

Jamie eyeing a fitting end

BISHWAJIT ROY from Chittagong

The instruction was there to prepare a true batting track for today's fifth and final one-day match to ease the criticism over the last match's pitch at the Chittagong Divisional Stadium. But it was not sure whether it would be possible to bring changes in the character of the track, though it's a new one, with only two days preparation.

The teams were however not too much concerned about the track, rather both focused on how they can improve their own performance.

One may feel there is no stake for the Tigers when they take on Zimbabwe in today's inconsequential last match after the home side clinched the series with one match in hand but Bangladesh coach Jamie Siddons has still something to achieve from the last battle against Zimbabwe.

"It feels great to have won the series with one game to go. I guess you can relax a bit but we still have a lot of players who are under-performing. Ashraful has made one score in four hits. Riyad (Mahmudullah), Nayeem (Islam) and Zunaed (Siddiqui) have done nothing in this series. So we have a lot of room for improvement. We need these guys to perform to do well as a team against better opposition," Siddons explained.

The Bangladesh coach said there is a no scope to be complacent in today's game because winning is a habit which will help the team to push the big opponents, especially when they are scheduled to meet India and Sri Lanka at home in January next year in the tri-nation one-day series.

"It feels good to be winning. The players are getting used to winning and that's a good thing. When we play India and Sri Lanka we'll know how to win and they'll need to play their best cricket to beat us. That's the beauty of what's happening to us at the moment," he opined.

And that's why the Australian was also not interested to give captain Shakib Al Hasan a rest in the match though the all-rounder is yet to recover hundred percent from his groin injury.

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FINAL ONE-DAYER TODAY



HOW WILL YOU PLAY THIS TIME? Bangladesh coach Jamie Siddons is having a close look at the wicket of the Chittagong Divisional Stadium yesterday, ahead of today's final one-dayer against Zimbabwe.

PHOTO: STAR

Zim seeking some solace

SPORTS REPORTER from Chittagong

It seemed that Zimbabwe lost just another game on the previous day no matter how terrible their batting was in the fourth one-dayer as they were beaten by superior opponents at the Chittagong Divisional Stadium on Tuesday.

The visitors had started the series with the tag of "underdog" and they didn't even change their mind after winning the first game by five wickets and that was the reason they were not too much frustrated with the series outcome rather were looking forward to sign off with some solace when they meet the Tigers in the today's fifth and final one-dayer.

Apparently the visitors have hardly any doubt of the supremacy of the Tigers and that's why they were less bothered with the debate on the condition of the pitch and it was none other than former skipper turned bowling coach Heath Streak who find out lot of potential in the young side.

"This is a much younger side obviously and less experienced but in terms of talent they have plenty of it. Once they mature I believe they are going to be a top side in international cricket," said Heath Streak when asked about the difference between the Bangladesh side he had played against and the present one.

"I have been very impressed with Tamim (Iqbal). Then you have the captain Shakib (Al Hasan). Ashraful (Mohammad) we all know can be a match-winner on his day. So there's a lot of solidity in batting. The only thing is that they need to understand the different tempo of T20, limited overs and Test cricket as they all like to play their shots," added the mighty man, who won some battle against the Tigers single-handedly.

"In the bowling department, obviously the spin attack is very strong, especially in these conditions. For the seamers it is tough bowling on pitches here but the talent is there and they should make the most of overseas tours. Also you have to try and give them wickets where they'll get some assistance," he said.

The former Zimbabwe captain was not ready to blame the pitch for his team's batting debacle in the fourth game rather he

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BTV & SuperSport5

Bangladesh v Zimbabwe

Fifth ODI

Live from 9:30am

Neo Cricket & SuperSport2

India v Australia

Fifth ODI

Live from 4:00pm

SuperSport3

UEFA Euro League

Hamburger v Celtic

Live from 12:30am (Friday)

Everton v Benfica

Live from 3:00am (Friday)

SuperSport7

UEFA Euro League

AS Roma v Fulham

Live from 12:30am (Friday)

ESPN

Sportscenter India

Sports News

Live at 9:30pm



Bangladesh v Zimbabwe

Fifth ODI

Venue: Chittagong Divisional Stadium

Citycell Bangladesh League

Farashganj v Beanibazar (5:30pm)

Venue: Bangabandhu National Stadium

Premier Div Cricket League

Gazi Tank v Partex

Venue: Shaheed Chandu Stadium, Bogra

Khelaghar SKS v Kalabagan

Venue: Fatullah Cricket Stadium

Biman v Cricket Coaching School

Venue: BKSP-2



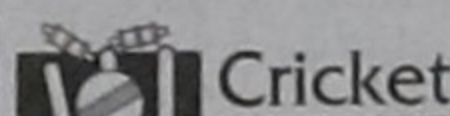
David Beckham

(England soccer superstar)

"I need to give myself the best chance possible to make the World Cup squad and playing for Milan on loan will help me to do that."

After re-signing on loan with Italian giants AC Milan on Monday.

U-19s end on a high



SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Under-19 cricket team ended their series against visiting England Under-19s with an eight-run win in the seventh and last one-dayer at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium yesterday to take the series 5-2.

This triumph comes on the back of a 2-1 win against the same opponents in their own backyard in July. And this will be considered as a big boost for the young Tigers ahead of the ICC Under-19 World Cup which begins in January next year in New Zealand.

After confirming the series by winning the first four matches, the local boys probably let their feet off the gas a bit as they lost the next two, but came back strongly in the last match to prove their credentials as one of the outside challengers for the World Cup title.

It was an all-out effort in the last game that confirmed their victory. They put on 206 before being all out in the last over against the visitors, thanks to a half-century from opener Saikat Ali and 32 from one-down Amit Majumder.

Skipper Mahmudul Hasan then led from the front as he took three wickets to restrict the English youths to 198 all out in 49.1 overs. There was one consolation for the visitors as their opening batsman Joe Root was named man-of-the-series for his consistent form with the bat.

This series was billed as a preparation for the World Cup by both teams. So this comfortable series victory would, if nothing else, work as a confidence-booster for the young Tigers and go in some way to validate the predictions of coach Minhazul Abedin and captain Hasan that they hoped to finish among the top fours in the World Cup.

Spin attack has always been the strength of the Bangladesh side, with two leg-spinners and a couple of all-rounders in the side. It was due to their efficiency that got Bangladesh out of trouble on number of occasions. Bangladesh team management can now ease a bit about the batting as well which has done better than expected this time around, with most of the upper and middle order batsmen getting runs.

Bangladesh Under-19 side will now host Zimbabwe Under-19s later this month as their last preparation for the World Cup.



PHOTO: COURTESY

Players and officials of Bangladesh Under-19 team pose for photographs after a successful home series against their English counterparts at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium. The youths won the seventh and final limited-overs match here yesterday and clinched the series 5-2. They also won the lone four-day Test.

FIFTH ODI TODAY Crucial match for both India and Australia

PTI, Hyderabad

With the seven-match series tantalisingly poised 2-2, India will have to overcome their batting shortcomings when they go into the crucial fifth one-day international against a spirited but depleted Australia here on Thursday.

The Indians, seeking to dethrone Australia from the number one spot in world rankings, will be strengthened by the expected return of Gautam Gambhir, who had to skip last match due to a neck injury.

Although left-hander Gambhir's presence will lend solidity to the top-order, the worrying factor for the hosts has been the lack of good starts in the series so far.

Clearly the onus is on the Indian batsmen to deliver the goods on a track which according to the curator has plenty of runs to offer but will also aid the bowlers.

School h'ball

SPORTS REPORTER

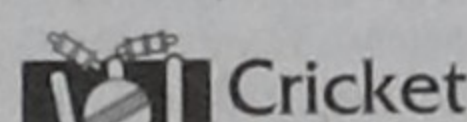
Scholastica and BAF Shaheen School & College emerged champions in girl's and boy's group respectively in the 18th Bata School Handball tournament at the Dhanmondi Sports Complex ground yesterday.

Scholastica recorded a hard-fought 4-3 win over Sunnysdale in the girl's final while Shaheen School registered 16-12 win over St Gregory's High School in the boy's final.

Raisa Habib of Sunnysdale was named the best player in the girl's group while Farman Hossain St Gregory's was adjudged the best player in the boy's group.

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Contrasting wins for Abahani and MSC



SPORTS REPORTER

Rony Talukder scored the second century of the season to give defending champions Abahani a 104-run victory over Victoria in their clash of the Premier Division Cricket League at the Shaheed Chandu Stadium in Bogra yesterday.

Rony found his more illustrious opening partner Imrul Kayes leave without scoring, and then saw the next two follow soon as Abahani were reduced to 38 for 3 in thirteen overs. But he held firm at one end and found good company in Nasir Hossain at No. 5, who played a 62-run knock to take the side towards a big score. Rony's vigil ended in the 43rd over after the innings had already crossed the 200-run mark and his side well placed. Rony played with patience and knocked the ball all around the park as he hit only ten boundaries and a single

six in his 117-ball 101. Abahani posted 252 in the end losing eight wickets.

The target was a bit too much for Victoria and they crumbled under the pressure losing wickets right from the word go. An inspiring spell from paceman Shuvashish Roy, who returned figures of 4 for 16, reduced Victoria to 27 for five only in the 11th over. Victoria were out of the running by then and latter batsmen, despite their best efforts, couldn't avoid a huge margin defeat.

As Abahani won easily, their biggest rivals Mohammedan survived a massive scare to be home in the end with a 2-run victory over Old DOHS at BKSP.

Mohammedan had a few useful contributions, with highest 47 coming off the bat of all-rounder Marshal Ayub, while Aftab Ahmed and Faisal Hossain scored 31 runs each. But the latter batsmen failed badly to collapse for 188 runs, giving the opponents an opportunity to

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Abahani imperious

SPORTS REPORTER



Holders Abahani maintained their superb unbeaten record in the Bangladesh League when they handed a convincing 3-0 defeat to Shuktara Jubo Sangsad at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

The third win in as many matches in the ongoing league means Abahani extended their unbeaten run in the professional football league to 14, 11 of them achieved in the second edition of the prestigious league, and now share the top position with title contenders Mohammedan with a maximum nine points.

Shuktara Jubo Sangsad, on the other hand, lost their all three matches they played so far and stayed at the bottom with falling giants Muktijoddha Sangsad in the 13-team table.

Zahed Parvez Chowdhury, Ghanaian striker Sheriff Deen Mohammad and Enamul Haq struck one goal apiece in the Sky Blues' last match before a one-and-half month layoff of the league following the national players'

preparation for the December SAFF Championship in Bangladesh.

The Dhanmondi-based outfit, Abahani, have so far played their finest game in this season with fine understanding among all three departments and the crisp passing and better movements dictated the match from the first to last. They had to be content with only three goals though it could have been doubled had their striking pair not squandered a series of scoring chances.

Abahani never felt the absence of their Ghanaian striker Awudu Ibrahim, who sustained an injury and has been sidelined since their second match. National striker Enamul and Sheriff developed a fine understanding to split the Shuktara backline several times and Abahani came close to taking a lead in the very sixth minute when Enamul advanced into the box to set up Sheriff, who drove lamely only to be blocked by goalkeeper Rashed Chowdhury. And four minutes later Mehdi Hasan Ujjal squandered a fine chance to disappoint the Sky Blues.

Thereafter, Enamul ran down the middle to

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Chelsea, MU through

AFP, Paris



English giants Chelsea and Manchester United made hard work of it but ended up coming from behind to both qualify for the Champions League knockout stages on Tuesday.

French champions Bordeaux joined them as they earned an impressive 2-0 victory over Bayern Munich in Munich, while Porto can also look forward to Champions League football in the spring after winning 1-0 at APOEL Nicosia.

However, things look stark for Bayern Munich and their Champions League-winning coach Louis van Gaal as his side trail second-placed Juventus by four points in Group A with two matches remaining.

Chelsea came from 1-0 down to draw 2-2 with Atletico Madrid - Didier Drogba scoring both goals on his return from a three-match Champions League suspension.

"It was a good game but frustrating because we didn't win it," said Drogba.

United had to come from even further behind as they trailed 3-1 late into the match against CSKA Moscow at Old Trafford before two goals levelled matters and pushed them through.

United manager Sir Alex Ferguson was relieved to have progressed but was left less than happy by the referee's performance, especially over a penalty that was not awarded for a trip on Darren Fletcher - the Scottish midfielder being booked instead.

"I can't believe the decision. Its one of the worst I have seen in my lifetime," fumed the irascible Scot.

AC Milan and Real Madrid's group has become one of the tightest as the two giants fought out a 1-1 draw in Milan, while rivals Marseille thrashed FC Zurich 6-1 to stand just a point behind the duo.

Milan and Real shared the spoils at the San Siro, with both goals coming in the first half.

Karim Benzema got his first goal in seven matches for the visitors before

Ronaldinho drew Milan level from the penalty spot.

Milan's Brazilian coach Leonardo said a draw was probably the right result.

"If we look only at the first half, Real played very well, they had many chances but in the second I was a bit disappointed because we deserved to win," he said.

Marseille had wrapped things up shortly after half-time as captain Mamadou Niang was on hand to round off a nicely worked move by the French side to make it 3-1 against FC Zurich and then romped away to leave themselves in with a real chance of making the knockout stages.

On a good night for French sides Bordeaux qualified after securing a splendid 2-0 victory over Bayern Munich - French international Yoann Gourcuff netting in the first half and Moroccan international Marouane Chamakh sealing victory late on in the second-half.

Bordeaux coach Laurent Blanc was immensely proud of his team's achievement.

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PHOTO: AFP

BACK WITH A BANG: Chelsea striker Didier Drogba celebrates his second goal against Atletico Madrid during their Champions League match at the Vicente Calderon Stadium on Tuesday. Drogba scored twice on his return to Champions League action after serving a three-match ban.