

Toss crucial for Shakib

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh captain Shakib Al Hasan's first wish will be to hope for the rub of the green when it comes to tossing the coin with India skipper MS Dhoni for today's third one-day match in the Idea Cup tri-nation tournament at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur.

And then the all-rounder will desperately try to regain the rhythm of the past year to prove that he has not been going through a lean patch. The 22-year old skipper made a poor start in the New Year as he scored only one run and bowled without any success against Sri Lanka in the first game that Bangladesh lost by seven wickets.

Shakib's performance was at the peak in the international engagements in 2009 but he failed to carry it on to the domestic circuit and as well in the first international game in the New Year, so the number one all-rounder in ODI rankings, who is suffering from mild fever, needs to come up with his best in the battle with the wounded Indians who suffered a five-wicket defeat in the second game of the competition.

Winning the toss however has become a vital issue due to dew factor as in the previous two games Sri Lanka skipper Kumar Sangakkara on both occasions tossed the coins rightly and in the end had the last laugh.

It was a tough job, especially in the first game, for the team fielding second as the spinners struggled to grip the wet ball and that helped the Lankans to overtake the formidable total in both matches with ease. Things get even more difficult for a team like Bangladesh who are mainly dependant on their slow bowlers.

"Nothing would be better if luck favours us in the toss but we can't control this thing rather we have to make sure that we play our best game against India. We have the self-confidence that it is possible for us to beat any team if we can play our best cricket," said vice-captain Mushfiqur Rahim after a training session at Mirpur yesterday.

Though Bangladesh captain Shakib blamed the dew factor behind his team's poor bowling in defence of 260 runs against the Lankans, his deputy Mushfiqur however admitted yesterday that the pace bowlers also failed to bowl in the right spot and it would be a big challenge for the bowlers against the formidable Indian batting line-up. It was a forgettable international debut for young Shafiqul Islam and Rubel Hossain also struggled with his line and length. There is however a good chance to see experienced left-arm pacer Syed Rasel included in the side in place of Shafiqul but still the Tigers feel the absence of leading paceman Mashrafe Bin Mortaza who had a pivotal role in his team's success

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Bangladesh's explosive opener Tamim Iqbal (C) has the look of a determined man as he jogs with others yesterday on the eve of their crucial match against India today.

PHOTO: STAR

Mahela arrives in Dhaka

CRICINFO, undated

Sri Lanka have called up Mahela Jayawardene to boost their injury-hit squad midway through the tri-series in Bangladesh. The team has lost the services of three men on this tour: Tillakaratne Dilshan picked up a groin injury during the first game against Bangladesh, Chamara Silva fractured his thumb during training, and Muthumudalige Pushpakumara injured his shoulder in the game against India. In addition to Jayawardene, Sri Lanka have called up the 20-year old uncapped wicketkeeper Dinesh Chandimal and the opener Mahela Udawatte, 23, who has played nine ODIs.

"Mahela is fit and ready to play," Brendon Kuruppu, the manager, said. "Dilshan and Pushpakumara are under observation and Chamara Silva has gone back to Sri Lanka."

Chandimal, who admires Romesh Kaluwitharana, was drafted into the Nondescripts Cricket Club at the behest of Sangakkara and came into limelight when he scored his maiden first-class century against New Zealand in 2009, against an attack that included Chris Martin, Daryl Tuffey, Iain O'Brien, Jacob Oram and Daniel Vettori.

Udawatte, an attacking batsman, has been seen as the potential long-term prospect for the national ODI side for some time now. He is rated highly by the likes of Jayawardene and made his debut in 2008 and hit his highest score of 73 in his third ODI against West Indies.

Sri Lanka have already been badly hit by injuries in the recent past with 10 players missing games at various points. Apart from the injured trio in this series, Jayawardene, Muttiah Muralitharan, Dilhara Fernando, Thilan Thushara, Angelo Mathews, Lasith Malinga, and Nuwan Kulasekara have been sidelined by injuries.

Arambagh, Feni in tame draw

SPORTS REPORTER

Hosts Feni Soccer Club held visiting Arambagh to a 1-1 draw in the Citycell Bangladesh League at the Feni Stadium yesterday.

After beating Muktijoddha Sangsad 2-1 in their previous match at their own den, Feni Soccer snatched a valuable point from the Dhaka outfit, Arambagh, and moved to the fifth position of the 13-team points table with eight wins from six outings.

Monu put the hosts ahead in the very ninth minute before ace striker Alfaz Ahmed levelled the margin with his third league goal for Arambagh, who earned a point from the newcomers after going down previously in two matches against giants Mohammedan and Abahani. Arambagh have now six points from as many matches to stay at ninth place.

Straight Drive

SUNIL GAVASKAR

Sri Lanka may not have had a great tour of India but when it comes to a multi-nation tournament or an event where more than two teams play they seem to have the wood on India. While it is still pretty early in the tournament here to make any predictions, Sri Lanka have with their facile win over India and that too without four of their main players have shown that they have recovered from the losses in India and will be the team to watch out for. Thilan Samaraweera has a terrific record in Test cricket but surprisingly he hasn't played a lot of one-day cricket. The Lankan middle order after Dilshan's promotion to the opening spot has been like a revolving door and players like Chamara Silva Kapugedera and Samaraweera have been in and out through that door. Maybe with the brilliant century at almost a run-a-ball he will now be a certainty to play in that position for a few more games. Of course with the classy Jayawardene there he may have to bat after him but that in fact makes for an even stronger batting lineup. Sangakkara continued with his batting form and it was his presence at the other end that helped Samaraweera to play himself in and then unfurl his range of shots. Sri Lanka have in Perera a destructive batsman who comes in to bat just when the opposition thinks they are now looking at the tailenders. He hits a long ball and it was he who took the game away from India with his belligerent batting when the asking rate was over 8 runs an over when he came in to bat.

The dew is certainly a factor in the subcontinent at this time of the year and so organisers must look to have a late morning start to ensure that teams bowling second do not have to contend with trying to come to grips with a wet ball. Pakistan plays a lot of its games with an 11 am start which means that the dew factor is limited to a dozen overs at best for the team defending a score and not for more than 40 overs as is the situation now. Winning the toss should not mean winning the match.

Bangladesh, the hosts will have to lift their game against the Indians, for with Lanka winning both their matches it will be between these two teams to try and qualify for the finals. Bangladesh is struggling with its bowling attack and that could well be due to the dew factor but in the absence of Mortaza its new ball attack doesn't look sharp enough to trouble the Indians. Shakib can keep a lid on the runs with his spin but he needs support at the other end and that wasn't seen in the game against Lanka. Not that the Indian bowlers were all that impressive against Sangakkara and company and they too will have to bowl a lot better than they did in their first game.

What has been the noticeable feature about the Lankans has been the commitment shown while fielding and if the Indians and Bangladesh teams also show improvement there then we could be in for an exciting series.

Youths target top four

SPORTS REPORTER

The Bangladesh Under-19 cricket team will leave for New Zealand tonight with a lofty target of finishing amongst the top four in the ICC Under 19 Cricket World Cup 2010 that kicks off on January 15.

Both the captain and the coach have said that this team is much better compared to the previous one and they have the quality to cross the quarterfinal hurdle. The Bangladesh youths reached the quarterfinals twice in their previous five attempts.

"You can't go into a mission without setting a target. Our target is to make it to the last four in the World Cup which we are capable of," said skipper Mahmudul Hasan during a pre-departure briefing at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.

U-19s GROUP MATCHES

Date	Against
Jan 16	Papua New Guinea
Jan 17	West Indies
Jan 20	Pakistan

All matches will be played at Fitzherbert Park in Napier.

"We have a strong fielding side. The batting has come together nicely. If I have to comment on weakness then I guess we have a lot of room for improvement in the pace bowling area," said Mahmudul.

"We have been given the opportunity to grow as a team and therefore the team spirit is excellent. We know each other really well and there is great camaraderie," concluded the all-rounder.

Each time, Bangladesh goes into the tournament with high hopes but in most occasions they have underperformed and ended up in the fight for

the plate. Why is this time they are different?

"True, we have not played to our potential in the past. But from what I have seen so far we are probably at the standard of the top four teams in terms of strength. Our players have been together since April, in the meantime we've played against Pakistan, England, Sri Lanka and Zimbabwe in conditions similar to that of New Zealand. I think our players are well prepared for the job," was coach Minhazul Abedin's reply.

About the conditions in

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PHOTO: TIGERCRIKET.COM

The Bangladesh Under-19 cricket team pose for a photograph with the BCB president AHM Mustafa Kamal (front row 3rd from L) and other dignitaries at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur prior to their departure for the U-19 World Cup in New Zealand tonight.

Zoran admires local passion

Football

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh's new football coach Zoran Djordjevic yesterday presented his plans on how he would prepare his new charges of the Bangladesh U-23 team in a short period for the South Asian Games.

Zoran, who arrived in the capital on Tuesday, has been given the responsibility to guide the Bangladesh U-23 team in the SA Games to be held in Bangladesh from January 29 to February 9 as well as the to lead the senior team in the AFC Challenge Cup finals to be held in Sri Lanka from February 16 to 27. An official agreement is however, as yet, pending.

The Serbian stated that he has a basic concept of Bangladesh's football as he watched the eight-nation SAFF Championship in early December during his interview with the game's governing body. He also has an idea of the kind of opponents he can expect to face in the SA Games after closely monitoring the team during the SAFF Championship.

"I travelled to many places in the world and I must recognise some of places like Dhaka where people have a lot of emotion towards football.

I saw this during the SAFF Championship in the stadium that's why I am excited I am here with you again. I know this position (head coach) is challenging for every person and this is a dream for every coach to be national coach in either his own country or abroad," said Zoran while taking to reporters yesterday in the presence of BFF president Kazi Salahuddin at the BFF House.

The former Sudan national coach has also planned out what matches of the ongoing Bangladesh League he and his assistant Zoran Kraljedic will watch in the capital and outside before selecting the primary candidates for the residential camp that will kick off on January 15 at the Bangladesh Krira Shikha Protisthan. Both are also scheduled to visit BKSP today to see the facilities of the country's lone sports institute.

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Stunning Aussie win

CRICINFO, Undated

CRICINFO, Undated

Australia completed a nerve-shredding 36-run victory over an exasperating Pakistani side to become just the sixth team in Test history to triumph after trailing by 200-plus on the first innings. An obstinate 123-run ninth-wicket partnership between Michael Hussey and Peter Siddle drew Australia back into a contest they appeared to have conceded after a calamitous opening day, and a penetrative final-day bowling display completed one of the great come-backs witnessed on these shores.

The Australians, who resumed play on Wednesday eight wickets down and only 80 runs ahead, set the Pakistanis a challenging target of 176 following the brilliant, improbable stand of Hussey and Siddle that almost matched Australia's entire first-innings aggregate. Pakistan's batsmen positioned themselves for a victory charge at several junctures of their innings, but Nathan Hauritz's second five-wicket haul in as many matches ensured the tourists fell agonisingly short in their pursuit.

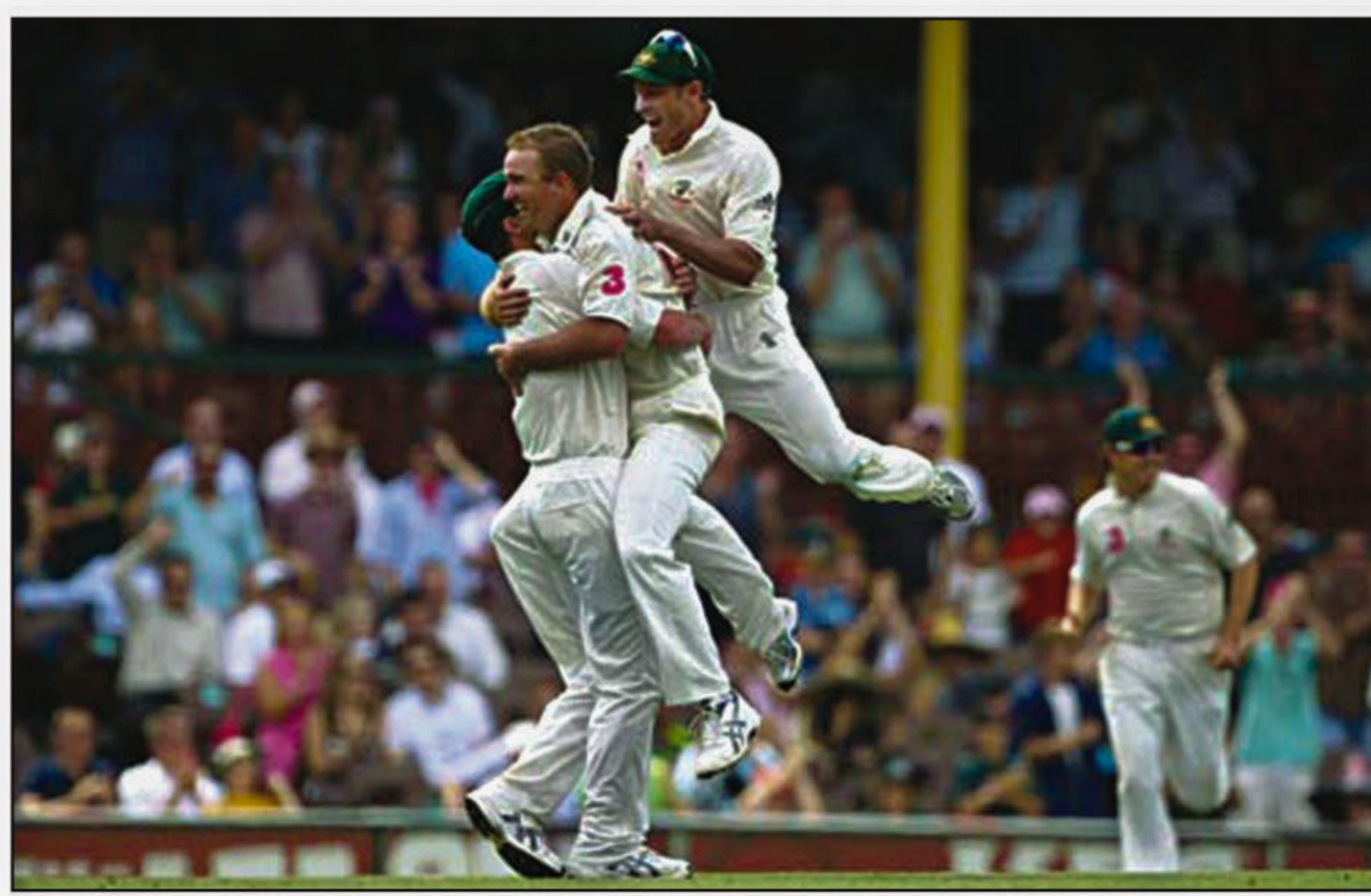
In the end, it was a game of "who blinks first". The Pakistanis have made no secret of their plans to attack Hauritz throughout the summer, and looked to erase large chunks of their deficit while the Australian spinner was in

operation. Such a tactic was inevitably going to lead to chances, and Hauritz proved good enough to take them on a gripping afternoon at a ground that has come to resemble Australia's theatre of dreams.

Hauritz began his series-clinching spell with a caught-and-bowled catch that threatened his further participation in the contest. Mohammad Yousuf, whose timid tactics in the morning session played into the hands of the Australian batsmen, belatedly found his aggression and bludgeoned Hauritz's third delivery after lunch with the force of a thousand ordinary drives. Alas, he did so in the bowler's direction and an unflinching Hauritz held onto an excellent catch that cut open his left thumb and required medical treatment.

Far from finished, Hauritz removed the out-of-sorts Misbah-ul-Haq two deliveries later, then rolled through the Pakistani tail to complete a polished performance that served as further evidence of his evolution into a legitimate international spinner. His efforts were complemented by those of Mitchell Johnson, who finished with three wickets and commenced Pakistan's terminal slide with the dismissals of Salman Butt and Faisal Iqbal in the same over. Doug Bollinger, too, thrived in the pressure-cooker atmosphere, dismissing the potent duo of Imran Farhat and Umar Akmal in a spell defined by pace and discipline.

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Five-shooter Nathan Hauritz (C) celebrates the fall of another Pakistan wicket with teammates during a dramatic fourth day of the second Test at the SCG in Sydney yesterday. Australia pulled off a stunning 36-run win.

PHOTO: INTERNET

Remember the name Rabbi

Cricket

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Manikganj

Fazly Rabbi of Manikganj Government Boys' High school hit a double century in the Standard Chartered Young Tigers Under-16 National School Cricket tournament at the local Shahid Miraj-Tapan Stadium yesterday.

The magnificent batting display of the class X student enabled his side to pile up 410 runs in 45 overs against Girish Chandra Institution who were bundled out for 64 runs to suffer a massive 355-run defeat.

During his unbeaten 212 run essay, Rabbi clobbered 18 boundaries and 12 over boundaries to put the opponent bowlers to the sword. It was for the second successive year that Rabbi showed his big scoring ability as he also scored 150-plus runs in the last year in the same tournament and got a call for the Under-16 national trial.

Mamun claimed three wickets while Russel took two wickets to wrap up the Girish Chandra Institute for 64 runs. In the day's Dhaka metro zone match, European Standard School (ESS) regis-

tered a massive nine-wicket victory over Badda Alatusnessa Secondary at the City Club ground.

Kader Alam claimed four wickets for 21 runs as Badda Alatusnessa were all out for 75 runs in 35.3 overs. ESS posted



FAZLY RABBI...212 n.o

80 runs at the loss of one wicket in 9.4 overs with Sabbir making team highest unbeaten 48.

At the Barguna Stadium, Barguna Zilla School defeated Kathaltali High School by 139 runs. Barguna Zilla School rode on Sabuj Roy's unbeaten 67 to score 216 runs. Nibid then picked up four wickets conceding four runs as Kathaltali were bundled out for 77 runs.

DAY'S EVENT

Idea Cup
Bangladesh v India
Venue: Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium, Mirpur
Time: 2:30 pm

Bangladesh League
Muktijoddha Sangsad v Sukhtara
Jubo Sangsad
Venue: Kamalapur Stadium
Time: 2:45 pm

What to WATCH

SuperSport, NEO Sport & BTV

Bangladesh v India
Idea Cup
Live from 2:30 pm

TEN Sports
South Africa v England
Third Test, Day Five
Live from 2:30pm

ESPN
Sportscenter India
Sports News
Live from 8:30 pm