



A WHOLE-HEARTED EFFORT: Bangladesh speedster Shahadat Hossain is on to his follow-through after a delivery during the South Africa second innings on Day Four of the first Test at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.

Smith hails Shahadat Ashraful blames curator

SPORTS REPORTER

WARID Cricket Series

Bangladesh lost yet another Test match against South Africa, but their five-wicket defeat in the first of the two-match series was in no way a meek surrender like four previous occasions.

And it was none other than the South African skipper, Graeme Smith who praised the Tigers' efforts in the match as the home team pushed them hard in the first two days including that creditable first innings lead at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur.

"It was a hard-fought game and I am very happy that we finally won it. Bangladesh played really good cricket in the first two days, to be fair, I'm thinking that the fast bowler (Shahadat Hossain) bowled really well," observed the Proteas skipper in a post-match briefing.

"He (Shahadat) used the conditions well, he got reverse swing which made it tough. He bowled the ball in the right areas. And I think (Mohammad) Rafique really did a good job in the first innings containing one end that made it

difficult for us to score," he added.

Lanky paceman Shahadat took the fourth day's only wicket by trapping Ashwell Prince in front of the wicket to finish with second innings figures of 3 for 70 and thus completing a match haul of nine wickets while Rafique, brightened his hopes of claiming 100 Test wickets before bidding international cricket goodbye after taking four wickets in the match.

Smith however pinpointed the Mirpur wicket behind their difficulty to win the match.

"I think probably the nature of the wicket is a little tougher than the other sub-continent wickets and (that's why) it was natural that we had to work hard for victory."

"The lack of bounce and pace is something we took some time to get used to. It is good to see the way the guys played in the second innings to chase down more than 200 runs," he said.

"I don't think we really adapted to the condition as well in that first innings. In the second innings, we had to bowl under pressure. I thought we bowled well on the second day without much reward. We got our reward in the morning for the pressure we have created,"

he added.

Bangladesh captain Mohammad Ashraful also expressed his disappointment over the behaviour of the pitch in Mirpur.

"It was not the wicket what we had desired (from our curator). It was difficult to bat in the first day but I think it's gradually improved. We didn't get the turn as we expected. But I must say our bowlers gave too many half volleys in the initial stage of the South African second innings," explained Ashraful.

"The 200-run target could have been good enough if the pitch behaved like the first day," he added.

The doom-faced Ashraful, who astounded everybody by making a comment after the third day's play, however admitted that they had lost another opportunity in Tests.

"No doubt we lost the opportunities because of the batsmen's failure. Some of our batsmen got starts but couldn't make it into a big one which was really a crime," admitted the ace batsman, who was also one of those batsmen.

His South African counterpart Smith also said that the Tigers' batting should improve if they want to be a competitive team.

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Siddons stands by Rahim

BISHWAJIT ROY

WARID Cricket Series

It took only forty-five minutes on the fourth morning to see the South Africans complete their job to take a 1-0 lead in the two-Test series against Bangladesh.

Interestingly, the post-match briefing was much longer than the day's action. The victorious skipper Graeme Smith and man-of-the-match Jacques Kallis made a short presence on the podium and home captain Mohammad Ashraful was also not in a mood to have a long conversation with the media.

It was however Bangladesh coach Jamie Siddons, the man who loves to share his ideas with the press, who took centre stage as the Australian had his first real salvo with the media regarding his policy about the 'future team'.

The shaven-headed coach came down hard when asked in which criteria wicketkeeper Mushfiqur Rahim is continuing his

place in the team. The criticism has been loud, not only because of Mushfiq's poor keeping but also because of his batting, for which he took over the reins from veteran Khaled Mashud.

The right-hander was nowhere among the runs since he made a well-composed 80 against Sri Lanka and has scored only nine runs in the first Test at Mirpur.

"I think he is the best wicketkeeper in the country. You guys (media) are putting enormous pressure on him with talks of getting rid of him. It's not helping him. He is our best keeper; if you can find a better keeper who is good for our future, let me know. I am looking forward to seeing him."

"I am not a selector. I was told he is our best keeper. I have seen a couple of other wicketkeepers. We can always bring the experienced players and have the same result; I am not going to do that. Every young wicketkeeper is going to get it hard in his first couple of years," he said while defending Mushfiq. Siddons had also some explanation

behind Mushfiq's poor keeping in the match.

"He missed one (chance) today, but I don't think it would have made any difference. But there is no excuse for missing, but it was something very tough on a wicket on the left-side that had unpredictable bounce," he said.

At one stage, he was reminded that every foreign coach, after his arrival, found a lot of potential in a single player but suddenly lost interest in that blue-eyed boy.

When asked how to get rid of the phenomena, he responded: "If you keep picking on a young player, you are going to force him out of the team. You should give him time to prove himself. The young players that we have got in this team have the talent to improve and I am happy to stick with him for as long as I am here."

He however said that he has a lot of work to do with his charges.

"At the moment our batsmen are collapsing and we can lose five for 30 or six for fifty-odd. It is difficult to

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Gazi Tank ride on Shihab

SPORTS REPORTER

Contributions from Shihab and Apurba ensured Gazi Tank Cricketers continued their winning run in the First Division League yesterday.

Apurba took three for 42 while Shihab cracked 57 as the favourites beat lowly Kathalagan by 50 runs, after having scored 232-9 in 50 overs at the Dhaka University

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Did U Know?

In 2004, the men's singles winner of the Wimbledon Lawn Tennis Championships received 602,500 pounds while the ladies' singles winner got 560,000 pounds.



Sanjay Manjrekar

(Cricketer commentator)
"With Tendulkar, it's like the elephant in the room that no one wants to talk about."

Wondering why Sachin Tendulkar's failures, especially while chasing, are not questioned by the media.



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Bangladesh end on top 9-star Monalisa queen of pool

SPORTS REPORTER



Bangladesh dethroned West Bengal yesterday to bag both the men's and women's football gold medals in the 2nd Indo-Bangladesh Bangla Games.

With the last two gold medals of the competition decided at the Bangabandhu National Stadium, the hosts also completed a successful campaign in the Games of the Bengali speaking citizens of Bangladesh and India with 45 gold, 29 silver and 18 bronze medals.

West Bengal, who had dominated the inaugural version two years back in Kolkata, finished with a haul of 24-40-27.

In the end, 69 gold medals were decided in nine disciplines although the organisers had initially announced about 67 events.

Bangladesh had targeted at least 40 gold medals and the additional five gold has made the organisers more than happy even though it was just a competition against a state team from India, a force to reckon with in South Asian sports.

The Games will officially close with a Twenty20 cricket match between Bangladesh and West Bengal at the Fatullah Stadium with the hosts already securing gold by virtue of their unassailable 2-0 lead.

Having swept all the team gold medals, Bangladesh maintained their supremacy by maintaining all-win record in the three-match

series of kabaddi, volleyball, basketball and kho kho.

In yesterday's series finales, Bangladesh kabaddi team won 36-26 with two losses, the spikers blanked the tourists 25-17, 25-19 and 25-23, the local basketball team recorded an 87-78 win in extra time after the regulation period ended 72-44 while the kho-kho match ended 15-12 in favour of the local side.

FOOTBALL
Although the success of the men's team, who defeated the visitors 2-1 in the final match yesterday to clinch the three-match series 2-0, was not a surprise, the eve's triumph was a great achievement considering the fact that women's football was introduced in the country very recently.

The women, who lost the first match 1-0 and drew the second on the previous day, won the third and last encounter 1-0 to level the series 1-1 in the afternoon. The local girls finally got their hands on gold with a 4-2 victory in the penalty shootout.

Bangladesh captain Dalia Akhter slammed the all important goal after 48 minutes from a freekick to give Abu Yusuf's girls a lifeline and the booters kept their cool in the shootout.

"The girls really worked hard. This is the result of their effort. I thank them for this achievement," said former national footballer Yusuf.

Dalia hoped it would be a turning point in the history of women's football in the country. "It would inspire us to work harder in the future, specially after winning gold coming from behind," she said.

The males, after a scoreless

draw in the second match, returned to form but had to wait till the second half to open the scoring. Fullback Atiqur Rahman Mishu netted both the goals, in the 55 and 73 minutes, while Lal Chhunawma reduced the arrears for the touring side two minutes from time.

SHOOTING
Bangladesh clearly dominated the shooting competition grabbing 11 out of 16 gold medals.

However, the two teams shared the honours equally on the final day when four events were decided at BKSP.

In the end, Bangladeshi shooters finished with an 11-7-4 record compared to West Bengal's 5-9-3.

In the women's 50m three position rifle Sabrina Sultana won the individual gold scoring 560 points. Her teammate Sharmin Shilpa won silver and West Bengal's Amrina Das bronze. In the team event, the hosts won the gold with a total of 1649 points.

West Bengal clinched both the men's 50m three position rifle gold, Joydeep Bandopadhyaya winning the individual event and also helping the side claim the team event.

SWIMMING
Monalisa Mondol's nine-gold performance including seven in individual events aided the West Bengal team fight neck and neck in the swimming competition as the visitors (14-17-18) fell just four gold medals behind Bangladesh (18-15-10).

The locals won six out of 11 gold medals decided on the final day

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Mohammedan leave for India today

SPORTS REPORTER

Mohammedan Sporting Club will leave Dhaka today to participate in the century-old IFA Shield in Kolkata.

Shafiqul Islam Manik's boys, however, will make the trip rather half-hazard, confirmed the Mohammedan coach.

"We have yet to get visa of a few players but I can say now that we are going to take a22 to 23 players," Manik said last night.

Manik informed Mohammedan are lined up against Churchill Brothers of Goa in their opening game on February 28.

Goalkeeper Hassan Al Mamun, defender Jewel Rana, midfielders Arman Aziz and Faisal Mahmud are among many guest players to wear the famous black and white strip in the prestigious tournament. The foreign recruits are Moroccan players Adil and Hakim and Nigerian Paul.

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Amateur Golf to tee-off tomorrow

SPORTS REPORTER

The 23rd edition of the Bangladesh Amateur Golf Championship will tee-off at the Kurmitola Golf Club in the city tomorrow.

The event however will be inaugurated today by Chief of Naval Staff, Vice Admiral Sarwar Jahan Nizam, who will also double as Chief Guest and distribute prizes amongst the winners.

The tournament which is being held since 1982 will be sponsored by Cotton Group.

The premier international event will continue until March 1 and will see both individual and team play and both male and female participants.

Top teams and amateur golfers from Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Malaysia and Pakistan will compete in the event.

Each participating country will send two men and two ladies golfers and there will be 36 foreign participants competing for the prize alongside about two hundred local golfers.

SA fined

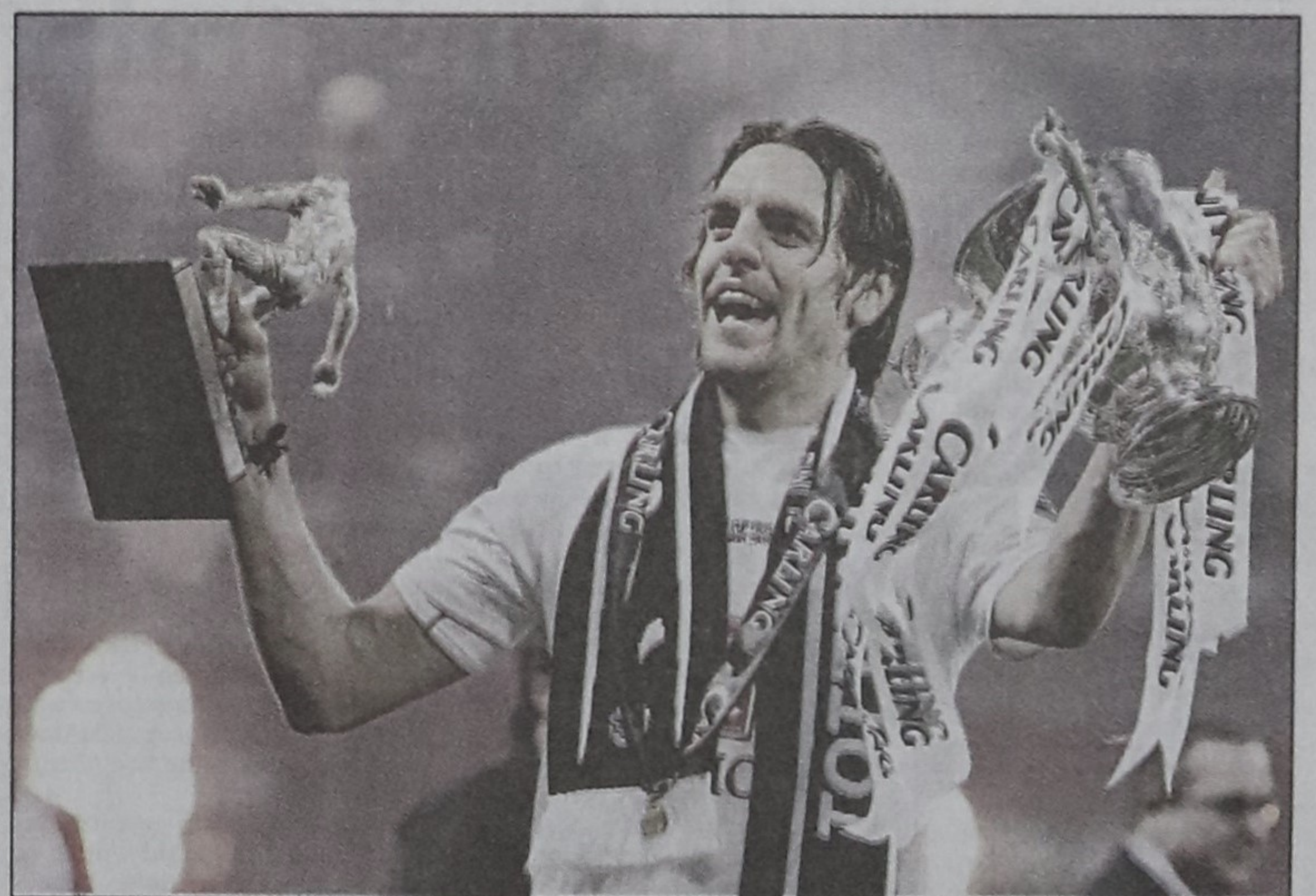
SPORTS REPORTER

South Africa have been fined for maintaining a slow over-rate during their five-wicket win over Bangladesh in Dhaka.

Match referee Ranjan Madugalle imposed the fines after South Africa were ruled to be three overs short of its target when time allowances were taken into consideration.

In accordance with the ICC Code of Conduct regulations governing

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Tottenham defender Jonathan Woodgate celebrates with the Carling Cup and his man-of-the-match trophy after his side overcame Chelsea in the final at Wembley in London on Sunday. Woodgate scored the winning goal in extra-time.

Spurs end trophy drought

Football

AFP, London

Jonathan Woodgate's extra-time header settled a pulsating League Cup final on Sunday as Tottenham came from behind to beat Chelsea 2-1 and claim their first trophy in nine years.

It was a thoroughly deserved triumph for the Tottenham coach Juande Ramos, just four months after his arrival from Sevilla, with Spurs having continually taken the game to opponents who ultimately paid the price of their own caution.

Didier Drogha's first-half freekick had put the holders on track to retain their trophy.

But a penalty equaliser from Dimitar Berbatov -- after Wayne Bridge handled in the area -- sent the match into extra-time and Spurs, who might easily have wrapped things up inside 90 minutes, finally

got the break they deserved in the third minute of extra-time.

Jermaine Jenas bent in a freekick from deep on the left and Woodgate got in behind the Chelsea defence to glance a header goalwards.

Goalkeeper Petr Cech still managed to get a punch on the ball but Woodgate was so close that it rebounded off his head and into the net.

For Woodgate, it was his first goal in two years.

"I don't believe it. I don't usually go up for corners but I just managed to get my head to it," said Woodgate.

"I think we deserved it. We were the best team on the day and we knocked the ball about against a team who are very resilient."

Chelsea could count themselves unfortunate to be denied a penalty in the second period of extra-time when Woodgate appeared to manhandle Drogha in the box and Paul

Robinson had to produce a superb save with his legs to deny substitute Salomon Kalou an equaliser.

But overall Chelsea boss Avram Grant could have few complaints about his failure to emulate his predecessor Jose Mourinho's 2005 and 2007 triumphs in this tournament.

The Israeli reflected: "Up to midway through the second half Tottenham weren't in the match. We were dominating and they were powerless."

"After that they had that penalty which wasn't a penalty. The referee shouldn't have blown his whistle."

"The referee also handled very badly the extra time, stopping play all the time. And then he blew the final whistle just when we were in the middle of an attack. It's a harsh loss. I'm very disappointed and the players are too."

Tottenham's hopes of containing a Chelsea forward line in which

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The Bangladesh eves celebrate after beating West Bengal for the football gold medal of the 2nd Indo-Bangladesh Bangla Games at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR