

## Siddons targets India

SPORTS REPORTER

**ICC WORLD TWENTY20 ENGLAND**  
Bangladesh national cricket team have targeted beating India in their first match of the ICC World Twenty20s in England and are all set to depart amidst some modest but important concerns from coach Jamie Siddons.

Siddons's biggest worry is the lack of international exposure that the Tigers have had ahead of the tournament and he believes that it is a worrying factor as the players have not faced quality bowling attacks in the recent past.

"Definitely it's a cause for concern for us since we haven't faced world-class opponents for some time now. The boys have played plenty of domestic cricket here and in Chittagong, but they haven't faced good fast bowlers and the practice matches we have played are good but not really world-class," said Siddons.

Bangladesh team will fly out for London on May 23. Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) have scheduled a seven-day training camp at Wormsley, which includes

three unofficial practice matches against New Zealand on May 26, Netherlands on May 28 (Canterbury) and against Scotland on May 29.

Captain Mohammad and vice-captain Mashrafe Bin Mortaza will join the squad in Wormsley a day after the team arrives in England as they would first travel from South Africa to Dhaka and then catch a flight to London on May 24.



Bangladesh cricket coach Jamie Siddons (C) speaks at a press briefing at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium yesterday.

Bangladesh's official practice matches are against Australia on June 1 and Sri Lanka on June 4 at Trent Bridge.

Bangladesh have been pitted in Group A along with defending champions India and ICC associate member Ireland in the second version of the ICC World Twenty20s which will begin on June 5.

Ashrafa's men face India on June 6 and Ireland on June 8 at Trent Bridge.

Siddons is happy with his schedule of practice matches but felt that it would have been better if the side were pitted against more quality bowling line-ups.

"I hope the five practice matches will help us recover all that we have missed but again, we are facing the likes of Scotland who also don't have fast bowlers to push us. So I hope we pick up the pace sooner so that we are ready for the challenge ahead," added the coach.

Siddons did not just point out India as an early kill but also explained that reaching the second round and living up to the Tiger's name of giant killers were equally important.

"Anyone can win in a Twenty20 game and anyone can get knocked over. But we are hoping to beat India in our first game and we are not too worried about our second game against Ireland. Realistically we want to get to the Super Eights and once we are there we want to be the giant killers that people think we are. But we don't want any games to be a fluke; I'd rather want them to be genuine victories for us. It's bit of a

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Given their reticence, it is uncommon for any of the national cricketers to speak with the reporters so when the entire national cricket team turned up to face the media yesterday, it yielded interesting results for both parties.

WAPDA came from behind to crush Taiwan Power Company 3-1 in Kathmandu to finish as Group A runners-up to brighten up their chances of booking a semifinal place as the best second-placed team yesterday.

The Pakistani team now has a goal difference of plus-two against Abahani's plus-one.

WAPDA however will have to wait for the outcome of Group C comprising of Dordoi Dynamo of Kyrgyzstan, Myanmar champions Kanbawza, Phnom Penh of Cambodia and Yeedzin of Bhutan that kicks off on June 10.

Defending champions Regar-Tad AZ finished Group A champions to join FC Ashgabat of Turkmenistan, the first team to qualify for the last four putting Abahani behind on goal difference from Group B.

Three group champions and the best runners-up among three groups will play in the semifinals.

the older boys in the group who bank on obvious lines even when pressed with a difficult question. They would merely mention their targets, an obvious question, and fend off the harder ones with some difficulty. "I will try to do well" is a favourite for this shy lot while some simply inform what they are, a batting or bowling all-rounder.

This sort is a nightmare for the journalists who always stay in the lookout for stories with unique angles. Yesterday it was all going down hill until Tamim Iqbal, Shahadat Hossain and to some extent Nayem Islam came to the rescue.

"Look, if I bowl at the same pace Yusuf Pathan will send me out of the ground. But not me, he will dispatch my ball" quipped the easy-going Shahadat who informed that he himself could hit the ball a long way.

Tamim's little quip in third person could be taken as a slight sense of arrogance but it's quickly covered by his witty persona. "Nobody knew Tamim, but Tamim also didn't know Zaheer Khan and Ishant Sharma," jibed the left-hander when asked about the loss of his surprise factor.

But before the likes of Tamim, Shahadat, Shakib and Mashfiqur got to the dais, their teammate Nayem Islam turned heads with his icy counter when asked about concerns with his strike-rate. Nayem's outburst stunned many who know him as a quiet chap.

Coach Jamie Siddons however believed that some of the new boys find it difficult to cope with the pressures of media and officials when they play at home. "I think they are in some pressure when they play at home with the media around but look how Tamim (Iqbal) and Shakib (Al Hasan) have managed everything," said Siddons.

## Their T20 with media

MOHAMMAD ISAM



Given their reticence, it is uncommon for any of the national cricketers to speak with the reporters so when the entire national cricket team turned up to face the media yesterday, it yielded interesting results for both parties.

The occasion was the ICC World Twenty20 for which the Bangladesh team will take off for London on May 23, and a few of the team members are new to the national fold and absolutely raw when it comes to facing the media. Remarkably, even the more experienced ones find talking to the media troublesome but then there are a few who talk openly and eloquently enough to sound reasonable.

To the surprise of many, the introverted Shakib Al Hasan and Mashfiqur Rahim delighted the journalists with their wise replies.

The two BKS lads have come a long way from the days when they were said to be difficult with the media. "We have specific goals for the team like starting well and how to finish an innings but if we can't fulfil them, we will think differently," said the world's No. 1 ODI all-rounder.

Mashfiqur was bold enough to suggest that he wasn't happy with the practice in Dhaka but reminded everyone that their first match opponents should remember the Tigers. "India are a big team and probably the favourites but for what happened in 2007 [World Cup in West Indies], they will keep us on mind," said the baby-faced wicketkeeper.

Among the new boys, Mohammad Mithun seemed confident enough but for Shamsur Rahman and Rubel Hossain, it was nothing short of an ordeal. The same goes for some of

## Tigers end prep poorly

**Cricket**

SPORTS REPORTER

The Tigers ended their preparation at home poorly when they suffered a seven-wicket defeat at the hands of Maharashtra Cricket Association in the third and final practice match at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday ahead of their departure to play the ICC World Twenty20s in England.

The batting of Jamie Siddons's charges, who won the first Twenty20 game by 63 runs under the BCB XI banner, were found wanting in the final game against a mediocre attack as the local side were dismissed for only 117 in 19.1 overs after deciding to bat first.

BCB XI lost opener Mohammad Mithun in the very first over as the right-hander continued his bad form since joining the Tigers squad. His opening partner Tamim Iqbal started well but could manage only 21 runs in 14 balls with four boundaries.

At one stage the home side, who played the last match without Shakib Al Hasan, were stumbling at 40 for 6 but stand-in skipper Mashfiqur Rahim and Nayem Islam saved their blushes by added 60 runs for the seventh wicket.

Wicketkeeper-batsman Mashfiqur made 28-ball 39 and Nayem added a 33-ball 27 but their effort was not good enough to put up a fighting total. MCA skipper Harshad Khadiwale played yet another stroke-filled knock, a 47-ball

62, that contained seven fours and a six, as Maharashtra reached the target of 118 by losing just three wickets.

Coach Jamie Siddons however seemed unperturbed with his side's poor finish at home. "I don't think we batted too badly. A lot of players made 25 of 20 balls. On this wicket it doesn't really matter who you play and obviously it's not a wicket for 180 runs. We lost a lot of wickets and could not recover. Our boys tried to score quickly and got out," defended Siddons.

"I am happy that all the batters are getting practice and every batsmen have got runs here and there except for the two new ones," he added.

Mashfiqur admitted that they threw away their wickets against weak opponents but hoped that everything would be okay in England.

"It was difficult to defend this small total, especially when we played the match without Shakib and Razzak. We threw away our wickets but there is nothing to be worried as we have some practice matches in England before the start of the World Cup," he said.

### SCORES IN BRIEF

**BCB XI:** 117 all out in 19.1 overs (Tamim 21, Mithun 0, Zunaed 10, Rokibul 1, Shamsur 1, Riyad 0, Mashfiqur 39, Nayem 27, Shahadat 4, Rasel 7, Rubel 0 not out, extras 7; Samad 1-13, Srikant 4-22, Kiran 3-23, Aditya 1-15).

**MAHARASHTRA:** 118-3 in 17.5 overs (Harshad 62, Rohan 1, Amey 31, Srikant 11 not out, Digamber 6 not out, extras 7; Rasel 1-24, Rubel 1-15, Shahadat 1-23)

**Result:** Maharashtra won by seven wickets.

## Tushar fashions Biman triumph

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Biman rode on Tushar Imran's all-round performance to clinch the Public University & Services Cricket title with a six-wicket victory over Jahangirnagar University at the Dhamondi Cricket Stadium yesterday.

The out-of-favour Tushar first grabbed three wickets for just 10 runs with his occasional off-spin and then struck a 39-ball 34 that contained five fours and a six to script the comfortable victory.

Put into bat first, Jahangirnagar University were bundled out for 111 runs in 38.3 overs. The only resistance came from opener Shafiqul Azam who

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## Ponting backs Symonds

**Cricket**

BBC ONLINE, undated

Captain Ricky Ponting says he would "not be surprised" if Andrew Symonds's Test exile ends when Australia's Ashes squad is revealed on Wednesday.

The all-rounder has endured a string of off-field and injury problems over the past year, fuelling talk the 33-year-old will be overlooked for the series.

But skipper Ponting believes he will be named in the squad, saying: "He's had his battles but he's a great guy."

Ponting also indicated Brett Lee and Stuart Clark were set for recalls.

The pace duo have missed the Australian summer because of ankle and elbow injuries respectively, but both are expected to play key roles as Australia attempt to retain the Ashes they won back in 2006.

And Symonds could return just five months after he was fined by Cricket Australia over a remark he made in a radio interview - the latest in a history of off-field disciplinary problems.

An exciting, fast-scoring batsman who can

bowl medium pace or spin, Symonds earned this assessment from Ponting: "I wouldn't be surprised if he's named."

"He's worked his way back into domestic cricket pretty well and played well for us in Abu Dhabi and Dubai. There's no doubt about that and obviously the selectors are going to have some tough decisions to make in the coming hours."

Andrew Hilditch, David Boon and Merv Hughes will name what is likely to be a 16-man touring party seven weeks ahead of the first Ashes Test, which starts in Cardiff on 8 July.

But despite Ponting's confident assessment of Symonds, the controversial character faces stiff opposition from fellow Queensland all-rounder Shane Watson.

Marcus North and Andrew McDonald are also in the equation, and of that quartet only two are likely to be picked.

One man sure to feature is left-handed opener Phillip Hughes, who has been hugely impressive this season batting for Middlesex.

The 20-year-old scored 415 runs at an average of 69 in three Tests in South Africa before heading to England for a five-week stint with Middlesex.

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## Bangalore stay afloat

AFP, Johannesburg

Jacques Kallis struck an unbeaten 58 and took a key wicket as Royal Challengers Bangalore beat Delhi Daredevils in the Indian Premier League title hunt.

The big South African batted throughout the 19-over Bangalore innings as they reached 135-3 in reply to 134-7 in 20 overs from Delhi, who are sure to finish first with one round of group fixtures left.

But below them the stage is set for a thrilling climax to the round-robin phase of the Twenty20 extravaganza on Wednesday and Thursday with five franchises chasing three semifinal places.

Chennai Super Kings have 15 points, Deccan Chargers, Bangalore and Kings XI Punjab 14 each and defending champions Rajasthan Royals 13 with double-headers to come in Durban and Centurion.

While many in the team dug-outs at the Wanderers used blankets to fend off the autumn chill, a good crowd turned up at one of the homes of South African cricket and were treated to a tense struggle until the final few overs.

Winning skipper and India legend Anil Kumble claimed he is not even checking the standings traffic-jam, but concentrating on mastering another win when they face Deccan Thursday.

"I'm taking this tournament one game at a time and not looking at the table. All I'm thinking about is how to win the next match which would guarantee us a place in the semifinals."



Royal Challengers Bangalore's Jacques Kallis (R) celebrates with a teammate after guiding his side home in their IPL Twenty20 match against Delhi Daredevils at the New Wanderers Stadium in Johannesburg yesterday.

ing for us to worry about."

**SCORES IN BRIEF**

**DELHI DAREDEVILS:** 134 for 7 in 20 overs (Karthik 31, De Villiers 28, Gambhir 27, Nagar 20; Praveen 3-30, Kumble 2-24)

**ROYAL CHALLENGERS BANGALORE:** 135 for 3 in 19 overs (Kallis 58 not out, David 38, Taylor 25, Nagar 2-20)

**Result:** Royal Challengers Bangalore won by 7 wickets.

**Man-of-the-match:** Jacques Kallis.

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## Asif off to Italy

SPORTS REPORTER

Commonwealth Games gold medallist Asif Hossain was scheduled to leave for Italy last night to take part in the ISSF Shooting World Cup to be held in Milan from May 21.

After completing in the World Cup competition, Asif will fly to the German city of Wesbaden to receive high-profile training at the city's Olympic Training Centre for a month in a bid to earn a quota place in the 2012 London Olympics, said a statement of the National Shooting Federation.

The training will begin on May 24. Atikur Rahman will accompany Asif for one week in Germany as a trainer.

Asif won gold in the Commonwealth Games' 10m air rifle event in Manchester in 2002.

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## Strauss very happy

**Cricket**

AFP, Chester-le-Street

Andrew Strauss, the England captain, believes the "hunger" his new-look side have shown in two crushing Test victories over the West Indies augurs well for this year's Ashes.

England humbled their visitors from the Caribbean in an innings and 83 runs here at the Riverside on Monday.

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