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LET ME DO IT FOR YOU SIR: South Africa all-rounder looks back to the umpire with his index finger raised only to confirm the dismissal of Bangladesh middle-order batsman Shakib Al Hasan (L) on the third day of the first Test at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.



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Ashrafal is deluded

BISHWAJIT ROY

WARID Cricket Series

Despite the fact that the Tigers started the third day of the first Test on top against the formidable South Africa, the turnout was surprisingly low -- sparsely a couple of thousand turned up to watch the start of the day.

Surprising because it was expected that people would turn up in large numbers at the Mirpur Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium as their beloved team were endowed with some aspiration after the second day's play following Shahadat Hossain's six-wicket burst and Zunaed Siddiqui's patient half-century.

But perhaps they had sensed beforehand what was going to happen in the first session, as they are relatively experienced at having their raised hopes dashed.

Or maybe there was some other reason behind the lack of enthusiasm.

However, if anyone still wants to go the venue on the fourth day then he/she can take all the inspiration required from the words of home skipper Mohammad Ashrafal who lacks no enthusiasm even though the Proteas need only another 27 runs for victory with six wickets in hand.

Everybody at the press conference was taken aback when the Tigers captain was quite straight-forward in

his assessment that they still have a chance of winning the game.

"The game is not over and still anything can happen in the game. One hat-trick can change the whole scenario and as you know, nothing is impossible in cricket," said the ace batsman at a press conference yesterday.

Without any doubt the Tigers showed a much improved performance against the South Africans in comparison with their previous four encounters as they at least avoided the innings defeat for the first time and not only tried to get a result but also pushed the Proteas hard.

So it can be acceptable if Ashrafal finds improvement in the match even as they are on the verge of another Test defeat.

But his atrocious assessment that they still have a chance of winning from this situation simply raised questions about his maturity as a Test captain.

It would have even been okay if he had said that only a miracle could turn the game in his favour.

But even as the Proteas stand on the brink of wrapping up a comfortable win, Ashrafal still feels he has let nothing slip.

The little man is often spoken highly of for his cricketing intelligence but in the last session of the third day he fell well short of this reputation. It was widely expected that the field setting would be attacking bordering on aggressive when South Africa suddenly lost a couple of wickets but Ashrafal

astoundingly had spread his fielders to allow the batsmen to milk easy singles.

But Ashrafal believes that one should get the rub of the green along with his skill to become successful in cricket.

"Mashrafe could have taken at least two or three wickets the way he bowled in the last hour but it didn't happen. I think luck is a big factor," he said.

Ashrafal admitted that it could have been a different ball game if they could have managed 250-plus score but he was not ready to blame his batmen.

"You saw our two overnight batsmen tried their best to occupy the crease and they survived for 50 minutes. I must say both Zunaed and Afridi got out by good deliveries. But still I believe that the wicket is good for batting," explained Ashrafal.

"There are also other reasons behind our failure in such a crucial juncture as we took extra pressure in that kind of situation. I think we can only overcome it if we are able to play under pressure regularly," he said.

SCOREBOARD

Scoreboard at stumps on the third day of the first Test between Bangladesh and South Africa at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur on Sunday:

BANGLADESH: First innings 192 (Aftab 44, Ashrafal 34; Morkel 5-50)
SOUTH AFRICA: First innings 170 (De Villiers 46; Shahadat 6-27)

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Hosts flying high

SPORTS REPORTER



Bangladesh took revenge of their defeat to West Bengal in the inaugural Indo-Bangladesh Bangla Games when the hosts secured more than half gold medals at stake in the second edition yesterday.

Although 15 more events will be finalised today -- the last day of competition in the 2nd Indo-Bangladesh Bangla Games -- Bangladesh put the results beyond the visitors with a haul of 35 gold, 22 silver and 16 bronze medals after two days of competition.

The domination also kept the local boys on track to fulfil their target of winning at least 40 gold

out of total 67.

West Bengal, who won 38 gold medals to Bangladesh's 30 in Kolkata two years back, took their tally to 17-30-19.

Bangladesh also secured all the team gold medals but football. The men's and women's football titles will be decided today with both matches to be played at the Bangabandhu National Stadium.

To confirm gold, Bangladesh took unassailable leads (2-0) in the three-match series of kabaddi, volleyball, basketball, cricket and kho kho by defeating their opponents. The kabaddi team won 37-23, the spikers won 25-16, 25-23, 25-16, the basketball team won 82-68, the cricketers recorded a three-wicket victory while kho kho team triumphed 18-13.

The men's football team, who won 2-1 on Saturday, were without key players Mithun and Sharif in

their goalless draw at Narshingdi while the eves, who drew goalless on the previous day lost 1-0 with West Bengal's Soma Bera slotting the match winner at Narayanganj.

ATHLETICS

Bangladesh won four out of six events on the second and final day of athletics competition at the Army Stadium to finish atop with nine gold, seven silver and four bronze.

West Bengal hauled five gold, seven silvers and six bronzes.

Country's fastest man Shamsuddin, who lost the fastest man title to West Bengal's Rahmatullah on the opening day, took revenge of his 100m spring defeat by grabbing the 200m gold in 21.7s. Rahmatullah took silver in 21.8s while Bangladesh's Masudul Karim got the bronze.

West Bengal also clinched the fastest woman title with Rakhi Saha

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Justin Langer

(Former Australia opening batsman)

"When you go to your grave, people will remember what you did with your life rather than how much money you made."

While getting a bit philosophical while stating he's opting out of the Indian Premier League.



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First Test, Day Four
Live from 10:00am

ESPN
Sportscenter India
Sports News
Live at 8:30pm

Manchester City v Everton
English Premier League
Live at 1:54am (Tuesday)

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Gambhir ton goes in vain

AFP, Sydney



A sparkling century from Gautam Gambhir could not save India from an 18-run defeat at the hands of Australia in their tri-series match here on Sunday.

A win would have secured India a berth in the finals, but they were always struggling at the crease after several Australian batsmen returned to form in posting 317 for seven.

India chased bravely and made 299 from 49.1 overs, the highest total ever by side batting second at the SCG, but it wasn't enough with Brett Lee taking 5-58 for the home side.

With Ricky Ponting making 124, Australia, choosing to bat first on a docile wicket, posted the highest score of the series and then made early inroads with the ball.

Symonds does it again!

PTI, Sydney

Even less than a month after the racism row involving Andrew Symonds and Harbhajan Singh was resolved, the Australian all-rounder once again was seen mired in a heated exchange of words with an Indian bowler -- this time Ishant Sharma.

Symonds, who scored 59 to propel Australia to a challenging 317 at SCG, fired up in final overs and smashed a five fours and two sixes to raise his half century from 44 balls.

While Symonds' innings was blazing, Ishant Sharma foxed him with a slower delivery and the Australian was clean bowled. But Symonds did not leave the ground before exchanging some heated words with the Indian paceman.

Symonds first reacted to his dismissal after which Ishant Sharma retaliated by showing Symonds his way back to the pavilion, which led to the two umpires calling over the Indian team and asking them to show restraint.

Umpire Daryl Harper was seen having a word with Dhoni and his men.

Incidentally, Symonds had alleged Harbhajan of calling him a monkey during a Test played at the same ground.

India were always struggling after star opener Sachin Tendulkar fell in the second over before they slumped to 51 for four.

Gambhir and captain Mahendra Singh Dhoni revived Indian hopes by putting on 98 for the fifth wicket, before the latter was caught behind off the bowling of Brett Lee for 36.

Robin Uthappa and Gambhir then kept the score ticking over by putting on 67, but India's hopes suffered a fatal blow when the century's brave knock came to an end when he was stumped by Adam Gilchrist, who completed six dismissals, off the bowling of Brad Hogg for 113.

It left India needing 102 more off just 65 balls and although Uthappa bravely kept the chase going with a dashing 51, the required run rate was just too high.

While disappointed, Dhoni thought the performance was

encouraging.

"The start we got was quite disappointing, but I think there were quite a few positives from the game," he said.

"He (Gautam) was very calm and cool and played the right shots. "With one partnership at the top it would have been more close."

Ponting said it was closer than he would have liked, but was delighted to see his batsmen back in form.

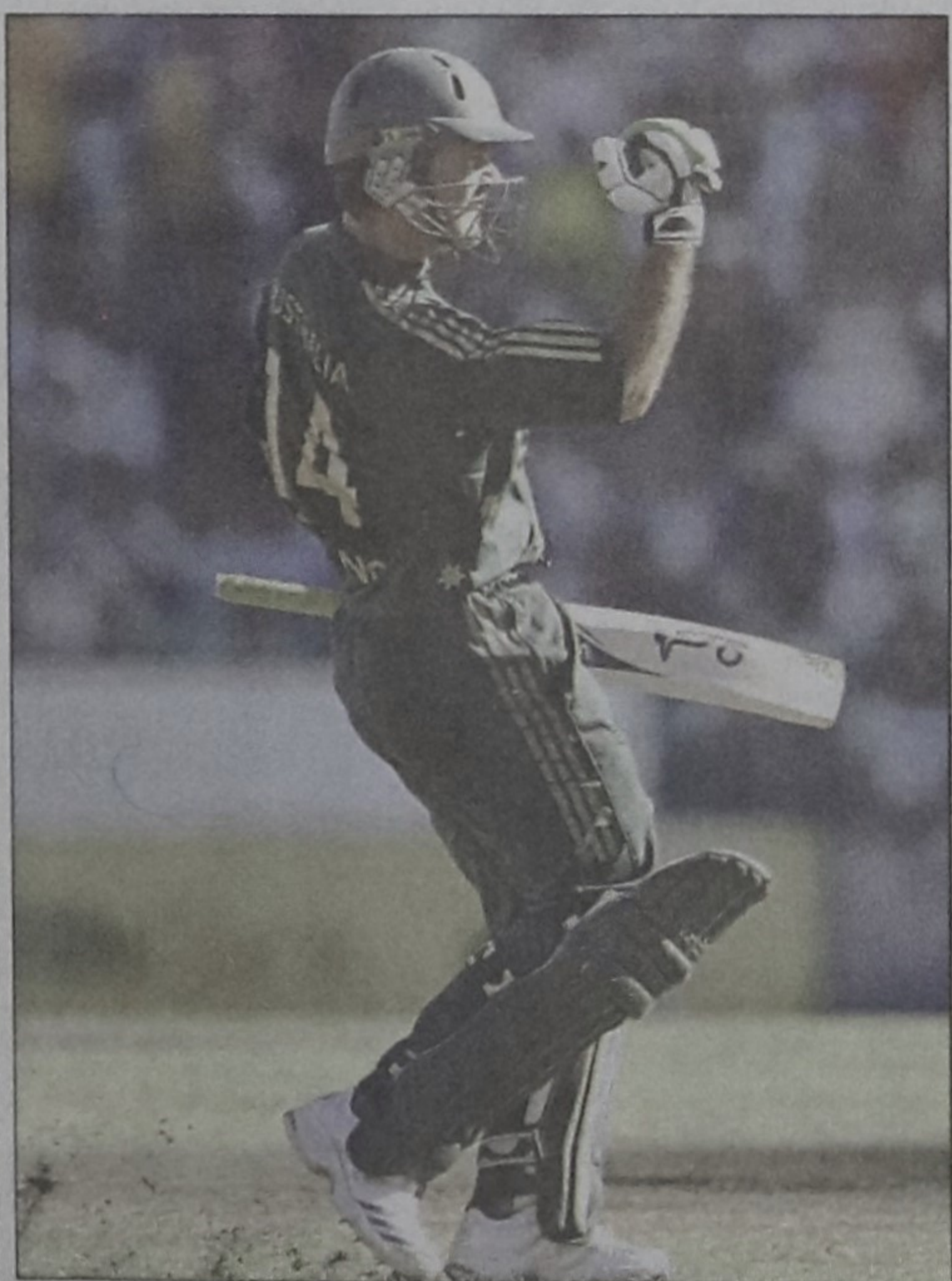
"It was another good win by us, although they got a few more runs than we would have liked towards the end," he said.

"Our batting was excellent today and it's been coming for a while."

"We wanted to get some momentum going into the finals."

Despite the lack of top order support Gambhir, batting at number three, notched his second century of the series and fourth

SEE PAGE 18 COL 2



BACK ON SONG: Australia captain Ricky Ponting punches the air after scoring his hundred against India in a triangular one-day series match in Sydney yesterday.

Easy win for Orient

UNB, Dhaka

Orient SC registered an emphatic seven-wicket win over Dhaka Wanderers Club in the Metropolitan First Division Cricket League at the Dhanmondi Cricket Stadium yesterday.

Batting first after winning the toss, Dhaka Wanderers made 145 for four in 42 overs with Sony scoring 51. Rahat captured four wickets for 13 runs.

In reply, Orient reached 149-3 in 30.2 overs with Rubel contributing 69 not out. Pappa took one wicket for 10 runs.

In the day's other matches Brothers Union (172-6) beat Dhaka

SEE PAGE 18 COL 4

4TH JFA CUP

3 teams in zonal final

SPORTS REPORTER

BKSP, Bhola and Moulvibazar moved into the finals of the 4th JFA Cup Under-15 Football Championship yesterday as their respective zonal champions.

Braces by Kanan and Sumon helped BKSP rout Tangail 4-1 in the zonal final at Jamalpur Stadium while two host teams needed tiebreakers to oust their opponents.

Moulvibazar defeated Habiganj 4-2 after the zonal final ended in a goalless draw while Bhola won 6-5 after another scoreless final at home.

At Pabna Kushiya edged Magura 1-0 while Feni thrashed Chandpur 4-0 in the opening match of the group at Cox's Bazar.

Shamima stuns Rani Hamid

SPORTS REPORTER

Qualifier Shamima Akhter Liza upset defending champion IWM Rani Hamid in the third round of the Aromatic Gold 29th National Women's Chess Championship at the federation chess-room yesterday.

Young prodigy Liza, who won the qualifying competition and also clinched the title of the recently concluded FIDE rating meet, shared the second place with veteran Rani on two points.

Nazrana Khan Eva and Sharmin Sultana Shirin led the table jointly with 2.5 points after drawing with WFM Syeda Shabana Parveen Nipa and Rokhsana Titi respectively.



Asadur Rahman of Bangladesh crosses a barrier on way to clinch the men's 110m hurdles gold at the Army Stadium yesterday, the concluding day of the athletics competition of the 2nd Indo-Bangladesh Bangla Games.

Youths crash out

India, SA reach semis



SPORTS REPORTER

While their seniors were battling to save a Test match at home against South Africa despite going neck and neck on the first three days, Bangladesh Under-19s lost the tempo after a great show in the group stage when they crashed to a humiliating 201-run defeat to the Proteas in the Under-19 cricket World Cup in Kuala Lumpur yesterday.

A close finish in the group stage saw Bangladesh snatch a 13-run victory against England to win all their group games and avoid a clash against hot favourites India in

the knockout stage. But it seemed that they fell into fire from the frying pan in their quarterfinal against South Africa at the Bayuemas Oval as they produced a no-show.

The inserted Proteas recovered from a precarious 69-4 to reach 242 for eight in 50 overs, thanks to captain Wayne Parnell's 57 off 60 deliveries. Rubel Hossain and Subhashis Roy each claimed two wickets.

Parnell later ran havoc in the Bangladesh batting with five overs of his left-arm seam bowling, grabbing six wickets for eight runs as the rank outsiders skittled out for a meagre 41 in just 11.5 overs.

Bangladesh Cricket Board's development committee chairman Col (ret'd) MA Latif rushed to the Malaysian capital before the semis to inspire the boys but it seemed

that the official's whole-hearted effort went down the drains as they were all out for the second lowest total ever in the competition.

Nasir Hossain was the only Bangladeshi player to reach double figures with 17 on a woeful day for the batsmen.

India also advanced to the semifinals when they eliminated England by seven wickets. India meet the winners of today's clash between Sri Lanka and New Zealand in the semifinal while South Africa will take on winners of the fourth semifinal between holders Pakistan and Australia.

AFP adds: After Jonathan Vandiar (45) and Yaseen Vallie (28) put on 66 for the fifth wicket to rescue South Africa from an early collapse, Parnell smashed a

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