

Nat't cricketers win third T20 practice tie

SPORTS REPORTER

Some disciplined bowling from the spinners guided the national cricket team to a 24-run win over Bangladesh Biman in the third Twenty20 practice match at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.

The spinners, led by left-arm Enamul Haq, grabbed four wickets to restrict the national flag carrier to 126 for five in 20 overs after the national side had posted a challenging total of 150 for seven in the stipulated overs.

After being put in to bat, openers Mehrib Hossain and Mushfiqur Rahman gave the national team a solid 64-run start before the former was trapped leg before on the very first delivery of the eighth over.

The left-handed opener made a 21-ball 14, but Mushfiqur was more destructive than his partner, having hit five fours and one six in his 27-ball 45-run knock.

Later Marshal Ayub (36) and Khaled Mahmud (19) contributed 36 and 19 to help their side reach the 150-run mark. Elias Sunny was the most successful spinner with three wickets for 34 while Sharifullah took two for 24.

In reply, Biman reached 126 at the close losing five wickets with opener Avishek Mitra top-scoring with 39. Besides, Mosharraf Hossain (20), Sharifullah (19) and Jahurul Islam (14) were the other notable scorers for the losers.

Enamul, who claimed seven wickets in two matches on Wednesday, grabbed two for 22 while Mahmudullah and Naeem Islam chipped in with one wicket each.



THE WORLD IS HIS OYSTER: The number one one-day all-rounder Shakib Al Hasan has now grabbed the top prize of Wisden Cricketer's Test Player of the Year 2009.

PHOTO: INTERNET

Shakib Al Hasan, the world-beater

Cricket

QUAZI ZULQUARNAIN ISLAM

Having been inexplicably ignored at the ICC Cricket Awards last week, the smile returned to Shakib al Hasan's lips yesterday as the Bangladesh all-rounder was named by respected cricket monthly The Wisden Cricketer - as the best Test player of the year.

The 22-year-old talisman of Bangladesh saw off stiff challenges from marquee names such as Sachin Tendulkar, Graeme Smith, Jacques Kallis and Andrew Flintoff to snatch the award. The win came on the back of a sterling season for Shakib, in which he took 45 wickets including five five-wicket hauls and scored 498 runs in 8 Tests.

"It is very exciting. I am extremely happy," said Shakib when queried about his initial reaction to the win.

"It is really the best award I have ever got because journalists from all over the world voted for me. This joy is hard to express in words," continued Shakib.

Ever the team man, the left-hander was quick to distribute credit for his victory among his teammates.

"As a team, this award will only take us forward. I never thought that I would receive

such lofty recognition. But this is a reminder of what hard work gets for you. Hopefully this will inspire my teammates, including myself, to work even harder for the development of Bangladesh cricket," he said.

Shakib topped the performance table of all Test match players based on marks awarded by Wisden Cricketer's correspondents who reported on every Test played during the period. He averaged 7.94 out of 10 for each of the eight Tests he played between the beginning of September 2008 and the end of August 2009.

So did he feel he deserved the award?

"That is a hard question to answer. I did not honestly think that I would win, but now that I have received the award, I do think that I

deserved it," was his witty reply.

And deserve it he did. Shakib's performance chart spiked during the historic tour to the West Indies while playing a weakened side, but saying that contributed to the award win would be taking away from the all-rounder's fantastic consistency with bat and ball throughout the year, against any opposition, home and away.

His left-arm spin bamboozled New Zealand at home, but he was equally sharp in the fast wickets of South Africa. His performance against Sri Lanka was nothing short of admirable and the added burden of captaincy only brought out the best in him at the Caribbean.

"I would say that my best performance for the year would be my 7-wicket haul

against New Zealand in Chittagong closely followed by the twin 96's that I got against Sri Lanka and West Indies," said Shakib.

"I was disappointed at missing out on the century [against West Indies] but the win for Bangladesh more than made up for it."

The Wisden award was the icing on the cake for Shakib in a year, in which he made the ICC's Best Test Eleven and has been the number one all-rounder in the world in ODI's for the best part.

Things can hardly get any rosier.

However, amidst all of this, Shakib's strongest quality that shines through is his ability to put things in perspective.

"Things are good today, but they can just be as bad tomorrow. Therefore I try not to get carried away [with awards]. And I think neither do my teammates. Collectively, at the moment, we are just concentrating on improving."

The Wisden Cricketer is the world's biggest-selling cricket magazine. It was launched in 2003 as a result of a merger between Wisden Cricket Monthly and The Cricketer. Shakib's victory was revealed via a press release yesterday and its November issue, released in the UK today will feature the Bangladesh star.

TOP TEN

No	Player	Country	Match	Points
1.	Shakib Al Hasan	Bangladesh	8	7.94
2.	Gautam Gambhir	India	8	7.63
3.	Graeme Smith	South Africa	7	7.21
4.	Sachin Tendulkar	India	9	7.00
4.	Jacques Kallis	South Africa	8	7.00
6.	Ben Hilfenhaus	Australia	8	6.94
7.	Andrew Flintoff	England	8	6.88
7.	Dale Steyn	South Africa	8	6.88
9.	Fidel Edwards	West Indies	8	6.81
10.	Andrew Strauss	England	13	6.77

The truth will out

Cricket

NADER RAHMAN

When Shakib al Hasan was announced as Wisden Cricket Magazine's Test player of the year, yours truly made a mental note not to label this a 'richly deserved honour'. However, without that phrase you would find yourself strangely speechless. Less than a week ago, an article in these pages discussed that it was a damned shame that Shakib was not awarded the international player of the year award along with the ODI player of the year accolade at the International Cricket Council (ICC) Cricket awards 2009. Now however, we can celebrate possibly his greatest achievement yet. The truth of the matter is that the ICC is an organisation that may be the governing body of world cricket, yet the people who run it and those who select the awards all have their own agendas. People outside the confines of their Dubai offices have just as much talent, intellect and cricketing knowledge and as such their agendas are not entirely commercial. Thinking freely without the fear of Lalit Modi and the colonial cricket boards, the most reputed cricket magazine in the world proved to a global audi-

ence once again that the truth will out.

The wise men at The Wisden Cricketer had the guts to choose the person who really was the best Test player of the year. No, it could not have been an easy choice, Shakib was by no means the runaway leader for the award but in the end he was the only truly deserving nominee. To go from nominee to winner takes more than hard work and dedication, it takes people to believe in you and that is exactly what the magazine did. They knew statistically Mitchell Johnson was definitely the better bowler, Andrew Strauss was the better batsman and that Andrew Flintoff was the sentimental choice, yet they decided to look beyond the runs, wickets, averages and memories to choose the person who had done the greatest all-round job and that includes captaining ones team to its first Test and ODI series whitewash ever.

That is not to say that statistically Shakib was not up there as well, in fact his record as a bowler and a batsman could have stood by itself, the fact that he combined his talents perfectly was what really gave him an edge over his competitors. Andrew Strauss did not do much from August 08 till January 09, it was only after facing the West Indies that he really started to score runs consistently. His Ashes success and performances were

good, but at the end of the day not enough to warrant the award. Mitchell Johnson, the reigning ICC player of the year did not even make the short list as his patchy year was not deemed worthy enough of the recognition. Tendulkar, Steyn, Gambhir and Graeme Smith were also up for the award, but eventually did not make the final cut.

That honour went to Shakib, as his performances came against four different teams, both home and away. What really separated Shakib from the rest was his influence on the team, when he was at the crease the batsmen were never hurried, they took their time, calmed down and put bat to ball. With the ball in his hand he never tried too hard, he pitched it up and tried to spin it, and in the process he developed a straighter ball, which is now one of the harder balls in international cricket to spot. He took bags of wickets, scored consistently and often propped the team with colossal performances. While before we used to be 'thrashed', with Shakib in the team we were 'beaten'. By naming Shakib as the Test cricketer of the year, the Wisden Cricketer proved that every now and then injustice can be overturned. I thank the ICC for the bitter taste they gave us a week ago, today's victory tastes so much sweeter now.

England U-19 cricketers arrive

SPORTS REPORTER

The England under-19 cricket team arrived here yesterday on a month-long tour to gear up for the ICC U-19 World Cup in New Zealand in January next year.

The English boys will play one four-day Test and seven one-dayers against their Bangladesh counterparts.

The visitors begin their tour with a two-day match against BCB Selection XI at the Khan Shaheb Osman Ali Stadium at Fatullah on October 12. They then travel to Chittagong to play the four-day over October 16-19.

The first one-dayer on October 23 will also be held in Chittagong. The next four limited-overs matches, scheduled for October 26, 27, 29 and 31 respectively, will be held at Fatullah.

The visitors will wrap up the month-long tour with two more one-day games at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur on the 2nd and 4th of November.

Ganguly wants Sehwag as captain

CRICINFO, undated

Sourav Ganguly, the former Indian captain, has backed Virender Sehwag to lead India before he retires from international cricket.

"Virender Sehwag has it in him to lead India," Ganguly told Indian television channel Star News. "Sehwag still has at least five or six years of cricket in him and even if any chance of captaining the side comes his way in the last two years of his career he should not pass it on."

Having initially stated that he did not want to lead India, he backtracked by saying he was not keen on the vice-captaincy as he felt the selectors were better off grooming a youngster for the job, but was open to leading his country. To that Ganguly said: "I don't think Veerushould think like this."

Sehwag considered Ganguly as the best leader he had played under.

Amol, Ranjan to fight it out

Tennis

SPORTS REPORTER

Top seed Amol Roy and Ranjan Ram moved into the men's singles final of the Anlene National Tennis Competition beating their respective opponents in the semifinals at the National Tennis Complex in Ramna yesterday.

Amol of Engineers' Club handed a 6-3, 6-4 defeat to Alamgir Hossain of Nordic Club while Ranjan from Dhaka DSA rallied back to edge past Dipu Lal of Nordic Club 1-6, 7-6, 7-5.

In the women's singles event, Sathi Sarkar and Disha

Islam advanced to the final beating Ma Hi Ching of Bandarban and Ripa of Narsingdi respectively.

Sathi faced a tough challenge from Ching before winning the first set 7-6 and then won the second easily by 6-2. In the other semi, Disha thrashed Ripa 6-1, 6-4.

Both men's and women's singles finals will be held today.

In the Under-14 boys' singles, Rustom Ali, Delwar Hossain, Selim Sadman and Jamil Bhuiyan moved into the last four beating their respective rivals while Mourin, Jhik Chakma and Semin booked the semifinal berths in the girls' section.



Disha Islam plays backhand during her women's singles semifinal of the Anlene National Tennis Tournament against Ripa at the National Tennis Complex in Ramna yesterday.

PHOTO: BANGLARCHOKH

Cricket goes to beach

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Cox's Bazar

The Grameenphone-WECCA Beach Cricket Tournament will be held today at the Seagull Point of Cox's Bazar, the world's largest sea beach, with 14 teams taking part in the daylong event.

The meet, the first of its kind in Bangladesh, is being organised by the Weekly Cricket Club Association and financed by Grameenphone, the leading mobile phone operator of the country.

The participating teams, consisting of former national as well as top-level cricketers, will play the tournament amongst themselves in an attempt to promote beach cricket in Bangladesh, said the organisers at a press conference here yesterday.

Satellite TV Channel-i will telecast the matches live.

Ferdousur Rahman, GP's assistant general manager of marketing, Awulad Hossain, Chittagong regional head and WECCA president Waqar Chowdhury, general secretary Obayed Nizam and tournament committee convenor Iftekhar Rahman were among others present at the press conference.

CL kicks off with a question mark

JARROD KIMBER



I am genuinely excited about the Champions League (CL). No, really. I am Victorian and for too long Victorians have struggled to show their wares outside the odd game for Australia or England. Now they get a chance to play against the best other domestic teams of the world.

That doesn't mean the tournament is perfect. The marketing is incorrectly playing on the name of the tournament. "Only Champions. Only the Best."

Only Champions? That isn't true. Runners-up are playing too. Lots of them, some of them are good, others are Somerset.

Only the Best. But not the best? The best-performed country in World Twenty20 championships is Pakistan; they are the superheroes of Twenty20 cricket. Rajasthan Royals had two pretty important Pakistani members in the first IPL team. Even in Australia they used them domestically. And the last ICL was won by Pakistanis.

When it comes to the term champions in this format, they should probably be first in line. The team that we miss out on is the Silky Stallions (actually title Sialkot, but Silky is snappier) who have won four out of a possible five Twenty20 titles in Pakistan. I have no idea if

they are good, but I have no idea if Otago are either, I assume Otago aren't, but they get a chance to prove me wrong.

Pakistani cricketers have always been my favourite, and it seems wrong to not have them in a tournament like this. Especially when it isn't their fault. So many idiots have conspired to ensure that there should be an asterisk in the title of this tournament.

Even without the Pakistani boys, the tournament is missing some key elements of the bets; a Twenty20 tournament without Shane Warne or Shah Rukh Khan seems a little naked. Who will bring the Hollywood or the Bollywood? What will the Fake IPL Player write about in this tournament? Luckily there is still one key facet in this tournament.

Lalit Modi may not be everyone's cup of tea. There are far too many reasons I don't like him to mention here (I've never forgiven him for using two mobiles at once), but he does know how to throw a party, and he would never have a final on a school night like the ICC did for their "champions". The IPL may be over the top, loud, didactic, stage managed and crass, but it is definitely a party.

When the ICC hosts a tournament it is more like your parents throwing you a bash. They think they know what is cool, but they don't quite get it. They put on Maroon 5, invite over

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Did U Know?

During the first several modern Olympics, the marathon was always an approximate distance. In 1908, the British royal family requested that the marathon start at the Windsor Castle so that the royal children could witness its start. The distance from the Windsor Castle to the Olympic Stadium was 42,195 metres (or 26 miles and 385 yards). In 1924, this distance became the standardised length of a marathon.



Roberto Carlos

(Brazilian football veteran) "I spent some marvellous years at Real Madrid. I won everything. I consider it like my home."

Expressing his desire to return to his old club from Fenerbahce.



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