



Newly appointed Bangladesh captain Mashrafe Bin Mortaza (L) and vice-captain Shakib Al-Hasan have a chat during a training session at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.

Onus is on Mashrafe

Cricket

AMEERUDDIN ZAIN

Uneasy lies the head that wears a crown. William Shakespeare's age old observation was epitomized by the just-former Bangladesh captain Mohammad Ashraful.

In his tenure as captain, Ashraful let the pressures of captaincy get to him to the extent that he failed at both leading the side and delivering with the bat. Henceforth the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) had to relieve him off his duties and hand it over to his deputy Mashrafe Bin Mortaza.

So, the not quite envious task of putting Bangladesh cricket on the rails of consistency and restore some lost pride now falls on the shoulders of Mashrafe.

After an ordinary outing at the recently concluded ICC World Twenty20 in England the time is ripe for Mashrafe to realize that if there was ever a time more apt to bring about a change in the right direction; this is the hour and he is the man for it.

Mashrafe is an aggressive cricketer. He has also seen the highs and the

lows of cricket and has gone from strength to strength since making his comeback in 2003 after spending more than a year in the wilderness. He has since produced some match winning spells for the Tigers.

Popularly known as the Narail express, Mashrafe has stood tall over his problems and is an inspirational captain at the domestic level for his team Abahani whom he has led to two consecutive Premier Cricket League victories.

And now it will be his responsibility to ensure every player puts in his best possible effort when turning up for Bangladesh.

The majority of the team is still far from self-confident and assured in their own abilities whenever pitted against a major opposition. Even though the body has the firepower, what any one worth his salt will tell you is this -- it is no good unless you believe it yourself.

And arduous as it may sound, it will be Mashrafe's responsibility to ensure every player puts in his best, believes in himself and fights tooth and nail to the end.

It will be easy for people to say that lauding his appointment as the cap-

tain and highlighting his abilities or putting forth his leadership potential is just going to put extra pressure on the man. But since when has playing for your country or leading it come without the baggage of pressure and expectations?

Mashrafe's first big assignment will be the tour to West Indies next month. The pitches will be flat and the opposition will be hostile as the West Indians are in good form beating England 1-0 at home. How he uses the resources at his disposal, what strategies he employs on the field and how well he takes the pressure of captaincy will surely test his nerves.

But what he will need to stop first and foremost as the chieftain of the team is the practice of players going out there to make a meek 20 or 30 or bowl six homogenous deliveries to secure themselves a place in the next match.

Mashrafe for us is the only player who can hold his head high while the Tamims, Shakibs, Zunaeds and Rubels play without being crippled by the fear of failure. The only fear the rest of the country would have is that the new role will not make his head uneasy and reduce him to ASHes.



Did U Know?

Rowing was the first inter-collegiate sport contested in the United States. The first rowing race was between Harvard and Yale in 1852.



Talk Turkey



Luis Fabiano

(Brazilian striker)
"I have a dream and that dream is to be a part of the World Cup squad next year in South Africa. I will try to make the dream of playing at the World Cup a reality."



What to Watch

STAR Sports
Wimbledon Championships
Second Round Matches
Live from 6:00pm
ESPN
Sportscentre India
Sports News
Live at 9:30pm
FIFA Confederation Cup
(SECOND SEMIFINAL)
Brazil v South Africa
Live from 1:30am (Friday)

Teletalk cricket

OUR CORRESPONDENT,
Khagrachhari

Ujjibito Jubo Sangha defeated Munigram Ujjal Smriti Club by three wickets in the first Tele Talk cricket tournament at the Khagrachhari Government High School ground yesterday.

Munigram Ujjal Smriti Club was bundled out for 68 runs in 14 overs. Gourab Uttam Chakma was the lone batsman to reach double figure with 10.

Subashish Chakma caused the damage by picking up six wickets conceding 15 runs.

In reply, Ujjibito Jubo Sangha reached the target with 69 runs for seven wickets in 15.2 overs.

Gilly wary of fit Freddie

Cricket

AFP, London

Former Australia wicketkeeper Adam Gilchrist is wary of the threat posed by Andrew Flintoff ahead of the upcoming Ashes series - but only if the England all-rounder is fully fit.

Flintoff was the star of England's 2005 Ashes series win when Gilchrist, 37, who retired from Test cricket in 2008, was still a key member of the Australia batting line-up.

Lancashire hero Flintoff's pace and swing made him particularly awkward for even as gifted a left-handed batsman as Gilchrist to face.

Australia's top six set to feature four left-handers - Simon Katich, Phillip Hughes, Michael Hussey and Marcus North - come the first Ashes Test in Cardiff starting on July 8.

But ever since the 2005 series, Flintoff has been troubled by a succession of injuries and only recently returned to first-class action this season following a knee problem.

"He is so awkward to face as a left-hander," Gilchrist told Wednesday's edition of Britain's Independent newspaper. "It's his physicality,

his angle of attack, his height. I admire his controlled aggression. He's in your face but not recklessly so."

"He creates an aura of control, even if you get a good shot away he has that look in his eye, and a demeanour, that suggests it is all part of a big plan."

(Shane) Warne and (Glenn) McGrath - they had the same quality. When I have faced Flintoff since he can still get his weaponry to that level. It's just he's not been able to do it consistently."

Australia, since winning the Ashes 5-0 on home soil in 2006/07 have seen the likes of openers Justin Langer and Matthew Hayden, Gilchrist, leg-spin great Warne and champion fast bowler McGrath all retire from Test cricket.

But a new look side, still under the captaincy of Ricky Ponting, won a Test series in South Africa 2-1 earlier this year and Gilchrist said: "That group really surprised me and I'm very much encouraged. I'm also encouraged listening to Ricky. His enthusiasm is exceptional."

"In the past he's been criticised for not moulding a team. Well, he's neither needed, nor had the chance, to do it before. He has the chance to develop this group and I think he is really excited by it. He wants to leave that legacy of formulating a team out of this fresh start."

'We must build on T20 win'

AFP, Karachi



Popular all-rounder Shahid Afridi said Pakistan need to build on their historic victory in the ICC World Twenty20 championship as he arrived home Wednesday.

Pakistan beat Sri Lanka by eight wickets to win the World Twenty20 title in England -- their second biggest win in the sport in 17 years after their 50-over World Cup win in Australia in 1992.

Afridi, who won man-of-the-match awards in the semifinal and final, said the team lived up to the expectations of the nation. He scored half centuries on both occasions.

"We are proud champions and, more so, we lived up to the expectations of millions of cricket fans in the country who were seeking some moments of smile," Afridi told reporters at his residence where a large crowd had gathered to greet him.

But Pakistan need to carry on the winning momentum, he said ahead of next month's Test tour of Sri Lanka.

"We have met success in one event, but now we have to carry forward this momentum and win more and more series in future," said Afridi, who arrived in Karachi with team-mates Fawad Alam and Shoaib Malik two days after the squad returned home.

Allrounder Abdul Razzaq flew into Lahore. The four players had stayed in England due to some personal commitments.

Eleven other members including captain Younus Khan and team coach Intikhab Alam arrived on Tuesday.

Afridi expressed surprise that fans were deprived of welcoming the triumphant team when they arrived at Lahore due to security concerns.

"I heard that fans had to wait for hours outside Lahore airport but the team was taken away without giving them a glimpse, it's disappointing for fans," he said.

Afridi was also surprised over captain Younus's decision to quit T20 cricket after their victory.

"I am surprised, he can still play this form of cricket and is good at it," he said.

Razzaq, who was summoned to England as replacement for injured allrounder Yasir Arafat, praised Younus and coach Intikhab Alam.

"Both Younus and Alam were outstanding and supported me a lot. I needed that because I had come in the team after a long gap," said Razzaq who joined the team in England after two-year absence from international cricket.

Razzaq, 29, signed with the unrecognised Indian Cricket League in protest after he was left out of the squad for the inaugural World Twenty20 in 2007.

He snapped his ties with the league earlier this month to get clearance to play for Pakistan.

"I have my confidence back and now I am ready to play for Pakistan in Tests against Sri Lanka," said Razzaq who was named in the 15-man squad for the Sri Lanka tour.

Pakistan play three Tests, five one-day and one T20 international. The first Test starts in Galle from July 4.



Fans greet Pakistan all-rounder Shahid Afridi upon his arrival at Jinnah International Airport in Karachi yesterday.

Enamul grabs 6

SPORTS REPORTER

Enamul Haque caught his peers in a web as the left-arm spinner grabbed six wickets in the first day of the two-day match at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.

The soon to be West Indies-bound cricketers played the match divided into two groups. The batsmen were again found wanting on the first day as Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) Green were all out for 188 in 48.2 overs while BCB Red were reduced to 79-7 at the end of the day's play.

The training at home will end today and cricketers will enjoy a three day break before flying to the West Indies on June 29.

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

The Tigers will play the two-match Test series first followed by three ODI's and one international Twenty20 and then they will fly for Zimbabwe to play five one-day internationals.

SCHOOL FOOTBALL Siddeshwari found guilty

SPORTS REPORTER

Viqarunnisa School and College have been asked to play in the final match of the Citycell Metropolis Women's School Football Championship after Siddeshwari Girl's High School was scratched off their status as finalists for playing illegal players in their side during the semifinals.

The decision was taken yesterday at a meeting of the tournament committee of the Bangladesh Football Federation after Viqarunnisa lodged a complaint after being outplayed by 3-1 in the tiebreakers on Tuesday.

The tournament committee found Siddeshwari guilty of violating the bylaws to have played six illegal players, who had played for Narayanganj District in the National Women's

SA trounce Bangladesh

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh National Hockey team continued their woes from Malaysia to Russia as they made a frustrating start in the four-nation Invitational Hockey Tournament losing 8-0 to South Africa in their opening match in Moscow yesterday.

Bangladesh will play the second match against the 25th ranked Russia today and the third against the 11th ranked Canada on Saturday.

The place-deciding match is on June 28.

Sharapova stunned

AFP, London



Centre Court queen Maria Sharapova, the 2004 champion, was sensationally dumped out of Wimbledon on Wednesday losing 6-2, 3-6, 6-4 to Argentina's Gisela Dulko in the second round.

Dulko, who needed five knife-edge match points to seal victory after 2hr 13min, goes on to face Russian 10th seed Nadia Petrova for a place in the last 16.

But for Sharapova, defeat will cast further doubts over the ability of the sport's most bankable star to ever return to her former powers following a 10-month absence from the tour nursing a shoulder injury.

"It's the biggest win of my career because

she's a great champion and on centre court in the most important tournament in the world," said the 24-year-old Dulko.

"It's a dream day. I played a poor second set but I kept fighting in the third. I was really nervous at the end. I didn't want it to go to 5-5 because she competes right to the very end."

Dulko was quickly a break ahead to lead 2-0 as the Argentine showed few nerves playing in front of 15,000 people.

The world number 45, had the Russian scampering from side to side and took the opening set in the eighth game courtesy of a sweeping, crosscourt forehand winner.

Sharapova was soon in trouble again as the slender Argentine nipped ahead to a 3-0 lead in the second set, courtesy of a break in the second game.

Dulko had lost both her previous meetings

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Daniela Hantuchova of Slovakia serves to China's Zheng Jie during their Wimbledon Championships second round match at the All England Club in London yesterday. Hantuchova won 6-3, 7-5.

Murray slams Brits flops

AFP, London



Andy Murray lamented the latest generation of British tennis flops after only two out of 11 starters survived the Wimbledon first round.

Murray, the third seed, is the sole man left standing while Elena Baltacha is the only British woman in the last 64 as Britain equalled its worst showing in the Open era.

"It's not great. The depth needs to get way better. It's not acceptable," said Murray who is attempting to become the first British men's champion here since Fred Perry in 1936.

"Some of them played well, but they aren't at

the same level as a lot of guys. They don't play at this level too often because they're not ranked that high, so when the tight moments come, they don't play as well."

British women's number one Anne Keothavong, one of the few home players able to make the main draw without the leg-up of a wildcard, broke down in tears after her straight sets defeat to Austria's Patricia Mayer, a player ranked 30 places below her.

"I feel like I've let myself down more than anything. Wimbledon is such a special tournament to me. I've overcome so much just to get where I am," said Keothavong.

Baltacha, who had been as far as the third round here, saved national honour in Tuesday's twilight when she came back from a set down to

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