

## He who can, and he who can't

**Cricket**

MOHAMMAD ISAM

The Bangladesh-Zimbabwe series that ended this Friday will always be remembered fondly by one player and at the same time, pass off as yet another listless episode in the career of another more illustrious player.

On the eve of the crucial third one-day, Shakib Al Hasan received news that he has made it in the ICC Championship rankings climbing over the likes of Andrew Flintoff and Jacob Oram as the No. 1 all-rounder in one-day cricket.

He has done everything asked of not just an all-rounder but also a match-winner. He took over the lead spinner's role after the ICL defections and became the only spinner of note after Abdur Razzak's suspension. He kept insisting in press conferences that he rarely takes interest in his bowling but surely nothing comes about in cricket without hard work. And that confidence has exuded greatly in his batting.

He has flourished ever since he hammered a fighting half-century batting at number eight against New Zealand in Chittagong last year. He returned to his middle-order batting position and struck runs with ease. When a batsman can blast Muttiah Muralidaran through and over the covers consistently, you know he is a potent force to reckon with.

In the last six innings, Shakib has scored 223 runs with an average of 55.75. There is no doubt that Shakib is going through a purple patch but how many players in the Bangladesh team have ever been able to cash in during a good time?

The man who bats just above Shakib in the batting order Mohammad Ashraful has

wasted yet another series.

It might just be three-odd innings for the captain but ask any international batsman and they can tell you better than Ashraful what three innings can do for a career. Just ask Tillekaratne Dilshan, the man who hung on to his Test spot, scored the runs and retained his one-day place and now scores as if he was never set aside. Three good knocks in Pakistan and he has pushed away any threat to his place in the team.

Ashraful has totalled just 12 (yes, twelve) runs in the one-day series against Zimbabwe after scoring 57 from the previous three in the tri-series. Think about it, just 69 runs from six innings on the back of a Test century. Say he wasn't in form even while scoring that century but wasn't it enough to bring him back among the runs? Well, not when you are Ashraful. It won't hurt him now, nobody is there to push him out of the team and his captaincy albeit controversial at times will keep him in place. Maybe he will begin his long golden run of form, from the home series against Pakistan but when he hangs up his boots and puts his willow aside, he will rue the days he simply drove upshilly for no reason; tried to experiment when all he needed to do was play straight and keep it simple.

It is hard to imagine anyone other than Shakib and his growing legion of fans remembering this series against Zimbabwe when one considers the volume of important and glamorous cricket coming up in 2009.

But what of Ashraful? Scanning through his records someday and stumbling upon the dreadful statistics of this series one might ask 'what does one do with lost opportunities'.



PHOTO: STAR

Emeka Christian (second from right), who scored Abahani's winner in a 2-1 victory against Mohammedan in yesterday's Citycell B. League clash, celebrates with his teammates after the final whistle at the Bangabandhu National Stadium.

## Muscles flexed at BCB

SPORTS REPORTER

An untoward incident happened at the Bangladesh Cricket Board's Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium headquarters in Mirpur yesterday when some unruly people entered the office room and hurled abusive language towards board officials present.

One of the men was identified as one Reaz Babu, who flanked by about twelve hooligans entered a room while some BCB officials were involved in a sub-committee meeting during the afternoon.

It was learnt that they were some activists from a ruling party and they threatened the officials in the name of the party.

"The impression you got by looking at them is not

SEE PAGE 18 COL 5

## Last laugh Abahani's

AL MUSABBIR SADI



retain the B. League title.

Mohammedan looked like taking full three points from the crucial B. League match at the Bangabandhu National Stadium after Alamu Bukola's 45th minute goal but Zahid Hasan Emily staged a dramatic comeback for the defending champions with a 67th minute equaliser before setting up Emeka Christian's last-gasp winner.

Abahani opened up a nine-point lead over Mohammedan, who have played a match less but virtually have no chance to recover, and went four clear of second-placed Russel to consolidate their position atop the 11-team fray.

About 10,000 fans enjoyed the thriller

but the crowd would have been bigger in the clash of heavyweights had not Mohammedan played some strange tricks before the game.

Even at 2 pm, the tickets were not on sale for the scheduled 4.30 pm start as Mohammedan refused to play the match on ground of league committee's rejection of their demands.

Mohammedan had been demanding the punishment of Sheikh Russel officials for intervening the ground during the two

sides' match on last Tuesday. They also wanted the league committee to award them full points in that match, which ended 1-1, on argument of biased refereeing.

The league committee on Friday night banned a Russel official and warned their coach apart from suspending the match commissioner but it found no logic to

SEE PAGE 18 COL 1

### TOP GOAL SCORERS

13 goals: Alfaz (Russel), Emeka (Abahani)  
12 goals: Idris (RMFS), Emily (Abahani), Bukola (Mohammedan)  
9 goals: Enamul (Farashganj)  
7 goals: Robin (Mohammedan)  
6 goals: Henry (Brothers), Raphael (Ctg MSC)  
5 goals: Youness (Russel), Sakawat Rony (Ctg Abahani), Nasir (Mohammedan)  
4 goals: Divine, Zahid (Brothers), Mithun (Ctg Abahani), Towhidul (Ctg MSC), Omani (Russel)

### POINTS TABLE

Teams	M	W	D	L	GF	GA	Pts
Abahani	16	12	2	2	33	7	38
Russel	16	10	4	2	34	16	34
Mohammedan	15	8	5	2	31	11	29
Brothers	15	7	6	2	23	14	27
Ctg MSC	15	6	6	3	17	10	24
Farashganj	15	5	5	5	20	16	20
Rahmatganj	15	6	2	7	18	19	20
Ctg Abahani	16	4	5	7	11	17	17
Arambagh	16	2	5	9	11	25	11
Muktijoddha	15	2	3	10	7	29	9
Khulna Abahani	16	1	1	14	9	48	4



## Did U Know?

Russian Marat Safin spoilt American Andre Agassi's 26-match winning streak at the 2004 Australian Open in a thrilling five-set semifinal.



## Virender Sehwag

(Explosive India opener)  
"I am very scared to step out to fast bowlers and he does that against people who bowl at 150 kph. He just steps out against them and hits boundaries at midwicket and mid-on."  
While professing admiration for his opening partner Gautam Gambhir.



## STAR Sports

Australian Open  
Live from 6:00am

ESPN

Primera Liga

Sevilla v Racing

Live at 11:55pm

Real v Deportivo

Live at 2:00am (Monday)



Citycell B. League

Ctg Mohammedan v Ctg Abahani

Venue: MA Aziz Stadium, Chittagong

Time: 2:45pm

Farashganj v Arambagh

Venue: Bangabandhu National Stadium

Time: 4:30pm

## Winners take it all

**Football**

SPORTS REPORTER

A lone figure was sitting in the dugout even when the lights were put off last night. The Bangabandhu National Stadium was all but deserted for Maruful Haque, who was in pain after his side's loss to Abahani in a crucial B. League match.

Despite delivering the Federation Cup title to Mohammedan on his big league debut with victory on penalties against the same side, Maruf knows that his hands are far away from the professional league trophy following yesterday's 2-1 defeat.

"It was bad luck. We had many chances to kill the game but failed to take them in time," Maruf told after the Black and Whites gave up a 1-0 first half lead.

"We could not keep the

pressure on the opposition after halftime and they came back."

Abahani were not at their best in the first half but Maruf opined that the Sky-Blues were not negative at all.

"They had a depleted side but never played negative. Only a team with a positive frame of mind could win such a match."

"I know we still have chances in the title race but it now depends on a lot of ifs and buts."

At the other end, Amalash Sen was very happy after beating Mohammedan after two abortive attempts this season.

"It was the result of total team work. We were shaky because we did not have our key player Ibrahim, who missed his flight from Amsterdam yesterday," said the veteran Abahani coach.

"I admit that we were looking for a draw but in the sec

SEE PAGE 18 COL 7

## Nadal cruises along

AFP, Melbourne



australian open

Powerhouse Rafael Nadal shot down Tommy Haas to make the second week of the Australian Open Saturday while rusty triple champion Serena Williams booked a fourth round clash with Victoria Azarenka.

Fourth seeds Andy Murray and Elena Dementieva joined them in the round of 16, with the Scot crushing Austria's Jurgen Melzer 7-5, 6-0, 6-3 and the Russian beating local favourite Samantha Stosur 7-6 (8/6), 6-4.

In an epic four-hour thriller, Chile's Fernando Gonzalez ground down France's Richard Gasquet 3-6, 3-6, 7-6 (12/10), 6-2, 12-10 for the right to meet Nadal next.

Also making the grade were three Frenchmen -- Jo-Wilfried Tsonga, Gilles Simon, and Gael Monfils.

Nadal showed why he is world number one by demolishing Germany's Haas and said he was playing some of his best tennis ever.

"I played one of my best matches in Australia out there," he said afterwards.

"I can sleep with a lot of satisfaction."

Williams, the tournament favourite, crushed China's Peng Shuai 6-1, 6-4 to set up an intriguing showdown with Azarenka after the Belarusian ended any hope Amelie Mauresmo had of repeating her 2006 heroics here.

Stung by a listless "D-minus" performance in the second round and sister Venus' shock exit at the same stage, Williams stamped her authority on the match early and never let go.

"It was definitely a lot better than my second round. But, you know, I'm still trying

to work on some things and hoping they'll come together," said Williams.

"I'm feeling a little rusty, for whatever reason. I'm hoping my next round I'll be a little better."

Peng's departure leaves Zheng Jie as China's only player left.

SEE PAGE 18 COL 6



PHOTO: AFP

World number one Rafael Nadal of Spain makes a double-fisted return during his Australian Open third round match against Germany's Tommy Haas in Melbourne yesterday. Nadal won 6-4, 6-2, 6-2.

## Shakib, Tigers rewarded

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) has rewarded Shakib Al Hasan for becoming the world's number one all-rounder in the ICC ODI rankings.

BCB president Lt. Gen Sina Ibn Jamali handed over a memento and a cheque of Tk 1,00,000.00 to Shakib on behalf of the board at the end of the third and final one-day against Zimbabwe at the Sher-e-Bangla National Cricket Stadium in Mirpur.

The BCB president also declared a prize of Tk 50,000.00 for each member (players and team management) of the squad that won the three-match one-day series by 2-1 against Zimbabwe.

Jamali made this announcement during a dinner reception in honour of State Minister for Youth & Sports Ahad Ali Sarker at a local hotel, which was attended by the Bangladesh cricket team.

## Premier Division T20 starts today

SPORTS REPORTER

The Premier Division Cricket League gets underway today with the Twenty20 version as Abahani takes on Partex Sporting Club at 9:30 am at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur while Victoria meets Old DOHS at BKSP also at 9:30 am. Mohammedan will encounter Young Pegasus Club at the same time at the Fatullah Cricket Stadium in group A matches.

In Group B encounters, BKSP host City Club at 1:30 pm while Surjo Torun Club face Biman at 1:30 pm at Mirpur and Gazi Tank meets Cricket Coaching School at the same

SEE PAGE 18 COL 5



PHOTO: STAR

Former national and Mohammedan central defender Jewel Rana makes his final bow to the passionate football fans during the Dhaka derby at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday. Jewel called it quits from competitive football recently marking the end of his luminous career spanning over two decades.

## Jewel Rana's last bow

SPORTS REPORTER

Former national football captain Jewel Rana hanged up his boots yesterday when he played his last domestic match as Mohammedan captain.

Jewel, a centre-back, was on the pitch as a rightback for just 25 minutes before the Mohammedan captain was replaced during their B. League match against Abahani at the Bangabandhu National Stadium.

"It is an honour for me to go out like this. Not every player gets this chance to retire from the field," said an emotionally charged Jewel, who led Bangladesh to win their only gold medal in the SAF Games, in 1999 in Kathmandu.

Jewel, who began his career in the first division in 1988, got a national call in the next year and quit from international football after the SAF Games triumph.

He also won domestic league titles for Mohammedan.

SEE PAGE 18 COL 1

## SL blow Pakistan away

**Cricket**

AFP, Lahore

A hundred from Tillakaratne Dilshan followed by devastating spells from Sri Lanka's bowlers handed Pakistan their heaviest one-day defeat in the third and final clash here on Saturday.

Dilshan's career-best 137 anchored his team's impressive 309-5 in their 50 overs before Nuwan Kulasekara (3-17) and Thilan Thushara (3-33) bundled Pakistan out for just 75 in 22.5 overs, giving the tourists a massive 234-run win.

The total is Pakistan's lowest in a one-day match at home and is their heaviest one-day defeat in terms of runs.

The victory means Sri Lanka win the three-match series 2-1.

Off-spinner Muttiah Muralidaran took 2-2 to pass 500 one-day wickets. Pakistan's Wasim Akram (502 wickets) is the only other bowler to reach the mark.

In an untidy fielding display, the home team dropped three catches and spurned a stumping chance.

When it was their turn to bat, captain Shoaib Malik surprisingly promoted out-of-form Younis Khan to open the innings.

Pakistan were never in the hunt as Thushara trapped Younis (four) off the last ball of the second over.

Butt was the next to go for nought, caught by

SEE PAGE 18 COL 2