



Bangladesh fast bowler Mashrafe bin Mortaza (L) exults as wicketkeeper Dhiman Ghosh (on the ground) grasps the catch to dismiss Ireland batsman James Porterfield during the first ODI at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium yesterday.

Relief in Tiger's camp

SPORTS REPORTER



Are you a relieved man now? was the expected question asked to Bangladesh captain Mohammad Ashraf after his side's comfortable eight-wicket victory against Ireland in the first game of the three-match one-day series at the Mirpur Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium yesterday.

Another reason behind the query was that the right-hander indicated a return to form by making an unbeaten 64 runs after a run drought in the last five matches. In addition it was his first one-day international victory as a captain.

The 23-year old Tigers skipper, who has already come under serious scrutiny following his immature off the field activities, however was realistic enough to tone down their success against an ICC associate member country.

"It feels good because we haven't won any one-day match after the World Cup. I am happy as we played the match according to our plan and it's always important to win matches no matter against whom," said Ashraf in response to the initial question.

Despite the Tigers horrible performance against South Africa in the recently concluded home series, a huge crowd turned in to watch the low-profile encounter under immense heat -- which the visitors also felt was a major reason behind their poor showing in the match -- and this occasion their beloved team didn't frustrate

them.

Undoubtedly they maintained their recent past supremacy over the ICC associates and avenged their World Cup defeat to Ireland in West Indies by winning the game but one shouldn't really get carried away.

"It is natural that people come down hard on us if we didn't play good cricket. But you should also consider the success as a win is always a win," said Ashraf.

The ace batsman said that he stuck to their team rule that's why he returned amongst the runs after a disappointing performance against South Africa in the Test and one-day series.

"I followed the team rules which suggested not to play in the air. I think we didn't do that against South Africa that's why we failed to put on a reasonable score. But if we can continue to bat in this manner then definitely you will see a progress in our batting under the guidance of our new coach," he observed.

"I think partnership is important in any form of the game and Nafees and I could do it today," he added.

Without any doubt it was encouraging to see the way the Bangladesh captain batted in the match as he not only took 13 balls to score his first runs but also avoided risky shots, a facet that was completely missing against the formidable South Africa.

Coach Jamie Siddons also expressed his satisfaction over the manner his skipper played the innings and was involved in an unbeaten 130-run third wicket partnership with Shahriar Nafees, who hit an undefeated 90.

"It's really nice to see that Ash

(Mohammad Ashraf) struck to the team rule today. I am especially happy that a win entertained the crowds," said the Australian, who also tasted his first victory with the Tigers since he has taken the job five months back.

Everybody definitely wanted to see Ashraf continue his batting in this manner to bring more success for the Tigers and as well as hope that he can understand his position as a captain of the team.

The 23-year old Ashraf was not only reluctant to acknowledge the crowds after making fifty as he raised his bat towards the dressing room to give an unsporting impression about his character but also defended his position during the post-match briefing.

"I am playing for my team and myself. It is my personal matter whether I will raise the bat or not," said Ashraf.

The comment however saddened everybody.

SCOREBOARD

Scoreboard of the first one-day international between Bangladesh and Ireland at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday:

IRELAND	
Porterfield c Dhiman b Mortaza	1
Strydom c Dhiman b Mortaza	8
Morgan b Reza	35
N O'Brien c Reza b Mahmudullah	15
K O'Brien lbw b Shabbir	20
Botham run out (Razzak)	22
Cusack c Reza b Mortaza	38
Johnston not out	31
Langford-Smith not out	3
Extras: (b-5, lb-4, w-3)	12
Total: (For 7 wickets in 50 overs)	185
Did not bat: Thompson, McCallan.	

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Abahani make it big

Cricket

SPORTS REPORTER

Abahani maintained their impressive run in the Premier Cricket League when the defending champions inflicted a thumping 150-run defeat on Kalabagan Krira Chakra yesterday.

Old DOHS once again gave birth to a tight finish but this time, they were on the wrong side against City Club who snatched a four-run win. In another fifth round match, Partex SC defeated Young Pegasus by 65 runs.

ABAHANI-KALABAGAN
Fresh from a 105-run victory against Partex in the previous round, Abahani recorded the biggest win of the league so far when they bowled out Kalabagan for just 118 while defending 268-9.

Although the champs lead the table with nine points, they do not have a 100 per cent winning record after being denied of one valuable point due to a washed out second round tie against BKSP. If Mohammedan win today, they will regain the lead from their archrivals Abahani with ten points.

The inserted Abahani got off to a bright start at the Fatullah Stadium with openers Jahurul Islam and man-of-the-match Mahubul Karim adding 62 runs in nine overs.

Mahubul, who smashed 89 off 93 balls, held the innings together till the 35th over and hit seven fours and one six. Apart from

Jahurul's 27, Pakistani batsman Anwar Hafeez, Nadif Chowdhury and veteran Mohammed Rafique contributed in the 30s.

The Kalabagan batting was no match for Abahani's three-prong pace attack and the spin duo featuring Rafique and Arafat Sunny, who got on top from the start.

Having lost their top half for just 30 runs, only national paceman Syed Rassel's 52 off 70 balls delayed the inevitable as Kalabagan stretched their innings to the 40th over.

Nazmul Hossain was the peak of the attack, taking 3-14 with the new ball while part-timer and captain Tushar Imran took a couple of wickets for three runs including the scalp of Rassel in his 3.2 overs.

CITY CLUB-DOHS
Old DOHS needed seven runs in as many balls at BKSP but City Club's tight fielding resulted in two run outs (Monir Hossain and Rashedur Islam) in four deliveries to stop their rivals for exactly 200.

Despite half-centuries by opener Rajin Saleh (64 off 104 balls) and captain Mehrab Hossain (68 off 107 balls), DOHS slumped to 143-7 in reply to City Club's modest 204-9 as inform paceman Shafaq Al Jabir, adjudged man-of-the-match, ripped through the middle order grabbing 3-19.

Monir (23) and Rashedur (10) kept DOHS's hopes alive after Mehrab's departure in the 46th over on 174-8, but their nerves showed under pressure as they were bundled out with three balls remaining.

Earlier, the City innings was built around Imran Ahmed's 40 and an 83-ball 65 by Golam Mabud after a 49-run opening stand.

PARTEX-PEGASUS
At the Dhanmondi Cricket Stadium, Rezaul Haque's all-round performance was decisive in Partex's comfortable victory in a low-scoring match.

Man-of-the-match Rezaul made 22 and captured 2-25 with the new ball as Partex, bowled out for 177, restricted Young Pegasus to 112.

SCORES IN BRIEF
ABAHANI: 268-9 in 50 overs (Jahurul 27, Mahubul 89, Hafeez 35, Nadif 30, Rafique 30, extras 30, Rokibul 3-39, Sadat 2-38).
KALABAGAN: 118 all out in 39.2 overs (Sadat 17, Mahfuz 14, Rassel 52, extras 16, Nazmul 3-14, Talha 2-28, Tushar 2-3).
Result: Abahani win by 150 runs.
CITY CLUB: 204-9 in 50 overs (Rajinul 14, Imran 40, Mabud 65, Bashir 19, Khadem 21, extras 17, Monir 3-46, Mahubul 3-43).
OLD DOHS: 200 all out in 49.3 overs (Rajin 64, Mehrab 68, Mahubul 11, Monir 23, Rashedur 10, extras 8, Shafaq 3-19, Atiqur 2-35).
Result: City Club win by four runs.
PARTEX: 177 all out in 46.3 overs (Shahin 37, Pratik 18, Tariq 19, Ariful 44, Rezaul 22, Faruk 11, extras 16, Arif 2-25, Nazmul 2-35, Sabbir 3-23).
PEGASUS: 112 all out in 38.4 overs (Izal 13, Arif 19, Ashiqur 10, Iftekar 14, Habibur 18, Jubair 14, extras 7, Rezaul 2-25, Mahfuzur 2-14, Faruk 2-16).
Result: Partex win by 65 runs.

Booters call strike

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh's preparation for two international football tournaments -- the AFC Challenge Cup and the SAFF Championship -- ran into jeopardy as the desperate footballers called a strike yesterday against the football's governing body.

In the wake of the cancellation of the new season's transfer, the footballers decided not to play for the national team or in any tournament under the Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF).

The national team were due to start training for next month's Challenge Cup in Kyrgyzstan within a week but former national captain Arif Khan Joy conveyed the decision of about 40 booters present at the Dhaka University ground saying they would boycott the BFF.

"We have decided not to play under the federation until the players get contracts for the new season," Joy told reporters.

"We will also not play for the national team," he added.

The transfer for the B. League started on March 15 but after the professional league clubs of Dhaka declined to take part, the BFF had to cancel it and announced that the transfer would be held after the April 28 election.

"Even if the BFF hastily announces another date for transfer soon, we will not move from our position. We want to see some real action from the federation and clubs," said Jewel Rana, another ex-national captain.

The BFF president, however, believed that the booters would change their stance for the sake of the national team.

"We will sit with the players. I hope they will consider the national pride," Sultan commented.

LOCAL SNIPPETS

SPORTS REPORTER

Milon, Rana and Al Amin found the net once each in the first half as Badda Jagarani crushed Dhaka Wanderers 3-0 at the Birshreshtha Shaheed Mostafa Kamal Stadium yesterday in the super league to remain at fourth place in the Senior Division Football League. Badda followed champions Youngmen's Club (36 points), Sunrise (28) and Victoria (26) with 25 points.

In the relegation league, struggling City Club remained second from bottom after losing 2-1 to Mohakhali XI at the Bangabandhu National Stadium.

Golap and Humayun scored for Mohakhali who have 19 points to top the relegation table. Mehdi reduced the arrears for City, who have 13 points.

JFA CUP
Rajshahi moved into the semifinals of the 4th JFA Cup Under-15 Football Championship with nine points when the hosts edged Bhola 1-0 at the Rajshahi Divisional Stadium.

Shafi struck the match winner after 39 minutes.

In the other match, Sajib's

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Inzy can't forget Bob

Cricket

AFP, Karachi

Twelve months after the death of Bob Woolmer, former Pakistan captain Inzamamul Haq has admitted that he will never forget the inspirational cricket coach.

"Pakistan cricket will always be indebted to Bob Woolmer for his contribution to the game," Inzamam told AFP in an interview to mark the first anniversary of the former England Test batsman's death which sent shockwaves through the sport and cast a shadow over the 2007 World Cup.

"I want to forget the tragedies of the World Cup, but I can never forget Bob. He was not only an excellent coach, but also a very good human being."

Woolmer, 58, who had also coached South Africa, was found dead in his hotel room in Jamaica on March 18, 2007, just a day after Pakistan had been sensationally knocked out of the World Cup following a shock defeat to Ireland.

The tragedy was initially treated as murder with some commentators insisting that Woolmer was

killed to prevent him blowing the whistle on illegal betting, the curse of the game in Asia.

However, after the biggest manhunt in Jamaican history and following months of wild speculation, an inquest jury in October eventually returned an open verdict on Woolmer's death.

Inzamam was so shattered by the events that he quit one-day cricket in tears immediately after Pakistan's last game in the doomed Caribbean campaign.

"He was helpful to all and very accommodating. He always thought about the team and saw to it that we kept improving," added Inzamam, who also quit Test cricket in October last year.

"After the defeat to Ireland we were all depressed but Bob was trying to console everyone and was trying to convince us that it was just a bad day and things would improve for the team."

"He asked me what were my plans. I told him that my mind was not working and we would talk the following day, but that opportunity never came and we got the shocking news of his death."

Woolmer had himself ruled out any hasty decision over his own

future with the team.

"I'm deeply hurt and I don't know how this is going to affect me, but I will let you know," Woolmer had told AFP in an exclusive interview following the defeat.

When his death was initially treated as murder, the Pakistan players were finger-printed and DNA-tested before Jamaican police finally announced in June that Woolmer, who suffered from diabetes, had died of natural causes.

Former international leg-spinner, and bowling coach, Mushtaq Ahmed said Woolmer was an inspiration for all those he coached.

"Bob was successful at county level where he coached Warwickshire, then lifted South Africa and was hoping to build Pakistan into a great team before he met a cruel fate," said Mushtaq.

The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) have dedicated their indoor cricket school to their late coach, which was inaugurated by both the Pakistan and South African teams.

"Bob will be remembered in Pakistan cricket and hopefully his legacy will continue. His memory is still fresh because his contribution

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Ron tricks revealed

Football

INTERNET, Madrid

Questions are being asked in Barcelona about the latest mysterious injury suffered by Ronaldinho. Above all, the Barca fans are asking whether the wayward Brazilian is really injured, and whether he should have missed Sunday's crucial game away to Almeria.

They are also asking why so many Barca players have suffered muscular injuries this season.

Without Ronaldinho -- and without eight other injured players, including Lionel Messi and Deco -- Barca could only draw 2-2 in Almeria, a result which leaves the Catalans no less than seven points behind leaders Real Madrid, with just 10 games left.

The digital version of Sport on Tuesday carries a sensational report entitled "Ronaldinho Unmasked", in which it claims that the Barca doctors have "discovered no injury at all" in Ronaldinho's right leg.

The Brazilian playmaker missed the trip to Almeria claiming he had pain in his right calf, but medical tests on Monday, according to Sport, could find no injury whatsoever.

Sport goes on to claim that Ronaldinho trained for only six minutes on Monday, just trotting twice around the training ground.

This is by no means the first time that the Brazilian has pulled out of a key game with a mysterious injury the doctors cannot find.

The newspaper claims that the club is "fed up" with the attitude of Ronaldinho, and that coach Frank Rijkaard is "tired of defending him

and giving him opportunities."

According to Sport, Ronaldinho's teammates are tired of his attitude and will no longer defend him in the media.

"The fans are more disappointed every day with Ronaldinho," alleges Sport, "because the player does not show signs of changing."

Ronaldinho, 28, quickly became the idol of the Barca fans after

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Barcelona star Ronaldinho (L) is seen at the team's training ground on Monday.



Desolate footballers gather at the Dhaka University ground yesterday to announce a strike against Bangladesh Football Federation until the transfer for the new season starts.



Did U Know?

The first mechanical chess clock was invented by Thomas Wilson in 1883. Prior to that, sandglasses were used. Sandglasses were first used in London in 1862.



TALK TURKEY



Fabio Capello
(England's new football coach)
"My goal now is to live the same joy as Marcello Lippi did for Italy by winning the World Cup for England."



What to WATCH

ESPN
Sportscentre India
Sports News
Live at 8:30pm
English Premier League
Tottenham v Chelsea
Live from 1:55am (Thursday)

STAR Sports
English Premier League
Man United v Bolton Wanderers
Live from 1:55am (Thursday)



Premier Div Cricket League
Biman v Surjo Torun
Venue: BKSP-2
Mohammedan v Sonargaon Cricketers
Venue: Dhanmondi Cricket Stadium
Victoria v BKSP
Venue: Fatullah Cricket Stadium