

Rain ruins tour opener

Cricket

BISHWAJIT ROY from Colombo

Rain ruined Bangladesh's only warm-up match ahead of the Test series against Sri Lanka as the tourists' three-dayer against Sri Lanka A fizzled out to a draw on the third and final day at the Colts Cricket ground here yesterday.

Overnight rain delayed the start of play by 55 minutes as Bangladesh captain Mohammad Ashraful decided to declare their first innings on the previous day's 245 for eight. The second-string side, who got only 36.3 overs to bat before rain again stopped play in the mid-afternoon session, reached 170 for four at stumps.

With the skies opening up, heavy rain gripped Colombo and it is believed that weather will play a big part in the series, which will see three Tests and as many one-day internationals.

"Yes, we are a bit frustrated by the conditions but at least, we got the chance to see what's coming," said the Tigers' interim coach Shaun Williams after the match.

"It was a decent start. Not that everyone carried on to have a big score, but almost everyone got a start. At least the boys tried to stay out in the middle," Williams said of Bangladesh's batting efforts.

"It was a good news that Habibul (Bashar) returned among the runs," the Australian said of the former Bangladesh captain, who top scored in the first innings with 63.

"Ashraful also looked confident and so did a few others. I am happy that we got closer to what I wanted in

our first match. The fact that they have batted 104 overs proves that it has been improving," he added.

"I would have been happy had we got the chance to play the full match," said Ashraful, who completed his first match as Bangladesh captain.

"Rain hampered our preparation at home and I feel it is going to play a big role in the series here too," the batsmen told.

When asked why the declaration came in the morning, he defended his decision.

"Mushfiqur (Rahim) had a chance to score a fifty and it would have been better to give him some time with the bat. But in a warm-up match that's not very important. I needed to see my bowlers because with the overcast condition prevailing from the last day, I was worried how much time I would get for them.

"Overall, it was a good start because we usually do not get along well in tour openers. There is nothing to be worried about and it will definitely boost the confidence of the team," said Ashraful.

Back to the day's proceedings and openers Michael Vandort and Mahela Udawatte batted aggressively in the morning session to rattle 61 runs before Vandort fell to a smart catch by wicketkeeper Khaled Mashud off left-arm seamer Syed Rasel for 38.

Recalled to the Test squad, the left-hander Vandort cracked five boundaries in his 42-ball knock. But his dismissal did not dampen the spirits of his partner Udawatte as the 20-year-old left-hander smashed his way to a run-ball-fifty.

But the introduction of spin brought his downfall as left-arm spinner Abdur Razzaq, recalled into

the Test fold after being ignored during the home series against India, got him out for 53. Udawatte struck a six and eight fours in his 52-ball stint at the crease.

All-rounder Shakib Al Hasan then had Sri Lanka A captain Thilan Samaraweera, coming in at number three, bowled for 30.

Both Razzaq and Shakib made an impression as their arrival prompted the hosts to take rear-guard action and the impressive run-rate started to come down.

All-rounder Mohammad Sharif then took the wicket of left-hander Jehan Mubarak as he had the lanky batsman out bowled for only 11.

Two overs after the dismissal, rain again appeared and as the covers were re-introduced, the match was almost surely at its end.

As the top order was dismissed, wicketkeeper-batsman Prasanna Jayawardene was unbeaten on 31 alongside robust batsman Thilina Kandamby, who had just arrived at the crease, on 1 off 4 deliveries.

SCOREBOARD

Scoreboard on the third day of the three-day warm-up match between Bangladesh and Sri Lanka A at the Colts Cricket Club Ground in Colombo on Friday:

BANGLADESH: First innings 245-8 decl (Bashar 63, Ashraful 37, Omar 34, Rahim 33 not out, Shahadat 24 not out, Saleh 21; Herath 3-63, Welegedara 2-59).

SRI LANKA A: First innings Vandort c Mashud b Rasel 38 Udawatte b Razzaq 53 Samaraweera b Shakib 30

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Bangladesh players celebrate the dismissal of Sri Lanka 'A' team batsman Jehan Mubarak (C) during the final day of the three-day practice match at the Colts Cricket ground in Colombo yesterday. PHOTO: AFP

Zaim rescues Russel

Ctg Abahani hold Muktijoddha



SPORTS REPORTER

A second half strike by Nureddine Zaim bailed out Sheikh Russel with a 1-0 win over Farashganj but Russel's fellow title contenders Muktijoddha were not as much lucky as they stumbled to a 1-1 draw in the away match against Chittagong Abahani yesterday.

Muktijoddha, who lost to Chittagong Mohammedan in their first trip to the port city in the first leg, have now failed to win a single match outside Dhaka after also being held by Khulna Abahani 1-1.

The Reds were without skipper Saifur Rahman Moni, who had to return to Dhaka in the morning after receiving the news of his father's death, and his replacement in the first eleven Rokonuzzaman Kanchan -- back to the side after a long lay-off -- fired the visitors ahead in the 49th minute.

However, Liberian striker Abraham Bobby equalised two minutes from time for his fifth

league goal which gave the home team one point at the MA Aziz Stadium in Chittagong.

"We should have won this match," told Muktijoddha coach Abu Yusuf whose side thrashed the same team 4-0 in Dhaka.

"I feel that our players were a bit hot-headed towards the end and gifted the equaliser to Chittagong Abahani, who played tough for some time. Also, we broke their defence often but the final delivery was not accurate," said Yusuf.

Muktijoddha, who would have taken solo lead had they won, joined Mohammad and Russel atop the table with 26 points after all three have played 14 matches while second from bottom Chittagong Abahani increased their collection to 11 points.

At the Bangabandhu National Stadium, the start was delayed by over an hour due to torrential rain and Farashganj held Russel to a goalless draw at half-time.

The two sides drew 1-1 in the first leg but Russel finally got the reward for dominating the show when Zaim received a right side cross from fellow Moroccan midfielder Ighir Mohammad and hammered the ball into the far post to separate the two sides after 66

minutes.

After a slow start on a muddy pitch, Russel began to slice the rival defence midway through the first half but Bulbul, who did well to position himself behind Tanvir's left flank centre, screws his shot wide in the 25th minute.

A couple of minutes later, it was Tanvir's turn to frustrate the tent when he put Bulbul's pass wide.

Russel goalkeeper Zia survived a test by Farashganj midfielder Kabir, who unleashed a long range drive five minutes before the break while Farashganj custodian Mamun made a spectacular diving save from a Saad freekick, just before conceding the goal.

The riversiders had a chance to score level in the dying moments but their forwards failed to get the vital touch from a goalmouth melee to remain on 17 points.

TEAMS

RUSSEL: Zia, Aminul, Hassan, Bourid, Mishu, Ighir, Pappu (Kai-sen), Zaim, Tanvir (Nayan and Pradip Barua), Bulbul and Saad.

Farashganj: Mamun, Khaled, Faisal, Liton, Jamal, Mamun Mia, Rony, Amirul (Ali), Kabir, Puma and Robin (Palash).

Referee: Mansoor Azad.

Vandort replaces Tharanga

BBC ONLINE, undated

Sri Lanka have called up Michael Vandort to replace injured opener Upul Tharanga for next Monday's first Test against Bangladesh in Colombo.

Tharanga suffered a hairline fracture of his left foot after being hit by a ball from teammate Lasith Malinga during a practice session.

"We are hoping there is a chance he can play in the second Test," captain Mahela Jayawardene commented.

Vandort has played six Tests, the most recent in England last year.

He already has two centuries to his credit and could be asked to go in first with newcomer Malinda Wamapura, who is in line for his

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Hamlet pilots Biman to top

SPORTS REPORTER

Hamlet led Bangladesh Biman to a thrilling 3-2 win against defending champions Sheikh Russel in the AB Bank Senior Division Table Tennis League yesterday.

In the three-hour long finale of the first-leg, Mostafa gave Russel a good start when he blanked Biman's Manash but Hamlet

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IRELAND V INDIA

Vital time for hosts

Cricket

BBC ONLINE, undated

Ireland captain Trent Johnston has said this weekend's one-day internationals against India and South Africa are of "vital importance to

Irish cricket."

The Irish face India at Stormont on Saturday before taking on South Africa at the Belfast venue on Sunday in games which will get worldwide TV exposure.

"It's a marvellous boost to the players to know that hundreds of millions of fans will be watching us play."

"It's another motivation for us," added the Ireland captain.

Irish Cricket Union chief executive Warren Deutrom says that his organisation is eagerly looking forward to the games.

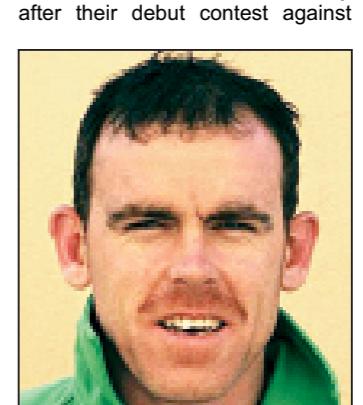
"The Irish Cricket Union is delighted to be hosting these important matches on behalf of the Board of Control for Cricket in India," added Deutrom.

"To have two great Test Nations such as India and South Africa playing against each other and against Ireland on Irish soil is a terrific boost for the sport on these shores."

"I understand that these matches

cumulatively may constitute the largest ever televised audience for any sporting event on Irish soil, which is a massive source of pride for Irish Cricket, and Irish people in general."

The weekend games will only be Ireland's second and third one-day internationals on home territory after their debut contest against



TRENT JOHNSTON

England last year.

Andrew White played in that game and the allrounder believes that the Irish can help to ensure good contests over the weekend despite their recent struggles in the Friends Provident Trophy, when

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Collingwood in charge

Cricket

AFP, London

Paul Collingwood was named Friday as England's new one-day captain and put in charge of a new-look squad for the upcoming series against the West Indies.

The Durham allrounder replaces Michael Vaughan, who has opted to concentrate on his role at the helm of the Test team.

Both Vaughan and Test opener Andrew Strauss were left out of the squad that will face the West Indies in two Twenty20 and three one-day internationals next week.

Hampshire allrounder Dimitri Mascarenhas and Warwickshire's South African-born batsman Jonathan Trott earn their first international call-ups as part of a 14-man squad.

Collingwood, 31, had been widely expected to get the role after England's leading one-day batsman, Kevin Pietersen, said he did not feel ready for the responsibility of captaincy.

Strauss was also in the reckoning but his current lack of form damped his chances while England's leading allrounder, Andrew Flintoff, is currently recovering from an ankle operation.

"The selectors believe that Paul's experience and performances in the one-day game make him the ideal candidate to lead the

side," said David Graveney, chairman of the England selectors.

"He has been a key member of the one-day team for a while and we believe he is ready to take on the additional responsibility of captaincy."

Neither Flintoff, Sajid Mahmood (hernia) nor Ravi Bopara (thigh) were fit enough for consideration and a further five players from the World Cup squad have been over-



PAUL COLLINGWOOD

looked -- Vaughan, Strauss, Jamie Dalrymple, Paul Nixon and Jon Lewis.

Graveney stressed: "Overall, we were keen to identify the best way for the team to play in the one day game, pick players who can perform certain roles and keep one eye on the need to build towards the World Cup in 2011."

"We have decided to give oppor-

tunities to players who have not been tried previously such as Jonathan Trott and Dimitri Mascarenhas as well as a fresh chance to others who have limited experience of one-day international cricket such as Alastair Cook, Matt Prior, Owais Shah, Ryan Sidebottom and Mike Yardy.

"Jonathan will give us options in the top three of the order and he has been in prolific form for Warwickshire in the Friends Provident Trophy this season."

"Similarly, Dimitri Mascarenhas enjoys an excellent record in the shorter form of the game, has shown that he can take wickets on different types of surfaces and is also an effective hitter in the lower order."

Nottinghamshire left-arm seamer Sidebottom is recalled six years after playing his two previous one-day internationals, having impressed during the recent Test series victory over West Indies by claiming 16 wickets.

He has also been rewarded by being added to the England Performance squad alongside Trott and Mascarenhas to increase its size to 28 players.

SQUAD

Paul Collingwood (captain), James Anderson, Ian Bell, Stuart Broad, Alastair Cook, Dimitri Mascarenhas, Monty Panesar, Kevin Pietersen, Liam Plunkett, Matt Prior, Owais Shah, Ryan Sidebottom, Jonathan Trott.



PHOTO: STAR

Aaqib to help GP pacer hunt bowlers

SPORTS REPORTER

Former Pakistan fast bowler Aaqib Javed will impart tips to the final round participants of the GrameenPhone Pacer Hunt.

The Pakistan national academy coach will arrive on June 25 and travel to BKSP where the trainees are located.

Javed will work closely with the pace bowlers at the camp on technical and non-technical aspects related to fast bowling and offer specialised coaching and expert opinion on fast bowling to the selected fast bowlers.

These fast bowlers were selected in a nationwide search for pace bowler in Bangladesh, the third such event undertaken by the mobile phone giants.

The camp will end on June 28.

Muktijoddha forward Alfaz Ahmed (L) tries to take a shot through two Chittagong Abahani players during their B. League match at the MA Aziz Stadium in Chittagong yesterday.