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## There have to be some positives!

**Cricket**

**BISHWAJIT ROY**

For any keen Tigers follower, the last few days have been simply terrible. If waking up very early on a cold morning was a tough task, then watching the batting of Mohammad Ashraf's men in New Zealand made it most unpleasant.

Keeping one's eyes open to watch the pathetic batting was not easy as it apparently looked that the Tigers gifted away their wickets rather than retaining it.

Leave the ball when it is seaming around is a basic knowledge for any batsman but it has been proved time and again that this batting commonsense is not so common for Jamie Siddons's charges.

No need to go too far back, rather look at what happened in the second innings of the second Test at Basin Reserve in Wellington yesterday. The way the top-order

chased the ball from well outside the off-stump indicated that they were in a hurry to achieve a target rather than the fact that they were trailing by 250 runs.

How the young batsmen are being caught in the vicious cycle of playing poor shots is most evident in opener Zunaed Siddiqui. He must have thought that his score in the second innings of the first Test was good enough for him to keep his place as the left-hander went for a wild hook against Kyle Mills only to be caught by Brendon McCullum.

And then the dismissals of Shahriar Nafees, Aftab Ahmed, Mushfiqur Rahim and Mohammad Ashraf portrayed the pictures of 'how one can commit a suicide'.

The fate was all but written for what is going to happen this morning when Bangladesh go to the third day in the second Test tottering at 51-5 and only a miracle can make sure that they put an end to yet another miserable tour against the Black Caps.

There had been no high expectation with the tour considering the tough condition where big teams even struggle under this kind of windy and cold conditions. But what everybody expected was that Bangladesh would prove at least one point that they have taken some steps forward from the first tour in 2001.

If you are suffering from a disease of 'Finding Positives From Everything' then it is only possible to find any improvement during this series.

It was very hard to believe that Tigers have hardly changed from what they were six years back because the batting problem has remained.

Chief selector Rafiqul Alam is one of those who believe that the Tigers showed some improvement in the tour although the former national cricketer admitted that watching them was not a great experience.

"It was painful to watch this kind of batting but still I believe that there was some positive out-

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Bangladesh paceman Shahadat Hossain celebrates claiming the wicket of New Zealand all-rounder Jacob Oram on the second day of the second Test at Basin Reserve in Wellington on Sunday.

## A meek surrender Tamim fractures thumb

**Cricket**

TIGERCRIKET.COM, Wellington

The first over wrote the second day's script for Bangladesh as the tourists closed their second innings on 51 for 5, a deficit of 199 runs. Five catches were dropped and then the batsmen repeated the same mistakes all over again in the second innings to leave the side in a hopeless position going into day three after New Zealand's first innings had ended on 393.

The home side resumed on 134 for three and in Mashrafe Mortaza's opening over Matthew Sinclair on 10 was first given not out by umpire Peter Parker to a confident lbw appeal. Sinclair padded up to a Mortaza delivery that shaped in and would have taken off. A ball later Sinclair edged Mortaza and Tamim Iqbal only managed a touch to a shoulder high edge. In the process Tamim injured his left thumb and did not take the field for the remainder of the day. The opening batsman underwent an x-ray and the report

revealed that he had suffered an undisplaced fracture. Tamim is unlikely to bat tomorrow and is scheduled to consult a specialist in Wellington.

Sinclair was dropped by wicketkeeper Mushfiqur Rahim and Mortaza at gully before his luck ran out on 47. Stephen Fleming made 87 after being let off on 61 when Shahriar Nafees at mid on stayed glued to his position instead of backtracking and floored a skier trying to take it with a desperate one-handed attempt.

New Zealand captain Daniel Vettori hit five fours in the first over from an out of sorts Sajidul Islam who either pitched too short or too wide. Vettori went on to make 94 after he was given a reprieve by captain Mohammad Ashraf who fumbled a dolly at mid on from Aftab Ahmed's bowling. Bangladesh's batting also was as forgettable as their fielding on the day. In the 22 overs they had to negotiate the Tigers lost openers Zunaed Siddiqui and Nafees, Ashraf, Aftab and Mushfiqur Rahim to catches behind the

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## India hint at bargain

**Cricket**

AFP, New Delhi

India have hinted at withdrawing a complaint against Australian Brad Hogg if the hosts drop a race charge against their spinner Harbhajan Singh, reports said here on Sunday.

Spinner Hogg was charged with making an offensive remark to India captain Anil Kumble and vice-captain Mahendra Singh Dhoni during last week's controversial second Test in Sydney.

It followed a three-Test ban handed to Indian spinner Harbhajan after match referee Mike Procter of South Africa found the bowler had racially abused Australian batsman Andrew Symonds in the same Test.

"A senior member of the Tour party, however, hinted at a compromise wherein India would withdraw their complaint against Hogg if Australia did not push the Harbhajan case," the Hindustan Times reported.

"Talks are on, I can't say more at this moment. You are free to interpret it the way you like," the newspaper quoted the senior member as saying in Canberra.

New Zealand judge John Hansen has been appointed as commissioner for Harbhajan's appeal against the racism charge.

In the meantime, Harbhajan will continue to play pending the verdict of the appeal.

The paper said some in the team management had confirmed they wanted the row over before the third Test, which starts in Perth on Wednesday.

"It should be done away with before the match because the players should not go into such a crucial game thinking about what might happen on this front," the paper quoted the senior member saying.

"We have always maintained that he (Harbhajan) didn't use any foul word and will continue doing so."

The preliminary date for the Hogg hearing is set for Monday in Perth.

According to The Indian Express, an Indian player revealed there had been secret meetings between Cricket Australia general manager of cricket operations, Michael Brown, and Indian team management in a bid to find a compromise.

"Yes, there have been meetings

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## Did U Know?

In 1998 English referee Martin Sylvester sent himself off after punching a player during a game in the Andover and District Sunday League.



**Virender Sehwag**  
(Star India batsman)  
"We just want to come and play cricket. If they say something, we will also talk back, but hopefully there would be nothing against the spirit of cricket. Australians are famous at sledging. If they start it, we will not be quiet."  
While coming out in support of Harbhajan Singh.



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## He's for cricket, not film

AFP, Karachi

Pakistan speedster Shoaib Akhtar Sunday dispelled the impression he is keen to join Indian movies and quit cricket, saying he intends to play cricket as long as he is performing.

"I want to play cricket and just showing a little interest in films doesn't mean I am leaving the game," Akhtar, speaking for the first time since last month's tour of India, told AFP.

"I stayed back in India for two weeks, not for films but to help raise funds for an organisation called India Charity and no one should question my integrity and commitment for the team."

Akhtar said he was ready to play against Zimbabwe in the five-match series starting next week, however the selectors had different ideas and later Sunday axed him from the list of 21 in the initial squad, saying he has to prove his fitness by playing in domestic matches.

The 32-year-old fast bowler was criticised for his off-field activities on the tour of India where Pakistan lost the one-day series 2-3 and Tests 0-1.

Akhtar took six wickets in the first

Test in New Delhi where Pakistan lost by six wickets. He then suffered viral infection but still played the second Test in Calcutta, managing just two wickets in the match.

In the final Test at Bangalore, Akhtar hurt his back and could take



SHOAIB AKHTAR

only one wicket in the second innings.

Akhtar refused to agree he lacked commitment.

"I bowled my heart out in the one-day series where we lost because of poor batting and then did my best in the first Test where

again we failed to put a reasonable total on the board in the second innings.

"I am deeply disappointed at hurting my back in the last Test. I had to leave the field for hospital where MRI (scans) took several hours and when I returned India had scored enough runs. I still bowled 17 overs in the second innings.

"I have always played for the country and yet people question my commitment. I agree I am more prone to injuries than others but it's because I bowl fast and try hard, and even team officials can vouch for that."

Pakistan coach Geoff Lawson defended Akhtar, although that clearly did little to save the bowler from the chop later Sunday from the squad for Zimbabwe.

"I never felt let down by Akhtar. He concentrated hard and when fit he was the bowler most likely taking wickets for us. Unfortunately, he fell ill and then unfit but he was our best bowler and, if fit, we want him against Australia," Lawson said on Friday.

Pakistan face Australia in three Tests and five one-day internationals in March-April, a series which hangs in the balance over security fears in Pakistan.



Indian table tennis great Kamlesh Mehta (2nd from L) imparts tips to local players at the Woodenfloor Gymnasium yesterday.

## Ex-BFF gen sec Akmal no more

SPORTS REPORTER

Former Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) general secretary Sheikh Akmal Hossain died yesterday morning at the Gulshan Shikder Medical Hospital after suffering



SHEIKH AKMAL HOSSAIN

from respiratory and kidney ailments for long. He was 59.

He left behind his wife, two sons, a daughter and a large number of admirers to mourn the death. His namj-e-janaja was held at the Old DOHS Mosque yesterday afternoon.

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## Goodbye to grace

**Cricket**

CRICINFO, undated

"There's no way we're settling for that," Shaun Pollock growled at the umpire. "We didn't come here for a draw -- I want this thing settled, I want a play-off. Nobody's going to bed yet."

The venue was the Pearl Continental Hotel in Peshawar on the 1998 tour of Pakistan and the competition involved putting golf balls into strategically placed glasses along the corridor. The umpire was coach Bob Woolmer and Pollock, as competitive as ever, was disputing his call of "tie" when Dave Richardson holed a tricky left-to-right eight-footer through bright yellow, damp stain where a room-service waiter had recently dropped a bowl of korma.

"Fine then, you win," said veteran wicket keeper Richardson. "I'm going to bed."

"No you're not, Grandpa," Pollock said. "We're going to have a play-off. I want to win fair and square..."

If it was worth playing, it was worth playing to win for Shaun Pollock. And if it wasn't worth playing to win, it wasn't worth playing. From table tennis (at which he excelled) to tennis, bowls and Trivial Pursuits -- at which he also excelled, being one of the very few members of the squad with

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South Africa's Andre Nel (L) and Graeme Smith carry carry-jet retired all-rounder Shaun Pollock off the field after their series win over West Indies at Kingsmead on Saturday.

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