

MERDEKA CUP Bangladesh go down to Mozambique

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh conceded an 87th minute goal to lose their opening Merdeka Cup match 1-0 to Mozambique yesterday.

Mozambique, who brought their under-20 squad, the team management claimed they are an under-23 side though, were under constant pressure by Bangladesh but banked on a rare mistake by Rajani at the Shah Alam Stadium in Kuala Lumpur.

Veteran central defender Rajani, who has shown weakness in clearances in recent times, once again delayed to clear a ball inside the box, giving rival forward Francis a chance to go past him and score the match winner.

According to the team management, underdogs Bangladesh played a superb game and dominated the whole show against the Africans.

After a series of chances were wasted in the first half, striker Emily and midfielder Sharif Duffed

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Trial for U-18 booters from Oct 23

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) will run a weeklong trial camp for under-18 footballers from October 23 at the BUET ground in Dhaka.

A total of 76 booters, who have been chosen from BFF's training camps held earlier this year for 34 districts and clubs, will take part in the camp. The participants will be provided conveyance, food and accommodation.

Later, the selected players will join a long-term camp at Dinajpur BKSP.

The players called for the trial have been asked to report to BF member Satyajit Das Rupu or member of BFF development committee Mohammed Mohsin on October 22.



Did U Know?

The 2010 FIFA World Cup, which will be staged in South Africa, will be the first in the continent.



Talk Turkey



Ricky Ponting

(Australia cricket captain) "He's just happened to have a good game as well, which is pretty unusual for him." Responding to Zaheer Khan's comment about the Australians being overly defensive in Bangalore.



What to Watch

BTV
Bangladesh v New Zealand
First Test, Day One
Live from 9:30am
Neo Cricket
India v Australia
Second Test, Day One
Live from 10:00am



PHOTO: STAR

READY TO GRAB IT: Bangladesh batsman Rajin Saleh, recalled in national team after a gap of one year, sets himself up to take a catch during the last practice session ahead of the first Test at the Chittagong Divisional Stadium yesterday.

It's going to be hot

NUR UDDIN ALAMGIR, Chittagong

The weather forecasters here in the port city predicted bad news for the players of Bangladesh and visiting New Zealand as the possibility of a fall in temperature today, the first day of the first Test match, is very little.

For the cricket fans of Chittagong, who were the worst sufferers of stifling heat during the third ODI at the Chittagong Divisional Stadium due to poor management by the stadium authority, it is yet another reason not to go all the way to the ground.

Both teams prepared themselves at the same venue yesterday with a maximum temperature of 32.5 degrees Celsius and 71 per cent humidity, which is excessive for this time of October.

This was the second highest temperature in the last week. Local Met Office forecasting officer Sheikh Harunur Rashid said the heat is being excessive as the difference between the maximum and minimum temperatures are not reducing as usual.

"The temperature would

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CHITS FROM CHITTAGONG

SPORTS REPORTER from Chittagong

There is no complaint when it comes to food in Chittagong. Whether you are in the hotel, at the stadium or even taking a stroll around the city, food is everywhere and difficult to ignore at times.

And if you are a fish lover, then there's no better place than this port city. Chittagong is famous for its beef too but it has so far been out of the menu surprisingly.

Apart from the food, the evenings are fantastic to look at from the hotel window but once you are outside, it just doesn't seem as nice.

It is better to stay in the cooler climes of the hotel room as Chittagong is nothing without the heat, it seems.

THE NEW HIT

Nayeem Islam has impressed some in the press with his ability to handle the microphone. While his more illustrious colleagues have frozen in front of the cameras, Nayeem gave two good cameo performances.

"I couldn't survive as an opener so I became a middle-order batsman," said the young batsman when asked of his change since the

under-19 days. Nayeem was a medium-pacer just four years ago when he was part of the World Cup side that won the Plate at home.

He played alongside Aftab Ahmed, Nazmul Hossain, Nafis Iqbal and Enamul Haque in that tournament. All four were part of the national setup by that time and when asked if he felt left out, his reply was simple: "They improved faster than I did so I have no regrets."

And he didn't regret playing alongside batsmen he looks up to Mohammad Ashraful and Shakib Al Hasan.

But the real gem was his answer to a question concerning his bowling skills. It was nonchalant but he made his point through to the reporter: "I cannot turn the ball neither do I have enough variations. All I do is bowl line and length and try to be disciplined."

CHITTAGONG'S THUNDER

A tall, gangly fast bowler was seen forcing some of our country's best batsmen into their backfoot yesterday. He had a whippy action which ended up open-chested and

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'Batters need to click'

MOHAMMAD ISAM in Chittagong



Zealand.

"To do well in the Test match, we should bat eight out of 15 sessions in two innings," said Mohammad Ashraful in yesterday's pre-match press conference at the Chittagong Divisional Stadium.

"A good result can be expected if we can bat well. We have to confirm a draw first and then go for a win,"

added the ace batsman, who added that playing session-by-session should be his side's main goal.

Bangladesh are playing a Test match after a gap of seven months (since April), similar to a 13-month break between the series against Australia at home in 2006 till the New Zealand tour earlier this year.

"We have been preparing to play Test matches in the last seven months, when we didn't play a Test. We had many national players in England where they played several four-day games for the A team and we have two guys who have toured to South Africa and Sri Lanka with the Academy," said Ashraful before reminding everyone that his side performed well after the year-long

break back in 2006-07.

"After the 13-month break, we played two good Tests where we had a good start in New Zealand and pushed South Africa very hard (in Dhaka).

I think our bowlers have done well in the last few tournaments and a few batsmen were good too," said Ashraful. He also hoped that the wicket is nothing like the one they had against South Africa back in March this year when Dale Steyn wrecked havoc in the Tigers camp.

"(Dale) Steyn bowled at 140kph and it came to the bat at the same speed but normally we see that the ball comes 10-12kph slower in these wickets. It was two-paced last time so I hope it is better now."

informed Ashraful

But all that everyone worries about is the lack of a genuine Test match spinner in the lineup and it is alarming to find out the record of the two main left-arm spinners in this team.

Razzak has two Test wickets at a staggering average of 168.5 while Shakib has three wickets in six Tests. Add to that the heat and it is not unlikely that if the all-important toss falls on the wrong side, it could be a very long Test match for Bangladesh.

"Rafique bhai (Mohammad Rafique) retired after the last Test we played and I hope Razzak and Shakib continue his good job," said Ashraful.

Bangladesh have gone for both Mehrib Hossain and debutant Nayeem Islam, leaving aside seamer Syed Rasel from the lineup. And with Rajin Saleh making a long-awaited comeback, the batting order looks heavy on paper. Rajin and Mehrib last played in the Sri Lanka tour in 2007 even though they had been in the Test or ODI squad for several series.

Mehrab will be under the microscope from the word go as one bad knock could see him give his place to Rokibul Hasan while Rajin said he hoped he can do the job that is expected of him.

"I want to take responsibility as a senior batsman and I know that is why I have been called up," said the Sylhet batsman, who played 22 Test matches for Bangladesh but knows the pain of sitting out a lot of games.

TEAMS

BANGLADESH: Tamim Iqbal, Zunaed Siddiqui, Rajin Saleh, Mohammad Ashraful (captain), Mehrib Hossain, Nayeem Islam, Shakib Al Hasan, Mushfiqur Rahim (wicket-keeper), Mashrafe Bin Mortaza, Abdur Razzak, Shahadat Hossain.

NEW ZEALAND: Jamie How, Aaron Redmond, Jesse Ryder, Ross Taylor, Brendon McCullum (wicket-keeper), Daniel Flynn, Jacob Oram, Daniel Vettori (captain), Kyle Mills, Jeetan Patel, Iain O'Brien.



PHOTO: ZOBBAER HOSSAIN SIKDER

TOO HOT TO HANDLE: Two New Zealand cricketers quench their thirst during practice in immense heat at the Chittagong Divisional Stadium yesterday.

'On-field umps should be in total charge'

CRICINFO, undated

The two on-field umpires should be in charge of the review system, since they are the ones held responsible for any errors, a senior International Cricket Council (ICC) official has said. The system, first trialled internationally on India's recent tour of Sri Lanka, will be tried out in four more series over the next few months.

Dave Richardson, the ICC's manager for cricket operations, said there were concerns the on-field umpires were not totally in charge of referrals and left most to the third umpire. "The only disappointment (during the Sri Lanka series) was that the third umpire ruled the roost. We want the on-field umpires to be in total charge all the time."

"It's good for the game as well as the umpires who carry the stigma for giving wrong decisions throughout their life (in the absence of such a system). It gives them an opportunity to rectify their mistakes. It also eliminates umpiring controversies and brings back

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Vettori warns hosts

SPORTS REPORTER from Chittagong



Divisional Stadium today.

The Black Caps came from a match down win the one-day series 2-1 with players struggling to cope with a long break in international cricket, stifling heat and unfamiliar pitches.

"We have played only 50 per cent of our ability to be honest, and we still won the (ODI) series," said Vettori before a practice session yesterday.

"But we need to improve on that. It is a fresh start for us with some new boys in. I think the momentum is definitely with us and I am looking forward to those improvements," added the bespectacled left-arm spinner, who will have off-spinner Jeetan Patel at the end. Vettori has a fantastic record in Bangladesh, having

picked up 20 wickets in two Tests in

2003-04 with best figures of six for 28.

The two spinners will do the bulk of the job with Kyle Mills and Iain O'Brien providing support as the seam options. But there won't be any of the hostility that was on show in the last Test played at this venue where Bangladesh even had Aftab Ahmed retired hurt after being felled by a bouncer. The South Africans were at the Tigers' throat at all times but Vettori believed that it will not be their mode of attack.

"It depends on what type of bowlers you have. Obviously South Africa have a very strong fast bowling attack and they don't rely on spin that much so that's their plan of going about things."

"I think we have our spin options pretty well covered with me and Jeetan. I think we also have the fast bowlers to do the job (of bowling short-pitched) if it is required but it won't be our dominant form of attack," said Vettori.

The scorching heat coupled with a typically high humidity in the country's second largest city have become a major factor ahead of the Test match and although

many believed that the visitors will find it very difficult to cope with the conditions, the Kiwi skipper thought otherwise.

"The heat will play a role and we have talked about getting the job done," said.

"We just cannot get away from it and I think we should try not to talk about it and just move on and do the job properly," he added but some observed that the Black Caps were sapped during the latter stages of the third and final match of the one-day series here.

Apart from the overhead conditions, the condition of the Chittagong wicket is another talking point. Vettori, however, said that although the wicket looks to be low and slow in nature, it will be imperative for the batsmen to fire.

"To put up a big score on board is always key to allow spin bowlers to do their work," said Vettori adding, "You expect to have the spinners stand up and probably be the main wicket-takers when you come to the sub-continent."

"But if it is similar to the wicket we played in the one-dayer then we expect it to be slow and it didn't

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Injuries worry teams

Second India-Australia Test from today

Cricket

AFP, Mohali

Anil Kumble's fitness remained a worry for India as Australia grappled with injury problems of their own heading into the second Test here on Friday.

Kumble, the inspirational Indian skipper who turns 38 on Friday, said he was hopeful of playing but would take a final call only on the morning of the match.

"(Injury) is definitely a lot better than what it was yesterday," the leg-spinner said at a media conference at the Punjab Cricket Association stadium on Thursday.

"I bowled some overs in the nets today. There are still 24 hours to go for the match and we will take a final call on my availability tomorrow morning."

The veteran bowler was saddled by poor form and fitness in the drawn first Test in Bangalore where he toiled for 51 wicketless overs, triggering a debate on whether it was time for him to retire.

Kumble, India's most successful

bowler ever with 616 wickets from 131 Tests, hit back at his critics and declared he would quit on his own terms.

Australia, seeking to go 1-0 up in the four-Test series, were coping with the injury-induced absence of frontline bowler Stuart Clark.

Clark failed to recover from a sore elbow joint and was replaced by uncapped 23-year-old paceman Peter Siddle who has taken 43 wickets from 12 first-class games.

Siddle's inclusion would mean Australia having four squad members who have played less than five Tests.

All-rounder Shane Watson and wicketkeeper Brad Haddin have played four Tests while spinner Cameron White made his debut in Bangalore.

Australian captain Ricky Ponting, however, dismissed the inexperienced tag.

"A lot has been made about inexperience in our ranks leading to the first Test," he said.

"But all these inexperienced guys showed they are more than capable of holding their own at the international level. Of course it

helps if you have played some cricket in this part of the world.

"But we have 11 players now and we have to think about them."

Ponting said he hoped his bowlers would deny Sachin Tendulkar his impending milestone. Tendulkar needs just 15 runs to overtake West Indian Brian Lara's tally of 11,953 runs and become the world's highest Test run getter.

"Sachin is a great player. The way he batted in the second innings in Bangalore showed he still has the hunger. Hopefully our bowlers will deny him those runs. But if he gets there, we will all congratulate him."

Ponting's confidence in his bowlers stemmed from the fact that the Mohali track has usually assisted seam bowling.

"The rain overnight has watered the track a bit and hopefully our seamers will have more bounce and carry," he said.

TEAMS

AUSTRALIA (probable): Ricky Ponting (captain), Matthew Hayden, Simon Katich, Michael

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PHOTO: AFP

WAIT A LITTLE BIT: India's batting superstar Sachin Tendulkar takes a break from practice at the Punjab Cricket Association Stadium in Mohali yesterday. Tendulkar goes into the second Test against Australia that starts here today needing only 15 runs to become the world's top batsman.