



PHOTO: AFP

CHAMPION OF CHAMPIONS: Shahid Afridi has been in fantastic form both with the bat and ball in the ICC World T20. Here the exciting stroke-maker sweeps one over mid-wicket during his trophy-winning unbeaten knock of 54 off 40 balls against Sri Lanka in the final at Lord's yesterday.

Who's Ashraful fooling?

Cricket

BISHWAJIT ROY

When the country is experiencing an unusual heat wave that is bringing suffering to the public, a different kind of heat wave swept the country's cricket that left more questions than answers.

The squabbles of the last few days following the Tigers' early exit from the ICC World Twenty20 brought many things to the spotlight but there are really reasons to be concerned with the way the Tigers reflected their satisfaction.

Yes, one may say that it was just another match Bangladesh lost against Ireland but when a captain expressed his satisfaction by saying 'I have done a lot for my country and want to do more,' then there is really need to give a long look to his performance.

mance.

There is hardly any debate on Mohammad Ashraful's ability as a batsman. For any cricket fan it's hard to forget some of the innings the elegant right-hander has played since making his international debut in April 2001. How can one forget his century on debut Test match against Sri Lanka, a glorious and face-saving 158 against India, a heroic effort in Cardiff in the ODI victory against Australia. Inspite of all this questions remain about his consistency.

It's hard to believe how a batsman of his calibre could express his satisfaction with an average of 23 in 139 ODIs and little over 23 in the 48 Tests in his eight-year long international stint.

Is he justifying his talent? The answer is definitely negative. One can't even claim him as a batsman of international standard by holding this average. It's the batsman who made his last big score (101 against Sri Lanka in December last year) in Tests after an eighteen innings hibernation. He had not even made a fifty since he has made an unbeaten 129 runs against the same opponents in Colombo in July 2007.

His last two Test innings against the Lankans were 45 and 7. So, it's hard to know when he will score a fifty again because none can rely on his contribution. Every time he promised to learn from his mistakes he went on to repeat the same.

There is no difference in his one-day career. The 24-year-old right-hander hit his last fifty (73) against South Africa in November last year and since then his scores are 5, 18, 26, 13, 4, 5 and 3. Also, four of those matches were against Zimbabwe.

Despite all the statistics, if someone expresses the kind of satisfaction Ashraful expressed recently, it's really alarming for our cricket. It could be

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WOMEN'S WORLD TWENTY20

England's double

Cricket

APP, London

England's women added the World Twenty20 title to their World Cup crown with a convincing six-wicket win over New Zealand at Lord's here on Sunday.

England fast bowler Katherine Brunt took three wickets for just six runs as New Zealand were dismissed for a 85 and the hosts reached their modest victory target of 86 for the loss of four wickets with three overs to spare.

It was the second time this year that England had defeated New Zealand in the climax of a major tournament after their four-wicket win in the 50-over World Cup final in Sydney in March.

Claire Taylor, dropped before she scored, hit the winning boundary off Nicola Brown to finish on 39 not out after making an unbeaten 76 in Friday's eight-wicket semifinal win over

Australia at The Oval.

Amy Satterthwaite's 19 was the top score in a New Zealand innings where only four batsmen made double figures.

England, after captain Charlotte Edwards won the toss and elected to field, took their first wicket with the fifth ball of the innings.

Off-spinner Laura Marsh deceived Suzie Bates with a flighted delivery and the opener was stumped by England wicketkeeper Sarah Taylor.

New Zealand then saw captain Aimee Watkins, who made 89 not out in their semi-final win over India, clean bowled by Brunt for just two on the drive.

The White Ferns then suffered two setbacks in the eighth over as Brunt finished her spell with a double-wicket maiden.

Lucy Doolan, on 14, tried to play a 'ramp' shot off Brunt but got an edge and was caught brilliantly by a diving Sarah Taylor.

Three balls later, Rachel Priest miscued a

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Shane Bond

(New Zealand fast bowler)
"I love Test cricket, it's the pinnacle, and it would be nice to have another chance to play. I'm available if they [NZC] want me."

Declaring himself available for national selection after he cut ties with unauthorised Indian Cricket League.

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PHOTO: AFP

England cricketers celebrate with the winners' trophy after beating New Zealand in the ICC Women's World Twenty20 final at Lord's yesterday.

Afridi saluted

APP, London

Pakistan superstar Shahid Afridi was hailed as 'awesome' on Sunday after the mercurial all-rounder led his country to the World Twenty20 title.

Pakistan defeated Sri Lanka by eight wickets to claim their first major title in 17 years at a sell-out Lord's.

Afridi hit an unbeaten 54 off 40 balls, his second consecutive half-century, and former captain Shoaib Malik made 24 not out during a match-winning partnership of 76 for the third wicket.

"We were underdogs and had less pressure, but we came good in the big games. It's a credit to the country and to the team," said Younis Khan.

"We hadn't won anything since Imran Khan's team at the World Cup in 1992. This is our gift to our nation. Hopefully, it will help

Victory for nation

APP, London

Pakistan captain Younis Khan dedicated his team's World Twenty20 title to their troubled homeland on Sunday.

Pakistan defeated Sri Lanka by eight wickets to claim their first major title in 17 years at a sell-out Lord's.

"It was a pressure match. When I walked out to the wicket I was thinking I have to stay until the 20th over," said Shoaib.

"Shahid was awesome today and all credit to him. I told him to stay at the wicket and I will get some runs that we can finish the game. He's a great cricketer."

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India aim fresh start

Cricket

APP, Kingston

India have arrived in the Caribbean promising to put the bad memory of their failure in the ICC World Twenty20 behind them.

The Indians face West Indies in four one-day internationals on their brief trip to the Caribbean fresh from their exit from the Twenty20 World Cup at the Super Eight stage.

"When it comes to playing for your country, you don't really need motivation to go out and perform," said India captain Mahendra Singh Dhoni on arrival.

"West Indies are playing good cricket at the moment. They (had) a very good Twenty20 World Cup, but in the 50 overs, you have time to

settle down. After playing so much Twenty20 games, 50 overs seem like a Test match."

The Indian players have had a surfeit of Twenty20 matches, after going straight into the Twenty20 World Cup, following the second staging of the Indian Premier League in South Africa, and this has led to the visitors missing four key players through injury.

Batting superstar Sachin Tendulkar opted to take time off to fully recover from a finger injury he sustained during the IPL.

Shoulder injuries have sidelined talismanic opener Virender Sehwag and left-arm strike bowler Zaheer Khan, and middle-order batsman Suresh Raina has a hairline fracture in one of his thumbs.

"You're always going to miss them because they are great players, but it's a great opportunity

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Advantage Federer

All England Championships start today

APP, London

National football coach Edson Silva Dido's ambitious pre-season training camp for the Bangladesh national football team begins today at Laboni Point in Cox's Bazar. The booters reached the resort town on Saturday night for the three-week conditioning camp to prepare for three upcoming international tournaments.

The 30-man preliminary squad had a rest day yesterday, taking light walks on the beach during the late afternoon.

After the strength and conditioning camp in Cox's Bazar, the booters will join the residential camp that will start on July 16 at BKSP in Savar.

Earlier on June 8, Bangladesh Football Federation picked a national squad for the upcoming international tournaments in December this year, and January and February next year.

"I don't feel like I have extra pressure," said world number two Federer.

"There's a lot of weight off my shoulders since Paris. So I'm entering tournaments a little bit more relaxed these days."

Federer will open proceedings on Centre Court against Taiwan's Yen-Hsun Lu on

Monday in what will be his first tennis since beating Robin Soderling in the Roland Garros final.

He missed the grasscourt tournament at Halle last week, but is now refreshed and ready to go.

"I was mentally drained because I felt like I had to play like four finals at the end of Paris because of the pressure," he said.

Federer is a player reborn.

Five months ago, his tearful exit after losing to Nadal in the Australian Open final was interpreted as an emotional confession that his era was over.

But marriage and impending fatherhood have given the 27-year-old a new perspective on his personal life while his Paris breakthrough, which took him level with Sampras on 14 majors, have combined to make him the overwhelming favourite.

"I have achieved more than I ever thought I would," said Federer.

"My dream as a boy was to win Wimbledon one day. I won that five times, like one wasn't enough."

"I think I still have many more tournaments to go and many more Grand Slams. I am not

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