

Test squad to be named today

SPORTS REPORTER

The Bangladesh squad for the two-match Test series against South Africa will be announced in Fatullah today.

The first Test that begins on February 22 will take place at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium and the second game will be played at the Chittagong Divisional Stadium.

All talks are still swirling around opener Tamim Iqbal and Habibul Bashar's appearance but after the two's respective net sessions yesterday, clouds over their fitness concern are clearing. It looks likely that the pair would be picked but the national selectors, led by Rafiqul Alam, are yet to make a final call.

Bashar skipped the three-day practice match for the Bangladesh Cricket Board Eleven due to a thumb injury. Tamim has been suffering the same injury, have returned to the nets in the last week.

However, veteran left-arm spinner Mohammad Rafique is almost certain to play the Test series against the African visitors. The 37-year-old southpaw has expressed his desire to retire after the upcoming series.

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BCB Eleven's left-handed opener Zunaed Siddiqui salutes the home crowd at the Fatullah Cricket Stadium after reaching his hundred against South Africa on the second day of the three-day warmup match yesterday.

Fine ton by Zunaed

SPORTS REPORTER

WARID Cricket Series

Zunaed Siddiqui showed no nerve against a strong South African pace attack with a glitzy hundred as Bangladesh Cricket Board XI made a bold reply on the second day of the three-day warmup match at the Fatullah Cricket Stadium yesterday.

It was a morale-boosting effort from the home batsmen ahead of the first Test later this week when they finished the day's play at 263-5 in reply to South Africa's 397. The visitors took their tally to a near 400-mark from the overnight score of 329-8 thanks to a blazing unbeaten century from experienced wicketkeeper Mark Boucher (107).

Left-handed opener Zunaed not only continued his good form but also showed some maturity during his well-composed ton to make sure that there was no batting

collapse from the Tigers as it usually happens.

The 20-year old Rajshahi batsman executed some brilliant shots during his 168-ball 103-run essay and also demonstrated a rare kind of coolness against the South African fast bowlers comprising of Makhaya Ntini, Morne Morkel, Daryl Steyn and Jacques Kallis who tested him with an array of short deliveries.

Another left-handed opener Shahriar Nafees, who had a brilliant Test hundred against Australia in this venue in 2006, played a small but encouraging innings (31 off 37 balls) to give the home side a confident start as the southpaw pair added 58 for the first wicket.

The effort of the openers forced the visitors' coach Mickey Arthur to reassess their bowling strategy against the left-handers.

"I think we need to discuss our bowling strategy against the left-handers as there are a number of

lefties in the Bangladesh team," Arthur observed.

But the South African issued a warning for the home batsmen by saying that they are trying to improve the energy level before the start of the Test series. "I am happy at the moment with my team's performance but our energy level is a little down which is a real concern for me ahead of the series," he added.

Zunaed however outlined a formula to handle the fiery South African pace attack in the best possible way.

"I was successful today because I tried to stick to the basics and I believe that it is the only way to handle this kind of quality attack. You should be watchful against these different kind of pace bowlers and must try to avoid the mistakes as much as you can," he explained.

No doubt the tall left-hander at least justified his suggestion yesterday during his more than four-hour stay in the middle where he avoided

chasing any short deliveries.

But still it was a lovely experience for some 4000 people in the ground to watch some classy shots from Zunaed who brilliantly flashed Jacques Kallis for a boundary through point to complete his fifty in 83 balls and then played an eye-catching cover drive to the fence against Morne Morkel to reach the three-digit figure off 161 balls.

It was also nice to see the way Zunaed flicked Makhaya Ntini, who finally took a simple return catch to put an end to the brilliant knock, for a boundary in his total tally of 15 shots to the fence.

After losing two quick wickets, BCB XI could consolidate their position because of Zunaed's valuable partnerships with Nazimuddin (22) and Aftab Ahmed, with whom he shared 85 for the fourth wicket.

Aftab played the vital knock of 45 ahead of the final selection but

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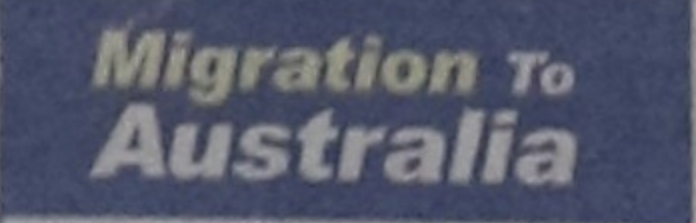
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Paolo Maldini
(AC Milan legend)
"Everyone asks me this question but I don't know how to answer it."
When asked what he would do next.



Day's Event
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AFC PRESIDENTS CUP Abahani face Nepal Police in opener

SPORTS REPORTER

Abahani will return to international club football after a long time when they face last year's runners-up and host club Nepal Police Club in the opening match of the AFC Presidents Cup qualifying Group A in Kathmandu on April 20.

Bangladesh professional league champions Abahani, who last participated in an Asian club competition back in the 90s, have been drawn in a tough group and will play former champions Regar-Tadaz of Tajikistan on April 22.

Abahani's last group opposition

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India's pressure mounts

CRICINFO, undated



It's 38 degree Celsius in Adelaide and the Indians find themselves in the hot seat. It's the business end of the tournament and even if their

countenance suggests they are relaxed, the sweat is steadily gathering across their foreheads.

A loss tomorrow against Sri Lanka will push them to the bottom of the points table. They will not want a situation where their last league game becomes virtual semi-final. Meanwhile Sri Lanka have played one game less and are tak-

ing it easy despite being at bottom of table for now.

There's no ignoring that fact that the pressure levels are mounting for both teams, especially now that Australia have entered the safety zone with three wins in five games. Both India and Sri Lanka have themselves to blame for making Australia's job easy, considering both were on top of the hosts in the last two encounters. Sri Lanka stuttered chasing a modest 233 in Perth last week while India, having restricted the Australians to 203, slipped miserably to 153.

These two opponents meet for the third time with Sri Lanka holding the slightest of edges, having scored an emphatic eight-wicket win in the rain-reduced clash in Canberra which was nearly a

Twenty20 affair. Mahendra Singh Dhoni will gather solace from the fact that his bowlers have topped oppositions consistently and it is just the batting order that needs to pull its act together. Sri Lanka's problems are doubled with both their batting and bowling yet to fall in to the place.

Mahela Jayawardene admitted as much though he felt Sri Lanka stand to push forward the advantage they accumulated in Canberra. "We've been inconsistent with the bat. I thought the bowlers have lifted their mark, but we haven't batted well at all," Jayawardene said, before his team's practice session at the Adelaide Oval. He agreed the battle was now between Sri Lanka and

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Youths off to a flier

SA, NZ, SL also win



SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh made a strong start while fellow title contenders South Africa, New Zealand and Sri Lanka overcame stuttering beginnings to win their opening matches in cricket's ICC Under-19 World Cup yesterday.

Bangladesh had no worries as they cruised to an impressive 178-run victory over a hapless Bermuda.

The young Tigers piled up 260-8 after being sent into bat and then shot Bermuda out for 82 in 26.1 overs at the Bayeams Oval in the Malaysian capital.

Number four batsman Nasir Hossain top-scored with 84 off 94 balls, while Ashraf Hossain and Ashiqul Islam helped themselves to

half-centuries. Opener Mithun Ali fell early but his partner, Ashraf, steadied the innings with a patient 81-ball 51, and added 62 runs for the second wicket with Nadimuddin Mintu, who scored 11.

Bangladesh then lost three middle-order wickets for 20 runs only to find themselves in a discomfort zone at 130-5 before Nasir, the 16-year-old right-hander, lifted the innings.

He took apart the Bermudan bowlers, blasting 84 off 95 balls, aided by eight fours and a six. He found a perfect ally in plucky wicketkeeper-batsman Ashiqul and the two added 99 runs for the sixth wicket. Bangladesh then managed to pick up 31 runs off their last 19 deliveries, Islam scoring a bulk of those to remain unbeaten on a run-a-ball 69.

The pressure was on Bermuda as they began their chase when Terry Fay was trapped by fast

bowler Dollar Mahmud; four balls later, Greg Marbury was dismissed in the same manner by slinger Rubel Hossain. Captain Rodney Trott, whose 20 was Bermuda's highest score, and Chris Douglas took the score beyond fifty by the 12th over.

Bermuda then lost their last eight wickets for the addition of only 30 runs, the procession of wickets starting when Subhashish Royput Douglas out of his misery.

They found it especially difficult to handle the left-arm spin of the Bangladesh captain, Suhawardi Shuvo, who took 3 for 9 in his seven overs. Offspinner Mahmudul Hassan also claimed three wickets.

Bangladesh will play their next Group B match against Ireland at the same venue tomorrow.

At the Kinrara Oval, South Africans collapsed to 179-7 by the 35th over, chasing the West Indies' 222-8, before the eighth-wicket

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PATIENCE IS A VIRTUE: Bangladesh youth team's number four batsman Nasir Hossain is all set to drive the ball during his fine knock of 84 against Bermuda in their opening group league match of the ICC Under-19 World Cup in Kuala Lumpur yesterday.

WARID Cricket Series
South Africa vs Bangladesh

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