

Bangladesh eye whitewash

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh women's cricket team play their fourth and final one-day match against Hong Kong at the Mirpur Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium today.

The home side go into the match with a target to whitewash the visitors as they clinched the series with 71-run victory in the third game at the Chittagong Divisional Stadium on Thursday.

Bangladesh won all the previous games quite convincingly, by eight wickets and 109 runs, in Chittagong.

SL tour match cancelled

AFP, Scarborough

Sri Lanka's scheduled three-day tour match against West Indies 'A', planned for this weekend, was cancelled on Thursday because of flight problems.

The match had been scheduled for Shaw Park from March 29 to 31, but it has become the latest victim of the Caribbean's erratic airline services.

"The planned tour match has been cancelled because of flight problems," said a terse, three-paragraph statement from the West Indies Cricket Board (WICB).

"The WICB apologises for any inconveniences caused. Sri Lanka will use the opportunity to do net practice at Shaw Park."

Sri Lanka would have preferred the three-day match to fine tune their preparations for the second Test, starting on April 3 at Queen's Park Oval in Port-of-Spain, the capital of the island of Trinidad.

The visitors lead the series 1-0, after they completed a 121-run victory in the opening Test on Wednesday in Georgetown.

Sri Lanka are eyeing their first Test series victory in the Caribbean on their third attempt.



Did U Know?

Boxing legend Archie Moore holds the record for most knockouts during a career - a staggering 141.



Dunga

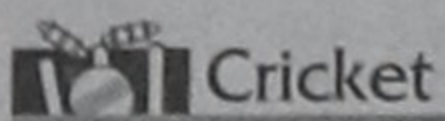
(Brazil football coach)
"I don't think he is a normal talent. There are some people that can make a big difference and he is one of those players."
On teenage prodigy Alexandre Pato.



What to WATCH

- NEO Sports**
India v South Africa
First Test, Day 4
Live from 10:00am
- ESPN**
English Premier Football League
Bolton Wanderers v Arsenal
Live from 8:55pm
- STAR Sports**
English Premier Football League
Birmingham City v Man City
Live at 8:55pm
- Man United v Aston Villa
Live from 11:10pm
- Primera Liga**
Betis v Barcelona
Live from 1:30am (Sunday)

Biman soaring high



SPORTS REPORTER

Mashrafe Bin Mortaza came back to haunt his old club with a blazing half-century as Biman pulled off a comfortable 70-run victory over Abahani in the Premier Cricket League at the Mirpur Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium yesterday.

Biman, with 17 points from nine outings, replaced Mohammedan as leaders after the latter's first defeat in the league on the same day while Abahani remained at number three.

Abahani's hopes to bounce back from the last round defeat to Victoria all but evaporated when the big-spending Biman piled up 255 for eight in their share of 50 overs on a surface where batting second is always a tricky job.

National opener Shahrir Nafees hit an unbeaten 60 but the left-hander never threatened the rivals rather the innings looked purposeless as Abahani bundled out for 185 in 49.2 overs.

Bangladesh vice-captain Mashrafe combined with elegant

Alok Kapali to take away the game from the defending champions as the pair added 124 runs for the sixth wicket stand after opener Tamim Iqbal made 59 off 72 balls before being run out.

There were few Abahani supporters in the stand to jeer their last year's hero, who had played a pivotal role in Abahani's success, but it only stirred up man-of-the-match Mashrafe to reply with a blistering knock of 76 that came from 56 deliveries.

He, however, made a cautious start and only went for the kill after 40 overs and his knock contained four boundaries and three sixes -- one each off left-arm spinners Mohammad Rafique and Arafat Sunny and pacer Ziaur Rahman.

Mashrafe must have thanked Abahani skipper Tushar Imran not to test him with some bouncers, which usually makes him nervous in the start of an innings, rather allowing the spinners to give him comfort.

Stylish Kapali's 68 off 74 balls featuring three fours and a six, however, was the one to watch as the out-of-favour batsman played sensibly to build the partnership with flashy Mashrafe by rotating the strike.

On the other hand, Nafees was totally a contrast in his batting as it seemed that he was more interested to follow the national 'team rule' and not hit over-the-top, which surely was the demand of the day.

Although wickets fell at the other end at regular intervals the left-hander, who played the last half-hour with a runner, hardly gave the impression that he wanted to win the match during his 115-ball essay that saw three fours and a six.

Tushar again failed with the bat, scoring 17 after Jahurul Islam (30) and Mahbubul Karim added 30 runs. Kapali was the peak of the Biman attack, taking 3-30 with his leg-breaks while Niaz Muzhd and Musharraf Hossain each picked up two.

SCORES IN BRIEF

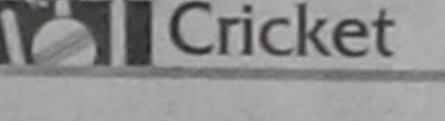
BIMAN: 255 for 8 in 50 overs (Tamim 59, Nafis 13, Kapali 68, Sanwar 12, Mashrafe 76, extras 11, Nazmul 1-26, Zia 2-49, Sunny 2-34, Tushar 1-31).

ABAHANI: 185 all out in 49.2 overs (Jahurul 30, Mahbubul 23, Nafees 60*, Tushar 17, extras 14, Mashrafe 1-31, Mahbubul 1-29, Musharraf 2-27, Niaz 2-39, Kapali 3-30).
Result: Biman win by 70 runs.



Biman stars Alok Kapali (L) and Mashrafe bin Mortaza cross each other in pursuit of another run during their 124-run partnership in the crunch Premier Cricket League match against Abahani at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.

DOHS end MSC run



SPORTS REPORTER

Mehrab Hossain led from the front as his struggling mid-table side Old DOHS upset title contenders Mohammedan Sporting Club by four wickets in yesterday's Premier Cricket League.

Having started the day on top of the table with maximum 16 points, Mohammedan's maiden league defeat in nine rounds saw them slump to second place.

Mehrab, a national team discard, made a gritty 48 not out as DOHS, chasing 214-9, reached 216 for six in the second ball of the penultimate over at the Fatullah Stadium.

It was DOHS's fourth win that kept their hopes alive to finish among the top half and book a place in the Super Six stage.

After taking two vital wickets including the prized scalp of Mohammedan captain Mohammad Ashraful who was caught at gully on 22, Mehrab kept

his cool to end DOHS's four-match losing streak.

Coming to the wicket at 72-4, the left-handed batsman added 43 runs with Monir Ahmed (29) and 24 with Farhad Reza (14) before finding an alley in Wasir Rahman for the 77-run unbroken seventh wicket.

An opening batsman and another left-hander, Wasir did not mind the demotion to number eight and grabbed the chance with both hands making 35 not out off 48 balls. He also hit the winning runs when he smashed part-time spinner Zunaid Siddiqui to covers for his third boundary.

Mehrab, who played 81 unconquered deliveries and missed a deserved half-century for just a couple of runs, hit one four and a six. Figures of 2-29 with his left-arm spin was enough for the DOHS captain to win the man-of-the-match award.

Earlier, inserted Mohammedan banked on sloppy DOHS fielding to recover from a poor start when they lost three wickets for 47. Pakistani batsman Aqeel Arshad made 37

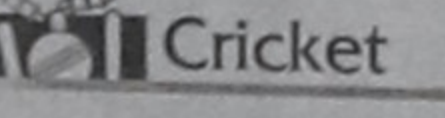
and Nadimuddin 41 but a run-a-ball 27 by Sohrawardy Shuvo and a 24-ball 31 by Abdur Razzak, who bowled ten 'expensive' wides in the dying overs, took them past the 200-mark.

Elsewhere in rain-curtailed matches, all three teams won by identical 5-wicket margins. Victoria Sporting Club snatched a last-ball thriller against Sonargaon Cricketers for their third win in a row, BKSP returned to winning ways edging City Club while Surjo Torun dumped Partex SC.

Skipper Ehsanul Haque smashed 55 off 45 balls and Mahmudullah Riyad unbeaten 42 from 36 deliveries as Victoria, who stunned Abahani in the previous round, scored 184-5 in the stipulated 37 overs in reply to Sonargaon's 183-9 at BKSP.

At the Dhanmondi Cricket Stadium, Test wicketkeeper and skipper Mushfiqur Rahim's sparkling 81 off 87 balls -- laced with half-dozen boundaries and a six -- during a 117-run second wicket

'Sacking stirred me'



AFP, Chennai

Virender Sehwag, who smashed the fastest recorded triple century in Test history on Friday, said his sacking from the India team in 2007 fired him up.

"It hurt when I was dropped for the Tests against Bangladesh, England and Pakistan last year and I was motivated to prove myself," said Sehwag, who made an unbeaten 309 in the first Test against South Africa here.

"I wanted to prove I belong. I wanted to prove I was a good Test player. It made me even more determined to succeed."

Sehwag's stunning performance helped the hosts make light of South Africa's daunting first innings 540 to pile up 468-1 by stumps on the third day at the Chidambaram stadium.

When he reached 300 off 278 deliveries, Sehwag surpassed the previous fastest recorded triple ton from 362 balls by Australian Matthew Hayden against Zimbabwe in Perth in 2003-2004.

Only 19 of the 22 triple centuries in Test history have the number of balls faced recorded against them. Those that miss out are Garfield Sobers's 365 not out, Wally Hammond's unbeaten 336 and Hanif Mohammad's 337.

Sehwag hit 42 boundaries and five sixes in the second triple century of his career, having made 309 against Pakistan in Multan in 2004. No other Indian has achieved the feat even once.

The 29-year-old Delhi opener joins Australian legend Don Bradman and West Indian Brian Lara as the only batsmen to have crossed the 300-run mark twice in their Test careers.

Sehwag, who has four 200-plus scores in his 14 Test centuries, is

well-placed to go after the retired Lara's record individual score of 400 not out when he resumes on Saturday.

"I am not thinking of the record right now, I just want to have a good night's rest," he said. "If I bat till lunch tomorrow I may get the record."

"But I have no words to describe how I feel. I have never concentrated so much in my life and that is why I think this one was better than the one in Pakistan."

"The hot weather is much tougher than what we faced in Multan. If we can get a lead of 150-200, South Africa will be under a lot of pressure against our spinners."

"But the wicket is still so good for batting that it is not easy to set a field for the bowlers."

Sehwag's double ton off 194 balls was the third fastest in Test history after New Zealander Nathan Astle's 153-ball effort against England at Christchurch in

Hamman to start groundwork of artificial turf

SPORTS REPORTER

Asian Football Confederation (AFC) president Mohamed Bin Hammam will lay the foundation stone of the artificial turf at the Arambagh 'Balur math' adjacent to the BFF Bhaban this afternoon.

The synthetic turf will be built under FIFA's second 'Goal' project to provide practice facilities to the national team and clubs during rainy season.

Hammam, who was due to land in Dhaka in the early hours today, will also call on National Sports Council (NSC) chairman and Army Chief General Moeen U Ahmed at his office earlier.

The AFC chief will leave Dhaka in the evening while his deputy, AFC general secretary Paul Mony, will lay the foundation stone of the football academy in Barisal this morning.

The academy will be built under FIFA's tsunami fund.

It can be mentioned that the Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) failed to find lands for an academy under the 'Goal' project and two buildings at coastal areas and was on the verge of returning the funds when Moeen U Ahmed stepped in and arranged handover of NSC properties to BFF and rescue the hopeless federation officials.

Nazeef spearheads Bangladesh U-15s

SPORTS REPORTER

Iftedar Nazeef Ahmed guided Bangladesh Under-15 team to a five-wicket win over Cricket Association of Bengal (CAB) Under-15s in the first two-day match at Coochbehar, India yesterday.

Nazeef, the younger brother of national opener Shahrir Nafees, showed all-round performance as he made 79 and claimed three wickets for 47.

Chasing 235, Bangladesh U-15s reached home in 88.3 overs for the loss of five wickets with Rakim contributing unbeaten 88.

CAB U-15s scored 234 in 71.3 overs with Bijoy making team highest 63. Mohammad Asif Hossain was most successful bowler with four for 15.

Bangladesh will play three one-day matches at Balurghat on March 30, at Malda on April 1 and at Burdwan on April 1.

The visitors will end their tour with the 2nd and last two-day match on April 5-6.

GM Zia shares lead with two

SPORTS REPORTER

Grandmaster Ziaur Rahman won the fifth round board against second ranked Armenian GM Smbat Lputian to share the lead along with two other players in the 3rd Kolkata Grandmaster Chess Tournament at the Gorky Sadan in Kolkata yesterday.

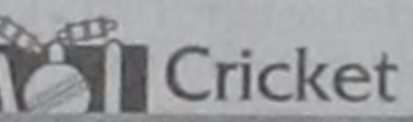
Zia, ranked 14th, played with white against the Gruenfeld defense of Lputian and checkmated his opponent at 39 moves to take his tally to 4.5 points. He shares lead with Czech GM Viktor Laznicka and Vietnam's GM Nguyen Anh Dung.

After fifth round, GM Abdullah Al Rakib secured 3.5 points, Mohammad Javed earned three points while GM Niaz Muzhd, IM Enamul Hossain Rajib and FM Sheikh Nasir Ahmed bagged 2.5 points each.



VA VA VIRU: Indian opener Virender Sehwag raises his bat to acknowledge the applause after scoring a stunning triple-century against South Africa on the third day of first Test at the Chidambaram Stadium yesterday.

Sehwag plunders 309



AFP, Chennai

Virender Sehwag smashed the fastest recorded triple century in history as India gave South Africa a dose of their own medicine in the first Test here on Friday.

Sehwag hit 309 not out off 292 balls as the hosts made light of South Africa's daunting first innings 540 to pile up 468-1 by stumps on the third day at the Chidambaram stadium.

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The 29-year-old Delhi opener joins Australian legend Don Bradman and West Indian Brian Lara as the only batsmen to have

crossed the 300-run mark twice in their Test careers.

Sehwag, who has four 200-plus scores in his 14 Test centuries, is well-placed to go after the retired Lara's record individual score of 400 not out when he resumes on Saturday.

With just 11 wickets having fallen in three days on a barren pitch that is proving to be a bowlers' nightmare, a draw would appear the most likely result in the first match of the three-Test series.

But South Africa will still need to battle the Indian spinners on the wearing turf in their second innings if India, who trail by just 72 runs, manage to gain a useful lead.

Sehwag put on 213 for the first wicket with Wasim Jaffer (73) and 255 for the unbroken second with Rahul Dravid, whose returned unbeaten on 65.

Dravid, who took his career tally to 9,985 runs by stumps, needs only 15 more to become the sixth batsman in history to complete 10,000 Test runs.

Sehwag's double ton off 194 balls was the third fastest in Test history after New Zealander Nathan Astle's 153-ball effort against England at Christchurch in 2001 and Sehwag's own 182-ball innings against Pakistan in Lahore in 2006.

The 55-Test veteran was at his best in the afternoon session when he scored 108 of India's 133 runs after lunch as the South African

bowling wilted under the assault in oppressively hot and humid weather.

It was Sehwag's second successive three-figure knock following a match-saving 151 in his last innings against Australia at Adelaide in January.

There was no assistance for the South African bowlers on the slow wicket which allowed the batsmen to play their strokes without fear.

Sehwag moved to 99 with a lofted on-drive off Jacques Kallis and reached his hundred with another skier off the bowler's head in the same over.

He also reached his double century in style, pulling Makhaya Ntini over the square-leg fence for six to move to 199 before taking three runs to long-on off the next delivery.

He hit two other sixes off the tourists was when Jaffer edged left-arm spinner Paul Harris to Jacques Kallis in the slips in the post-lunch session.

The lone success of the day for the tourists was when Jaffer edged left-arm spinner Paul Harris to Jacques Kallis in the slips in the post-lunch session.

SCOREBOARD

Scoreboard at stumps on the third day of the first Test between India and South Africa at the Chidambaram

SEE PAGE 18 COL 1



National footballers at their first training session at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday for coming international meets.

PHOTO STAR

SEE PAGE 18 COL 5