



Did U Know?

Morshed Ali Khan, former Bangladesh left-arm seamer, is among eleven players who made their one-day international debut on their birthday. On May 14 1998, Morshed played against India in Mohali during which he took the prize wicket of Sourav Ganguly.



Daren Powell

(West Indies fast bowler)
"I bowled a sharp ball at him (Pietersen) and gave him a stare. Then I got my ball in the right area; he went and played a stroke and he nicked one."

While revealing his plan to take the wicket of England batsman Kevin Pietersen in the 3rd ODI in Nottingham.



TEN Sports

Bangladesh v Sri Lanka
Third Test, Day 3
Live from 11:00am
ESPN
Sportscenter India
Live at 8.30pm



B. League
Ctg Abahani v Rahmatgani
Venue: MA Aziz Stadium
Time: 4:15pm

Sachin to lead India

CRICINFO, undated

If the Indians happen to glance at the scorecard of the recently concluded Essex-Nottinghamshire fixture, they might think that the M20 was redirected through the centre of the County Ground in Chelmsford. The pitch used for the encounter might just have been tarred, with both teams amassing in excess of 700 in a rather pointless exercise.

A board inside the club premises shows that the Australian tourists of 1948 rattled up a monumental 723 against Essex, though that was at Southend-on-Sea. It got to such a point that Keith Miller decided to gift his wicket at the lack of a challenge. The Indians have a challenge in front of them all right, taking on England A, a side filled with fringe players staking their claim.

Rahul Dravid is the sort who loves to bat till eternity, and would no doubt relish a good batting surface, but it was decided to give him a rest as a precautionary measure. He had suffered a calf strain on the first day of the Sussex tour game and required a runner in the second innings. Though he has recovered, it was decided to wrap him in cotton-wool for the first Test at Lord's, starting in a week's time.

Sachin Tendulkar, who's captained India in 25 Tests and 73 ODIs but never on English soil, will lead in Dravid's absence. It was also decided that Gautam Gambhir, who cracked a solid 81 in the first innings at Hove, Anil Kumble and RP Singh, the left-arm seamer, would sit out of this game. That leaves a squad of 12 and one can expect Ishant Sharma to beat Ranadeb Bose for the final slot. Bose got a chance at Hove and this

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Murali slams Ashraful



Cricket

BISHWAJIT ROY from Kandy

Mohammad Ashraful's men had their last chance to find an answer to their reckless batting in the first innings in the series but they failed to grasp the opportunity after being bundled out for 131 runs.

The fallout from disastrous performances in the first innings of the first two games was thorough unpleasant. Bangladesh were subject to a lot of scrutiny and some harsh criticism from almost all quarters but there was a surprising lack of action yesterday. It seemed that everyone had accepted their fate and that first innings were consigned to being a lesson in failure.

People were more interested to know whether the weather would favour a Sri Lanka clean sweep in this three-match series against Bangladesh.

It was impossible for the Bangladesh team to avoid this issue but any semblance of 'truth' was only revealed off the record. From the start of the Test series the message to "write positive" was distinctly clear, but yesterday even that request had to be withdrawn because it was impossible to derive

pluses from 131 runs.

"Everything has remained the same. The only thing I can say is that the players should understand their responsibility," was the brief reaction of selector Akram Khan, who is touring with the team here.

"There is a lack of individual drive in our team which is a big problem in our cricket," one commented under condition of anonymity.

The Bangladesh team management might have tried to find alternatives to explain the repeated failures of their batsmen but spin-wizard Muttiah Muralidaran's evaluation was as straight as they come.

"Some Bangladeshi batsmen have got good technique and they are also not very bad players against the spin bowling.

But the problem is that they are not mentally good enough to cope up with the pressure of Test cricket," said Murali, who claimed six wickets for 28 runs in the innings.

The ace spinner also raised question about the necessity of a three-match series against Bangladesh as he believes that a two-match series is good enough for the country.

"In our initial stage we played one-off Tests on most occasions

and it was also true for the other teams. Bangladesh also need the exposure to improve their performance but the problem is that too many bad performances have demoralized a team," he defended. "Bangladesh cricket is on a learning curve. They are taking longer than any other country. We have to give them the opportunity. Then only can they improve. Otherwise if they stop playing Test cricket and play one-day cricket they won't adjust to the system. They should play more four-day cricket with 'A' teams against other nations. When you get beat so often very badly it also demoralizes them," he said.

He also came down hard on Bangladesh skipper Mohammad Ashraful, when he was asked about his ability to play against him.

"He is a talented batsman but a 22 average is not a standard for a top order batsman. Even Chaminda Vaas has the same average," was his distinctly uncharacteristic reaction.

"I have already taken a hundred wickets in two other venues at Galle and SSC. This is the third. It is not easy to take 100 wickets in each venue. Not many people have done it," said Muralidaran who described his performance of

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PHOTO: AFP

Champion Sri Lanka off-spinner Muttiah Muralidaran completes a brilliant return catch to dismiss Bangladesh's Mashrafe Bin Mortaza (unseen) during the second day of the third and final Test at the Asgiriya Stadium in Kandy yesterday.

Bashar, Nafees axed from ODIs

SPORTS REPORTER

Habibul Bashar's wretched Sri Lanka tour came to an end when he was named among five players to return home after the end of the Test series.

The five Test players -- Bashar, Khaleed Mashud, Rajin Saleh, Shahriar Nafees and Mohammad Sharif -- will be replaced by Aftab Ahmed, Tamim Iqbal, Forhad Reza and Mahmudullah Riyad, who will play in the one-day series that begins on July 20. The four Colombo-bound players will leave Dhaka on July 14.

Tushar Imran was also in the list for only ODIs but the middle-order batsman had was flown to Sri Lanka earlier to play the ongoing third and final Test in Kandy.

Having amassed only 54 runs from five completed innings including the first innings of the Kandy Test, Bashar failed to make an impact on the selectors. This was the first time that the highest Test and one-day scorer for the Tigers was overlooked for an entire one-day series.

Bashar's exclusion was pending since his Test performance would have guaranteed him a place in the limited-overs outfit. But after his omission from the Twenty20 World Championship preliminary squad and this drop, it seems that Bashar's days in the shorter version are numbered.

Apart from Bashar, it was also a wake-up call for opener Nafees who has averaged 20.40 in the Test series and has frustrated the team think-tank with some reckless batting in crucial stages in the Tests.

For Saleh, who fought hard to score a fifty in the first Test, and Sharif, who played the second Test without any success, this would be yet another one-day disappointment. Interestingly, Mehrab Hossain has been retained in the team.

Meanwhile, Mohammed Rafique will also return home due to a family emergency and is expected to rejoin the team in Colombo later. The six players will leave Colombo on July 16.

U-19s in trouble

UNB, Dhaka

Bangladesh Under-19 team were in trouble against the Sri Lanka U-19s on the first day of the second three-day match at the Police ground in Colombo yesterday.

Replying to the home side's first innings total of 314, Bangladesh slumped to 14 for three in six overs in their first innings at stumps.

Nasir and Zahir of Bangladesh were at the crease on three and one respectively.

Earlier, Nasir and Shuvashish each grabbed four wickets conceding 22 and 49 runs respectively while captain Mahmudul Hasan took two wickets for 94.

The first three-day match between the two sides ended in a draw.

Arambagh stun Reds



SPORTS REPORTER

Arambagh dented Muktiyoddha's slender title hopes when they came from a goal down to upset the depleted local giants 2-1 in yesterday's B. League match at the Bangabandhu National Stadium.

Alfaz Ahmed put Muktiyoddha ahead after 36 minutes with his eighth league goal but the lead was short lived as Iddi Badambuze equalised on the stroke of halftime.

Captain Kallol Kumar Ghosh Zuku then sealed Arambagh's victory early into the second half with a spectacular long-range

effort that also helped them take revenge of a 1-0 loss to Muktiyoddha in the first leg.

A win would have taken the Reds back to the top of the table but coach Abu Yusuf, without four major players -- Rajani, Titu, Saiful, Parvez Babu -- in the injury list, were forced to field a weak side.

Arman Al Azizi was given his first match, and so was Kum Einstein, a Cameroonian striker who did not impress.

However, they drew the first blood only to see Alfaz firing the ball straight to Arambagh keeper Piru in the 18th minute after a through from Hassan Al Mamun, who had to switch to leftback in absence of Titu and Parvez.

In the next minute, Zuku came close to score after receiving a square pass from Kenyan striker Nicodemus but the midfielder's

shot from the edge of the area was saved by Titumir in his second attempt at the Muktiyoddha goal.

In an open battle, Muktiyoddha created another chance but Matuur Munna failed to beat Piru's gloves inside from the box in the 32nd minute.

The pressure told four minutes later when ex-national striker Alfaz latched with a right-side centre by Moroccan midfielder Ibrahim to dodge past rival centre-back Akram and place a left-footer past a helpless Piru.

Iddi scored his fourth goal to score level for Arambagh in the 45th minute when the Ugandan nodded home a cross by Kenyan midfielder Domenic.

Zuku then pulled off a stunner in the 67th minute to give Arambagh the lead when he picked

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Arambagh captain Zuku (L) races past a tackle by Muktiyoddha midfielder Arman Aziz during their B. League match at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

KP blames fatigue



Cricket

BBC ONLINE, undated

England's Kevin Pietersen has blamed tiredness for his poor form in the one-day series against West Indies.

The batsman scored just 42 runs in the three matches, losing his world number one ranking in one-day cricket.

"Right now I'm mentally fatigued, I'm just a very, very tired person," Pietersen told BBC Radio Five Live.

"I think I had a about a month off when I broke my rib in Australia, which was magnificent. I felt refreshed and I had a pretty sensational World Cup."

He said he was not unduly worried about his failures in the recent series.

"At the end of the day I've failed three times in a week and that's not going to make me lose any

sleep.

"The problem would be if I kept failing and kept failing in the same way, if it was a technical flaw."

Pietersen has called for more time off to be built into the interna-

that never, ever stops," he said.

"It's been a long, long three years and I haven't had a proper break to be honest with you.

"I know the issue is being discussed, not just amongst the players but amongst the England hierarchy and around the world.

"A good four to six weeks is about right for a proper break.

"I'm not a robot. I'm going away now for a few days, which isn't a real break, but hopefully it will help in some way before the Test series against India."

England's itinerary is hectic all the way to late September.

The first of three Tests against India begins on 19 July at Lord's.

Seven one-day internationals, also against India, follow and there is then the inaugural Twenty20 World Cup in South Africa.

England expect Pietersen to be a central figure for that entire schedule.



KEVIN PIETERSEN

tional calendar to allow the top players to recover.

"The England team is a team

England rouses Ganguly



Cricket

INTERNET, undated

The most memorable image of perhaps the most brilliant era of Indian cricket is of a half-naked man on a handsome terracotta balcony. He is waving a shirt above his head, a tangle of gold and amulets are heaving across his chest, and all the while rather forcefully wishing somebody what looks a lot like "luck". "If you look at the photos," smiles the man in question, Sourav Ganguly, former captain of India, "you'll see that Rahul (Dravid) is celebrating with one hand and with the other hand trying to pull my shirt down."

Looking at it five summers on, the famous photos on the Lord's balcony indeed show a lot. They reveal a team together and ascendant, a state that has been elusive for the past three seasons, and a rousing, confrontational leader in his pomp. Much has changed since. It has been a long two years for Ganguly, who returns to England in the middle of the most unlikely of comebacks. For those who missed it, a spectacular fight with the former coach, the Australian great Greg Chappell, led to his expulsion from the team, downgrading him from the most high-profile job in cricket to the drone of first-class matches before

empty stands in India's provincial towns.

Ganguly arrives looking a bit spent, having endured yoga, nets, a practice match and a pool session for the day. Offered a chance to respond to Chappell's insinuation last year that Ganguly was clinging to captaincy for financial motives, he says: "Really, I did not expect it from a man of his stature." He adds some more but then requests it be left off record. "The last thing I need is another controversy."

This is the difference in Ganguly now. Where earlier he would unhesitatingly take an eye for an eye, he now thinks twice about even a verbal riposte. He is a more soulful man, quieter, much more withdrawn. "It was tough being out," he says, "because I always felt that me being dropped was something more than cricket. No cricketer wants to go this way. Today it's me, tomorrow it could be anybody else. I had to live with it every day. It's not easy switching on a television every day and seeing yourself being talked about, seeing shows that your career is over.

"Obviously, it hurt. Even my father would tell me, 'Just forget it, you don't need to do this'. I told him, 'Let's see if I'm good enough. I've seen the best part of a cricketer's life, let's see if I can get through this'."

Away from the limelight, he worked on his technique (his stance

is now more upright), taking help from, among others, the Pakistani stylist, Zaheer Abbas. He injected freshness into his fitness regime by hiring a local trainer with the instructions: "You will not make me do anything that I've done for the past ten years."

Ultimately he broke back into the Test team late last year on the springy pitches of South Africa, where Chappell's one-day team had floundered. He finished as India's highest run-scorer in the series. Not bad for a has-been with a reputation for rolling over against bounce. Ganguly feels good to be returning to England, where he announced himself with a purring century on his Test debut at Lord's in 1996 and where he has maintained his best batting record since. Yet he is aware that with every innings he could be playing for his place.

"It's possible that can happen. But when I came back into the side, I had huge pressure on me. I survived that. Then I survived the pressure of coming back into the one-day team. I don't think any pressure can be more than that."

In India he has an unmatched knack for dividing public opinion, but in England it is quite unanimous: the image is of a character so

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PHOTO: AFP

South African umpire Rudi Koertzen (C) holds up a light metre under a gloomy sky on the rain-hit second day of the third and final Test at The Asgiriya Stadium in Kandy yesterday.