



Bangladesh players stretch ahead of a practice session at the Eden Park in Auckland on Tuesday.

PHOTO: TIGERCRICKET.COM

## 100 Tests of character Ganguly joins Indian elite

**Cricket**

INTERNET, undated

Rafael Nadal of Spain became first man since Swede Mats Wilander in 1982 to win the French Open title on debut. Nadal achieved the feat with a four-set victory over Argentine Mariano Puerta in June 2005.

TALK TURKEY

Did U Know?

If there is a man who has defied odds and surprised admirers and critics alike it has to be Sourav Ganguly. Now, after 11 years of international cricket, the man, known for his fiery aggression on the field, but radiating calm equanimity off it, tells the world that the thought that two days from now he will be playing his 100th Test gives him a very "satisfying feeling".

Satisfying it has to be for any cricketer who lasts for more than a decade at the top, and from a purely personal point of view, it is something to be really proud of.

Not that it is for the first time that someone will be achieving this landmark and neither will it be the last time. It's just that to have come so far means that you have been good enough to withstand the ravages of time and age. And in his case he has survived all the slurs, slings and arrows of a world, which has accepted him grudgingly as someone who belongs.

It is a story with so many twists and turns that a scriptwriter can make a living off it. When only 19 he played his first One-day International in Australia and immediately after that was dumped following accusations of having the attitude of a man spoilt by the affluence of his parents. Six years later, he was picked to play for India again and the whole journalistic community screamed in a

post the match-fixing convulsions that shook cricket to its core. It was again a choice that was greeted with skepticism but the results proved that the man had the steel in him that did not care for reputations but did care for results.

All international captains, be it a Nasser Hussain or a Steve Waugh, found to their dismay that they were dealing with a man who had the knack of getting under their

skin and inspiring his team to perform above themselves. Not since the days of the Nawab of Pataudi had there been a leader who rallied his troops behind him. All that mattered for Ganguly was the skill of the player and not which region or state he belonged to. He may not agree, but captaincy dulled his cricketing skills and then walked in Greg Chappell as India coach.

Chappell humiliated him and manipulated the press to such an extent that the only viewpoint that appeared in print was that of the coach.

It hurt the man, it still hurts him.

"I didn't mind being dropped; anyone can be if he is not making runs. But the kind of things that were said about me were depressing," Ganguly said.

There were not many who believed he could make a comeback, except the man himself. The eight months he was out of the team were spent in physical training the likes of which he had never done before and in preparing himself for a comeback. You would tell him "give up, what is the point, you won't be picked again" and the answer would be, "I will give it a try and if I am not there before the World Cup I will give up."

He is back now and the kind of

cricket he has played in this last year has not only raised his stature as a batsman but has made even his bitterest critic finally accept him as someone who belongs. When he steps out in Melbourne for his

SOURAV GANGULY

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## Cloud over Gayle First SA-WI Test from today

**Cricket**

APP, Port Elizabeth

SAB TV

New Zealand v Bangladesh

First ODI

Live from 5:00am

**STAR Cricket**

Australia v India

First Test, Day Two

Live from 5:30am (Thursday)

**TEN Sports**

South Africa v West Indies

First Test, Day One

Live from 2:30pm

**ESPN**

Sports Center India

Sport News

Live at 6:00pm

English Premier League

Chelsea v Aston Villa

Live from 6:55pm

Sunderland v Man United

Live from 9:00pm

Portsmouth v Arsenal

Live from 1:30am (Thursday)

**STAR Sports**

English Premier League

Tottenham v Fulham

Live from 6:55pm

Derby County v Liverpool

Live from 9:00pm

match although he is unbeaten in international matches since taking over from Gayle, who was injured in the first one-day international in Zimbabwe last month.

Bravo led the West Indies to three one-day wins against Zimbabwe and an upset Twenty20 international victory against South Africa in Port Elizabeth.

But the West Indies' batting frailty was exposed when they were beaten in three days by South Africa A in their only first-class outing ahead of the Test, which Gayle admitted had been a big disappointment.

With South Africa boasting a strong fast bowling line-up, spearheaded by Dale Steyn, who took 20 wickets in two Tests against New Zealand last month, the hosts will start strong favourites.

Bravo was one of only three West Indians to record a half-century in two innings against South Africa A, prompting tour manager and former captain Clive Lloyd to comment that the tourists needed to show more patience at the crease.

Gayle said the West Indies would have to play well, whether he was fit or not. "We have to play basic cricket and get the job done," he said.

Coach John Dyson said Monday

that the players had shown good form in net practices. "I've been very impressed with the professionalism and enthusiasm the players have shown in the nets," he said.

"If we can take that forward to the middle we'll be very competitive."

South African captain Graeme Smith, meanwhile, said he was fully recovered from a virus that led to doctors ordering him to rest following a recent one-day series against New Zealand.

"I started training about a week ago and I am feeling energised again," he said.

The St George's Park pitch is expected to offer some help to the fast bowlers and the West Indies appear to have reasonable ammunition to fire at South Africa's batting.

Fidel Edwards, Jerome Taylor and Daren Powell have the ability to break through against a batting line-up which has not been wholly convincing, although South Africa have won three out of four Tests this season -- one against Pakistan and two against New Zealand.

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## Rest of the Test team after today's match

SPORTS REPORTER

The national selectors will decide who will join the Bangladesh Test team in New Zealand after today's first one-day international of the three-match series in Auckland is over.

There are six players in contention out of nine standbys and the Rafigul Alam-led selection panel will pick up maximum three for the two-match Test series which starts from January 4.

Former national skipper Habibul Bashar and left-handed opener Shahriar Nafees are all but guaranteed to join the party down under but the axe may fall on veteran wicketkeeper Khaled Mashud.

It was learned that the selectors have seriously considered lacks of fitness and form of Mashud, who kept away from the first two days' training due to fever, to come to a negative conclusion although the 34-year-old stumper scored valuable runs in the ongoing National Cricket League.

The selectors, however, were in a dilemma to choose between the

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## British minister in Dhaka

SPORTS REPORTER

British Aviation Minister Jim Fitzpatrick, MP, arrived in Dhaka yesterday on a six-day personal visit to promote a youth football development programme.

Fitzpatrick has arrived at the invitation of Canary Wharf, UK, a British-based group, which sponsors a four-year youth football development programme.

He will visit BKSP today to look at the coaching camp -- where 34 players are undergoing training of the third session of the second year.

He is also expected to hold discussions with the country's football bosses and BKSP officials on building a proposed football academy.

The British minister will then depart for a three-day trip to Sylhet, home to the largest British-Bangladeshi expatriate community in Bangladesh.

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## Tigers raring to go Zunaed to make ODI debut

**Cricket**

TIGERCRICKET.COM, Auckland

Bangladesh's confidence-boosting victory in the Twenty20 fundraiser against a strong New Zealand XI at Hamilton has given a totally fresh complexion to tomorrow's opening ODI of the three-match series. As the Tigers practiced at Eden Park on an eerily quiet Christmas morning many scurried for tickets only to get disappointed.

The 42,000-capacity stadium is the largest among all sports grounds in New Zealand and with more than a quarter of the local population housed in Auckland it is no wonder that a good number of people would show interest in the Boxing Day fixture. Around 4000 Bangladeshi expatriates also live in this city and the Tigers' impressive showing in the Twenty20 match has added some much needed spice to the encounter.

"Even many New Zealanders, who would have otherwise given the match a miss have bought tickets online following Sunday's game. The team's vibrancy, fearlessness and youth has created an instant fan base comprising our children and the young Bangladeshi here," said a Bangladeshi businessman based in Auckland.

For the first ODI the Tigers have

left out opening batsman Javed Omar and pacers Nazmul Hossain and Sajidul Islam. Tushar Imran is still recovering from a sore shoulder and Rajin Saleh was not considered as he only arrived from Bangladesh on Tuesday afternoon.

This means that left-handed opener Zunaed Siddiqui was going to make his ODI debut.

"I was expecting this as I have come here determined to win a place in the Bangladesh side and I have worked hard. It is my debut match but I don't have any butterflies in my stomach. I just want to

go out there and give it my best shot. I am a positive and confident person and I want to do well," said Zunaed who had scored for Bangladesh in the first practice match in Hamilton against the Northern Knights.

"The wickets here are good for batting if you are prepared to leave the balls. If you see it till the end then batting can be enjoyable as there is consistent bounce," Zunaed added.

For 107 years Eden Park has the main sports ground in Auckland

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## FACTFILE



Full name: Zunaed Siddiqui

Born: October 30, 1987, Rajshahi

Age: 20 years

Major teams: Bangladesh, Rajshahi

Nickname: Imrose

Batting style: Left-hand bat

**CAREER BATTING AVERAGES**

	M	I	Runs	HS	Ave	SR	100	50
T20Is	1	1	71	71	71.0	145		