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## Oh no, Asoka! Not again!

SPORTS REPORTER

For the Bangladesh camp, getting Virender Sehwag early was imperative. And in the third over of the second innings, the Tigers thought they had got the breakthrough.

The dashing Indian opener was stuck inside his crease as a vicious in-swinging from Mashrafe Bin Mortaza struck him seemingly plumb in front.

The stadium exploded and even Sehwag looked flustered.

But the man in black was unmoved.

And why not? This was Asoka de Silva after all.

TV replays later went on to suggest just how badly the Sri Lankan had misjudged the call.

But no one was surprised. They were just reminded of how he has broken the hearts of Tigers time and again.

In the last series in May last year against the same opponents at the same venue after returning to the international fold following more than a year in the wilderness.

The 52-year old former Test cricketer not only brought back last year's episode when he ruled down a confident Abdur Razzak lbw appeal against Mahendra Singh Dhoni but also the memories from Multan.

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ALL GRACE: India opener Gautam Gambhir glides the ball towards third-man boundary during his match-winning 107 not out against Bangladesh in the final Kityly Cup league game at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.

## Tigers' timid act

BISHWAJIT ROY

The way Forhad Reza celebrated the dismissal of Yuvraj Singh it felt like a vital breakthrough for the Tigers to shake a confident India at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.

But Mahendra Singh Dhoni's side were only seven runs away from their second successive victory in the Kityly Cup with seven wickets and plenty of overs in hand.

The success may have been a personal boost for Forhad but the performance of the all-rounder, who gave away 45 runs in just 5.1 overs after making five runs, hardly gave any clue to why he was considered in the second game in place of Shahadat Hossain.

Many things of this team management, however, were not still clear and it may take more time to understand what actually they want to achieve under the guidance of Jamie Siddons.

But surely, right at the moment, it is not a win that they hanker after.

That is why nobody expected Bangladesh to win the last league match in front of a scanty crowd and dash the pre-tournament prediction of an India-Pakistan final on Saturday.

Though Dhoni was polite enough to say that 'no win is easy in international cricket because you have to sweat for it' after the match but in reality the high-flying Indians secured the seven-wicket victory quite comfortably as they only took 35.1 overs to chase

Bangladesh's total of 222.

Bangladesh skipper Mohammad Ashraful won the toss under brilliant sunshine and decided to bat first but India took the early initiative by removing openers Tamim Iqbal and Shahriar Nafees for 17 runs. The coach-instructed 'processed' batting of Mohammad Ashraful and Rokibul Hasan, however, enabled the hosts to put up a decent total but not a defendable one.

"We were 30 to 40 runs short," was how Ashraful explained their massive defeat at the post-match presentation ceremony. It surprised many because as per their team rule or process it was almost an impossible target for the Tigers to make 270 or 280 runs after losing early wickets.

The Bangladesh skipper and media-friendly coach Siddons however avoided the official post-match press briefing, rather sent vice-captain Mashrafe Bin Mortaza and Rokibul, who missed a well-deserved maiden hundred falling eleven runs short.

"Some batsmen like Ashraful and Rokibul got back their confidence and some bowlers also did that from the series which is our achievement from the series," said Mashrafe adding that the total of 222 did not put the team in any position.

"You have to get early breakthroughs when you defend a total like 222 but we were not able to do it rather we also missed a few chances. Actually we had a target of 240 to 250 runs but two early dismissals dashed our hopes," he said.

"Actually the openers were given the right to play shots but

they returned to the pavilion quickly so it was not possible for the next batsmen to take risks," Mashrafe explained.

Although scoring runs looked so difficult when the local batsmen were batting, Indian skipper Dhoni said that the wicket was much better than the one against Pakistan.

"The wicket was much, much better today for batting and once again we got a good start. Our openers were fantastic and hope it will continue," said Dhoni.

For Bangladesh, nothing, however, mattered rather than trying to follow the rules or process.

### SCOREBOARD

Scoreboard of the tri-nation Kityly Cup one-day international between Bangladesh and India at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur on Thursday:

BANGLADESH				
Iqbal c Dhoni b Kumar	0			
Nafees b RP	9			
Ashraful c and b Yusuf	36			
Rakibul c Kumar b RP	89			
Rahim c Raina b Chawla	6			
Kapali b Irfan	20			
Mahmudullah c Sehwag b RP	24			
Reza run out	5			
Mortaza run out	13			
Razzak not out	8			
Mahmud c Kumar b Irfan	0			
Extras: (lb-2, w-10)	12			
Total: (All out in 49.5 overs)	222			
Fall of wickets: 1-0, 2-17, 3-93, 4-106, 5-152, 6-187, 7-196, 8-209, 9-222				
INDIA				
Bowler	O	M	R	W
Kumar	10	2	32	1
RP	10	1	46	3
Irfan	8.5	0	48	2

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## Yusuf to go black & white

Football

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh national football coach Abu Yusuf said he would shoulder the responsibility of the team's failure in the fifth SAFF Championship.

Yusuf, who returned home with the team from Colombo Wednesday, kept mum so far but when he faced local media at the BFF Bhaban yesterday, he refused to explain why the team failed to go beyond the group stage.

Bangladesh, who have not won a single match in their last 17 internationals, finished third in a group involving co-hosts Sri Lanka and Unfancied Bhutan and Afghanistan.

"When a team fails, all the fingers are raised toward the coach. So I admit my failure," said Yusuf without elaborating.

Yusuf, who repeatedly claimed that Bangladesh would have gone far in the competition had the footballers played up to their potential, said he failed to get the

most out of the team.

"We had more off-the-field problems. On pitch, they were unable to give their 100 percent."

When asked whether Yusuf believed whether his young and experienced squad really had the capability to sustain international pressure, the former national defender refused to comment.

Yusuf, who was quoted by a newspaper saying that he was influenced during selection of the team in Colombo, however, did not point out anyone.

"We were always in touch with the federation officials," he added.

"I have been told to submit a report to the federation by June 18 and I'll tell everything I have to say," said Yusuf.

Team leader Shafiquzzaman and manager Sheikh Mohammed Aslam have also been given the same deadline to submit their reports.

It is believed that Yusuf's aloofness created a distance with the players and there was no one took the initiative to bridge the gap.

Bangladesh, who drew 1-1 with Bhutan, salvaged a 2-2 draw against

Afghanistan before falling 1-0 to Sri Lanka in a match where they needed to win to reach the last four.

In reply to a question why he ignored veteran defender Nazrul despite using three centre-backs in the last group match, Yusuf mentioned it was embarrassing for both the coach and the footballer when a senior player has to be kept at the bench.

He still did not say why he had ignored Nazrul, who was the top defender of last year's professional football league.

It can be mentioned that Nazrul was brought back from retirement by the National Team Management Committee, which took a lot of time to convince Yusuf to include him beside Joy in the side just two weeks before the tournament.

With the footballers going into the domestic scene after this month's transfer, they are not expected to be called for national duty until September when Bangladesh are likely to be invited to two international tournaments, in Malaysia and Indonesia.

## Batters follow plan

MOHAMMAD ISAM



If a plan works, you always praise the coach and when that plan goes askew, God save him.

Yesterday, the Tigers took their score past 200 and while it does not seem too big, given the context, it was as good as diamond.

Bangladesh have adopted a new approach to their batting with catch-phrases like 'team rules', 'bat out 50 overs' or 'process' providing a name to it. But whatever it is, it worked against India.

When the camp for the Kityly Cup began on May 28, Bangladesh coach Jamie Siddons told his young side that it is paramount to bat out the 50 overs rather than going for glory.

It may be an old tactic but Siddons has categorically outlined the importance of staying at the crease for the length of fifty overs.

During an orientation, the Australian coach put forward statistics which basically spoke for itself -- out of 177 ODIs played so far, Bangladesh have batted out 50 overs for only 56 times and gone on to win 19 of those matches while they have averaged 230-240 runs.

While it failed against Pakistan in the opening match of the tournament, it reflected in Thursday's performance out in the centre. Bangladesh batted first and although they wobbled early on, the innings of captain Mohammad Ashraful and Rokibul Hasan highlighted what Siddons wanted his batsmen to do: minimise the risks while taking full advantage of the bad balls.

Ashraful, who strode into the middle in the very first over, played patiently. That is a statement in itself. He cut out most of his aerial shots and made sure he grafted, rather than give away another wicket. One can be tempted to say that in another time, Ashraful would have blitzed to a hundred in 67 balls but yesterday, he just struck two boundaries -- both being edges between wicketkeeper and the slips. That showed how uncomfortable he felt in his new skin but also made sure that he put some price on his wicket.

At the other end, Jamalpur-born Rokibul sized up the situation brilliantly and while his captain chipped one back to part-timer Yusuf Pathan in the 25th over, he continued to collect runs. Actually, this sort of innings building suits his style of play.

His fifty came off in 78 balls with

three boundaries. Those three came from crisp shots and after he had sized up the gaps and made sure he knew exactly where he wanted to place the ball. Without giving away his wicket after reaching a milestone, he continued to pick easy and not-so-easy singles and basically, pushed the fielders to protect boundaries.

After the Ashraful-Rokibul stand for 76 runs, it was almost inevitable that wickets would start to fall. Rather, Alok Kapali's 20 and the helter-skelter 24 off 26 balls by Mahmudullah Riyad. Rokibul was with both these batsmen and as the two right-handers went for the big ones, Rokibul was the vital cog that held the innings and those partnerships together.

Wins would be hard to come by for the Tigers if this is how they are going to play in the near future. Some call it a 'back to the 90s' type of cricket and it definitely is a step backwards. Only when someone comes up with an awesome knock or a fantastic spell of bowling, a victory can be in sight.

But with this process in place, Siddons can drill his own methods into the Tigers' mentality and it remains to be seen how productive it is for Bangladesh.

## Croatia upset Germany

AGENCIES, KLAGENFURT



Fearless Croatia pulled off a memorable 2-1 win over Group B favourites Germany on Thursday to move to the brink of a place in the Euro 2008 quarterfinals.

Dario Srna beat Marcel Jansen to poke home a curling cross from the left by Danijel Pranjić in the first half and Ivica Olić tapped the ball in early in the second period after a centre by Ivan Rakitić had struck Lukas Podolski and a post.

Germany pulled one back in the 79th minute through Podolski but Croatia held on for a victory that revived memories of their 3-0 triumph over Germany in the 1998 World Cup quarterfinals, a match that featured their coach Slaven Bilic.

To add to Germany's misery substitute Bastian Schweinsteiger became the first player to be sent off at these finals when he pushed Jerko Leko to the ground in retaliation for a tackle from behind in injury time.

Croatia top the group with six points, ahead of Germany on three. Poland and Austria, beaten in their

opening matches, were playing later on Thursday.

Joachim Low's side put in an uncharacteristically fractured performance, creating plenty of chances but letting themselves down with their own poor defending.

And, although the Germans -- who face co-host Austria in their final group match -- will still be fancied to qualify for the quarterfinals, it seems likely they will do so as group runners-up and, if so, they will face Portugal in the last eight.

As impressive as Low's men were in despatching Poland in their opening game, it soon became apparent they would not find things as easy against Croatia, who proved they are genuine title contenders.

"I want to congratulate both teams for a great game of football," Bilic told reporters. "I think we played some outstanding football and nothing less is required to beat Germany."

"We kept going forward throughout and always looked threatening while our back four held firm when they put us under pressure."

Bilic's team certainly kept things tight early on and were

dangerous in attack.

In a cage opening, play was largely confined to a crowded and competitive midfield and there was little to choose between either side.

Pranjić gave Germany a warning of what was to come when he whipped in a cross that the defence struggled to clear.

The same player then headed over the bar, with keeper Jens Lehmann beaten, and Christoph Metzelder produced a last-gasp sliding tackle to deny Olić.

The first goal came in the 24th minute, Srna proving too sharp for Jansen.

Croatia nearly made it 2-0 when Olić headed down and Niko Kranjcar blasted over.

The Germans went close with a Michael Ballack freekick and a header from Metzelder that flashed over.

Coach Joachim Loew sent on David Odonkor to add pace on the right and Ballack shot over from the edge of the area.

The second goal had an element of luck about it but it was reward for the excellent attitude Croatia showed and they managed to hold on after Podolski netted his third goal of the tournament for Germany.

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## Did U Know?

Euro 2004 was held in Portugal. The hosts made it to the finals and played Greece. The Greeks surprised the world by taking the title with a 1-0 win.



### Ricardo Carvalho

(Portugal's Chelsea defender)  
"I would like to work with (Jose) Mourinho again. The titles I won at Chelsea were under him."



### What to WATCH

**ESPN**  
Euro 2008  
Italy v Romania  
Live from 10:00pm  
Netherlands v France  
Live from 12:45am (Saturday)  
**TEN Sports**  
West Indies v Australia  
Third Test, Day 2  
Live from 8:00pm

## Second gold for Sabrina

SPORTS REPORTER

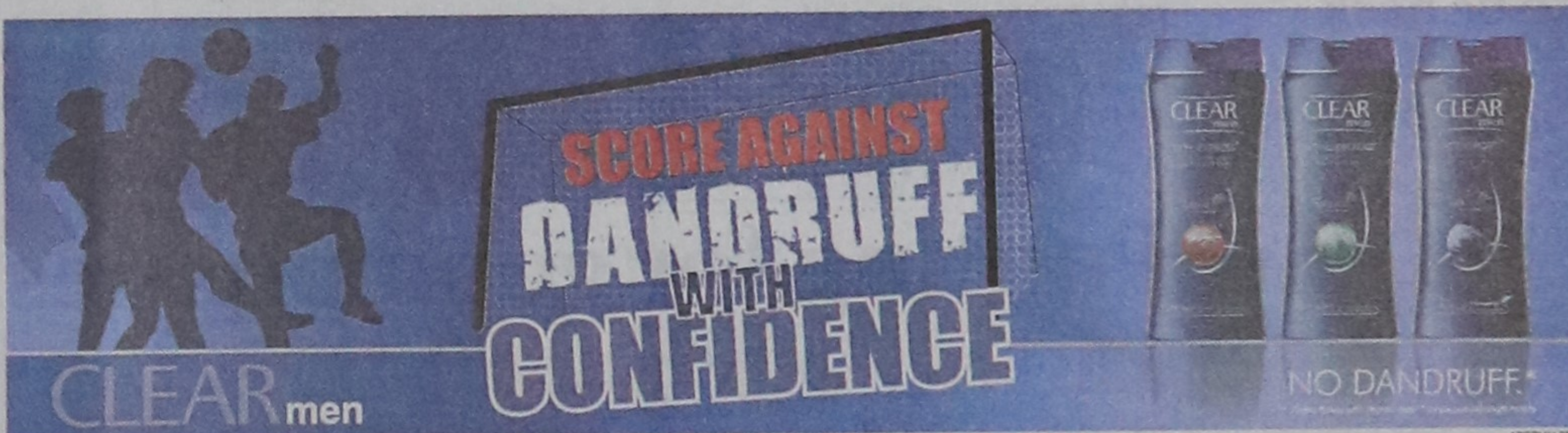
Ace shooter Sabrina Sultan won her second gold of the 22nd National Shooting Championships yesterday.

The Dhaka Rifles Club shooter, who won the 22 rifle prone gold on Wednesday, bagged the women's 10m air rifle on the 3rd day of the competition at BKSP.

A SAF Games gold medalist in 1997, Sabrina landed gold scoring 491.4 points.

Sabrina's younger oppositions, Sharmin Akhter of Rajbargh Rifles Club and Suraiya Akhter of Narayanganj Rifles Club, took silver and bronze.

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Croatia midfielder Dario Srna (L) scores the opening goal past Germany goalkeeper Jens Lehmann (R) during their Euro 2008 match at the Wöhrersee Stadium in Klagenfurt on Thursday.