

What lies beneath

Cricket

BISHWAJIT ROY

It seems that with the axe falling on the captain, everything has turned out to be all right in Bangladesh cricket after the Tigers inadequate performance in the ICC World Twenty20 in England.

After any debacle the easiest decision is to fire the captain but still it was not so easy for the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) to sack Mohammad Ashraful from the hot seat and announce the name of the new leader Mashrafe Bin Mortaza for the upcoming tours of West Indies and Zimbabwe in the next two months.

And the way the 'self-proclaimed' professional board came to a conclusion regarding the issue just gave an impression that one should go to its roots if he or she tries to find out where the problem actually lies in Bangladesh cricket.

Ashraful was sacked but not before a drama and it took nearly two weeks from the time the team returned from England.

Two influential directors of the board first publicly criticised the team performance as well as disclosing the board's desire to change the captain, which many thought was not the proper way to respond. It got a terrible reaction from the

players in the camp and then serenity prevailed with the interference of another director and the vice-president of the board.

Finally the captain was changed in an official announcement but in which way, nobody knows; a funny act from BCB indeed.

Yes, there is a committee in the board, which holds the responsibility of looking after all these issues but interestingly during the entire episode the existence of the cricket operations committee was hardly visible. Rather than standing tall in the crisis, it seemed the committee went into a brief hibernation. Because it's chairman, Enayet Hossain Siraj, was still in England during that time.

It's a committee, which can be referred to as the heart of all committees, where people should not only be active rather than proactive to smoothly run the show and no doubt one has to give enough time to deal with the very important committee's work.

But, unfortunately this committee portrayed a sordid picture in their performance just like the national team. And the question can be raised: What can someone expect from a team which is handled by such careless guardians?

In the first place the chairman of cricket operations should have returned

home from England without any delay after his team's early exit from the showcase event and formed a 'fact finding committee' to probe into the team's dismal performance and the allegations raised against the players and the management and the role of the coach.

With the next assignment knocking on the door, Siraj's committee needed to communicate with the players, officials and management to solve a few issues immediately but finally only a half-hearted job (removing captain) has been done and that too by other members.

Also, following the debacle there were lot of observations over the activities and the ability of team operations manager Shafiqul Haque but he has interestingly remained scot-free. Astonishingly this former national skipper got an extension to his job by the same board when many raised eyebrows about his capability as a manager.

It's none other than the board directors who raised their fingers towards the head-coach, selectors and the management but only after the World Cup disaster. So the obvious question is that: was there any lacking in the monitoring of the team and of course by the very knowledgeable cricket operations committee.

In the entire chapter, another man

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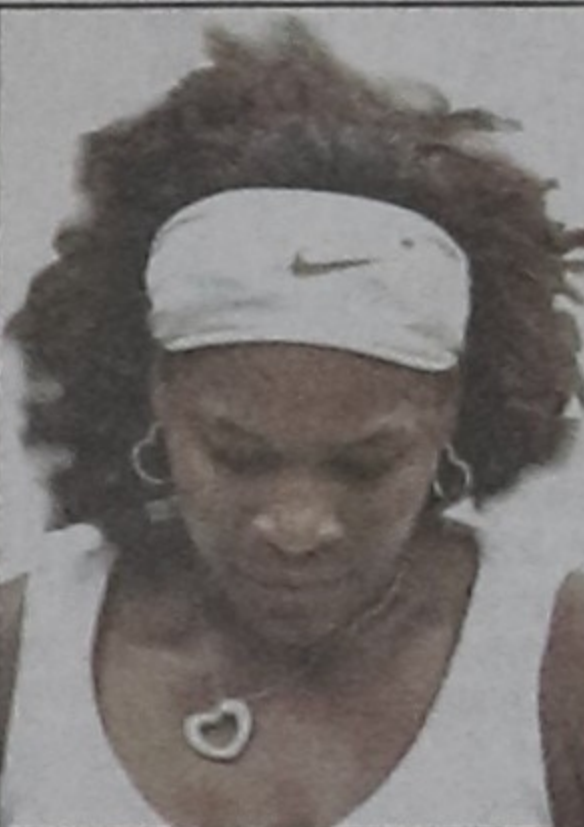
Indian star batsman Yuvraj Singh is ecstatic after scoring a rollicking century during the first one-day international against West Indies at the Sabina Park in Kingston on Friday. Yuvraj smashed 131 off 102 balls.

PHOTO: AFP



Did U Know?

Alan Davidson of Australia is the first player to score 100 runs and have taken 10 wickets in the same Test in 1960.



Serena Williams

(American tennis player)

"He was a great guy and a complete icon. Words can't express my horror. He was definitely the ultimate celebrity."

While paying tribute to 'Pop King' Michael Jackson who died of cardiac arrest in Los Angeles on Thursday.



STAR Sports
Wimbledon Championships
Fourth Round
Live from 6.00pm
ESPN
FIFA Confederation Cup
(Third Place Playoff)
Spain v S Africa
Live from 8pm
Final
USA v Brazil
Live from 1.25am (Monday)
TEN Sports
West Indies v India
Second ODI
Live from 9.30pm

India to play tri-series in SL

AFP, New Delhi

India will play a triangular one-day international tournament in Sri Lanka in September with New Zealand as the third team, the country's cricket board said on Saturday.

The teams will play each other once with the top two advancing to the final, the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) said in a statement.

"A total of four matches will be played during the short tour," it said adding that the itinerary will be announced shortly.

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Booters enjoying it

Football

SPORTS REPORTER

Players of the Bangladesh national football team who are currently on a three weeklong strength and conditioning camp at Laboni point, Cox's Bazar as part of their pre season training have still not had a taste of the intense hard work on which the camp has been designed.

Assistant coach Shafiqul Islam Manik told the Daily Star that five days into the camp the players are enjoying their time at the beach and went through a period of adjustment, running and ball play on the first week of the camp.

"This camp belongs to our strength and conditioning coach Ariel Coleman and he hasn't given the boys an intense workout yet. It's mostly been running, different types of drills and ball play on the sand along with swimming and spending time on the water," said Manik.

The boys are loving the beach in this heat and realize that the week ahead is going to introduce them to the real grind of the

programme. Ariel has worked well with the boys so far adjusting them with the conditions as the players don't have past experience of working on sand for an extended period of time," added Manik.

The squad has two practice sessions in a day. One in the morning and the other in the late afternoon among which the activities have been spread.

Meanwhile 12 players from the camp were sent to Chittagong for a medical retest after their tests in Dhaka revealed some abnormal findings such as swollen heart and high pulse rate.

Later of course these were found normal for professional athletes as the tests in Chittagong affirmed all the players to be perfectly normal.

The training squad in Cox's Bazar has one additional member now as the Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) national team management committee has included Shahidul Islam Shahid into the 30-member preliminary squad.

Shahid was part of the Feni Soccer Club who recently were the runners up in the Bashundhara Champions Club Cup and was also a member of Under-17 football team. In 2006 Shahid became the best player of the school championships.

Alam's focus on fitness

Cricket

AFP, Lahore

Pakistan coach Intikhab Alam said his players' fitness will be the key on their tour of Sri Lanka as the 15-man Pakistan team set off on Saturday.

Alam, who led the team to the World Twenty20 title in England last week, warned that the biggest problem for the tourists will be the hot climate.

"Fitness is very important on the tough and long tour of Sri Lanka," said Alam before heading for Dubai and then Colombo.

The tour comprises three Tests followed by five one-day matches and a Twenty20 international.

The first Test starts in Galle on July 4 but Pakistan open the tour with a three-day match against a Sri Lanka Cricket XI in Colombo from

Monday.

"Sri Lanka will be hot and in such a climate your fitness is tested, so we have (put a stress) on fitness, which will play an important role," said the former leg-spinner and Pakistan captain.

He said the series would be interesting as both teams have talent.

"Sri Lanka have quality spinners in (Muttiah) Muralitharan and (Ajantha) Mendis but our batting is good and I hope it will be up to the challenge of playing in the heat and against two world-class spinners," he said.

Pakistan have been boosted by the return of star batsman Mohammad Yousuf, who broke his ties with the unrecognised Indian Cricket League (ICL), clearing the way for his return to the international fold.

The 34-year-old, who scored a world record 1,788 runs in 2006 -- the most in a calendar year -- joined the rebel league in protest over his

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Canada beat Bangladesh

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh national hockey team lost to Canada 6-2 in their third and final match of the four nation Invitational Hockey Tournament in Moscow yesterday.

Chayan and Nannu scored the goals for Bangladesh as the team missed a lot of chances on the field.

There have been reports of bad umpiring from Moscow and Bangladesh played with ten players as Jimmy was sent off on the tenth minute.

Earlier, the hockey team lost to South Africa (8-0) in their first match and to hosts Russia (4-2) in their second match, which brings their tally of goals to 18-4.

The place deciding match of the meet is slated for today.

India clinch classic

Cricket

AFP, Kingston

Yuvraj Singh set India up for a 20-run victory over West Indies in the first One-day International on Friday with a boundary-laced 131.

Yuvraj appeared to be stuck in Twenty20 mode, when he struck 10 fours and seven sixes from 102 balls in his 12th ODI hundred to propel India to 339 for six from their 50 overs, after the visitors chose to bat at Sabina Park in the opening fixture of their four-match series in the Caribbean.

Opener Dinesh Karthik scored a career-best 67 off 77 balls, India captain Mahendra Singh Dhoni made 41, and Yusuf Pathan got 40 not out to boost the visitors' total.

India then bowled with discipline to strangle the West Indies batting and dismissed the home team for 319 to complete victory with 11 balls to spare.

Shivnarine Chanderpaul hit three fours and three sixes in the top score of 63 from 59 balls, and several other West Indies batsmen got starts, but failed to carry on.

Ramnaresh Sarwan supported with 45, Runako Morton with 42, and West Indies cap-

tain Chris Gayle added 37.

Ashish Nehra - on his return to the Indian side - captured three wickets for 49 runs from 7.1 overs, and Yusuf Pathan took three for 56 from eight overs with his uncomplicated off-spin.

The victory gives India a 1-0 lead in the four-match series which continues on Sunday at the same venue before the final two matches are contested next Friday and Sunday at the Beausejour Stadium in St. Lucia.

India were put on their heels, when West Indies started their chase confidently with a stand of 65 for the first wicket between Gayle and Morton.

But Nehra removed Gayle fell in the 10th over, and Pathan snared Morton in the 16th to leave West Indies on 100 for two.

India saw West Indies get back on track, as Sarwan and Chanderpaul put on 51 for the third wicket.

But RP Singh's throw from deep square leg from the last ball of the 25th over ran Sarwan out as the West Indies batsman tried for a second run, leaving the home team needing 189 from the second half of their innings.

India maintained their discipline, although Chanderpaul reached his 50 from 51 balls with a flick to deep fine leg for four off Ishant Sharma

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PHOTO: AFP

Serbian starlet Ana Ivanovic celebrates a point against Samantha Stosur of Australia in a women's singles third round match of the 2009 Wimbledon Tennis Championships at the All England Tennis Club in southwest London yesterday.

Venus' sweet revenge

AFP, London



THE CHAMPIONSHIPS

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Defending champion Venus Williams avenged one of the most embarrassing defeats of her career on Saturday by sweeping into the last 16 at Wimbledon with a 6-0, 6-4 victory over Carla Suarez Navarro.

Williams will now tackle former world number one Ana Ivanovic who was left to carry Serbian hopes after sixth seed Jelena Jankovic suffered a shock exit against American qualifier Melanie Oudin.

Williams, 29, was unceremoniously bundled out of the Australian Open by unseeded Spaniard Suarez Navarro in the second round in January despite holding a 5-2 lead in the final set.

But Venus, the third seed, made amends in clinical fashion on Saturday to keep alive her bid to become the first woman to win a hat-trick of Wimbledon singles' titles since Steffi Graf claimed three in a row from 1991 to 1993.

Venus once again played with her left knee swathed in bandages but was hardly restricted as she eased past Suarez Navarro in one hour and 21 minutes.

The five-time Wimbledon champion has yet to drop a set in three rounds this year and her winning streak at the All England Club has now reached 17 matches.

Suarez Navarro, the world number 34, has already reached two Grand Slam quarterfinals at the tender age of 20, but she never threatened to repeat her Australian Open heroics.

A break for Venus in the opening game set the tone. With memories of that Melbourne defeat driving her on, Williams was quickly 4-0 up and took the set without surrendering a game.

Suarez Navarro had managed to test Williams a little more in the second set, but it couldn't last. The former world number one upped her game, broke for a 5-4 lead and served out the match.

Williams said: "I was really enjoying myself out there. She's a fast and competitive player so I was happy to close it out."

"When you're winning at Wimbledon there's not much better than that."

Meanwhile, Jankovic, the world number one only last August, was knocked out by 17-year-old Oudin, the world number 124, who claimed a famous 6-7 (8/10), 7-5, 6-2 victory.

Jankovic, who has been struggling with blisters and a broken toenail, was hampered by injury and heat exhaustion during a gruelling match on Court Three.

She called for treatment three times before finally cracking in the final set to continue a disappointing year for the Serb.

Oudin, playing in her first Wimbledon, will face China's Li Na or 11th seed Agnieszka Radwanska in her first Grand Slam fourth round appearance.

While Jankovic struggled, her compatriot Ivanovic showed signs of recapturing her former glories during an impressive 7-5, 6-2 victory over Australian 18th seed Samantha Stosur.

A year ago Ivanovic arrived in south-west

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