



PHOTOS: ANISUR RAHMAN

IN THE END, THEY WERE BOTH WINNERS: (L) The Bangladesh team, led by a jubilant Shakib Al Hasan, celebrate the fall of Kumar Sangakkara's wicket during the final of the tri-nation ODI series at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday. Shakib's double blow had the Tigers believing that a historic win was on the cards, only for Muttiah Muralidaran (R), partnered by the responsible Parveez Maharoo, to take the game away from Bangladesh through some lusty late-order hitting.

What to WATCH

ESPN
English Premier League
Bolton v Man United
Live at 8:55pm
Sunderland v Aston Villa
Live from 11:00pm
STAR Sports
English Premier League
Chelsea v Stoke City
Live at 8:55pm
Hull City v Arsenal
Live from 11:25pm
Primera Liga
Sevilla v Numancia
Live from 2:00am (Sunday)

TALK TURKEY



Arjen Robben
(Real Madrid striker)
"For me, (Lionel) Messi is the best player in the world. What more can I say? I think he is in incredible form, he's on another planet, he's the best, he's different."

DAY'S EVENT

National Cricket League
(One-day match)
Rajshahi v Sylhet
Venue: BKSP
Chittagong v Barisal
Venue: Dhanmondi Cricket Stadium
Khulna v Dhaka
Venue: Fauziah Cricket Stadium
Citycell B League
Brothers Union v Muktijoddha
Venue: Bangabandhu National Stadium
Time: 4:00pm

Hard lessons for all

AL MUSABBI SADI

The Sri Lankan cricket team will leave for home with more questions than answers after the poor show by the much-vaunted top-order batting despite winning the Test series against Bangladesh and a tri-nation one-day tournament.

In the month-long tour, the islanders struggled in the first Test as the hosts scored 400 odd runs in the fourth innings but in the end, they whitewashed the Tigers 2-0.

But their show against Zimbabwe was no good, although they won by a big margin, and losing to Bangladesh in the last league match that booked the home side's place in yesterday's final came as a blow.

To make things worse, Sri Lankan top-order was crudely exposed against Bangladesh's pace attack in the final. Mahela Jayawardene's men, chasing 153 that looked like a 30-over target for them, stumbled to six for five wickets -- the lowest score for which a side has lost five wickets in an ODI -- before Kumar Sangakkara and Feroze Khanzada set the stage for Muttiah Muralidaran to swing his bat and defy an electric atmosphere at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium on way to snatch victory from the jaws of defeat.

And Jayawardene admitted that things have gone wrong in the past month.

"I am not happy about all the departments. The wins were important but we have to analyse what went wrong, the batting was inconsistent and we return with some batting concerns," told Jayawardene after winning a thrilling final by two wickets.

"Probably the way we played we didn't deserve to win but it was amazing the way we came back. Hats off to the way Kumar batted

and Maharoo came back to the team. And the way Murali finished it was brilliant.

"We never really looked like winning this game until the last overs. We kept fighting and it was a great game.

"It was a very good final, not just the final itself, a very good game of cricket, that's what you need to take out of this."

The Lankan captain, who has just one Test hundred to talk about this tour, praised his bowlers.

"Guys bowled really well up front and the fielding was excellent. It was disappointing the way we batted though, losing five wickets for six was terrible: a couple of run outs and the way the top order batsmen got out. Probably we were not at the best but in the end of the day what matters is winning it," added Jayawardene. "We came here to win the Tests and the ODI trophies and we did it."

When asked whether they were relaxed after facing a paltry target, Jayawardene said that was not the case.

"We wanted to bat positively, specifically when you chase small totals you have to be very positive. We knew initially the new ball would be something we had to negotiate but losing Sanath (Jayasuriya) in the first ball of our innings was not the greatest start and we didn't have the momentum. (There had been) a couple of bad shots.

"Bangladesh didn't give us easy runs either. Kumar found it difficult and couldn't score easily initially. Once he started spending more time, he dug deep. We also sent a pinch hitter but that didn't work. Overall, we didn't handle the situation well, to be honest we did not at all. To come away with a win when you are five for six, I am quite happy as captain."

Jayawardene said Bangladesh have improved much in the last two years and time

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Ctg Abahani take revenge

SPORTS REPORTER

A first-half strike by Ismail Zahed gave Chittagong Abahani a 1-0 away win over Rahmatganj in the Citycell B League yesterday.

Ismail notched the all important goal after 22 minutes at the Bangabandhu National Stadium as the visitors collected their fourth win in 15 matches to take revenge of their solitary goal defeat in Chittagong in the first leg.

Chittagong Abahani, however, remained one point behind seventh-placed Rahmatganj, who have 17 points from 14 outings.

In a match evenly poised, the port city giants took the lead when Ismail controlled a left-side lob from Emon with his chest and slotted home as the rival defenders and goalkeeper Mohammed Ali left him unmarked.

Rahmatganj had two great chances either side of halftime to take full points but Thuan at

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Niaz wins again

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Grandmaster Niaz Mursheed defeated Sahoo Utkal Ranjan of India to stretch his tally to five points in the 7th Parsvnath International Open Chess Tournament in Delhi, India yesterday.

After seven rounds, Bangladesh's Debaraj Chatterjee and Mohammad Ali had 4.5 points and FM Mohammad Javed had four.

In the day's other matches, Debaraj beat DS Negi of India, Ali beat Kulakova Veronika of Kazakhstan and Javed lost to local IM Dinesh Kumar Sharma.

Ctg, Khulna win

SPORTS REPORTER

Suborna Islam bagged four wickets for ten to help Khulna beat Rajshahi by 65 runs in the Women's National Cricket League yesterday.

In reply to Khulna's 167, Rajshahi were all out for 102 at the Chittagong Divisional Stadium.

At the Dhanmondi Women's Sports Complex ground in Dhaka, Chittagong (56-3) stormed to a 7-wicket win over Sylhet (53) with Fatematuz Zohra claiming 4-9 for the winners.

Graceful in defeat

BISHWAJIT ROY



"People only remember the wins, not the close matches," Bangladesh captain Mohammad Ashraful heaved a sigh in disappointment after their heart-breaking two-wicket defeat at the hands of Sri Lanka in the tri-nation final at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.

It was amazing the way the Tigers bounced back in the tournament with a five-wicket victory against Sri Lanka after a shock defeat to Zimbabwe and played the final match in a jam-packed stadium. There might be a reason to feel pain but no way they would hold their heads down after such a stupendous performance as it would be hard to find how many teams defended a small total like 152 runs in such a brave manner.

It's a match where many can debate with 'may' or 'may be not' issues but must accept that it was a good match to watch.

But in the end it seemed that many were hardly bothered to think about how good the match was rather tried to make the Bangladesh

captain a scapegoat for the defeat. It was not only that some frustrated fans chanted slogans against him outside the stadium rather Ashraful had to battle with the press afterwards: why he gave the ball to an inexperienced bowler like Rubel Hossain in a crucial stage of the match?

Ashraful, however, defended his decision and said that it was Muttiah Muralidaran's brilliant batting that took the match away although it was so close to make history by winning a tri-nation tournament for the first time.

"In the last match he (Rubel Hossain) bowled really well to wrap up the Sri Lankan tail and that's why I kept faith on him. He has a different kind of action and is capable of giving bouncers and yorkers but he failed to maintain his normal bowling in an crucial stage," Ashraful said.

"It's natural after the defeat many considers it a wrong decision but I think Murali played a brilliant knock. Luck also favoured him, otherwise one could have been top edged during the hasty innings. There is always chance for the pacers when tailenders bat," he added.

The question was raised why he did not try

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We have to believe

Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate. Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure. --MARIANNE WILLIAMSON

Cricket

QUAZI ZULQUARNAIN ISLAM

What a match!

A topsy-turvy encounter encompassing all possible emotions a fan can experience, ended via the unexpectedly lusty blows of the wily Muttiah Muralidaran. He will have seen it all before, a grizzled veteran of 300-something ODI matches that he is.

But for the Tigers, yesterday at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium could and should be the start of something new.

With glory beckoning, the Tigers failed, managing to snatch defeat from the jaws of victory. It was a cruel life lesson, but hopefully one that will teach this gallant group of youngsters a thing or two about the mental strength needed to play international cricket.

Defeat can be a heart-wrenching thing, especially in the circumstances under which it came, but for once, the mantra of 'taking the positives' should hold true.

Because this should be our marker -- almost everything is achievable, but even if you fail, do so gloriously.

And that is exactly what the Tigers did yesterday.

Not even the most ardent fan thought they would defend 152. But going absolutely all out, they matched the Lankans every step of the

way. Buoyed on by a rousing quarter and when they home support, the Tigers heartbreakingly went down in fought tooth and nail, gave no

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PHOTO: STAR

TAKING CHANCES: A young fan balances precariously on the safety fence while waving the Bangladesh flag during the final of the tri-nation ODI series on Friday. Much like the team he was supporting, the young tyro seemed ready to take chances to nail his colours to the mast.