

Ignorance is not always bliss

SPORTS REPORTER

At times it's nice to admit to ignorance but definitely it was not respectful for Mohammad Ashraful when the Bangladesh captain said that he was not aware of the rules of follow-on in the rain-interrupted Test match.

Everybody was stunned when the Tigers skipper confessed during a post-match briefing at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday that his side were looking forward to 63 runs to avoid the follow-on in reply to New Zealand's 262 for six declared.

But the Tigers had to score at least 163 as the laws for interrupted Test matches state that the follow-on score goes down to 100 runs if no play takes place in the first three days of the match.

"Honestly speaking I didn't know the rules and that's why our first target was to score 63 runs," said Ashraful.

The statement came as surprise as it's hard to believe that in the team management nobody was not aware of the rules of the game to discuss about when the first three days play are washed out.

One may even raise the question about whether the concerned people, in other words the cricket operations committee, has taken any initiative to make the orientation for his captain and the whole team.

"One should know this rule if he plays international cricket. One has to come to know the laws if they have any lacking. And it's expected the people in the team management were aware of the laws," said Gazi Ashraf Hossain, chairman of the cricket operations committee, defending their position.

"And I think it's nothing new for the players as they have had the same kind of experience in the national cricket league," he added.



PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

Bangladesh's saviour Shakib Al Hasan pulls one through the wide mid-on region during his patient knock of 49 during the final day of the second Test against New Zealand at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.

A lost opportunity

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The just concluded home series against New Zealand would be remembered as a lost opportunity for the Tigers.

And that's the reason Bangladesh coach Jamie Siddons said after the third and final Test match yesterday that: "It could be amazing but now it's disappointing."

It was especially disappointing because of the way his batsmen jeopardized their position even in a virtually 'two-day Test' after first three day's play was washed out.

The Australian could not hide his frustration when he said that his side should have won both one-day and Test series against the Black Caps. It's seemed that losing the second one-day match at Mirpur still has been haunting the shaven-headed Tigers boss.

Bangladesh went to the second one-day match with a hope of first-ever series victory against any major team other than Zimbabwe as they won the first match by seven wickets, their maiden success against the Kiwis. And the bowlers paved the way by restricting New Zealand for 212 but the batsmen let down the chance to suffer a 75-run defeat.

"I think that we should have probably won both series. We should have won the second one-day game. We played very well in the first game but should have won the second one. We batted very slowly in the early part of that game and probably batted ourselves out of that match," said Siddons expressing his opinion over the whole series.

"We needed one little breakthrough in the Test series. With it we would have won the Test match in Chittagong. It's exciting to have been in a position to win the series. We didn't do it but it was a lot of fun for us this time around because we could have won the series," he added.

Despite his side pushing the Daniel Vettori led Kiwis in the series, Siddons expressed concern about his side's inconsistent batting, especially the way the top order batsmen failed in the series, ahead of the tough challenge in

South Africa.

"In South Africa if our top four players fail like that then we cannot expect our five six and seven to save us all the time. It won't happen. They have a good attack and we need our top four to play well. We are getting let down at the top. If we are going to be successful in South Africa, hopefully we can be, we need to get our top four firing," he said reflecting on his side's batting in the series.

"We just got to stay disciplined. We are working hard on leaving the

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PHOTO: STAR

New Zealand captain Daniel Vettori (L) is handed the Brac Bank Test Series trophy at the end of the rain-curtailed second Test at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium on Wednesday. The Kiwis won 1-0 thanks to their nail-biting victory at Chittagong.

Day One India's

Cricket

AFP, New Delhi

Opening batsman Gautam Gambhir struck a career-best unbeaten 149 to propel India to 296-3 on an ill-tempered first day of the third Test against Australia here on Wednesday.

Gambhir put on 130 runs with Sachin Tendulkar (68) and also shared 139 runs with Venkatesh Laxman (54 not out) for the unbroken fourth wicket after the hosts were reeling at 27-2 in the morning session.

The opener, who bettered his previous-best knock of 139 against Bangladesh, was involved in verbal sparring with the tourists, who must avoid defeat here if they are to keep alive their chances of retaining the Border-Gavaskar trophy.

They trail 1-0 in the four-Test series after losing the previous match in Mohali by 320 runs. The opener in Bangalore ended in a draw.

Tensions between the two teams came to the boil when Gambhir apparently elbowed

Shane Watson while taking a second run after the all-rounder seemed to mutter something to the batsman.

"It was not deliberate," Gambhir told reporters after the day's play.

"It was accidental. They were desperate to get me out and wanted to break my concentration. It was one of those incidents that keep happening in international cricket."

Watson unleashed a nasty bouncer in his next over but Gambhir responded by lofting him for a six over long-on to bring up his third Test century and second on the trot after his second-innings 104 in Mohali.

The left-hander, who has hit 20 fours and a six in his 285-ball knock, also became involved in a spat with part-time bowler Simon Katich, forcing umpire Billy Bowden to intervene.

The trouble started when Katich apparently tried to obstruct Gambhir from taking a run and the Indian made his displeasure clear.

Katich charged at Gambhir but Michael Clarke pulled him away

and Bowden stepped in promptly.

Clarke tried to downplay the incident later on.

"I was standing at midwicket. I didn't hear what they were saying. I just took away Katich and told him to let go."

The Australian vice-captain also said the team would try to take some quick wickets with the new ball on Thursday to put the hosts under pressure.

"Our bowlers tried very hard on a flat wicket today. We should make the new ball count now because once it gets old, it becomes easier for the batsmen. So we will try to get Gambhir early with the new ball."

Laxman, playing his 99th Test, batted with composure amid all the action around him, reaching his 36th Test fifty.

Tendulkar made a fine 68 with 11 boundaries before edging behind to wicketkeeper Brad Haddin off Mitchell Johnson (2-69) in the last over before tea.

Tendulkar, 35, looked in sublime touch during his knock, whipping Cameron White past extra-cover and following it up with a slog

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Kiwi captain pleased

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New Zealand skipper Daniel Vettori expressed his satisfaction over his side's overall performance against Bangladesh although it was not clean sweeps this time around as he had intended before the tour.

"Overall I think we showed that we were the better side and we probably would have come away with a 2-0 result (in the Tests) if there was more time," said Vettori, who led from the front to ensure the 1-0 Test series victory after a 2-1 success in the preceding one-day series.

"We came here to win the series. Obviously we didn't get a chance in this last game, which was a shortened Test due to rain. Overall I'm pretty happy. There were parts if the game we were disappointed with like when Bangladesh were on top in parts of the first Test match," he added.

The New Zealand skipper, who was adjudged man-of-the-match and man-of-the-series in the Test, also said that they had never underestimated Bangladesh in their own condition.

"I don't think at any stage our side underestimated Bangladesh. From the start I had said that it is going to be a difficult tour so whilst

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Milestones for Anil & Sachin

PTI, New Delhi

As opener Gautam Gambhir hogged the limelight on the first day of third Test of the Border-Gavaskar Trophy at the Feroz Shah Kotla stadium here, India skipper Anil Kumble quietly touched another milestone, becoming the second most capped Indian Test player.

Playing in his 132nd Test match, Kumble on Wednesday went past compatriot Kapil Dev who played in 131 matches between 1978 and 1994.

The 38-year-old leg-spinner, who started his Test career way back in 1990, is now in the joint sixth spot with former West Indies fast bowler Courtney Walsh in the most capped Test players' list in the world.

Kumble is behind England's Alec Stewart (133), Australian Shane Warne (145), Sachin Tendulkar (153rd including Koda Test) and former Aussie captains Allan Border (156) and Steve Waugh (168).

Kumble is set to leave Walsh behind and draw level with Stewart when he leads the Indian side in the next Test against Australia in Nagpur.

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Maradona is back!

Football

AFP, Buenos Aires

Argentinian football legend Diego Maradona capped a remarkable comeback from a near fatal heart attack four years ago to being named coach of the national side here on Tuesday.

Maradona, who will be 48 on Thursday and who has no top level coaching experience, said he hoped to repeat the success of the 1986 World Cup when as a player he inspired them virtually single-handedly to the title.

He will be assisted in that mission of winning the 2010 World Cup in South Africa by another integral member of the 1986 set-up coach Carlos Bilardo, who will be the director of football.

Their respective roles were rubberstamped at a meeting with Argentinian Football Association president Julio Grondona.

"During the conversation with Grondona and Bilardo it became clear that I was to coach the team," said Maradona, whose international playing career came to an ignominious end when he failed a dope test at the 1994 World Cup finals.

"However, I am going to listen to everything Bilardo has to say. He is going to help me as we can't leave someone with the success, experience and knowledge he brings on the sidelines."

"Grondona's ideas are the same as mine and Bilardo's. My job will be to go and watch the players as often as possible."

The idea is to return the squad to the spirit of 1986."

Maradona - who also was part of

the Argentinian side that muscled its way into the 1990 final only to have two players sent off as they lost 1-0 to then West Germany - won crucial support last week in his bid to become coach when the man charged with finding Alfio Basile's successor threw his weight behind the World Cup winning skipper.

"I'd like Maradona to be the next

coach," said Noray Nakis, the president of the Argentina Football Association (AFA) selection commission.

Basile resigned a fortnight ago after a World Cup qualifying defeat to Chile which left them in third place after 10 matches, seven points adrift of leaders Paraguay.

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DIEGO MARADONA

Long gap worries giants Brothers-Mohammedan match today

SPORTS REPORTER



Playing a competitive match after three weeks could play confusion over the minds of local giants Mohammedan and Brothers Union when they meet today in the Citycell B League, which resumes after a six-day break due to inclement weather.

The fifth round match -- being staged late due to a revised schedule -- will kick off at 5 pm at the Bangabandhu National Stadium.

Both the teams had a number of representatives in the national team which toured Malaysia for the Merdeka Cup earlier this month and

neither played since the fourth round. Mohammedan's last game was a 7-0 crushing of Muktijoddha on October 7 while Brothers survived against Arambagh on October 10 with late equalisers in a 2-2 draw.

Mohammedan are the team to have played lowest number of matches so far and the Black and Whites have won two out of three outings. Their only draw came against Chittagong Abahani at home in the opening round but since then, Maruful Haque's side have shown that they are a real contender to add the B League title to their showcase after winning the Federation Cup.

Like all title contenders, Wasim Iqbal's Brothers who have played four matches so far, also stumbled in their opener but consecutive

wins against Khulna Abahani and Chittagong Abahani had put them on top of the table before another slip against Arambagh.

"Long gaps are worrying. With four players in the national squad and inclement weather disrupting training, the whole team have gone through a state of slackening," said Brothers manager Amer Khan last night.

"The main problem would be the combination, and we won't know about the real condition until the match starts. It would also be the same for Mohammedan as they are going to play after a long time too. Also, it would be our first match of the season against them, which means we have to be cautious."

"Still, it's a vital match for us and

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Did U Know?

Maud Barker-Wallach was the oldest US Open singles champion. She won the title at the age of 37 years 244 days in 1908.



Cristiano Ronaldo

(MU's Portuguese superstar) "I want to do the same as last season. I don't need to prove anything to anyone. I just want to keep proving to myself that I am a good player."



What to Watch

Neo Cricket
India v Australia
Third Test, Day Two
Live from 10:00am
ESPN
Sportscentre India
Sports News
Live at 8:30pm
TEN Sports
ICI Twenty20
Delhi v Mumbai
Live from 8:00pm



Citycell B League
Mohammedan v Brothers Union (5:00pm)
Venue: Bangabandhu National Stadium

Glorious Gambhir

Cricket

INTERNET, New Delhi

It was four years ago when Gautam Gambhir made his Test debut against the same opposition. Although India won that game on a minefield in Mumbai, Gambhir made for little impact which was followed by indifferent form that saw him on the sidelines soon after, with a Test hundred against Bangladesh to boot.

But looking at his back-to-back hundreds in Mohali and Delhi, both of which came under significantly different circumstances, it's hard to think Gambhir took this long to make the transition.

"When I made my debut against Australia, I was too nervous. I put too much pressure on myself because I wanted to score runs against them badly," Gambhir lamented on a game which is more remembered for a part-time spinner's exploits.

The left-hander, however, now looks the part. After being dismissed as merely a dasher in the one-day variety for a large part of his career, he has come of age in this series.

"I motivated myself to do well against Australia. I have often been criticised for not going on to make bigger scores after getting good starts. But this time I thought that if

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PHOTO: AFP

India batsman Gautam Gambhir square drives on his way to a sparkling unbeaten 149 on the first day of the third Test against Australia at the Feroz Shah Kotla Stadium in Delhi on Wednesday.