

## Straight Drive

SUNIL GAVASKAR

India's record in the finals of tournaments especially overseas has not been great and the tri-nations defeat did not help in making it any better. The manner in which they had lifted their game after losing to Sri Lanka in their first round robin game gave hope that this time around they would be able to turn around that record and win a trophy. The win by the Lankans in the finals meant that in every single match of this tournament the team that batted second won the game.

The dew factor was a huge one and that is something the organisers will have to take into account when fixing the timings of the match. It simply is not fair to the team bowling second if they have to wipe the ball dry after every ball. A bowler needs to use the few seconds between deliveries to think and plan his next ball and if he is going to spend those microseconds wiping the ball and the seam dry and even then is not sure if he is going to get a proper grip on the ball then he will not be able to bowl as he wants to. The limited overs format is heavily loaded in favour of the batsman and bowling second with dew around does not make it any better for the bowlers. What the dew factor does is that it makes the team batting first try and get the extra runs that they feel are needed because of the effect the wet ball will have on their bowlers when trying to defend the total. India did just that as they tried to play the big shots even before the batsmen were well set. The shot selection was to a great extent influenced by the knowledge that they were going to bowl second and so needed to score more and faster.

Having said that no praise is too high for Kulasekara and Welegedara as they cleverly varied their pace and bent their

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PHOTO: STAR  
Mahmudullah Riyad (C) shot on target every time for Bangladesh in the Idea Cup tri-series and skipper Shakib Al Hasan (L) and his deputy Mushfiqur Rahim will be hoping that the all-rounder takes his form into the Test series against India that begins in Chittagong on Sunday.

## Shakib pledges good cricket

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Chittagong



Bangladesh skipper Shakib Al Hasan is confident of throwing a tough challenge to the number one Test team in the world and give the cricket fans the taste of a very competitive match.

The Tigers skipper shrugged off any suggestion of any ruggedness from not playing Test for over a period of five months. Bangladesh played their last Test series against West Indies back in July 2009.

"It is true we didn't play a Test match for quite some time, but hopefully that won't pose any major problem for us to adapt to the Test mould," Shakib said while talking to reporters at a practice session at the Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium here yesterday afternoon.

"We batted well in the last ODIs of the tri-nation series and want to show improvement in our game in the field, not through words," said a confident skipper.

"I think the battle between India and Bangladesh this time will be an interesting one because the opponents have a long batting line-up while we have a few quality bowlers. However, we don't bother much about the result of the match. But a draw will be good for us. I am confident that we will have a good chance if we can score 700 runs in the two innings," he said.

The last Test match against India at this venue in May 2007 was drawn due to rain while Sri Lanka won the last Test match here by four wickets in January last year.

Curator of Bangladesh Cricket Board Shafiqul Alam Belal informed that the match would be played on the third pitch, among seven, on the ground.

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## U-19 WC starts today

SPORTS REPORTER

The ICC U-19 Cricket World Cup (U-19 CWC) gets underway in New Zealand today with 16 teams vying for the highest honour in international youth cricket. A global audience of millions, through ESPN-STAR Sports, will watch defending champions and cricketing powerhouse India take on debutants Afghanistan at Bert Sutcliffe Oval in Christchurch.

Bangladesh take the field tomorrow when they play against Papua New Guinea at the Fitzherbert Park in Napier. Bangladesh have also Pakistan and West Indies in their group. Bangladesh left for New Zealand with a target of finishing among top four, a feat they have never been able to achieve.

And they started their campaign in the right

vein defeating hosts New Zealand and Australia in their two warm-up matches. Bangladesh skipper Mahmudul Hasan pointed out pace bowling as the only point of concern.

Since its earliest days the tournament has been a springboard for young talent. The very first U19 CWC introduced a host of future stars including Brian Lara, Inzamamul Haq, Mushtaq Ahmed and Sanath Jayasuriya. It was to be a sign of things to come as the tournament has always provided the perfect opportunity for young prodigies to show their talent.

Australia (1988 and 2002), India (2000 and 2008) and Pakistan (2004 and 2006) have won the event twice each, while England won the tournament in 1998 in South Africa. Sri Lanka have hosted the event twice (2000 and 2006) and New Zealand is hosting the event for the second time this year having already done so in 2002.

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## Younus back for ODIs

CRICINFO, undated

Younus Khan, the former Pakistan captain who took a break from the game in November while claiming he had "lost command" of the side, has been picked in a squad of 17 for the ODI leg of the tour of Australia.

However, Mohammad Yousuf will continue to lead the side with all-rounder Shahid Afridi as his deputy. Younus had been in contention for the ODI series following Pakistan's disappointing batting display in the ongoing Test series, and Yousuf had requested him at the start of the tour to join the squad "as soon as possible".

Kamran Akmal, after a torrid time behind the stumps in Sydney, has been retained and so has his replacement for the Hobart Test, Sarfraz Ahmed. Fast bowlers Rao Iftikhar and Navedul Hasan, who didn't play the Tests, join the ODI squad. Batsman Khalid Latif, who has represented Pakistan in four ODIs, has also been called-up.

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## Mumbai Ranji champions

AFP, Mysore

Mumbai won India's premier first-class competition for the 39th time on Thursday when they defeated Karnataka by six runs in a thrilling Ranji Trophy final here.

Former Test star Ajit Agarkar claimed 5-81 as Karnataka, chasing a victory target of 338, were bowled out for 331 in the post-lunch session of the fourth day's play.

Karnataka, fired by young batting star Manish Pandey's 144, were comfortably placed at 255-3 when they lost their last seven wickets for 76 runs.

The match fluctuated wildly as Mumbai, dismissed for 233 in the first innings, shot out Karnataka for 130 and were themselves bowled out for 234 in their second knock.

Mumbai took the field without Sachin Tendulkar, Zaheer Khan and Rohit Sharma, while Karnataka missed Rahul Dravid, all of whom are on international duty for two Test matches in Bangladesh.

## NCL gets underway

### Zahurul hammers first century on first day



SPORTS REPORTER

Zahurul Islam drew the first blood with a hundred when the 11th National Cricket League got underway under new format at three different venues across the country yesterday.

Rajshahi made a bold start against Sylhet thanks to a 139-run innings by opener Zahurul as the defending champions ended the first day's play on 300 for four at the Fatullah Cricket Stadium.

In the other two games, bowlers dictated terms as Khulna were bundled out for 132 and then restricted their opponents Dhaka to 77 for eight before stumps were drawn for the day while Barisal wrapped up Chittagong for 200 runs and finished the day on 73 for three.

At Fatullah, Nasir Ahmed gave Sylhet a brilliant start by removing Forhad Reza for four runs but their joy was shortlived as captain Khaled Mashud joined Zahurul to steady the ship during their 132-run second wicket stand before the former was trapped in front by Nabil Samad for a 126-ball 56.

Forhad Hossain then came in to share a

123-run third wicket partnership with Zahurul to put Rajshahi in a commanding position. Forhad contributed 53 off 104 balls with five fours while Zahurul hit 18 boundaries and a six during his 268-ball essay.

At the Sheikh Abu Naser Stadium in Khulna, left-handed Faisal Hossain slammed 73 off 103 balls that contained 12 fours and a six but his effort was not good enough for Chittagong to put on a decent total on the board as Arafat Salahuddin and Monir Hossain shared six wickets to cause the damage in the port city team's innings.

Salahuddin tormented the top-order by taking three wickets for 37 runs while Monir wrapped up the tail with three for 24 runs.

Out-of-favour paceman Tareq Aziz however claimed two wickets to make sure Chittagong ended the day with some solace as Barisal lost three wickets for 73 runs.

At the Shaheed Kamruzzaman Stadium in Rajshahi, two new ball bowlers Talha Jubair and Mohammad Sharif demolished the Khulna batting line-up by sharing seven wickets.

Talha was the most successful bowler with four for 43 and Sharif picked up three for 32.

Dhaka however failed to cash in on their

fine bowling efforts as young paceman Robiul Islam hit hard by taking four wickets for 23 runs in his 10-over spell while other two pace bowlers Ziaur Rahman and Dollar Mahmud took two wickets each as Dhaka were reduced to 77 for eight.

### SCORES IN BRIEF

#### RAJSHAHI v SYLHET

RAJSHAHI: First innings 300 for 4 in 9 overs (Zahurul 139, Forhad 4, Masud 56, Forhad Hossain 53, Nayeem 10 not out, Nasir 22 not out, extras 16; Nasir 2-51)

#### CHITTAGONG v BARISAL

CHITTAGONG: First innings-200 all out in 59.4 overs (Gazi Salahuddin 28, Faisal 73, Arman 27 not out, extras 8; Arafat Salahuddin 3-37, Monir 3-24)

BARISAL: First innings 73 for 3 in 27 overs (Asif 28 not out, Shaheen 22 not out, extras 6; Tareq 2-16)

#### DHAKA v KHULNA

KHULNA: First innings 132 all out in 40 overs (Aslam 22, Nizamuddin 22 not out, Zia 20, extras 20; Talha 4-43, Sharif 3-32, Mosharraf 2-21)

DHAKA: First innings-77-8 in 32 overs (Marshal 11, Mosharraf 12 not out, Sharif 12 not out, extras 12; Zia 2-24, Dollar 2-29, Robiul 4-23)

## Ponting, Clarke hit tons



CRICINFO, undated

On the day when he was voted the world's best cricketer of the past ten years, Ricky Ponting showed his use-by date didn't arrive with the end of the decade. Ponting and Michael Clarke each scored centuries in a merciless 231-run partnership that left Pakistan dejected, bereft of ideas, and rueful of yet another dropped catch that took their tally to 14 for the series.

In Sydney, Ponting was caught for a duck in the first innings when he hooked straight to the man on the boundary and this time, again without scoring, he whipped a Mohammad Asif bouncer from in front of his eyebrows straight to the man at deep backward square leg. Mohammad Aamer didn't have to move a single step but grassed the chance, slumping on the ground in dismay at his error.

Teams know that if they miss a chance to get

rid of Ponting, they may not get another. And after Australia were 3 for 71 in the opening session, the bright start that Pakistan's seamers made after a third lost toss for the series was wasted. Soon, Mohammad Yousuf's defensive fields crept back in, Pakistani shoulders slumped and by the final hour, the bowlers were interested only in stopping runs with a wide-outside-offline.

But while Pakistan contributed to their own disappointment, Australia's captain and vice-captain deserve high praise for their concentration and determination to reach 3 for 302 at stumps with Ponting on 137 and Clarke on 111. Both men entered the match hoping to turn around personally fruitless summers: Clarke needed to show that he could return to his Ashes form and Ponting required a big knock to avoid his least productive home Test summer in a decade.

Ponting was scrappy early. His ears have been ringing over his favourite hook and pull shots, which he has struggled to middle in

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## Aus taking it 'seriously'

AFP, Sydney

Australia's Foreign Minister Stephen Smith on Thursday said he took "seriously" a right-wing Hindu party's threat to stop its cricketers playing in an Indian state which hosts lucrative IPL matches.

Smith said Australian cricket and foreign ministry officials were discussing the comments from Bal Thackeray, head of Mumbai's influential Shiv Sena, which follow a string of attacks on Indian nationals in Australia.

Thackeray said the party would not let "kangaroo cricketers" play in its home state of Maharashtra where two major cities, Mumbai and Nagpur, hold Indian Premier League (IPL) games.

"This has come from a political party and they've made comments about disrupting cricket in the past and they've also disrupted some cricket games," Smith told Sky News.

"We take any threat against Australians overseas seriously. In the last couple of years we've developed a very close relationship with Cricket Australia so far as Australian cricket teams and individuals playing overseas are concerned."

The Shiv Sena has in the past prevented Pakistan's national team from playing in Maharashtra for what it says is Islamabad's backing of militant activities in India.

Smith said any decision to play in India would have to be taken by individual players and teams, adding that the government would provide security advice.

Australian cricketers like captain Ricky Ponting, Andrew Symonds, Matthew Hayden and Shane Watson will be among the star players in the IPL Twenty20 competition's third edition in March and April.



PHOTO: ZOBAER HOSSAIN SIKDER  
A beaming Sachin Tendulkar makes his way into the team hotel after arriving in the port city of Chittagong yesterday to play the first of two Tests against Bangladesh from Sunday.

## A noble gesture

SPORTS REPORTER

Eight government financial intermediaries on Thursday declared their active involvement with the upcoming 11th edition of the South Asian Games, the biggest sports extravaganza of the sub-continent.

They signed a deal yesterday to raise an amount of Tk. 17 crores as sponsorship money. The cost for the Games has been estimated at Tk 170 crores, proudly called the South Asian Olympics.

Finance Minister Abul Maal Abdul Muhith, also the chairman of the South Asian Games Organising Committee, attended the partnership signing ceremony at the BOA Bhaban as the chief guest. Ziaul Huq Khandoker, the convener of marketing and sponsors committee and Kutubuddin Ahmed, secretary general of Bangladesh Olympic Association (BOA), were also present on the occasion. Kutubuddin, also the member secretary of

the organising committee, expressed his gratitude to the sponsors. "I think it is a historic moment. The budget of the SA Games is Tk. 170 crore and the government is providing Tk. 122 crore, the rest of the money will be provided by the sponsors, I thank all the sponsors for their noble gesture. We look forward to hosting a Games to remember," he said.

Agrani Bank, Janata Bank, Shadharan Bima Corporation and Sonali Bank arrived as the Gold sponsors, Investment Corporation of Bangladesh announcing themselves as the Silver sponsors and Jiban Bima Corporation, Basic Bank and Rupali Bank declared themselves as the co-sponsors.

Syed Abu Nasir Bukhtear, MD of Agrani Bank, Aminur Rahman, MD of Janata Bank, SA Chowdhury, CEO and MD of Sonali Bank, Rejaul Karim, MD of Shadharan Bima Corporation, AKM Sajedur Rahman, MD of Basic Bank, Talukder Shamsur Rahman, MD of Jiban Bima Corporation, Abdul Hamid Miah, MD of Rupali Bank and Humayun Kabir, MD of ICMB, handed over the cheques to the finance minister.



**TEN Sports**  
South Africa v England  
Fourth Test, Day Two  
Live from 2:30pm

**STAR Cricket**  
India v Afghanistan  
U-19 Cricket World Cup  
Live from 3:15am

**ESPN**  
Sportscenter India  
Sports News  
Live from 8:30pm

Australia v Pakistan  
Third Test, Day Three  
Live from 5:30am (Saturday)