

Young India defy odds

SPORTS REPORTER

With only ten days of preparation and a young side, India defied the odds to regain the supremacy in South Asian football by beating Maldives 3-1 in the final of the Sixth SAFF Championship last night. Thanks to the superior gameplan of a master tactician and the brilliant performances from a goalkeeper, India got past the hurdle to lift the coveted trophy for the fourth time.

The success will prove a major boost to the young Indian side, most of who will view this success as a launching pad for a long career in the national side.

The final match turned out to be a battle between the Maldives strikers and India's goalkeeper Arindam Bhattacharja. He made some brilliant saves during 120 minutes of play and then stopped two penalties to emerge as the most valuable player of the tournament.

However, Arindam was reluctant to take all the credit at the post-match briefing and said it was down to a complete team effort that won them the trophy. "It's not only me, all the members of the team played well in this match. The defenders did a wonderful job and made my job easy."

"I followed the instructions that the coach gave before the shoot-out and that plan worked," said Bhattacharja.

"This win is a result of the fighting spirit of the team. We were instructed to play positive and good football. We wanted to go match by match, and not with any pressure of winning the tournament," said the Churchill Brothers goalkeeper who didn't concede a single goal in the four matches that he played.

ROAD TO GLORY

GROUP STAGE

Afghanistan 1-0

Nepal 1-0

Maldives 0-2

SEMIFINAL

Bangladesh 1-0

FINAL

Maldives 0-0 (3-1 in tie-breaker)

India coach Sukhvinder Singh gave all the credit to his charges for winning such a competitive match and the tournament. "All the credit goes to the boys for the way they performed."

"We were under pressure from the Maldives strikers in the second half. We had to adjust to our game plan and decided to go a bit defensive, as we were missing a couple of important players due to injuries," said the veteran India coach.

Sukhvinder's counterpart, Urbanyi Istvan took the defeat gracefully. "Our boys did very well to get to the final. I thank all the fans and the officials for their continued support."

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PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

GLORIOUS GOALIE: Indian goalkeeper Arindam (C) celebrates with a teammate after seeing Maldives' star Ashfaq Ali (R) put his spot-kick past the post in the shoot-out. Ashfaq's miss meant that India won the SAFF Championship for the fourth time, thanks to Arindam's two saves in the tie-breaker.

Kalabagan down CCS

SPORTS REPORTER

Rokibul Hasan and Javed Omar guided Kalabagan to an 84-run victory against Cricket Coaching School (CCS) in the Premier Division Cricket Super League match at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium yesterday.

With the outcome, Kalabagan improved their tally to 18 points from 13 matches while CCS remained on 10.

The match was delayed due to dense fog in the morning and curtailed into a 40-over-a-side affair. Nazmus Sadat and Rokibul Hasan got off to a flying start for Kalabagan after being sent into bat first by scoring 39 run in four overs before the former was trapped in front by Ashraf Haque. Sadat hit a quickfire 35 off 18 balls with seven boundaries.

Kalabagan then rode on two fifties from Rokibul and veteran Javed to put up a challenging total of 256-6 in 40 overs. Man-of-the-

match Rokibul smashed five fours and two sixes to make a 74-ball 83 while Javed contributed 70 off 91 balls that included five boundaries and six.

Taposh Ghosh claimed three wickets for 49 runs.

In reply, CCS made a disastrous start by losing two wickets for 15 runs. Nazmul Hossain scored 61 off 79 balls and Taposh Ghosh added 45 off 73 balls but their efforts were not good enough to overhaul the daunting task as CCS completed their 40-overs quota for 172 runs.

Mohammad Zahid captured three wickets conceding five runs in two overs.

SCORES IN BRIEF

KALABAGAN-CCS

Venue: SBNCS

KALABAGAN: 256-6 in 40 overs (Sadat 35, Rokibul 83, Javed 70, Ariful 26, extras 7; Taposh 3-49).

CCS: 172-9 in 40 overs (Uttam 26, Taposh 45, Nazmul 61, extras 10; Shafiq 2-32, Farid 2-30, Zahid 3-5).

Result: Kalabagan won by 84 runs.

Surjo Torun crush Partex

SPORTS REPORTER

A 104-run opening partnership between Intiaz Hossain and Zunaed Siddiqui helped Surjo Torun to secure a seven-wicket victory against Partex in the relegation match of the Premier Cricket League at BKSP yesterday.

Riding on former national opener Mehrab Hossain's 80, Partex scored 147 for 8 in 34 overs.

Pacer Mahbubul Alam did the damage by picking up four wickets for 36 runs.

In reply, Surjo Torun stormed to the target with 151 for three in 29.2 overs. Intiaz made 64 off 80 balls with seven boundaries while Zunaed added 48 off 57 balls that also contained seven fours.

Siddons wary of changes

Cricket

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh coach Jamie Siddons welcomed the return of some ICL players to the national fold but it seemed that the Australian was hardly interested to make any major changes to the team which have won numerous games in the last few months.

The Australian was talking to reporters during the first day training at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium yesterday. Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) announced a 26-member preliminary squad on Saturday for the tri-nation tournament at home also involving India and Sri Lanka, which also saw four ICL returnees---Shahriar Nafees, Aftab Ahmed, Alok Kapali and Dhiman Ghosh.

It was a tough time for Siddons when some frontline players left the team to join the unapproved Indian Cricket

League (ICL) to create a huge vacuum as well as make a crisis but the newcomers responded well and won some games including against New Zealand, Sri Lanka, West Indies besides Zimbabwe.

"It is good that they (the ICL players) have come to preliminary selections and are available for us but they have to continue performing because the boys who have been with us have won us games," said Siddons.

Since the ICL defection, Siddons' charges have won 14 ODIs and 2 Tests.

There has been a problem with the opening slot as left-handed opener Zunaed Siddiqui has been struggling with his place and that's the reason many thought Shahriar Nafees' inclusion may solve the problem.

"Opening is a bit of concern but we did well in Zimbabwe where the opening pair added fifty odd runs every game. Zunaed has been a bit inconsistent although he is a talented player. Shahriar was also very inconsistent when he left us for ICL. It is

good that they are scoring runs in the Premier Division Cricket League but it is a big step up from club cricket to international cricket," Siddons responded.

The concern however was not with the ICL players rather the injury of Mashrafe bin Mortaza, which is a cause of huge anxiety for the team. The leading pacer is all set to miss the coming tri-nation series as Dr. David Young, who operated on the pacer's both knees, issued a warning that it would be dangerous if Mashrafe plays before fully recovering from the injury.

"What Young advised is that it would be difficult for Mashrafe to return if he play a match until he is declared full fit," informed Debashish Chowdhury, BCB's physician.

Meanwhile, Alok Kapali could not appear in the first day training as his eldest sister Chaya Das breathed her last on Thursday in Sylhet at the age of 42. Also, Imrul Kayes has been suffering from a stomach injury.



Did U Know?

Basketball and rugby balls are made from synthetic material. Earlier, pigs' bladders were used as rugby balls.



TEN Sports

New Zealand v Pakistan
Third Test, Day 4
Live from 6:00am

ESPN

Sportscenter India
Sports News
Live at 9:30pm



Talk Turkey



Tiger Woods

(American golf super star)
"After much soul searching, I have decided to take an indefinite break from professional golf. I need to focus my attention on being a better husband, father and person."

Smith warns Pietersen

Cricket

CRICINFO, undated

Graeme Smith, the South African captain, has warned Kevin Pietersen he faces a hostile reception when the first Test begins at Centurion on Wednesday.

Pietersen was born in Pietermaritzburg and played first-class cricket for Natal in 1997 before moving to England after voicing his displeasure at the racial quota system in place in South Africa. He was given a tough time from the home crowds when he toured South Africa with England's one-day side in 2004-05 but responded sensationally, smashing 454 runs in six innings.

He is yet to play a Test in the country of his birth and while Smith insisted there was no hostility between Pietersen and the South African players, the South African public will not have forgotten the criticisms Pietersen made about their country's cricket system.

"He obviously gets a hostile reception from

South African fans because he's made a lot of remarks about the country that I don't think he's ever apologised for. It's hard for people just to wash away those things and I think that's why people still give him a hard time."

"It creates a little bit of tension towards him. Our job is to play the game. From my perspective there's certainly no tension going into the game."

"It's up to the players to get on with it. You want the game of cricket to be remembered for some fantastic cricket. That's how I want cricket to be viewed by the fans and by the media."

"We've all moved on and got on with our lives. He [Pietersen] has really performed well in his international career. There's a cricket respect there."

Smith also maintained there was no tension between himself and Andrew Strauss, the England captain, despite their confrontation in the Champions Trophy match between the sides at Centurion earlier this year. Smith requested a runner towards the end of his 141 when he was struck down by cramp but Strauss refused, insisting that because cramp is a fitness problem and not an injury, it didn't merit a runner.

Pakistan fight back

Cricket

BBC, undated

Pakistan openers Imran Farhat and Salman Butt fired a century partnership to keep their series hopes alive in the third Test against New Zealand.

Resuming the third day on 346-6, New Zealand opened up a first-innings lead of 248 with the help of Daryl Tuffey's Test best 80 not out.

Pakistan leg-spinner Danish Kaneria ended up with figures of 7-168.

But Farhat, who starred in Pakistan's first innings of 223, made 55 and Butt 66 as the tourists reached 128-0.

With the three-match series finely poised at 1-1, Pakistan needed a good start to their second innings after their first innings collapse.

And although they are still 120 runs behind, the efforts of Farhat and Butt have ensured

a fascinating final two days in Napier.

In the morning session, New Zealand captain Daniel Vettori and Tuffey guided the

hosts to 471.

Tuffey was dropped early on by Gul but brought up the 50 partnership when he cut

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PHOTO: INTERNET

Pakistan leg-spinner Danish Kaneria celebrates one of his seven wickets on the third day of the third Test against New Zealand at McLean Park in Napier yesterday.

V'Day cricket

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) announced teams for the Victory Day cricket match between Shaheed Jewel XI and Shaheed Mushtaque XI which will take place at the Dhanmondi Cricket Stadium on December 16.

The traditional Victory Day cricket match was first organised in 1972 in memory of Liberation War martyrs Shaheed Abdul Halim Chowdhury Jewel and Shaheed Mushtaque Ahmed.

The selected players are asked to contact their respective team managers today.

TEAMS

SHAHEED JEWEL XI: Mahmudul Hasan (Captain), Amit Majumder, Saikat Ali, Tasamul Haque, Shabbir Rahaman, Mominul Haque, Soumya Sarker, Kamrul Islam Rabbi, Alauddin Babu, Arman Radshah, Shaker Ahmed, Noor Hossain, Anamul Haque and Quazi Nurul Hasan
SHAHEED MUSHTAQUE XI: Alok Kapali (Captain), Nazimuddin, Nasiruddin Faruque, Farhad Hossain, Shahriar Nafees, Mohammad Mithun, Farhad Reza, Qazi Kamrul Islam, Dollar Mahmud, Ziaur Rahman, Nazmul Hossain Apu, Tanvir Haider and Rumman Ahmed.

Local chess

SPORTS REPORTER

I2 Soft Solution snapped the unbeaten run of Titas Club but still they maintained their solo lead in the Dutch-Bangla Bank First Division Chess League.

I2 Soft Solution beat Titas Club by 2.5-1.5 in the sixth round.

Titas remained on ten points while I2 Soft Solution followed the leaders with nine points.

In the other sixth round matches, Farahganj beat Jobs Vander Dot Com 3.5-0.5, Basir Memorial Chess Club beat Sonali Bank Sports & Recreation Club 2.5-1.5, Faith Chess Club beat Dhaka Metropolitan Chess Club 3-1 points.



PHOTO: STAR

National cricketers jog during a training session for the upcoming tri-nation tournament at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.

Dhoni calls for improvement

Cricket

CRICINFO, undated

India may have squared the series with a record chase but MS Dhoni has said the team will have to pull up their socks before they can claim to be a quality Twenty20 side. India's successful chase of a target of 207, the highest successful chase in this format, snapped a four-game losing streak but their bowling and fielding left much to be desired.

It was the second match in a row that Sri Lanka were allowed to cross 200, and the fielding was worse than in Nagpur, with six catches going down. "We could be the best team in the world in this format, but our bowling and fielding has got to improve," said Dhoni. "We have been struggling with our bowling for some time, not just in the Twenty20 format, but in the one-day version as well."

"If we could improve that aspect of the game, we would be a difficult team to beat. We certainly have the batting and this team has got character, but there are areas in which we need to improve."

That India managed to emerge triumphant owed plenty to Virender Sehwag's 36-ball 64, Yuvraj Singh's unbeaten 60 off 25 balls, and Dhoni's quick 46. These three innings allowed India chase down Sri Lanka's total of 206 for 7 with five balls to spare. "We had the firepower to chase this score, but we needed a good start," said Dhoni. "Even if you lose a wicket at the top, the player who comes in ought to score at a brisk pace. That didn't happen for us in the first game in Nagpur, but we were perfect here. Overall, you need every batsman to contribute and that's exactly what happened in this game."

"I've never seen a team dropping six catches, but then Sri Lanka missed as many run-out chances. In an international game, you have to take those chances whatever the reasons may be."

Kumar Sangakkara's 31-ball 59 had been the foundation of Sri Lanka's imposing total, but he was left to look on in frustration as Sri Lanka outdid India's butter-fingered performance. "We did well to create that total which I thought was more than enough to win this game," he said. "We bowled the first six overs really well,

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