

Know your Olympians

Michael Phelps may have been the most decorated athlete at the Games but the Paraguayan sizzler that is Leryn Franco has definitely topped the stakes as the most talked about athlete. Franco has been the runner-up in the Miss Paraguay contest and has attended the Miss Bikini Universe pageant. She is also a javelin thrower although her best efforts landed her a dismal last but one place in Beijing.



Bolt faces Rogge's rage

INTERNET, undated

International Olympic Committee president Jacques Rogge spoke out Thursday against the celebratory gestures made by Jamaican sprinter Usain Bolt during his record-breaking performances in the 100 and 200 metre races.

The IOC president praised the achievements of Bolt, 22, comparing him to American great Jesse Owens. But Rogge was critical of Bolt's gestures towards the end of the 100 final and accused him of showing a lack of respect for his fellow competitors.

"I have no problem with him doing a show," Rogge said in an interview with three international news agency reporters. "I think he should show more respect for his competitors and shake hands, give a tap on the shoulder to the other ones immediately after the finish and not make gestures like the one he made in the 100 metres."

In that 100 final, Bolt deliberately slowed near the finish, looked around with arms outstretched and pounded his chest as he crossed

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Did U Know?

The states of Serbia and Montenegro which participated at the Athens 2004 Olympic Games jointly as Serbia and Montenegro, are now competing separately in the Beijing 2008 Olympic Games.



Michael Johnson

(US track & field legend)

"It was the most impressive athletic performance I've ever seen in my life. I certainly expected him to win. I can't say I expected him to win that fast or separate himself from the field so much."

While praising Jamaican star Usain Bolt for his sensational sprint to win the men's 200m with world record in the Beijing 2008 Olympic Games.



BTB
Beijing Olympic Games
Men's Beach Volleyball Final
Live from 9:00am
Football (Men's) Bronze
Brazil v Belgium
Live from 5:00pm
Women's Hockey Final
Recorded from 6:30pm
STAR Cricket
England v South Africa
First ODI
Live from 7:30pm

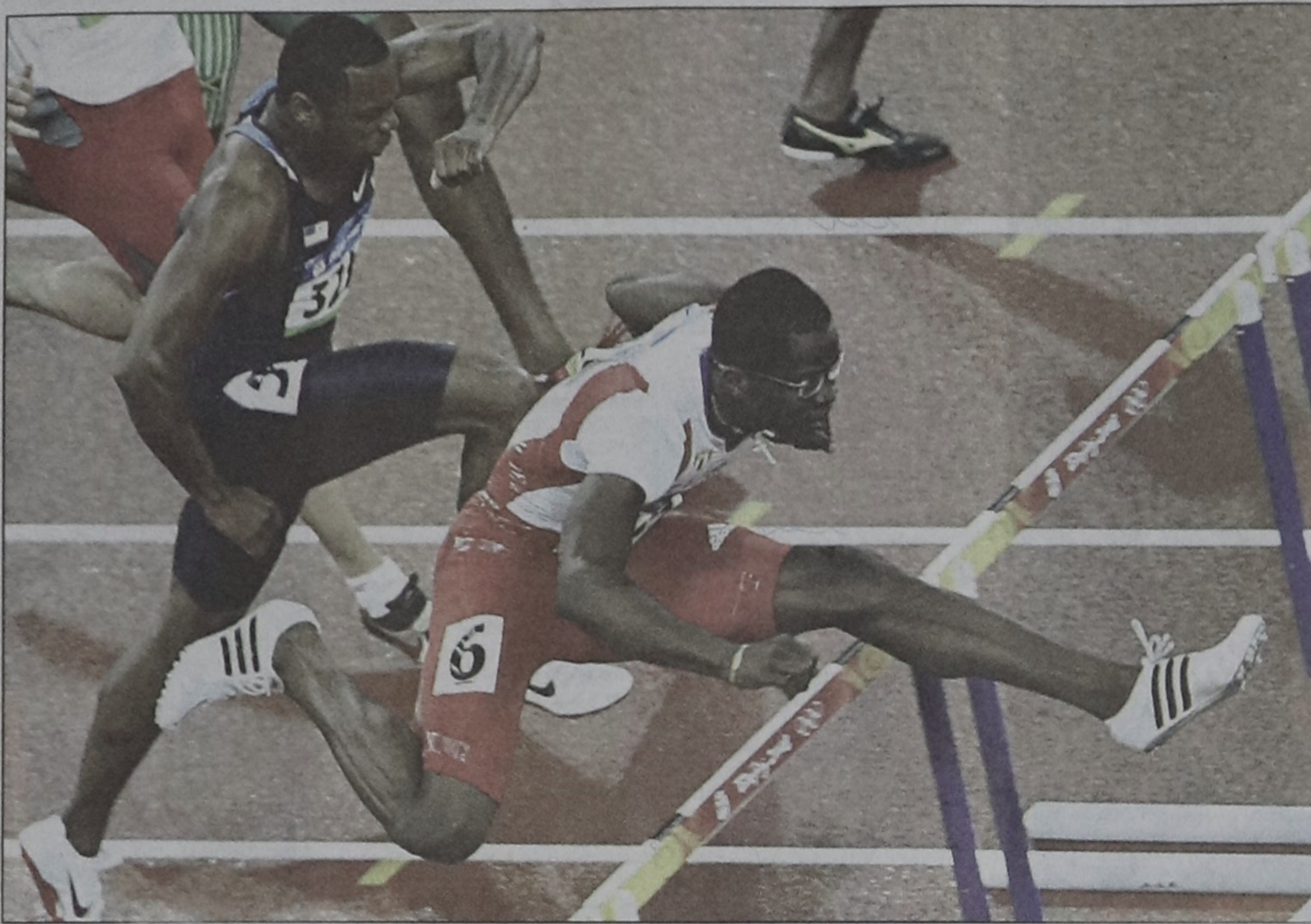
Zim confirm pull-out

AFP, London

Zimbabwe will not be participating in the Twenty20 world championship next year in England, officials at the Dubai-based International Cricket Council confirmed Wednesday.

The announcement rubber stamped a compromise worked out at the ICC's conference last month, under which the strife-torn country retained full membership of the ICC after agreeing not to send cricketers to the 2009 contest in the UK.

ICC President David Morgan
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Cuba's Dayron Robles (R) takes a giant stride on his way to winning the 110m hurdles gold in the Beijing 2008 Olympics at the National Stadium yesterday.

Split forces Lee out

Cricket

AFP, Sydney

Star Australian paceman Brett Lee confirmed here Thursday that the breakdown of his marriage was behind his decision to miss the upcoming one-day series against Bangladesh.

Cricket Australia (CA) announced on Wednesday that Lee would miss the three-match series for personal reasons, and rumours immediately surfaced that it was because his two-year marriage to Liz Kemp was over.

A number of newspaper reports on Thursday pointed to marital problems and the 31-year-old confirmed that was the reason in a brief statement released through CA.

"We have been caught by surprise as to how quickly our situa-

tion has become public," Lee said in the statement.

"It is with regret that I confirm today's media reports are correct and that Liz and I have decided to separate."

"Given the personal nature of the matter I ask that you please respect our privacy as we attempt to deal with this sensitive situation."

Lee said he would be making no further comment on the issue.

He and Kemp married in June 2006 in a lavish ceremony, after Lee proposed to the podiatrist on a tour of South Africa.

Their son, Preston, was born later that year.

The Daily Telegraph reported the relationship had been on the rocks for a couple of months, the news breaking just days after the fast bowler launched his own brand of men's underwear.

In a surprise move, Lee was

replaced for the three-match series by Tasmanian Brett Gervase, who has not previously played for Australia.

Australia were already without captain Ricky Ponting for the series, while he recovers from wrist surgery.

Opener Matthew Hayden has been named for the series, despite lingering concerns over an Achilles injury.

All three matches will be played in Darwin, on August 30, and September 3 and 6.

The series is currently scheduled to be followed by the troubled Champions Trophy in Pakistan.

Australia then have a Test tour of India, where Lee is a massive star, having recorded a hit Bollywood single last year.

Lee is soon to make his Bollywood film debut in Victory, directed by Manmohan Shetty.

Bid for NZ series unsatisfactory

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) called for revised bid after the two bidders failed to meet the floor price of the sponsorship deal for Bangladesh's home series against New Zealand this year.

It was learned that Axiom Technologies and Adtouch were the only two parties to bid for the series but their offers were below BCB's floor prices for the title sponsorship (US dollars 85,000), In-stadia package 1 (US \$ 55,000) and In-stadia package 2 (US \$ 35,000).

Both parties have been invited to submit revised bids tomorrow, said a BCB source.

New Zealand will play three one-day internationals and two Tests in Bangladesh in October.

Raisul-Hasib move ahead

SPORTS REPORTER

Local pair Raisul and Hasib moved into the boys' doubles pre-quarterfinals of the Prime Bank ITF under-14 Asian Tennis Championship at the National Tennis Complex in Ramna yesterday.

Their eliminator Rustom and Passi 7-5, 6-3.

In the boys' singles, Merzuki Assri of Malaysia beat Soon Hwang of South Korea 6-3, 6-4, Gwang Byun of Korea beat Digvijay Singh of India 6-4, 6-2, Abdul Razak Deeda of Malaysia beat Biplob Ram of Bangladesh 6-4, 6-2, Hi Son of Korea beat Joshua Jordan of Malaysia 6-0, 6-1.

In the girls' singles, Indian Amrita Mukherjee beat Malaysian Selvarajoo Theivya 3-6, 6-1, 6-2, Korean Jung Hee beat Indian Iska Teertha 6-0, 6-1, Choi Hee of Korea beat Indian Banka Moulika 6-1, 6-1 and Korean Num Jun beat Sehrawai Megha of India 6-2, 6-2.

LOCAL SNIPPETS

SPORTS REPORTER

Old Ideals posted a 23-19 win over Surjaday Krira Chakra in the CUTE Premier Handball League at the Handball Court adjacent to Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

The winners dominated the first half 11-8 with Mamun and Rana scoring six and five times respectively. Shaheen netted four goals for the losers.

Aminul of Old Ideals was named the best player of the match.

In the other match of the day, Victoria Sporting Club scored a 33-19 win over Bhadratitwa Samaj Kalyan Sangha after leading the first half 15-5.

Man-of-the-match Humayun scored fifteen goals for Victoria while Anik scored seven goals for Bhadratitwa.

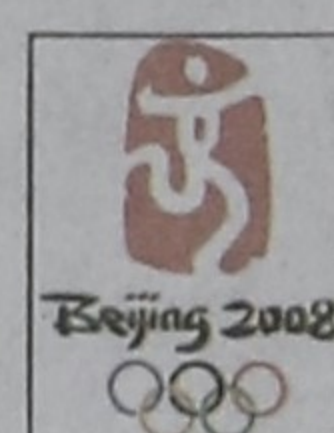
BARISAL SCHOOL CHESS
Our correspondent adds: Schedule of the Standard Chartered School Chess competition, in collaboration with Bangladesh Chess Federation Barisal, has been announced.

Masuda Begum, convener of the chess sub-committee of Barisal District Sports Association (DSA), said that the competition would be inaugurated at 2:30pm in Halima

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Caribbeans rule the roost

AFP, Beijing



US Olympic athletics favourites crumbled under challenges from Caribbean stars and arch foes Thursday with 4x100-meter relays ousted in heats and Olympic 400m champion Jeremy Wariner settling for silver.

Botched final handoffs eliminated the American relays, finishing a US sprint disaster that saw Jamaicans claim men's and women's 100 and 200 crowns and become favourites to sweep weekend relay finals as well with the early US exits.

The Americans were haunted by the shocking failures in the relays, which ensured that no US sprint relay would win an Olympic medal. Not counting the 1980 US Olympic boycott, the only time that happened was when relays debuted in 1912.

"It's very humbling for Team USA," US women's anchor leg Lauryn Williams said. "We're going to hold our heads high and get through it."

World 100m and 200m champion Tyson Gay could not grab the baton from Darvis Patton on the

final curve, ending Gay's last chance for gold in Beijing.

"I don't know what happened," Gay said. "Patton said the stick was in my hand. I think I felt it, but it wasn't in all the way before I grabbed it. I take the blame for it. It was my fault."

Just minutes later, Torri Edwards failed to connect with Lauryn Williams on the last exchange to make US agony complete.

Williams, the 2005-world 100m champion, muffed the final exchange with Marion Jones four years ago in the Olympic women's 4x100 relay final. The American women are nine-time Olympic champions, but most recently in 1996.

"If people want to issue the blame to me that's OK," Williams said. "I can take whatever it is that people are going to dish out."

Two-time world champion Wariner's head was hanging as he crossed the finish line second in the 400 final to arch rival LaShawn Merritt, who avenged a runner-up showing to Wariner at last year's worlds in their biggest showdown.

Merritt seized command coming off the turn and won in a lifetime best 43.75 seconds, a time only four runners in history have bettered. Wariner was a stunned second in 44.74 with David Neville completing a US sweep in 44.80.

"LaShawn ran a better race than me," Wariner said. "I felt good coming off the turn but when I went for it wasn't there. I didn't have anything left. I ran the best I could."

The best prior time for Merritt was 43.96 from his loss to Wariner in last year's worlds.

"I have been waiting for this moment for four years. I trained harder than ever this year," Merritt said.

Cuba's Dayron Robles won the 110m hurdles in 12.93 seconds with Americans David Payne second in 13.17 and David Oliver third in 13.18 in an event where Chinese fans mourned the absence of injured hero Liu Xiang.

"I'm ecstatic that I am Olympic champion. It has always been my dream," said Robles. "It's disappointing Liu was not able to be here in the final, but I'm sure he will come back and we will have a really good rivalry next year in the world championships." Jamaica's Veronica Campbell-Brown defended her Olympic 200m title with US star Allyson Felix settling for second for the second Olympics in a row.

"It's great to come out and defend my gold medal," Campbell-Brown said. "It has been great to see Jamaica get a clean sweep of the sprints. Now I have to concentrate on the relays."

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BOLT EFFECT GOES ON: Veronica Campbell Brown of Jamaica celebrates with the national flag after winning the women's 200m sprint in the Beijing 2008 Olympics at the Bird's Nest yesterday. Veronica's gold winning effort came a day after her compatriot and super sprinter Usain Bolt won the men's 200m sprint with a world-record timing.

Botha talks the talk

Cricket

AGENCIES, London

South Africa off-spinner Johan Botha has warned Kevin Pietersen that he won't be intimidated by the England captain's aggressive stroke-making.

Botha will get a first taste of Pietersen's extravagant style in Friday's opening one-day international at Headingley.

Pietersen has mastered a switch-hitting stroke by reverting to a left-hand grip that makes him almost impossible to predict, but Botha is relishing the challenge of subduing England's dangerman.

"Obviously you have to find a way to bowl some dots against him and build a bit of pressure, because he is one of the world's best if not the best at the moment," Botha said.

"He has got all the shots and new ones. I see it as a challenge

because no one else out there does it, so I would like to see what I do if he does it."

"We have had a few chats, and some of the senior guys have an idea what I should do."

"If he moves late you cannot do anything if the ball has already left your hand."

"If he does move early you maybe could pull out, but I suppose it is also a good opportunity for a wicket if you get it right."

"If he is totally turning around then his head is moving. But you have to acknowledge he has done it well so far. I have seen him five to 10 times, and he has never failed."

Botha, 26, is one of the Proteas' limited-overs specialists and captained the side to victory over England Lions in Leicester when Graeme Smith rested his troublesome back last week.

Although South Africa are rated second in the world in limited-overs cricket, they tripped up

against the Lions in Derby -- and England also gained momentum with a win in the final power Test, which reduced series defeat to 2-1.

"The first two games are going to be important," Botha said. "If we can set it up early and take a lead I am sure the confidence should take us through to the end, and we can win the series."

Botha's career suffered a blow when he was cited for a suspect bowling action on his Test debut against Australia at Sydney in January 2006.

He subsequently spent 18 months out of international cricket, undergoing remedial work, but returned for South Africa last October.

"It definitely strengthened me a lot mentally," he said. "During that period, I had to really think about my bowling and be really on my game -- so that if something didn't feel right with my bowling I knew what it was."

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Dhoni lauds Badrinath

Cricket

CRICINFO, Dambulla

On the day when Indian wrestler Sushil Kumar and boxer Vijender Kumar provided unanticipated boosts to the country's Olympic campaign, India's one-day team tussled and tugged their way to a series-leveling victory in Dambulla. It started India's way emphatically through Zaheer Khan's enthralling opening spell, tilted Sri Lanka's way when India slipped to 75 for 5, and was finished authoritatively by two middle-order batsmen with an appetite for a scrap.

One half of a match-winning stand of 60 in 15.5 overs, Mahendra Singh Dhoni, paid credit to the man who eventually took India home -- debutant Subramaniam Badrinath. "Its good to have him," said Dhoni. "He was under pressure on debut, especially against Murali and Mendis, but he played

them really well. He took up the challenge and responsibility and showed some character."

When Badrinath hit the winning runs and jogged down the other end, pumping his right fist, the relief was clear for a batsman who voiced his disappointment at continually being overlooked for national selection. The closest that he came was when he was called up as a replacement for the injured Gautam Gambhir during the one-day series at home against Australia in October 2007. Having replaced Sachin Tendulkar in the current ODI team, it was an injury to Gambhir again which allowed him his debut, and he played with creditable determination to guide India home.

"He's very talented, and that's why he is here," said Dhoni. "He's been performing consistently over the years back home and on India A tours. It was reversing and turning a bit, and at one end we had a batsman [Badrinath] but the other end was open."

"It was Badrinath's first game and he had the pressure of scoring. That's what gives you confidence and the more experience you get the better. You don't need to play 100 games for that. Even 25 such games will give you much more experience. The more you are in these conditions, the more comfortable you will be in the future. It is good preparation, but it takes its toll too. You need to really concentrate."

Dhoni is no stranger to walking in under pressure and performing a rescue act, and he downplayed his contribution with a smile. "Well I'm losing some hair, but it is a pleasure to go out there under pressure and perform," he said. "That's what you're supposed to do at this level. People expect you to score and it's a privilege. A win is always good because the morale goes up and you start believing you can deal with pressure. Once you're square, you can look into the opponents' eyes and tell them that if we

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Chittagong Mohammedan defender Dhiman Barua (R) challenges Abahani's Ghanaian striker Pomeyie Mensah during their Citycell Federation Cup match at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR