

Ashraful won't quit

Cricket

SPORTS REPORTER

The general consensus maybe that he is not as courageous as he should be as captain but Mohammad Ashraful is undaunted in the face of huge criticism following a heartbreaking loss to Ireland, which made sure of their early exit from the ICC World Twenty20 in England.

After this massive failure the call for his removal from the top job has become louder but the 24-year-old put the ball into the BCB's (Bangladesh Cricket Board) court by saying that he has been given a job which he is still enjoying.

Ashraful returned home yesterday, two days after the team's arrival, and made it clear that he had no intention of taking a break or quitting the top job despite the question had been raised: how one can lead the team when the man himself is suffering from lack of confidence?

"I have no such plan [to quit the captaincy]. The board has given me this job and it's up to them whether they let me continue or not. But I want to continue as captain because I am enjoying the role

and trying my level best," said a confident Ashraful.

He was appointed captain in June 2007 and the job was extended in February this year until the conclusion of the

tour of West Indies in July-August.

"They [board] can remove me if they thought that I have lack of quality to lead the team but I am very much confident

and clear about my position," he added.

Bangladesh team will leave for the Caribbean on June 29 to play one T20, three ODIs and two Tests.

"I can understand that the fans are very much disappointed and angry after the defeat against Ireland. I don't mind with that when someone demanded my resignation as a captain because even my family is upset with our performance. I can apologise for it.

"But I think it's unwise to take a final decision after a one match performance. One should understand that our performance was not bad in England except the Ireland match. And I don't think under my captaincy the team's performance declined rather we have some encouraging performance and there was a sign of improvement in the team's performance," Ashraful defended his position.

"I'm not afraid of any criticism because it's nothing new to me. I don't mind when people criticise me because they have high expectations of me. But what I believe that my team is in a right track and I am fortunate enough that my colleagues are supporting me," he said.

SEE PAGE 18 COL 1



Bangladesh captain Mohammad Ashraful walks out of the Zia International Airport yesterday. Ashraful, who came under fire after Tigers' first-round exit from the T20 World Cup, did not return with the team earlier on June 10.

PHOTO: STAR



South Africa opener Herschelle Gibbs plays a lofted straight drive during his blistering knock of 55 off 35 balls against the West Indies in a Super Eights match of the ICC World Twenty20 at The Oval in London yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP



Lucio

(Brazil soccer captain)
"The Confederations Cup is a short tournament and so mental preparation is most important. This competition is over very quickly and the team who are the best prepared will be crowned champions."



BTV & STAR Cricket

ICC World T20 (SUPER EIGHTS)
Ireland v Sri Lanka
Live from 6:30pm
India v England
Live from 10:30pm
ESPN

FIFA Confederation Cup
South Africa v Iraq
Live from 8:00pm
New Zealand v Spain
Live from 12:30am (Monday)

TODAY'S T20 MATCHES

(SUPER EIGHTS)
Ireland v Sri Lanka
Venue: Lord's
Time: 6:30pm
India v England
Venue: Lord's
Time: 10:30pm

Rajib stays in 3rd spot

SPORTS REPORTER

Grand Master Enamul Hossain Rajib maintained third position at the end of the ninth round in the first SCS International Open Grandmasters Chess Tournament at Bhubaneswar, Orissa yesterday.

Rajib drew with IM Konguvel Ponnoswamy of India to improve his tally to 6.5 points while FM Minhazuddin Ahmed Sagar and FM Mohammed Abdul Malek also earned same points to share the third spot.

Sagar drew with GM Meelotpal Das of India and Malek beat IM PDS Girinath of India.

SEE PAGE 18 COL 1

Dinajpur trounce Fantos

SPORTS REPORTER

Ilias struck twice in the second half as Dinajpur Football Academy handed a 3-1 defeat to Fantos Sports Association of Rangpur in the final round of the Bashundhara Champions Club Cup at the Jessore Stadium yesterday.

The match was locked at 1-1 in the first half when Shaiful put the winners ahead in the 19th minute and Apel levelled the score after two minutes.

In the day's other match, Pabna Brothers Union Club came from behind to hold Barguna Abahani Krira Chakra 2-2 at the Cox's Bazar Stadium.

SEE PAGE 18 COL 8

TOUR OF WINDIES Team for prep camp named

Cricket

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) on Saturday announced a 20-member provisional squad for the preparation camp for the tour of the West Indies.

Young wicketkeeper-batsman Mohammad Mithun was the only player to be dropped from the ICC World Twenty20 squad and Sahagir Hossain came in his place.

"Because of his [Mithun's]

strike-rate we considered him in the T20 squad, but Sahagir is more experienced and has been playing good cricket for last few months," explained chief selector Rafiqul Alam.

The national players got few more days to prepare for the series as they failed to reach the Super Eights of the ICC World Twenty20 in England following heart-breaking six-wicket defeat to Ireland.

The training camp will start from June 15 at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in

SEE PAGE 18 COL 8

Gul blows Kiwis away

AFP, London



Umar Gul became the first bowler to claim five wickets in

Twenty20 internationals as Pakistan roared back into contention in the ICC World Twenty20 on Saturday.

Needing a win to stay in the competition, Pakistan rode on seamer Gul's amazing figures of five wickets for six runs in three overs to skittle New Zealand out for a paltry 99 in 18.3 overs at the Oval.

Pakistan surpassed the modest target in 13.1 overs for the loss of four wickets to come back strongly after losing their opening Super Eights match to Sri Lanka by 19 runs on Friday.

Teenager Shahzaib Hasan hit four boundaries and two sixes in his maiden interna-

tional match before he was run out for 35 off 28 balls.

Pakistan lost three wickets in eight balls to slip from 61-1 to 71-4, but Shahid Afridi lifted his team home with 29 not out.

Pakistan and New Zealand both have one win from two games in group F, while Sri Lanka still have two matches to play against the Kiwis and minnows Ireland.

The top two teams from the group will advance to the semi-finals.

Gul sliced through the tail to build on Abdur Razaq's memorable return to official cricket after two years.

Razaq, who last played for Pakistan in May 2007, grabbed a wicket off his fourth delivery and another one in his third over to reduce New Zealand to 37-3.

The 29-year-old was called up as a replacement for the injured Yasir Arafat after break-

ing links with the rebel Indian Cricket League.

Asked to open the bowling by captain Younus Khan, Razaq had the dangerous Brendon McCullum caught at point before trapping Martin Guppill leg-before.

Gul, brought on as the sixth bowler, struck immediately as Afridi sprinted back from mid-on to catch Scott Styris (22) near the boundary.

The steady seamer claimed four of the last five wickets to leave Pakistan chasing a modest target of 5.5 runs an over.

Scott Styris' 22 was New Zealand's top score on the easy-paced wicket as eight batsmen failed to reach double figures.

Pakistan omitted opener Salman Butt to play 19-year-old rookie Shahzaib Hasan and brought in Razaq in place of Sohail Tanvir.

SEE PAGE 18 COL 5

Dhoni bucks India up

AFP, London



India captain Mahendra Singh Dhoni rallied his

side following their seven-wicket World Twenty20 loss to the West Indies by saying history proved they could come back from a reverse at this stage.

Defeat in their Super Eights opener left India on the back-foot. But that was equally the case in South Africa two years ago when a team captained by Dhoni were beaten in the corresponding fixture by New Zealand.

But from then on India went through the rest of the tournament unbeaten and defeated arch-rivals Pakistan by five runs in a thrilling final.

India next face England at the Oval on Sunday before completing the second round against tournament favourites South Africa - who earlier this week pulverised the hosts at Trent Bridge.

Against the West Indies, India collapsed to 29 for three before an innings of 67 from Yuvraj Singh helped them recover to 153 for seven.

But they were left powerless in the field by all-rounder Dwayne Bravo's unbeaten 66.

Asked about India's situation, Dhoni told reporters: "This brings the best out of us."

"We'll be under pressure to perform in the next game but that was the story in the last World Cup," the wicketkeeper added.

"After the first (Super Eights) game, every other game was a do-or-die situation for us and we played some

of the toughest teams and got through to the finals to win the Cup so it's not like we can't do it again.

"You have to be at your best because some of the teams are playing really good cricket."

Looking ahead, Dhoni said: "Hopefully everyone will come through this and when we're under pressure that's often when India's best performances happen, so when we turn up next for the game against England we will be at our best."

"We are still at the same place we were before this game. We still have two more games and nothing much changes. We're concentrating on the next game because whatever is gone is gone."

"We'll just consider it an off day for us but in this format we have seen some of the best

SEE PAGE 18 COL 1

Mixed day for Vigarunnessa

UNB, Dhaka

Vigarunnessa Noon School and College 'A' team conceded defeat but the 'B' team won their match in the girls' school cricket tournament at the Azampur Girls High School ground yesterday.

In the day's first match, Amjad Ali Sarkar Pilot High School 'A' team outplayed Vigarunnessa Noon School and College A by nine wickets in the morning.

Sent into bat, the losers were dismissed for 19 runs in 9.2 overs against devastating bowling by Khodeja and Rehana.

Khodeja claimed five wickets for 4 runs while Rehana took three wickets for 4 runs.

In reply, Amjad Ali Sarkar Pilot High School 'A' team reached the target of 20 runs in four overs for the loss of one wicket.

In the day's other match, Vigarunnessa 'B' defeated Amjad Ali Sarkar Pilot High School 'B' team by six runs under the Parabola Method in a rain-affected match in the afternoon.

Put to bat, the Vigarunnessa side scored 63 all out in 17 overs.

Humaira and Zakia Sultana grabbed three wickets each for 8 and 23 runs respectively.

In reply, Amjad Ali Sarkar Pilot High School 'B' team scored 15 runs for 3 wickets in 5.2 overs when the match was stopped due to afternoon rain. Zarin captured two wickets for 6 runs.

'India now a fearless side'

PTI, London

Sachin Tendulkar feels that the poor traveller's tag associated with the Indian team has become a thing of the past and the recent successes abroad have made the team a fearless unit capable of beating any side in the world.

Tendulkar said the process of winning matches abroad started in 2001 and since then India have beaten every team in the world "in their own backyard".

"I remember it was from 2000-01 when we started touring much better. That is when we started winning matches abroad and beating the opposition in their own backyard. South Africa, New Zealand, West Indies, England and Australia virtually all the teams in the world we have toured well and beaten them," he said.

"It did not happen overnight it was a process. But, because of that (successes) we have started having that fearless approach. So now we are in a comfort zone, we are

SEE PAGE 18 COL 8

Proteas keep winning

AFP, London



South Africa maintained their unbeaten

record at the World Twenty20 with a 20-run Super Eights win over the West Indies at the Oval here on Saturday.

West Indies, chasing 184 to win, were given hope by Lendl Simmons's brilliant innings of 77, which came off just 50 balls with a six and 12 fours.

But when he holed out to left-arm spinner Roelof van der Merwe his side were 133 for five off the last ball of the 16th over.

And next ball the game was all but up when fast bowler Dale Steyn removed

Ramnaresh Sarwan.

Teenage left-arm quick Wayne Parnell took four wickets for 13 runs, including two in four balls to remove openers Andre Fletcher and Chris Gayle.

South Africa were on course for a huge total while Herschelle Gibbs (55) and all-rounder Jacques Kallis (45) and Gibbs were at the crease.

But they lost five wickets for 34 runs in 25 balls on a typically good Oval batting pitch, accompanied by a fast outfield, to finish on 183 for seven.

Fast bowler Jerome Taylor, whose second over cost 16 runs, fought back well to finish with three wickets for 30 runs in his maximum four overs.

Parnell's early double strike left the West Indies 13 for two but Simmons counter-

attacked with three fours off Kallis.

Dwayne Bravo, whose unbeaten 66 at Lord's on Friday led the West Indies to a seven-wicket win over defending champions India, could only manage 19 before he holed out against van der Merwe.

But two more superb boundaries from Simmons against off-spinner Johan Botha kept the West Indies on course.

However, occasional spinner Jean-Paul Duminy struck second ball to have Shivnarine Chanderpaul caught and bowled cheaply to leave the West Indies 91 for four in the 12th over and they struggled to recover.

South Africa captain
SEE PAGE 18 COL 5

Bravo IPL

AFP, London



West Indies star Dwayne Bravo believes

skills picked up at the Indian Premier League (IPL), while his teammates were suffering a Test mauling in England, will be crucial in their World Twenty20 title push.

Bravo took four wickets and then smashed a stylish, unbeaten 66 as West Indies cruised to a seven-wicket victory over defending champions India at Lord's to boost their hopes of reaching the semifinals.

He was promoted up the

order to No 4 on Friday and was glad to have seized his chance.

"I just have a love and passion for the game," Bravo said. "I enjoy playing cricket. This is what I was born to do. I was given the opportunity by the captain to go up the order, I grabbed it with both hands."

Bravo came into this tournament on the back of a stint with the Mumbai Indians in the IPL, having missed West Indies' unsuccessful tour of England because he wasn't deemed fit enough for Tests following an ankle injury.

"This is my second stint in the IPL, I gained a lot of experience both times. Sharing the same dressing room with some of the best players in the

world, you've got to learn a lot. I think that's what I did."

"Since I returned from injury, I have been working very hard at my game and it is nice to see the hard work paying off."

"We are a young team but this is a team that is willing to learn and really looking forward to this tournament."

Meanwhile West Indies captain Chris Gayle challenged his side to overcome the handicap of a congested fixture schedule and repeat their win over India against South Africa.

The West Indies held India to 153 for seven before Bravo saw them home.

But having played in
SEE PAGE 18 COL 2



BRAVO! West Indies all-rounder Dwayne Bravo (L) and Shivnarine Chanderpaul are over the moon after defeating holders India in the ICC World Twenty20 Super Eights match at Lord's on Friday.

PHOTO: INTERNET