

Vettori breathes a sigh of relief

Cricket

SPORTS REPORTER

New Zealand captain Daniel Vettori did not hesitate to declare himself a relieved man after his side secured a 75-run victory on Saturday to level the three-match series after suffering a seven-wicket defeat in the first match.

Both the Bangladesh and visiting skippers admitted that it was not easy to score runs on such a slow wicket but the Kiwi skipper still confessed to some anxious moments while defending the 212-run total.

The Tigers however squandered their chance to make history by winning two consecutive games against a Test-playing nation apart from Zimbabwe as the slow batting of the home team had no answer to the disciplined bowling of the Kiwis as they tumbled to 137 in 42.4 overs.

"Absolutely it's a relief. I think when you lose the first game and put a mediocre total on the board there are some concerns. So we were little bit nervous in the dressing room even though we scored 200-plus runs," stated the Black Caps skipper in a post-match briefing.

Understandably home captain Mohammad Ashraful was disappointed at letting such a chance pass by and explained that the 'too slow batting' was the reason behind the heavy defeat.

"Yes, we were close to a series victory as our bowling and fielding was good but we batted too slowly. It was not easy to bat in this kind of wicket where the ball stops a bit. It's very difficult to judge the ball and it was difficult to make up when we scored only 50 runs off 20 overs. In this situation you can only chase down if you had a good start," said a disappointed Ashraful, who played 86 balls to score team highest 40.

"It was tough to comeback in the match after the departure of Shakib (Al Hasan). The asking run-rate went high. We had a plan to take the powerplay early but every-

thing changed after the dismissal of Shakib. If we had not lost a few quick wickets then we might have used the powerplay at a later stage," he added.

The Bangladesh bowler however praised the opponent bowlers highly at defending just a 200-plus total.

"I must say they (New Zealand) read the pitch brilliantly and bowled very well," he said.

Ashraful was also not ready to blame left-arm spinner Abdur Razzak who conceded 25 runs off the last over to man-of-the-match Jacob Oram, including three sixes, although both the all-rounder and his captain agreed that it had swung the momentum to the Kiwis' way.

"On many occasions he has bowled the last over successfully but it's bad luck for him today," defended Ashraful adding that the bowling of Syed Rasel, who claimed three wickets to rip through the New Zealand top-order, came as relief for them after the left-arm seamer recovered from injury.

Ashraful also toned down the notion as many thought that it could have been a different story if they had been careful about a run out against Jeetan Patel as the TV reply clearly showed that the last batsman was short of his crease while Mashrafe Bin Mortaza distorted the stumps from mid-off with the scoreboard reading 176 for 9.

"We didn't receive any message from the dressing room as we went for the next ball very quickly and these things can happen," he said.

Vettori however was witty enough: "We would have still won the match [as Bangladesh were bundled out for 137]."

"These things really happen in cricket. It's part of cricket. I think when you play lot of cricket, you go through bad decisions. I think we bowled very well and fielded very well. Mills [Kyle], [Tim] Southee and Jacob [Oram] bowled really well to put pressure on the Bangladesh side. They got too far away. The way we bowled and fielded, it reasonably won the game for us," he explained.

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Bangladesh captain Mohammad Ashraful (R) rushes to congratulate young spinner Nayeem Islam who is on his knees after having dismissed New Zealand skipper Daniel Vettori (not in the picture) during the second one-day international at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday. The joy however didn't last long as the Tigers eventually lost the game by 75 runs.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

ICL UNDERWAY Heroes win by default

CRICINFO, undated

The opening game of the Indian Cricket League (ICL) came to an abrupt halt as the lights failed and the Hyderabad Heroes were awarded an 18-run win by the VJD method on Friday.

At 10.57pm local time, six overs into the chase, the ground plunged into darkness -- a power cut that affected much of the surrounding area -- and the game was eventually called off at 11.40pm.

The evening had started brightly with a simple and short opening ceremony that ended with fireworks.

Abdul Razaq started the entertainment with two fierce square cuts off Mohammad Sami in the second over of the innings. The first whizzed over backward point, the second flew right over the point boundary. But Sami had his revenge in the same over when he induced Razaq into a nick behind.

Ambati Rayudu ensured the hosts put up a competitive score. The highlight of his stay was a nonchalant pick-up shot over midwicket boundary against Shahid Nazir. While Rayudu

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Lara 'out of the ICL'

CRICINFO, undated

Brian Lara's involvement with the Indian Cricket League (ICL) has been put in doubt after league officials said he was injured and "unlikely to play" for them, and the player said was "out of the ICL".

Lara, who was in Mumbai, has left for Australia with the ICL second season now underway in Hyderabad.

"The fact that I'm going tomorrow to Australia means I won't be here for the ICL," Lara was quoted as saying in the Hindustan Times "It means I am out of the ICL."

Himanshu Mody, the ICL's operational head, said Lara may never return to competitive cricket. He fractured his left arm during a Carib Beer Cup match in January and was ruled out of the second

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Ronaldo (Brazilian soccer superstar) "It would be nice to be playing in the World Cup in 2010."



Neo Cricket & DD National

India v Australia
First Test, Day Four
Live from 10:00am

TEN Sports
ICL Twenty20
Ahmedabad v Delhi
Live from 2:30pm
Kolkata v Lahore
Live from 8:00pm



Nat'l Cricket League (Four-Day)
Khulna v Sylhet
Venue: Bir Shreshtha Matur Rahman Stadium, Khulna

Rajshahi v Barisal
Venue: Rajshahi Divisional Stadium, Dhaka v Chittagong
Venue: Fatahul Cricket Stadium

Khulna, Barisal on top

Cricket

SPORTS REPORTER

Left-arm spinner Nabil Samad completed a brilliant 13-wicket haul but it might not be enough for Sylhet who were struggling against hosts Khulna on the second day of the first round match of the 10th National Cricket League yesterday.

Nabil capped off a day that belonged entirely to the bowlers as the batsmen struggled to get the ball off the square in both the venues, while the Dhaka-Chittagong match still remained washed out, again due to a wet outfield, especially around the run-up area.

There was however no rain in Fatullah so everyone remained perplexed with the state of the ground.

Sylhet are chasing 292 runs for

victory in the second innings and already they have lost two wickets for 18 runs when stumps were drawn at the Birshreshtha Matur Rahman Stadium.

Away in Rajshahi, Imran Ahmed struck the season's first first-class hundred as Barisal led by 111 runs after the hosts were struggling on 162-7.

KHULNA-SYLHET

Sixteen wickets fell on the second day, starting with Sylhet being bowled out for only 74 in their first innings after coming into the day on 42-6.

Pacemen Ziaur Rahman and Robiul Islam took three wickets each while Dollar Mahmud and Aslam Khan took one each.

Khulna, in their reply, made a poor start with Shuvashish Roy snaring the top-order with his pace. He took five for 43 while

Nabil, who took eight in the first innings, snared five more as Khulna were bowled out for 187 in 67.4 overs.

None of the batsmen reached 50 in the second innings with only tail-ender Zia hitting a quickfire 39 that contained four boundaries and two sixes.

Facing 292 to win, Sylhet got off to a poor start, losing Golam Rahman in the first over.

While Khulna took control of the match, it will be a memorable match for young left-arm spinner Nabil, who took his first 10-wicket haul.

RAJSHAHI-BARISAL

Imran, the Barisal captain, scored an ultra-patient 110 off 355 balls that included just seven boundaries. But the knock ensured that his side crossed the 250-mark.

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Dhaka Warriors off to good start

SPORTS REPORTER

Dhaka Warriors made a decent debut in the rebel Indian Cricket (ICL) when they scored 142-6 in the unofficial Twenty20 cricket tournament against Chennai in Hyderabad yesterday.

Chennai were 74-2 in five over till filing of this report.

Former Bangladesh captain Habibul, who is leading the Dhaka side, won the toss and decided to bat first. Left-handed opener Shahriar Nafees struck three superb fours while his opening partner Nazimuddin entertained the sparse crowd with a massive six over square leg. The match also featured Aftab Ahmed, Alok Kapali, Dhiman Gosh, Forhad Reza, Mohammad Rafique, Monjurul Islam, Tapash Bisya and Mossarraf Hossain.

Manik picks 2 rookies

Football

SPORTS REPORTER

Pranotosh Kumar Das and Enamul Haque are the two new faces in the Bangladesh squad for next week's Merdeka Cup football tournament in Malaysia.

Coach Shafiqul Islam Manik yesterday announced his squad for the prestigious Kuala Lumpur meet which begins on October 15.

that he has matured enough to claim his place as a holding midfielder.

But there was no place for strikers Alfaz Ahmed, Jahed Parvez or defender Arup as they failed to impress Manik in the camp.

SQUAD

Goalkeepers: Aminul Islam and Biplob Bhattacharya
Defenders: Hasan Al Mamun, M Anif Islam, Rajani Kanta Barman, Mohammad Sujon, Wali Faisal, Amit Khan Shuvo, Kazi Nazrul Islam and Mofazzal Hossain Saikat
Midfielders: Enamul Haq Sharif, Pranotosh Kumar Das, Motiur Munna, Mamunul Islam, Arman Aziz, Abul Hossain and Jahid Hossain
Strikers: Mohammad Enamul Haq, Jahid Hasan Emily and Mohammad Robin.

"I consider discipline and commitment along with performance in my book but they failed to fulfil those," said Manik.

But Manik had earlier called veteran striker Alfaz in the 30-man preliminary squad after the former captain retired who was ignored after a mediocre Nehru Cup in India.

Manik, known for his very defensive tactics, promised that he would definitely plan for positive football, although they have the likes of Mozambique, Myanmar and Vietnam to deal with.

"I know that we are in a strong group but we will not play negative football," said the former national player.

Matiur Munna has been chosen as the captain and he said it was proud moment for the man who

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Harbhajan India's hero

Cricket

AFP, Bangalore

Tailender Harbhajan Singh proved India's unlikely batting hero after Mitchell Johnson put Australia in charge of the first cricket Test here on Saturday.

Harbhajan smashed 54 as India, replying to Australia's first innings total of 430, recovered from 155-5 to 313-8 by stumps on the third day at the Chinnaswamy Stadium.

Zaheer Khan chipped in with an unbeaten 35 during an eighth-wicket stand of 80 with Harbhajan as the last three Indian wickets plundered 158 runs after the famed top order had been decimated by Johnson.

The tall 26-year-old from Queensland claimed three wickets for 19 runs in the morning session to reduce India to 106-4 and left the hosts in danger of being asked to follow-on.

Harbhajan hit five boundaries before he was caught behind off Shane Watson just before stumps.

The four-pronged Australian pace attack of Johnson, Brett Lee, Stuart Clark and Watson prospered in their first Test appearance on

Indian soil with sustained hostile spells.

The bowlers won a fascinating contest against India's veteran batsmen on a dual-paced wicket where deliveries rose alarmingly or kept low attitudes.

Rahul 'the Wall' Dravid, who had a brick wall unveiled in his honour by the local cricket association before the match, made 51 and retiring former captain Sourav Ganguly scored 47.

Sachin Tendulkar, needing 77 runs to overtake retired West Indian Brian Lara as Test cricket's highest run-scorer, was dismissed for just 13.

Dravid fell two balls after recording his 53rd Test half-century, trapped leg-before by Watson.

Left-handed Ganguly, who will retire from international cricket after the series, held fort for three hours before Johnson had him leg-before soon after tea for his fourth wicket.

India lost openers Gautam Gambhir and Virender Sehwag in the first five overs after the hosts resumed at the overnight score of 68 without loss.

Gambhir was leg-before to Lee for 20, while Sehwag edged a wide ball from Johnson to lone slip

Matthew Hayden after making 45. Tendulkar, playing his first competitive match since the Test series in Sri Lanka in August due to a shoulder injury, was greeted by an ear-splitting roar from some 35,000 home fans.

He opened his account by slashing Lee to the point boundary, but was lucky to survive the next over when he was stranded down the wicket as Clarke's throw narrowly missed the stumps.

Tendulkar had another escape before he had reached double figures, pushing a short ball from Johnson just out of the reach of debutant Cameron White at short point.

Johnson, however, had the final say as Tendulkar patted a slower delivery straight to White in the same position to leave India on 94-3.

Venkatsai Laxman, another veteran fighting to retain his place in the Test side, failed to score as he edged Johnson to wicketkeeper Brad Haddin.

SCOREBOARD

Scoreboard at stumps on the third day of the first Test between India and Australia at the Chinnaswamy Stadium in Bangalore on Saturday:

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SAVING THE FOLLOW-ON: Indian lower-order batsman Harbhajan Singh flays one through the cover region during his entertaining knock of 54 on the third day of the first Test against Australia at the Chinnaswamy Stadium in Bangalore yesterday.

PHOTO: CRICINFO

Pakistan, Lanka win

Cricket

AFP, Toronto

Controversial fast bowler Shoaib Akhtar marked his return to international cricket by taking two wickets to help Pakistan to a 35-run win over Canada in the four-nation Twenty 20 tournament here on Friday.

Shoaib, who last played for the national team against India last December before a spectacular fallout with the Pakistan Cricket Board, struck in his first over when he removed Abdoool Samad and Mohammad Iqbal.

The 33-year-old finished with 2-11 although he suffered the indignity of being pulled for six by Rizwan Cheema.

Pakistan opener Salman Butt was man-of-the-match for his 74 off 56 balls as the Asian giants made a modest 137-7 before Canada were restricted to 102 for 9.

Cheema and Manoj David added 52 for the third wicket to give Canada hope but once David was removed by Umar Gul, the home side lost their next six wickets for just 37 runs.

Pakistan were made to work for their runs and when skipper Shoaib Malik (9) was dismissed, they were 63 for 3 following the losses of debutant Shoaib Khan (9)

and Younis Khan (13).

Butt's contribution was decisive with Misbahul Haq (17) the next highest scorer.

Meanwhile, Sri Lanka's latest spin sensation Ajantha Mendis took three wickets and was named man-of-the-match as his side clinched a five-wicket win over Zimbabwe.

Mendis finished with 3-15 from three overs after ripping the heart out of the Zimbabwe middle order including dismissing Prosper Useya with his 'carrom ball', which turns away from the right-handers.

Tatenda Taibu, the former captain, finished on 45 to push Zimbabwe to 106-8 off 17 overs in match shortened by the damp outfield at the King's City venue.

Sri Lanka openers Tillakaratne Dilshan and Mahela Udawatte put on 36 in four overs, before Udawatte was caught behind.

Left-arm spinner Ray Price bowled an economical spell which yielded two wickets including debutant Jeevantha Kulatunga and Dilshan.

Thilina Kandamby and skipper Mahela Jayawardene were both run out as Zimbabwe reduced the Asian side to 77-5 before Chamara Kapugedera and Farveez Maharoof saw their side home.

On Saturday, Canada face Zimbabwe while Sri Lanka tackle Pakistan.