

Tigers tame sorry Zim

BISHWAJIT ROY

Bangladesh trounced a careless Zimbabwe by four wickets in the third one-day international at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium yesterday to wrest a 2-1 advantage in the five-match series.

A blitzkrieg knock from Tamim Iqbal, who smashed ten fours and two sixes in his 72-ball 80, and a well-composed half-century by Mohammad Ashraful, 63 in 91 balls, took the Tigers to 198 for six in 40.4 overs. They were chasing a paltry Zimbabwe total of 196 that was made in 41.1 overs after the hosts had won the toss for the first time in the series.

Indeed it was an easy victory in the end for the home side, who were upset by five wickets in the first match, but that did not happen before a late-innings wobble that delayed the inevitable.

When Tamim and Ashraful and then Ashraful and Rokibul Hasan were building up partnerships, the win appeared closer. But when former captain Ashraful departed at the start of the 33rd over with the victory only 22 runs away, three wickets fell for just 19 runs and it took them another 8.3 overs to score the remaining

runs.

But the most interesting part of the third game under lights at Mirpur was the home side's strategy of fielding five spinners at the expense of one pace bowler; a funny decision to many. One may say what's wrong with the plan when they could keep their opponents below the 200-run mark and as it's well established that their southern African opponents are weak against the slow bowlers.

It was however not the spinners who caused the doom, rather the madness of the Zimbabwe batsmen who spoiled a good chance to put up a fighting total on the board. And then again the question could be raised; why the selectors picked four pacers in the side for the first three games when they are well aware about the weakness of their opponents?

There is nothing wrong if someone takes the home advantage but it seems that the Bangladesh think-tank has had the intention to test their batsmen on the sporting wicket against a team like Zimbabwe to tune up the team and find out the right combination ahead of a tough challenge in their next assignment in the tri-nation tournament involving India and Sri Lanka.

But everything has changed and apparently the think-tank went into the

shell after the team's defeat in the first game although everybody in the team admitted that poor-top order batting was the main reason behind the heartbreaking defeat at the same venue.

True, the performance of the pace bowlers in the first two games in absence of spearhead Mashrafe Bin Mortaza and one-day specialist Syed Rasel was pathetic and a real concern for the team management, but it was funny to see the way they solved this problem.

Without any doubt it was the best opportunity for the team to give the young pace bowlers a chance to find their feet against these opponents to make sure they can get the confidence to play in the bigger games when it's uncertain for the team to get the services of the experienced pace duo due to injuries.

And above everything a team like Bangladesh can't play with such an unusual bowling attack. It could be suicidal for the team in terms of finding the right combination.

It could have been an embarrassing decision for the team management after the way Hamilton Masakadza and Charles Coventry started to punish the spinners including captain Shakib Al Hasan and Abdur Razzak in the second wicket stand.

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Shakib still not happy

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh captain Shakib Al Hasan was far from being happy though his side coasted to a four-wicket victory in the day-night third one-day international to take a 2-1 lead in the five-match series against Zimbabwe yesterday.

The Tigers were in a position to finish the chase in an emphatic fashion but made it look clumsy following a late hiccup which upset the young Bangladesh skipper and he said that his side should get out of this kind of attitudes.

"I did not want to come out in the middle to bat after the way Tamim Iqbal and Mohammad Ashraful had dictated terms, but unfortunately none could finish the job which was really frustrating," Shakib expressed his disappointment while talking with the reporters in the post-match briefing.

Opener Tamim paid the penalty for trying to finish off the match quickly when he had plenty of time in hand to transform his 80 into a hundred. Ex-skipper Ashraful, in company with

Rokibul Hasan, did well to take his team to brink, but he too seemed to be in a hurry.

The captain had to come out to bat after the Bangladesh tail was about to be exposed.

"In such a situation, one can expect to lose three or four wickets. But I should say six wickets is too much for comfort and this is unacceptable. Either Tamim or Ashraful should have stayed there till the end. We all should know how to finish things off when we got such a small target. I also don't understand why Rokibul played that pull shot at that time," he fumed.

"These are very negative signs," he continued. Man-of-the-match Tamim also echoed his captain's sentiment.

"I'm really very disappointed that I could not satisfy my captain and there is a reason for him to be disappointed. I knew I had to prolong my innings when I got the start. I want to be a world-class batsman and for that I have to master the craft," said Tamim, who played a stroke-filled 80 that contained ten fours and two sixes.

The 22-year-old skipper, Shakib also warned

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Flemboyant Bangladesh left-handed opener Tamim Iqbal takes Zimbabwe left-arm spinner Raymond Price (not in picture) to the cleaners during his blistering 80 off 72 balls in the third one-day international at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN



Did U Know?

In 2005, Coventry City defender Andrew Whing managed to pull a hamstring whilst eating lasagne.



Mike Haysman

(South African cricket commentator)

"Chris Gayle, it was a pleasure to meet you sir!"

On how he was mistaken for the West Indies captain at a shop in Hyderabad.



Citycell Bangladesh League
Rahmatganj v Farashganj
Venue: Bangabandhu National Stadium
Time: 5:30pm



ESPN
English Premier League
Birmingham v Man City
Live at 10:55pm

School h'ball starts today

SPORTS REPORTER

The 18th Bata School Handball Tournament gets underway today at the Dhanmondi Sports Complex with 27 schools participating in boys and girls events, informed the organisers at a press conference yesterday.

Fifteen schools, split into four groups, will play in the boys' event and top team from each group will qualify for the semifinals while in the girls' event 12 teams, divided into four groups, will first play the group stage matches before the top teams from each group will qualify for the last four.

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India take lead

Cricket

STAR SPORT DESK

Captain Mahendra Singh Dhoni continued his rich vein of form and Yuvraj Singh returned to his belligerent best as India won the third one-day international against world champions Australia by six wickets and take a 2-1 lead in the seven-match series at the Feroz Shah Kotla Stadium in New Delhi yesterday.

Dhoni followed up his magnificent 124 in the second one-dayer with an equally impressive 71 not out and Yuvraj struck 78 on a difficult wicket as the home side chased down a fighting Aussie total of 229 with 10 balls to spare.

Dhoni and Yuvraj put on a match-winning 148 runs for the fourth wicket after India lost their first three wickets for 53. India looked down the barrel after Sachin Tendulkar (32), Virender Sehwag (11) and Gautam Gambhir (6) departed in quick succession.

Afp adds, Michael Hussey top-scored with an unbeaten 81 as Australia posted 229-5.

Hussey, 34, hit his third half-century of the series and shared 56 runs with captain Ricky Ponting (59) after the world champions' won the toss and elected to bat on a slow track.

Opener Shane Watson made up for his disappointing batting in the first two matches, making a fine 41 off 59 balls with five fours in the day-night encounter.

Left-arm spinner Ravindra Jadeja impressed the most among the bowlers on the tricky track, picking 2-41 off nine overs.

The seven-match series is tied 1-1 after India won the second match at Nagpur by 99 runs. Australia had clinched the opener at Vadodra by four runs. The visitors were off to a steady start with Ponting -- opening the innings in the absence of the injured Tim Paine -- putting on 72 runs with Watson off 98 balls.

The Australian captain, taking the opener's role for only the second time in his 327-match one-day cricket career, completed his 72nd one-day half-century off 74 balls before falling to Jadeja.

Ponting tried to clip the spinner across the line but the ball hit the base of the pads right in front of the stumps. He hit four fours in his measured 92-ball knock.

Hussey, who scored 73 at Vadodra and followed it up with a 53-run knock at Nagpur, accumulated his runs through some hard running between the wickets. He hit just three fours and one six, that too in the 50th over.

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Bangladesh unchanged

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh retained the same squad for the last two one-day internationals of the five-match Grameenphone Cup against Zimbabwe.

The Tigers, leading the series 2-1, will travel to Chittagong today along with their southern African rivals to play the final two matches on November 3 and 5.

Every player, barring pace-man Shahadat Hossain, on the 14-member team has played in the first three games at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium.

SQUAD

Shakib Al Hasan (captain), Mushfiqur Rahim (vice-captain/wicketkeeper), Tamim Iqbal, Zunaed Siddiqui, Mohammad Ashraful, Rokibul Hasan, Mahmudullah, Nayeem Islam, Enamul Haque, Rubel Hossain, Dollar Mahmud, Shahadat Hossain, Abdur Razzak, Nazmul Hossain.

Russel down Muktis

SPORTS REPORTER



A first-half brace from Mohammad Rony powered Sheikh Russel KC to an easy 3-1 win over 10-men MuktiJoddha Sangsad in their second match of the Citycell Bangladesh League at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

Moroccan striker Sharif Omari netted the other goal for Sheikh Russel while Liberian Eugene Jiah Gray pulled one back for MuktiJoddha Sangsad.

Sheikh Russel, who are now level with giants Abahani and Mohammedan with six points each, were more organised in midfield with the inclusion of debutant Ghanaian Moro Mohammad and deservedly took a 2-0 first-half lead though the MuktiJoddha defenders played their part in conceding the first two goals.

MuktiJoddha Sangsad, who went down 1-0 against a depleted Brothers Union in their first match, made three changes to their starting eleven bringing in Firoz Mahmud Titu, Saiful Islam Moni and Shahajuddin Titu that improved the All Reds' midfield a bit, but eventually they had no impact on the outcome of the match.

Winger Mobararak Hossain unsettled the Muktis backbone whipping in a cross from the right and Moroccan striker Omari setup his strike partner Rony to head home from a hand-shaking distance with ease to give Sheikh Russel the advantage in the 15th minute.

Rony then was denied by the onrushing Mukti goalkeeper Atiqul Islam Tareq on the halfway mark of the first half, but the former Mohammedan striker did not make a mistake to double the margin in the 37th minute.

This time too, MuktiJoddha's defensive duo Amit Khan Shuvro and Nigerian Promie Davis Majemu committed blunders as Sheikh Russel's Moro advanced into the danger zone and the ball went to unmarked Rony, who just tapped the ball home from the edge of right-side six-yard box.

After resumption in the second half, MuktiJoddha coach Golam Sarwar Tipu sent on Amin Rana in place of Titu to sharpen their attack and the freedom fighter-focused outfit earned a free kick at a fine angle with Gray missing the target narrowly.

Thereafter, Sheikh Russel counterattacked to earn a penalty when goalkeeper Tareq fouled

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'KP ready for Proteas'

Cricket

AFP, London

England team director Andy Flower believes Kevin Pietersen is in the right frame of mind to overpower South Africa in the forthcoming Test series.

Pietersen will stay in England to complete his recovery from an Achilles injury when England fly to Bloemfontein on Saturday for the start of the tour.

But the Hampshire batsman will join his England team-mates on November 9 -- in time for the first one-day international.

After admitting he had fallen out of love with cricket prior to England's Ashes victory over Australia this year, Pietersen is rediscovering his passion for the sport.

He batted for the first time in three months on Friday in a training session at Lord's and Flower said: "He's still got a bit of rehab work to do to get up to speed."

"Hopefully he'll be ok to play in the warm-up game against South Africa A and then ready to go at the start of the one-day series."

"That is what we are targeting. The infection has slowed everything up otherwise he would have been back during the English summer."

"But he brings a superb record, flair, confidence and the ability to counter attack."

"The fact that we won the Ashes with limited contributions from the two big stars [Pietersen and Andrew Flintoff] is a good thing for the unit and the country's cricket and when they come back that adds strength and power. That's a good thing."

"Pietersen's been pushing himself running. He'll just love getting a bat in his hands again and hitting the ball. That's what he loves doing. He's chomping at the bit to get going."

"He is important to us. He's a world-class player who has a special talent and a special confidence. He is a huge boon for us."

Pietersen was given a hard time by spectators on his last visit to his native South Africa in an England shirt but Flower believes the 29-year-old has won over his critics.

"This time probably he will have the respect from the South African public," Flower said.

"They love sport and cricket and I expect they will treat him with respect."

However, Flower expects Jonathan Trott to receive a more hostile reception after being criticised by former England captain Michael Vaughan.

Vaughan claimed Trott, who made a century in his first Ashes-winning Test at the Oval this summer, was celebrating with South African players after they beat England at Edgbaston in 2008.

Flower said: "I saw Trott on Wednesday and

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Classy Australia middle-order batsman Michael Hussey (R) flicks the ball on the on side during the third one-day international against India at the Feroz Shah Kotla in New Delhi yesterday. Hussey scored 81 to lift Australia to 229.

PHOTO: AFP