after three rounds yesterday.

Rakib's winning run was snapped when he drew with Iranian GM Ghaem Maghami Ehsan at the chess federation hall-room.

FM Nasir Ahmed shocked GM Ziaur Rahman to move to the top alongside Rakib, GM Reesat Bin Sattar, IM Enamul Hossain Rajib and GM Nguyen Anh Dung of Vietnam, all on 2.5 points.

Reesat beat FM Abu Sufian Shakil, Nguyen beat his Bangladesh counterpart GM Niaz Mursheed while Rajib defeated Pakistani IM Mahmood Lodhi.

Ghaem, India's GN Gopal and local FM Khondokar Aminul Islam were second with two points each.

Vaas's eyes on 2011 World Cup

BBC ONLINE, undated

Sri Lanka's most experienced opening bowler says he has no plans to retire until the next Cricket World Cup.

Chaminda Vaas, who was a member of the 1996 team that won the World Cup believes he might be able to play in 2011 World Cup, to be played in the sub-continent.

"2011, I think I will be able to play but everything depend upon my fitness," the veteran new-ball bowler told BBC's Sandeshaya.

Other two veterans who played in 1996 World Cup, Sanath Jayasuriya and Muttiah Muralidaran, have also ruled out setting deadlines to retire from the game.

"I am maintaining a good fitness at the moment and I'd rather focus on year by year than a long period," Vaas said.

"However, I think I will be able to play in 2011, if I maintain my current level of fitness".

Vaas is currently playing with Middlesex County in England where he sustained a head injury last week.

"Courtney Walsh and Ambrose for example, played until they were 38," he said commenting on the former West Indies' giants.

Warnakulasuriya, Patabendige Ushan Joseph Chaminda Vaas, who was briefly appointed as Sri Lanka's vice captain replacing Mahela Jayawardene, says he has no regrets whatsoever in his 13-year long career.

The veteran bowler with 313 Test victims and 383 ODI wickets for his name, says he has achieved what many other fast bowlers in the subcontinent did not manage.

"My record as a subcontinent bowler speaks for itself. I think I have achieved a lot in my cricketing career for which I am very proud of," he told bcsinhalacom.

Becoming only the second fast bowler, after Imran Khan, to take 14 wickets in a match in the sub-continent taking the first-ever ODI eight-for, against Zimbabwe following his lacklustre display

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team selection be for the forthcoming Sri Lanka tour?

DW: Look we have done okay in the ODI team. I am not sure there will be too many changes. But this is the start of a new four-year cycle and it really depends on what the selectors want to achieve. Building a game for another World Cup, which will take place in the sub-continent. Changes will have to be done very carefully. It may be the time to get some new players in.

DSS: What would you rate as your greatest success during your four year tenure?

DW: There have been some really good games that we played in. The recent World Cup performance is definitely up there. It allowed the team to get into the Super Eight competition.

DSS: From a very neutral standpoint, what do you think of Habibul Bashar's decision to quit as one-day captain and about his future in the shorter-version?

DW: He said he had a bit of pressure. His lack of runs may be why all these comes about. Very unfortunate that he didn't enjoy the best of

the World Cup. Even in the last 12 months, he has been useful at number five. People don't look at certain areas like team bus, dressing room, etc where he adds more calmness. He was under tremendous pressure in his own mind. But I respect whatever he has done.

DSS: Do you think Bangladesh can afford to have the luxury of separate captains?

DW: Not ideal. You would like to have one captain. But it depends on the situation where the team is. It's not my decision though.

He (Ashraful) has had some experience with Sonargaon and Dhaka. He is the next in terms of experience. I think he should be given a chance to do what he likes.

DSS: Our cricketers have always been for the sheer amount of talent they have, yet their averages are really poor. Do you think that our cricketers

are not consistent due to technical failures or some psychological issues?

DW: Yeah, it is the same now. We have another boy (Shahriar Nafees) out of form as well. Opening hasn't been the best part of our batting line-up. It would have been nice to have a good opening pair as it is important to have a good start if you're batting first or second.

DSS: Tell about one single fond memory or interesting event?

DW: Lots of fond memories. Relationship that I have developed with the players. Interesting conversations you have, interesting things you learn from players. Going to places with them like Jersore, Khulna and Bogra and just to know of their lives. Interacting with the players for four years, I've enjoyed their company. They are all very good boys.

DSS: What are the strong and weak points of Bangladeshi cricket?

DW: Their strength is that they keep coming up after being knocked down. They always look for the next game. As we evolve slowly, we will see consistent improvement in the shorter version of the game. It gets harder in the longer version where the opposition have more time to impose themselves on the cricketers. Improvement in the Test will take more time.

DSS: What are your biggest regrets?

DW: Nothing.

DSS: We have seen some talented cricketers fade away from the spotlight during your tenure like Alok Kapali, Al Shahriar, Tushar Imran. It's true that they have failed sometimes but don't you think that you have not motivated them enough to comeback. It seemed that you just let them go.

DW: (laughs) I am not happy with anybody who has talent and doesn't make it. But I do take some responsibility. But you're being harsh as you're saying that it's my fault. I never take credit when players do well. Therefore if a player doesn't do well, I don't think it's fair to say that the coach is at fault. I take responsibility but at the end of the day, the player should take some of the responsibilities. Alok is still rated highly and potentially extremely good. If you see him bat in the nets, you'd pick him first but unfortunately that didn't translate into runs. Even though he has so much ability, he must understand what's happening.

DSS: Do you think lack of pace bowlers in the pipeline is a big headache, especially in Test cricket?

DW: Possibly yes. Physique in Bangladesh doesn't allow us to have big, tall, strong individuals who bowl fast. We would love to have more of the likes of Shahadat (Hossain) and Mashrafe. Yah, we would like to have more bowlers who hit the wicket and think we have a few being developed in the academy.

DSS: Do you think not finding a permanent opening combination is a big



PHOTO: STAR
GM Ziaur Rahman (L) in deep concentration during his board against FM Nasir Ahmed in the United Insurance and Leasing chess tournament at the NSC chess hall yesterday. Zia lost the board to Nasir.

Captain cheers Steve on

Cricket

APP, Leeds

England captain Michael Vaughan was hopeful Old Trafford would again inspire Steve Harmison after the fast bowler failed to fire for much of the side's record-breaking innings and 283 run second Test win against the West Indies here at Headingley.

Harmison was reduced to the status of a supporting act in a match where left-arm quick Ryan Sidebottom, in his second Test and six years after his debut, returned match figures of eight for 86 as the tourists were routed inside three playing days after Sunday's total washout.

The Durham quick's match figures of five for 92 disguise the fact that three of his wickets came late in Monday's final day when a weak West Indies side, with injured skipper Ramaresh Sarwan unable to bat, were already well on the way to suffering their worst Test innings defeat of all-time.

"I thought then Steve Harmison was back to what we know he can be," Vaughan said. "That was bowling 90mph, getting bounce off a good length, and putting batsmen under a lot of pressure when the wicket wasn't swinging."

Now it remains to be seen how the 29-year-old Sidebottom fares on a less helpful pitch against a far stronger batting line-up

But Pietersen, who spent a season playing with Sidebottom at Nottinghamshire before joining Hampshire, said his former county colleague could take heart from the example of Sri Lanka left-arm quick Chaminda Vaas.

"Any bowler who swings the ball consistently and hits good areas can play in any team. You face them in the nets and you do have a hard time.

Chaminda Vaas has been pretty good at it in his career, so there's no reason why Ryan can't have a good go at it here."

For Sidebottom, who began his career at Yorkshire where his father Arnie, who won one Test cap for England in 1985, before moving to Nottinghamshire three years ago, it was a dream comeback.

"It was a concern for England, otherwise utterly dominant, after Harrison had been off-target in the drawn series opener at Lord's following his lacklustre display

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during their 5-0 Ashes thrashing in Australia.

But Vaughan, who marked his return to Test cricket after 18 months out injured with 103 in England's 570 for seven declared where Kevin Pietersen's Test-best 226 was the centrepiece, said Harmison would be a different proposition at Old Trafford.

Last year at the Manchester venue, on a lively pitch, Harmison took 11 for 76, including a first innings haul of six for 19, as England overwhelmed Pakistan by an innings and 120 runs.

"Steve has openly admitted he hasn't had the best six months. Old Trafford has always been a great ground for him, he'll be looking to reproduce the performance he showed against Pakistan last year," Vaughan also told reporters on Monday after his commanding return to Test cricket on his Yorkshire home-ground.

There were signs of the Harmison of old as West Indies lost their last three wickets for no runs in eight balls.

"I thought put England 1-0 up in the four-match series ahead of the third Test which starts at Old Trafford on June 7.

It was a landmark day for England -- their third largest Test innings victory -- and Vaughan and who equalled Peter May's record of 20 wins as England captain.

But for much of the game both Harmison and county colleague Liam Plunkett were wayward, Harmison in particular testing the agility of wicketkeeper Matthew Prior with several legside deliveries.

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"He'll be a real threat to all

batsmen if he can reproduce that kind of performance on a regular basis," Vaughan said.

Sidebottom's success also represented, as new England coach Peter Moores observed, something of a triumph for the much-maligned county game.

Understandably distrusted as a proving ground for international players by former coach Duncan Fletcher when he took charge of an England side languishing at the foot of the world rankings in 1999 and for much of his subsequent tenure, the signs are it is starting to bridge the gap between first-class and Test level.

Indeed, Sidebottom's performance was an endorsement of the old-fashioned benefits of plenty of overs which give a bowler a chance to groove his game.

This, critics claim, is something too many promising bowlers were denied by the inflexible Fletcher's routine policy of resting players on England central contracts from county to county.

For example, last season Plunkett bowled just 162 overs and Harmison 183 compared to Sidebottom's 485.5.

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Bangladesh media clinch series

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh media team fought back to win the three-match Media Cup Cricket Series 2-1 against the Indian media team at the Dhanmondi Cricket Academy ground on Monday night.

The six-a-side series was organised for the journalists from India and Bangladesh, who covered the recently concluded GrameenPhone Bangladesh-India ODI and Test Series.

The first selection, led by TigerCricket.com Editor Rabeed Imam, conceded a devastating five-wicket defeat, but the next selection bounced back in the second match with a 52-run victory, thanks mainly to a brilliant opening partnership between Janakantha's Asif Iqbal and sports editor of Amar Desh and captain MM Kaiser who added 89 runs.

In the third and deciding match, Bangladesh media registered a 28-run win to clinch the series, which ensured bragging rights for the local media against their Indian counterparts.

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Dav tops Pak list

Cricket

CRICINFO, undated

Dav Whatmore remains top of Pakistan's coaching wishlist as the search to replace the late Bob Woolmer enters