



WELCOME TO THE MEN'S WORLD: Fresh call-ups in the Bangladesh's one-day side (L-R) batsman Nazimuddin, wicketkeeper Dhiman Ghosh, left-arm spinner Mosharraf Hossain Rubel and Rokibul Hasan enjoy their first training at the Chittagong Divisional Stadium yesterday.

Shakib undaunted

Practice match today

SPORTS REPORTER, Chittagong

WARID Cricket Series

Shakib Al Hasan will lead a very young BCB XI in a warm-up match against the South Africans here today at the Chittagong Divisional Stadium.

After a whitewash in the Test series, most of the senior Tigers will get a rest as Shakib takes a number of probables -- nine cricketers of this side are in the ODI squad -- for the three-match one-day series into the game.

All four newcomers in the Bangladesh side will play as all 13 cricketers have a chance to do something and the skipper thinks it would be a great opportunity to see how they respond.

"It's an opportunity for the youngsters to prove themselves," Shakib told reporters after their practice session at the match venue, where the first ODI will be played on Sunday.

"We will see how the young ones take the pressure. I feel that they will try their level best to be

competitive against a strong team," said Shakib, who had also led the local side in South Africa's tour opener three-day practice match.

Shakib's side had got on top but the seniors failed to repeat any such thing in the two Tests, forcing the selectors to gamble by picking up one of the youngest squads ever for the country.

"Our target would be to get accustomed to the white ball and regain the confidence we have lost."

When asked about national captain Mohammad Ashraful's comments that live telecast of international matches put pressure on the cricketers, Shakib said he did not feel anything like that.

"It depends on the individual. For someone, may be there is pressure but I don't see any reason for tension. It's better to try playing one's natural game and not thinking about pressures."

"If we win (tomorrow) it would be a moral booster but I feel it would be ideal to concentrate on improving individual performance and prepare for the big show," he added.

The visitors have already termed Bangladesh as a dangerous one-day team and for skipper Graeme Smith it would be the only chance to give the new players, who have joined the side after the Test series, the chance to get used to the conditions.

"We have not seen many of the Bangladeshi players who are going to play in the ODIs. It gives us a chance to assess them," said the record-breaking Proteas captain, whose side lost to the Tigers in the World Cup.

SQUADS

BCB XI: Shakib Al Hasan (captain), Nazim Uddin (vice captain), Tamim Iqbal, Zunaed Siddique, Roqibul Hassan, Naem Islam, Mahmudullah Riyad, Dhiman Ghosh (wicketkeeper), Farhad Reza, Mosharraf Hossain Rubel, Syed Rasel, Sajedul Islam and Rubel Hossain.

SOUTH AFRICA: Graeme Smith (captain), Herschelle Gibbs, AB de Villiers (wicketkeeper), JP Duminy, Alviro Petersen, Hashim Amla, Albie Morkel, Paul Harris, Johan Botha, Morne Morkel, Dale Steyn, Charl Langeveld and Andre Nel.

Heroes' welcome for India

Cricket

CRICINFO, undated

The Indian one-day team returned from the CB Series in Australia to a rousing reception at the Delhi airport, where they were greeted by hundreds of fans and received by officials of the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) and the Delhi and District Cricket Association.

After a hard-fought series, where they won the finals 2-0, the team reached Mumbai in the morning and took a chartered flight to Delhi for a function at Ferozeshah Kotla. They were joined there by two members of the World Cup-winning under-19 side -- Virat Kohli, the captain and

Pradeep Sangwan -- who play for Delhi.

Speaking at the function, Mahendra Singh Dhoni, the limited-overs team captain, praised his side, which became the first Indian team to win a series in Australia. The series was played out amid some controversy and Dhoni made special mention of the team's behaviour: "The conduct of my team on and off the field is responsible for our victory."

Sachin Tendulkar, who played match-winning knocks in both the finals, told news channel CNN-IBN that the team hadn't been distracted by the controversies -- which originated in the Sydney Test -- during the tour. "Plenty of things happened on the field, but we were focussed on the cricket."

Rohit Sharma, who made a vital 66 in the first final, echoed Tendulkar's sentiments. "We tried to enjoy our cricket as much as possible," he said. "All the controversies motivated us."

The BCCI had initially planned an open-top bus parade from the airport, similar to the welcome the team had received after winning the World Twenty20, but decided against it later.

"The players have been in Australia for more than two-and-a-half months and will also be tired after the two flights," BCCI vice-president Rajeev Shukla told PTI. "That's why we have not made any elaborate arrangements as the players will be eager to go home."

A reward of 10 crore rupees, 2.5 million dollars, had already been announced for the team.



Indian cricket icon Sachin Tendulkar (C) shares a light moment with captain Mahendra Singh Dhoni (R) and Yuvraj Singh during a felicitation ceremony at the Ferozeshah Kotla in New Delhi yesterday. Tendulkar played the pivotal role in India's 2-0 win over Australia in the best-of-three CB Series finals.

A lot to achieve

AFP, Chittagong

WARID Cricket Series

After notching up 5,000 Test runs here barely a week ago, South African captain Graeme Smith is now eyeing the same mark in one-day internationals.

Bangladesh has been a happy hunting ground for Smith, who made his debut as Test captain in this port city four years ago.

He was involved in a world record opening stand of 415 with Neil McKenzie in the second Test against Bangladesh, erasing the previous 52-year-old mark of 413 between India's Pankaj Roy and Vinoo Mankad.

Smith, who passed the 5,000-run milestone on the way to the

record at the Chittagong Divisional Stadium, is just 183 runs short of reaching the mark in one-dayers.

Reaching this coveted milestone during the one-day series against Bangladesh starting here on Sunday looks a distinct possibility for the inspirational skipper given his form and the quality of the opposition.

"I hope to reach the mark. It would be fantastic to reach 5,000 runs. Bangladesh hold special memories for me and it would be wonderful to do it here," Smith told reporters Thursday.

The list of records for the left-handed opener in Bangladesh seems to be swelling by the day.

He set a captaincy record by leading South Africa in a national record 54th Test here, surpassing the late Hansie Cronje's mark of 53.

Smith also became the first South African to amass four Test double hundreds.

The upcoming three-match one-day series will also give Smith a chance to pip Australian skipper Ricky Ponting in the official one-day rankings, currently headed by Indian batting maestro Sachin Tendulkar.

Smith is only 17 points behind second-placed Ponting and he could overtake the Australian if he carries his Test form into the one-dayers.

South Africa won the recent Test series 2-0, with Smith scoring a total of 304 runs at an average of more than 100.

In seven one-day internationals against Bangladesh, Smith has scored 263 runs at an average of 52.66.

Rafique told to explain

SPORTS REPORTER

The Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) yesterday show-caused Mohammad Rafique for his comments against board officials last week.

Acc Bangladesh left-arm spinner Rafique, who retired from international cricket, told before his last Test in Chittagong that he wished not to continue with the national team under the people who have prompted his retirement.

Rafique is the only Bangladesh cricketer to have taken 100 wickets at both Test and one-day levels.

"By making unproven allegations against board officials, Rafique has broken the code of conduct. If he fails to prove the complaints, the board could punish him," said board member and cricket operations committee chairman Gazi Ashraf Hossain Lipu yesterday.

Rafique, who was not available for comments, has been asked to give his reply by tomorrow.

Abahani start training March 10

SPORTS REPORTER

B. League champions Abahani will prepare for more than a month for their return to Asian club football competition after nearly a decade.

Abahani, who last played in the now-defunct Asian Cup Winners Cup in the 90s, will participate in the third edition of the AFC President's Cup to be held in Kathmandu next April.

Abahani who won the right to play in the third-ranked AFC competition after winning the country's inaugural professional league last year, will start training on March 10.

Eng rocked by late strikes

Cricket

AFP, Hamilton

A late two-wicket burst by Chris Martin rocked England's pursuit of New Zealand's first innings 470 after batsmen had dominated the second day of the first cricket Test here Thursday.

A maiden Test century by recalled Ross Taylor, who featured in a seventh-wicket stand of 148 with Daniel Vettori, lifted New Zealand from a middle-order slump to an impressive 470.

At stumps England were 87 for two in reply, after reaching 84 without loss, and still trailing New Zealand by 383 runs.

Taylor and Vettori breezed through the morning session and into the afternoon before Taylor fell for 120 and Vettori for 88 as New

Zealand's final four wickets went in the space of 45 runs.

Evidence of the role the placid wicket played in New Zealand's innings was put in context as Michael Vaughan and Alastair Cook cruised to 84 without loss before Martin struck twice in seven balls.

Cook was first to fall for 38 when he misused pulling a short-pitched ball and was caught at square leg by substitute fielder Nick Horsley, then nightwatchman Mathew Hoggard edged Martin to Stephen Fleming at first slip.

Vaughan who had survived a hard chance to Fleming was not out 44 with Andrew Strauss on one.

But the day belonged to Taylor and his captain Vettori who resurrected New Zealand's innings when they were 277 for six.

With the second new ball only seven overs old when play resumed, England were looking for

an early breakthrough.

Instead they fed the batsmen a diet of boundaries with five fours coming off the first five overs of the day and New Zealand adding 105 runs in the first session.

Taylor, back in the New Zealand team after being dropped following a disappointing debut series in South Africa last year, brought up the New Zealand 300 with a four off Hoggard that flew over the slips cordon to the third-man boundary.

He reached his century with another boundary after playing out a patient maiden over from Monty Panesar when on 98 he pulled a short-pitched ball from the erratic Steve Harmison to the boundary.

It took an inspired bowling change by England skipper Vaughan to eventually remove Taylor who was caught and bowled when he top-edged the second ball

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Roma striker Mirko Vucinic celebrates after scoring against Real Madrid during their Champions League encounter at the Santiago Bernabeu on Wednesday.

Real Madrid crash out

REUTERS, Belgrade



Roma knocked Real Madrid out of the Champions League at the Bernabeu on Wednesday to reach the quarter-finals and were joined by Chelsea and Schalke 04.

Roma's 2-1 win secured a 4-2 aggregate victory while Chelsea thrashed Olympiakos Piraeus 3-0 and Schalke beat Porto 4-1 on penalties following a 1-1 draw over two legs.

The Italians never looked over-awed by nine times European champions Madrid and were unlucky not to take a first-half lead when Alberto Aquilani's screamer from 30 metres hit the post.

Spanish champions Real, sorely missing injured striker Ruud Van Nistelrooy, lacked ideas in midfield and bite up front but nearly took the lead themselves early in the

second half when Julio Baptista's freekick from 25 metres hit the bar.

They fell behind to a flying Taddei header in the 73rd minute, shortly after having central defender Pepe sent off, and Roma's passage to the last eight was sealed by substitute Mirko Vucinic after a Raul goal had briefly restored Real's hopes.

Raul slotted Robinho's through ball past goalkeeper Doni in the 75th minute but Vucinic silenced the vociferous home crowd with an injury-time header as Real threw men forward.

Roma coach Luciano Spalletti was delighted with his team's second Champions League win in their fourth outing at the Bernabeu that condemned Real to their fourth successive first-knockout round exit.

"I expected a tough game but my team came here to get a result and they responded perfectly," he told a news conference.

"We suffered at times but we

deserved to go through. We didn't steal this tie from Real. I think both sides played well and that makes the win here at this ground even more special."

Schalke, having reached the knockout round for the first time in three attempts, continued their run by beating Porto, whose left back Fucile was sent off in the 82nd minute.

Lisandro had given 2004 champions Porto a 1-0 lead on the night four minutes later with an unstoppable shot on the turn to force extra time but missed his team's final spot kick.

Goalkeeper Manuel Neuer kept Schalke afloat with a string of saves before denying Bruno Alves and Lisandro in the shootout.

Jermaine Jones then steered in the final spot-kick to start his team's celebrations at the Dragao stadium.

"That was a real fighting display," Schalke coach Mirko Slomka told Premiere TV. "We gave every-

thing. "It was a super performance from Manuel Neuer, and not only in the penalty shootout. He also made fantastic saves during the match."

Michael Ballack, Frank Lampard and Salomon Kalou settled a one-sided game at Stamford Bridge as Chelsea joined Premier League rivals Arsenal and Manchester United in the last eight.

If Liverpool beat Inter Milan when they visit the Italian Champions with a 2-0 first-leg lead next Tuesday then all four English teams will be through to the quarter-finals.

The match in west London was five minutes old when Ballack set Chelsea on their way by heading home Lampard's cross at the near post for his first Champions League goal of the season.

The pair changed roles as Lampard stroked home a rebound

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Did U Know?

About 42,000 tennis balls are used in the plus-minus 650 matches in the Wimbledon Championship.



Rohit Sharma

(Star India cricketer)

"I remember when I came here to play the last time I didn't have enough money! I couldn't shop... I didn't have a single penny to spend. In fact, I even borrowed money from my teammates that time. Now, fortunately, things have changed." Talking about the difference in his two visits to Australia.



ESPN

IFA Shield Final
Mahendra United v Santos FC
Live at 6:30pm
Sportscenter India
Sports News
Live at 8:30pm

SAB tv

New Zealand v England
First Test, Day Four
Live from 3:30am (Saturday)

STAR Sports

Bangalore Open
Live from 5:30pm



BCB XI v South Africa

One-Day Practice Match
Venue: Chittagong Divisional Stadium