

A win is always a win

BISHWAJIT ROY

ICC WORLD TWENTY20 SOUTH AFRICA 2007

In the tournament of entertainers Bangladesh justified the experts' prediction on Thursday by pulling off a six-wicket victory over West Indies to make a second round berth in the inaugural ICC World Twenty20 Championship.

True, the newest and shortest version of the game has been considered more as 'fun' where the saying 'anybody can win' has been popularly quoted but still the Tigers' first-ever international success against the Caribbeans in any form of the game carries more significance than to be classed only as entertainment.

Which might be why the expert commentators branded Mohammad Ashraful's youthful side's triumph at the Wanderers in Johannesburg as a memorable success for Bangladeshi cricket. Bangladesh eliminated West Indies when they overtook the West Indies total of 164-8 with two overs to spare.

Former Bangladesh skipper Habibul Bashar was also no exception as he believed that the enthralling display of power hitting by Mohammad Ashraful (61 off 27 balls) and Aftab Ahmed (62 not out off 49 balls) which followed a brilliant bowling performance, enhanced Bangladesh cricket's reputation in the international level.

"One might hesitate to give it a full credit but don't forget it's a World Cup event. What I believe is that every win is important for a team like us because it always changes the impression and helps to acquire more respect," said Bashar by recalling his side's success in the ICC World Cup in the West Indies where they similarly made their presence felt by beating India in the first match.

"What is also important to me is that it was our first win against West Indies," added a delighted Bashar.

The 34-year-old right-hander showered praises on his successor Ashraful, who has proved time and again that he has got the ability to achieve something memorable on his day.

"I think he was inspired by his bowling failure," Bashar said with a smile reflecting on Ashraful's bowling figures. Ashraful conceded 44 runs in his last two overs to finish with figures of 1 for 55 in four overs.

But he took sweet revenge in the second session by making the fastest half-century, in this version of the game, in 20 balls.

"Don't try to explain Ashraful because sometimes something strange plays inside him," he humoured.

Faruque Ahmed, the immediate past chief selector whose last assignment was to select this team, however was neither surprised by the victory nor ready to underestimate the event because of the character of the tournament.

"I am not surprised by the victory because I have the faith in these guys. True they have sometimes

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PHOTO: AFP

CHRONICLES OF A TIGERS FAIRYTALE: (Clockwise from L-R) Bangladesh captain Mohammad Ashraful plays his trademark pickup stroke over fine-leg for a six during his enthralling innings; left-arm seamer Syed Rasel and wicketkeeper Mushfiqur Rahim are overjoyed at scalping West Indies master-blaster Chris Gayle; pocket-rocket Aftab Ahmed flies one through the covers during his unbeaten half-century while the Bangladeshi expatriates at Johannesburg paint the Wanderers in red and green during the Tigers' opening match of the ICC World Twenty20 Championship against West Indies yesterday.



Did U Know?

In 1898, one of the first programmes to be broadcast on radio was a yacht race that took place in British waters.



Simon Taufel

(Cricket umpire)
"Roger earns a lot more money than I do."

While responding to comparisons with tennis superstar Roger Federer after picking up the Umpire-of-the-Year award for the fourth year running.



What to WATCH
ESPN
ICC World Twenty20
Sri Lanka v Kenya
Live at 2:00 pm
Australia v England
Live at 6:00 pm
India v Pakistan
Live at 10:00 pm

'There's more to come'

CRICINFO, undated

ICC WORLD TWENTY20 SOUTH AFRICA 2007
"It is totally wrong to label us minnows," says Mohammad Ashraful after his exhilarating innings and Bangladesh's wonderful victory. And he's got a point. From the very first ball of the match, Bangladesh looked on top and likely winners because they brought the one thing missing from that extraordinary opening match - variety.

With Mushfiqur Rahim standing up to the left-arm seamer of Syed Rasel, who used the excess moisture (thrown into the pitch by an over-zealous groundsman) to jag the ball away, this was a complete contrast to the medium-paced South African attack. Chris Gayle was caught in the gully third ball and Syed bowled straight through his spell taking 1 for 10 including a wicket maiden. These are match-winning figures.

But you have to back this up and - as Zimbabwe demonstrated - in this shortened version of the game, fielding well and staying disciplined can keep you in the match for

longer. And if you are still in the match, even if you need 12 off six balls, you can pick up the odd victory. Bangladesh's fielding was superb - apart from one blemish when Aftab Ahmed dropped Shivnarine Chanderpaul. They kept discipline, bowling sensibly and slowly to a line and length.

West Indies had no particular answer. Chanderpaul swiped a couple of huge sixes, Marlon Samuels, with a runner - almost summing up the chaotic nature of the West Indian display - whacked a few more as did Dwayne Smith but their running, urgency and general desire in the face of an awkward challenge seemed wanting.

But isn't this tournament interesting? Just as the English county cricketers have been saying till they're bored with it, spin and lack of pace wins Twenty20 matches.

See Australia, see West Indies - just look at Bangladesh and Zimbabwe. This is a great development because it not only leads to the odd upset but actually makes certain minnows viable contenders for the trophy. Everyone had better be wary of Bangladesh. Big boys may bully these teams at Test level,

where all that matters is 20 wickets. Take that out of the equation and magnify the importance of fielding and any well-drilled side can compete.

West Indies head home because of their poor discipline. They dropped catches, they misfielded, they bowled wides and no balls in excess. Their batting was poor as soon as patience and hard running was required. Big sixes do win games but they need to be the finishing touches to an innings built on singles and placement.

And why is Chris Gayle not captain? He did a fantastic job recently in England, reinvigorated a jaded side, gave them a sense of purpose and, most importantly, enjoyment. This team were ragged and apparently uncaring.

All this dwells on West Indies failings when, in truth, Bangladesh's simple gameplan - bowl length, field well, hit and run hard - is what won it. They came into this match and this tournament with a plan, each member of the team knowing his role. And they also have talent to back it up; Ashraful's innings was one of

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Long-awaited Indo-Pak clash today

PTI, Durban

Traditional rivals India and Pakistan will resume their cricketing hostilities when they square up against each other here today in a Group D clash of the ICC World Twenty20 Championship at Kingsmead.

The two Asian giants could not keep their date in second round clash at the 2007 World Cup in the West Indies following their shocking first-round exits, but this time around their high-profile clash is expected to provide thrills galore.

It will be for the first time in over a decade and half that India will play Pakistan without stars like Sachin Tendulkar, Rahul Dravid and Sourav Ganguly, with the trio not being present to lend a dash and verve to the top order.

Similarly, Pakistan will be without their celebrated stars like Inzamamul Haq, Mohammed Yusuf, Abdul Razzaq and Shoaib Akhtar, who was a late casualty having been sent back on

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Still have any doubt?

AFP, Johannesburg

If proof was needed that Twenty20 cricket was dramatic, spectacular and a crowd puller, look no further than the ongoing world championship in South Africa.

The inaugural tournament has provided more thrills, excitement and stunning results in two days of competition than what the entire 50-over World Cup in the Caribbean earlier this year did in six weeks.

West Indian Chris Gayle smashed the first-ever Twenty20 century in Tuesday's opening game, but that was not enough to secure victory as South African Herschelle Gibbs hit 90 off 54 balls to see the hosts home.

In the next match in Durban on Wednesday, New Zealand's Mark Gillespie returned the best figures in the format, taking four for seven in 2.5 overs as Kenya crashed to a new low total of 73.

Later the same evening in Cape Town, Zimbabwe created a cricketing tsunami with a shock win

over the game's undisputed leaders Australia that left Ricky Ponting's champions on the brink of elimination.

Australia, who won their third successive World Cup title in April, must defeat in-form England at the Newlands in Cape Town on Friday to avoid an early flight home.

South African fans, who wholeheartedly support their own team or anyone that plays against Australia, are gripped by sporting fever not seen here since the 1995 Rugby World Cup when the hosts won.

Crowds flocked to both the night games so far in Johannesburg and Cape Town and organisers expect full houses for all matches in the Super Eights round which starts on Sunday.

Even old-timers, who still regard Test cricket as the ultimate cricket contest, are enjoying the spectacle.

"It's quite exciting, isn't it?" said Johannesburg resident Johan Smidt, 61, who went to Tuesday's opener at the Wanderers.

"For me, Test cricket is the real thing but I suppose they can't do without the limited-overs game because it brings in the money."

"If there has to be limited-overs cricket, why don't they play only Twenty20? Those 50-over games are so insufferably boring."

Former England captain and commentator Tony Greig said the shortest version of the sport was here to stay.

"I certainly see an impact in a playing sense," Greig told a Cricinfo discussion.

"We've seen the dramatic changes in the way Tests are played as a result of the traditional one-day international tournaments -- it's strange to be using the word 'traditional' to describe one-day cricket isn't it?"

"But the big change lies in what the public wants. I think they are looking for cricket to provide them with a quicker fix."

Even Asian team will soon realise that there is more to Twenty20 cricket than just a hit-and-giggle outing.

Asia, cricket's financial backer, has organised more one-dayers than any other region, but India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka have been

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KP sets up England win

AFP, Cape Town

ICC WORLD TWENTY20 SOUTH AFRICA 2007
Kevin Pietersen played a match-winning innings against Zimbabwe on Thursday which he said gave England a chance to "humiliate" Australia in the ICC World Twenty20 Championship.

England's 50-run win meant Australia have to beat England in order to avoid elimination when the old rivals meet in their final group match at the same ground Friday.

Australia suffered a shock five-wicket defeat against Zimbabwe Wednesday. Pietersen lashed 79 off 37 balls to set up a 50-run win for England.

"We've been humiliated by Australia," said Pietersen. "Now we are in a position of strength where we can humiliate them."

But Pietersen warned that Australia were likely to bounce back. "We've been playing a lot of cricket and they looked a bit rusty yesterday but they've got world-class players and you can never underestimate them. But we've got

an edge in terms of match practice."

The margin of England's win Thursday meant that an Australian win would probably result in both England and Australia going through to the Super Eights stage.

Zimbabwe coach Robin Brown acknowledged: "We are hoping England bowl as well against Australia as they did today. But whatever happens we have played some good cricket and we can only go forward."

Pietersen and captain Paul Collingwood were mainly responsible for England's total of 188 for nine after Collingwood decided to bat after winning the toss.

Pietersen and Collingwood (37) put on 100 for the fourth wicket off 54 balls.

Zimbabwe briefly threatened to repeat Wednesday's upset when Vusi Sibanda and Brendan Taylor put on 74 for the first wicket in 8.4 overs.

It was the reverse sweep which was his downfall, however, when he hit Zimbabwe captain, off-spinner Prosper Utseya, to Hamilton Masakadza on the deep

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Zimbabwe hails 'biggest upset'

AFP, Harare

Zimbabwe's media on Thursday celebrated the country's shock victory against Australia in the ICC World Twenty20 Championship, hailing it as the "biggest upset in cricket history".

"Zimbabwe stuns Australia," screamed the headline of the state-run Herald.

The cricketing minnows beat pre-tournament favourites Australia by five wickets in their first match in Cape Town on Wednesday night.

"This will go down as one of the biggest victories, no matter what people will say," a disc jockey said on national radio.

The two countries have been at loggerheads politically with Australia preventing its cricket team from travelling to the impoverished southern African country earlier this month.

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TODAY'S MATCHES

Team	Time	Venue
Sri Lanka v Kenya	2:00 pm	Johannesburg
Australia v England	6:00 pm	Cape Town
India v Pakistan	10:00 pm	Durban

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