

Don't paper the cracks

Cricket

BISHWAJIT ROY

There was no shortage of excitement from the supporters and officials to welcome home the victorious Tigers at the Zia International Airport on Thursday night. But it seemed that the heroes themselves were not too overjoyed with emotion on their return home after their triumphant tours of West Indies and Zimbabwe. If really they can check their emotions as professionals that will be very positive sign for our cricket.

But their checked emotions gave way a little when they appealed to all, particularly media, to back them in good times and bad. Mohammad Ashraful, unusually gloomy amidst the festivity, in particular was vocal on the issue and understandably there was a reason for the former skipper as he had to face the heat after the team's debacle in the ICC World T20 in England.

We however beg to differ if someone says that the media does not provide their support in bad times. The problem arises when someone views the criticism as a 'negative campaign'. The question is whether someone takes the criticism sportingly in his stride even in good times.

No one can take away the Tigers' recent success. It was a historic trip without any question for our cricket when Shakh Al Hasan's men won the Test series 2-0 and also whitewashed the West Indies in the three-match series.

Batting was our main headache in the poor showings at the international stage but in these

two series the batters found their feet. Everybody played their part, whenever it was required. Some of our batsmen like Tamim Iqbal showed character to convert their innings into big ones, which was something new and hardly seen before; that three batsmen scored hundreds in a single tour. So, there were lots of positives in the tours which we can carry on to achieve more against the top-ranked sides.

But still there are some finer points to focus on. Our fielding was all but sloppy and the athleticism from this young side was missing as not only for the poor ground fielding but also they dropped some catches. The fact is that these are all that matters when the opponents are India, Sri Lanka and Australia because they not only make the half chances full ones but also capitalise on the chances hundred percent.

On the other hand it was really brilliant that we achieved the success without our main bowlers including country's number one pacer Mashrafe Bin Mortaza. But there was reason for concern with our backup pacers and we should focus on the area immediately because we simply can't survive with this kind of attack when we face formidable opponents.

And it would be unwise to think that our spinners will play the same job against teams like India and Sri Lanka, who will come in January next year to play a tri-nation series, what they did against bits and pieces West Indies who were found wanting against the slow bowlers.

These are the areas we should look at and must not hesitate to criticise if there are more flaws because ultimately it will help the team's performance, much like the criticism against

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PHOTO: AFP

GREASE LIGHTNING: Jamaican sprint king Usain Bolt celebrates his 200m sprint gold at the World Athletics Championships in Berlin on Thursday. Bolt set a new world record of 19.19 seconds, bettering his previous mark he set in the Beijing Olympics last year by a stunning 0.11 seconds.

'I want to be Sir Usain'

INTERNET, undated

Jamaican Usain Bolt, who shattered the 200 metres world record to win gold at the World Championships, said he was closing in on his biggest aim of becoming a sprinter the world would never forget.

"I keep telling you guys my aim is to become a legend. I don't think about records. I don't put myself under pressure. I know what to do and I go and execute," the 22-year-old said.

"I did well for myself and I am on my way to becoming a legend so I am just happy."

Asked whether a knighthood from Queen Elizabeth would be something he would like, Bolt said: "I just say that would be a great thing. Seriously that would be wonderful."

"I would get the title 'Sir Usain Bolt'. That sounds very nice."

Bolt claimed three gold medals at the Beijing 2008 Games and Rahmatganj MFS demanded more time to be

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Bolt blitzes again

200m gold caps off Calypso night

AFP, Berlin

berlin 2009
August 22-23
10th IAAF World Championships in Athletics

Superstar sprinter Usain Bolt stormed to his second world title of the week here on Thursday and collected another world record with an extraordinary triumph in the 200 metres.

Bolt, who will celebrate his 23rd birthday on Friday, timed 19.19 seconds to eclipse the record of 19.30sec he set in last year's Olympic final.

The Jamaican's victory led a night of celebration for the Caribbean with compatriot Melaine Walker adding the women's 400m hurdles title to her Olympic crown in a championship record time.

There was also an unexpected gold for Barbados, who had never won a medal at the world championships, as 21-year-old Ryan Brathwaite edged out experienced American duo Terrence Trammell and Olympic silver medallist

David Payne in the 110m hurdles.

The other titles of the night saw Croatia's defending champion Blanka Vlasic retain her high jump title while America's Trey Hardee won the decathlon.

Bolt, who shattered the 100m world record at the start of the championships, was truly extraordinary.

There was never any doubt about the result as he eased away to win by 10 metres, breaking his own record as well as achieving something even Carl Lewis never managed in holding the Olympic and world 100m and 200m titles at the same time.

He celebrated by demonstrating his trademark lightning bolt pose before insisting he never feels the tension of the big occasion.

"I was just in my room playing video games all day," said the Jamaican. "It keeps me calm and that is the aim."

More worryingly for his rivals is his pledge to keep breaking records.

"I don't know where I can stop. I just try to run as fast as possible even if I was feeling a little tired."

American bronze medallist Wallace Spearmon admitted he was in awe of Bolt.

"I saw Bolt for three seconds. This guy is really, really fast. He's amazing, one of the greatest ever runners."

Walker was also impressive, running down America's Lashinda Demus to win the 400m hurdles in a time of 52.42sec.

"I am so proud to be Jamaican," she said. "Everything went perfectly. I have been looking forward to this race because this is the only time you can do it."

Brathwaite showed maturity beyond his years as he recovered from a poor start to triumph.

"This is just great. It did happen," said Brathwaite, who reached the Olympic semifinals last year.

"I am very happy. My dream really has come true. Barbados is only a small country but I showed the world who I am."

Tigers to meet PM today

SPORTS REPORTER

The Tigers will pay a courtesy call on Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina at her official residence Jamuna today after their historic series triumph in West Indies and Zimbabwe.

The Tigers, who completed a Test and ODI series whitewash against West Indies before swatting aside the Zimbabwe side 4-1 in the ODIs, were given a warm reception on their return to Zia International Airport on Thursday.

The state minister for youth and sports, officials of the Bangladesh Cricket Board, relatives of the players and hundreds of fans greeted their heroes with garlands of flowers as the national cricket team achieved unprecedented success in their 51-day tour of Caribbean and Zimbabwe.

"She is not rejoicing. She (didn't) want the medal," said Chuene, who presented Semenya with the gold medal on Thursday.

"She told me: 'No one ever said I was not a girl, but here (in Berlin) I am not. I am not a boy. Why did you bring me here? You should have left me in my village at home.'

Semenya's family said they were angered at the International Association of Athletics Federations' (IAAF) decision to conduct gender

Semenya mulled rejecting medal

AFP, Johannesburg

berlin 2009
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South African 800-metre world champion Caster Semenya nearly boycotted the awards ceremony after feeling devastated by the row over her gender, her family and athletics officials said Friday.

"She said she did not want to go on the podium, but I told her she must," Athletics South Africa president Leonard Chuene told The Times newspaper here.

"She is not rejoicing. She (didn't) want the medal," said Chuene, who presented Semenya with the gold medal on Thursday.

"She told me: 'No one ever said I was not a girl, but here (in Berlin) I am not. I am not a boy. Why did you bring me here? You should have left me in my village at home.'

Semenya's family said they were angered at the International Association of Athletics Federations' (IAAF) decision to conduct gender

tests on their 18-year-old daughter.

"We won't accept her having to undergo those tests, and we agree with her -- she should (have) rather rejected the medal. We won't allow our daughter to be disgraced," her father Jacob told The Times.

"I feel so proud of my daughter. The talk that they want to examine her, it won't happen while I'm alive," her mother Dorcus said.

"She's a woman. I gave birth to her. They must give what my daughter deserves. She won that medal," she told the paper.

The popular Soweto tabloid published a copy of Semenya's birth certificate, listing her sex as female, on its front page under the headline "She's a girl" with a picture of a young Semenya towering over a group of school friends.

In an editorial "Shush, you silly twerps", the popular tabloid hit out at Semenya's detractors, calling it a "clearly contrived controversy".

IAAF spokesman Nick Davies said in Berlin

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MSC likely to play Fed Cup

Football

SPORTS REPORTER

Mohammedan SC will part in the Federation Cup as scheduled as the Motijheel-based outfit has apparently retreated from their decision to defer the season's curtain-raising tournament.

The Motijheel-based outfit had sought at least four weeks to be prepared after the completion of the month-long players' transfer. This is despite signing up 12 national players, including star striker Zahid Hasan Emily and last year's best defender Wali Faisal, in the first week of the transfer period in a bid to win the elusive B. League.

It is learnt that Mossadek Ali Falu, the convener of the Mohammedan ad-hoc committee and member Lukman

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PHOTO: AFP

Aussies make good start

Cricket

AFP, London

Openers Shane Watson and Simon Katich survived a fiery spell from Andrew Flintoff as Australia reached 61 without loss at lunch on Friday's second day of the deciding fifth Ashes Test here at the Oval.

Watson was 30 not out and left-hander Katich 26 not out, with Australia 271 runs adrift of England's first innings 332 when rain forced an early lunch.

Australia only had to draw this match to retain the Ashes but England needed a victory to regain them with the series all square at 1-1.

Flintoff, playing his final Test before an injury-induced retirement from the five-day format, was controversially left out of the England team that lost the fourth match of this series by an innings and 80 runs at Headingley

because of fears his suspect right knee would not stand the strain of fast bowling.

But the 31-year-old star of England's 2005 Ashes triumph, who only managed seven with the bat on Thursday, showed no discomfort as he charged in after being handed the new ball alongside his Lancashire colleague James Anderson by captain Andrew Strauss.

Flintoff had two appeals for leg before in his first three balls to Watson, then on four, and the second was especially close after the right-hander, aiming across the line, missed an inswinger that hit him on the knee-roll.

But, despite Flintoff's prolonged plea, Pakistani umpire Asad Rauf was unmoved. And next ball, to add insult to injury, Watson clipped Flintoff through mid-wicket for four.

However, that was the only boundary Flintoff conceded in an impressive initial burst of six overs for seven runs with three maidens.

Anderson, after six overs for 20 runs, was

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Bad weather appeared the main stumbling block in Sri Lanka's bid to win the first Test after illness-hit New Zealand were boxed into a corner on Friday.

The tourists, set an improbable target of 413 following an unbeaten century by Tillakaratne Dilshan, plodded to 30-1 in 13 overs by stumps on the fourth day at the Galle International Stadium.

Dilshan made 123 not out as Sri Lanka declared their second innings at 259-4 at the stroke of tea.

A sharp shower during the tea break interrupted play by 40 minutes but New Zealand lost the wicket of Daniel Flynn

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PHOTO: AFP

Croatia's Blanka Vlasic clears the bar on way to winning the women's high jump gold in the Athletics World Championships in Berlin on Thursday.