

NZ mend early damage

Cricket

CRICINFO, undated

An unbroken 100-run partnership between Martin Guptill and Brendon McCullum helped New Zealand stage a comeback on the first day in the one off Test at Seddon Park. The pair combined with the home side struggling at 158 for 5, but batted with assurance till stumps to rescue them from a doggy position.

New Zealand were pushed to a corner by the Bangladesh seamers who made good use of a green, seaming wicket after a rain-delayed start. Shafiqul Islam bowled an immaculate line and length throughout his first spell, beating the bats of both New Zealand openers repeatedly before getting one to seam slightly away from Tim McIntosh who edged to Imrul Kayes at second slip.

Rubel Hossain then took over, bowling at a lively pace and finding consistency in the afternoon session to trouble the New Zealand top order with a barrage of short-pitched deliveries. He was the pick of the visiting bowlers, ending with 3 for 86. After accounting for opener BJ Watling, Rubel added the scalps of debutant Peter Ingram and Ross Taylor, who both promised a lot in their aggressive knocks.

Ingram's arrival, following McIntosh's departure, with a flurry of powerfully hit boundaries through the off side while Watling struggled to an unconvincing 13 at the other end. Ingram eventually holed out to mid on, attempting to pull Rubel from wide outside off stump, ending a 47-ball innings that included an enormous straight six off Shakib Al

Hasan.

In the afternoon session, Taylor continued to bat as aggressively as he has done throughout the tour, dealing in boundaries through point and mid wicket, but was again unable to deliver a big innings that would have given his side the advantage. A fuller Rubel delivery was to be his demise, as he edged behind leaving the team total on 126 for 4.

Daniel Vettori, batting at six in the absence of Jesse Ryder and Grant Elliott, was unable to make an impression, getting to 10 before darning past a Shakib Al Hasan delivery that clipped the top of the off stump. His dismissal left the hosts teetering at 158 for 5, and in desperate need of rescue mission.

Martin Guptill led the recovery, continuing his sparkling form from the ODIs to end unbeaten on 80 at stumps. After being dropped on 4 by Shafiqul, attempting to complete a sharp return chance, Guptill batted impeccably, keeping out a menacing Bangladesh attack, and driving handsomely down the ground and through the covers on a regular basis to keep the scoreboard ticking over. The pull shot was also used to good effect towards the end of the day, as the Bangladesh seamers' short deliveries became less effective as the bounce got steadily lower.

New Zealand's highest partnership of the day between Guptill and Brendon McCullum, who ended on an unbeaten 58 from just 71 deliveries, revived their hopes of a sizeable first innings total. The unbroken century stand, a New Zealand record against Bangladesh for the sixth wicket, looked set to resuscitate the innings before bad light stopped play.

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PHOTO: INTERNET
Bangladesh right-arm paceman Rubel Hossain appeals for an lbw decision during the opening day of the one-off Test against New Zealand at Seddon Park in Hamilton yesterday.

Rajshahi, Dhaka dictate terms

Cricket

SPORTS REPORTER

Sohrawardi Shuvo spun leaders Rajshahi into a bold start against Chittagong in the first round of the second phase of the 11th National Cricket League at the Shaheed Chandu Stadium in Bogra yesterday.

Bowlers dictated terms on the opening day of the four-day encounters and Shuvo was top of the bowlers as the left-arm spinner returned with a figure of 5-36 to wrap up Chittagong for 198 runs.

Rajshahi finished the day on top as they scored 125 runs for three before stumps were drawn, thanks to a 83-run unbeaten fourth wicket association between in-form Forhad Hossain (30) and Anisur Rahman (58).

The table-toppers fell in trouble early losing three quick wickets in the span of ten runs but seasoned campaigner Anisur Forhad to defy the opponents.

Earlier Chittagong made a poor start after deciding to bat first when pacer Shuvashish Roy removed Mahbulul Karim in the second over but Nafis Iqbal and Gazi Salahuddin took the initiative to repair the damage. But both batsmen failed to capitalise on their good starts. Left-arm spinner Saqlain Sajib broke the 62-run second wicket stand by removing Salahuddin who scored 43 off 60 balls that featured seven boundaries while Nafis, who occupied the crease for little more than two and a half hours to make 44, was the first victim of Shuvo.

Rezaul Karim also got a start but only made 37 before falling victim of a run out.

At the Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium in Chittagong, out-of-favour paceman Mahbulul Alam gave Dhaka a flying start when he picked up two wickets of Khulna in the very first over and captured a third in his second as Khulna were tottering at two for three wickets. Amit Majumder, Mohammad Mithun and Nazmus Sadat, all three of them returned to the pavilion without scoring.

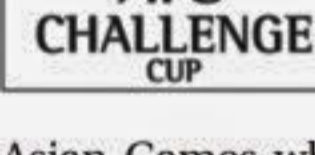
Veteran Tushar Imran joined opener Taposh Ghosh to stop the slide by adding 46 runs in the fourth wicket before the right-hander was dismissed for 45-ball 30 with six boundaries.

Taposh then got good support from wicketkeeper batsman Sahagir Hossain and their 127-run fifth wicket stand helped

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BD's Tajik test today

SPORTS REPORTER



Bangladesh will be hoping to keep up the momentum they gained from the South Asian Games when they take on favourites Tajikistan in one of the two opening day matches of the AFC Challenge Cup finals at the Sugahatadasa Stadium in Colombo today.

After emerging unbeaten champions in the just concluded SA Games football event, Bangladesh have set their sights on the semifinals

in the eight-team tournament for the third-tier Asian nations and nevertheless their success on home soil has been inspiring the booters to do something better in the 12-day meet.

Tajikistan are considered top favourites in Group A as they finished behind champions India in the last edition though the fact is that Myanmar are the top rated side as per the FIFA Rankings with a position of 140th. Bangladesh follow them in the 150th place. Sri Lanka are next to Bangladesh while Tajikistan hold the position of 165th on the rankings.

However, the rankings don't matter much for

Tajikistan, who have a record of thumping Bangladesh 6-1 in the inaugural AFC Challenge Cup in Bangladesh and have also another record of thrashing them 5-0 in the World Cup qualifying in Tajikistan despite being held 1-1 in away match in Dhaka.

Coach Saiful Bari Titu, who has been appointed after the departure of Serbian coach Zoran Djordjevic, was confident that his players would carry their good form into the AFC Challenge Cup and play in the last four.

"I must admit that Tajikistan is a better side than Bangladesh, but we will definitely fight against them for

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PHOTO: COURTESY

The national footballers stretch during a practice session at the Sugahatadasa Stadium in Sri Lanka yesterday. They will take on favourites Tajikistan today in one of two opening day's AFC Challenge Cup matches.

Zoran leaves

SPORTS REPORTER

Serbian coach Zoran Djordjevic, along with his two assistants, left Bangladesh yesterday. Earlier, Bangladesh Football Federation parted ways with the successful Serbian coach who had guided Bangladesh to gold in the just concluded South Asian Games.

The football's governing body on Saturday failed to reach a consensus with Zoran, who demanded a new four-year contract worth Tk 7 crore that would have kept him till 2014. The Serbian was discharged of his duties after all payments have been cleared.

Zoran, who first came in Bangladesh as an observer during the SAFF Championship in December last year, was given the responsibility to guide Bangladesh in the SA Games as well as AFC Challenge Cup but he demanded a fresh four-year deal after his first assignment.

Beach soccer soon

SPORTS REPORTER

WAF (we are for football), a newly-formed organisation comprising former national footballers, have decided to host the first-ever beach football tournament in Cox's Bazar from February 26 to 27 in a bid to give country's football a new shape.

Country's traditional giants Mohammedan, Abahani, Brothers Union, Victoria SC, Rahmatganj MFS along with local Cox's Bazar Beach Football Club, split into two groups, will take part in the five-a-side tournament. Top two teams from each group will play in the semifinals.

Former national players of respective clubs will play for their old tents while Cox's Bazar Beach Football Club will consist of those national players who are from outside of five Dhaka clubs, said the organisers at a press conference at Hotel Sheraton yesterday.

The 10 matches of the competition will be telecast live on Channel I from the venue.

The mega tournament will cost Tk 50 lakh and Comfort Sea Star have earned the title sponsorship rights providing major part of the fund while Bangladesh Parjatan Corporation have also extended their co-operation to the tournament to promote the world's longest seashore. The champions will be awarded Tk one lakh while the runners-up and third place finishers will get Tk 50,000 and Tk 30,000 respectively. Duration of each match

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Sachin, Sehwag hit hundreds

Cricket

AFP, Kolkata

Virender Sehwag and Sachin Tendulkar smashed impressive centuries before South Africa fought back with three quick wickets on the second day of the final Test on Monday.

Sehwag cracked 23 fours and two sixes in his 165 off 174 balls and shared a third-wicket stand of 249 with Tendulkar (106) as India reached 342-5 by close at the Eden Gardens in Kolkata.

Venkatsai Laxman (nine) and Amit Mishra (one) were at the crease when stumps were drawn for the day, with India leading South Africa's 296 by 46 runs with five wickets in hand.

India, who lost the first Test in Nagpur by an innings and six runs, need a win to square the series and retain their number one position in the official Test rankings.

The hosts were cruising at 331-2 when Sehwag, Tendulkar and Subramaniam Badrinath (one) were dismissed in the space of five runs towards the end of the day's play.

Sehwag mis-timed a drive in part-time spinner Jean-Paul Duminy's first over, Tendulkar was caught in the slips off Paul Harris and Badrinath was bowled by Dale Steyn.

Sehwag completed his second century of the series in style, cutting Wayne Parnell (0-61) to the point boundary for his 19th Test century and the fifth against South Africa.

Tendulkar joined in the run feast, hitting his 47th Test century and the fourth in

successive matches after making 105 and 143 in Bangladesh and 100 in the Nagpur Test.

Tendulkar hit 12 fours in his 206-ball knock.

But it was the belligerent Sehwag who stole the show, smashing fast bowler Steyn (1-66) for three fours in a row, before dishing out similar treatment to Morne Morkel (1-80).

Parnell was not spared either as Sehwag drove the fast bowler to the covers for a four and followed it up by smashing a six to the third-man

boundary.

The opener then pulled left-arm spinner Harris (1-97) for the second six of his entertaining knock.

South Africa had a chance to dismiss Sehwag on 47 but Duminy grassed a sitter off Morkel at first slip.

The batsman was let off for the second time on 129 when AB de Villiers, keeping wicket in place of an injured Mark Boucher, missed an easy stumping chance off Harris.

Harris conceded 12 wides as he bowled outside the leg-stump to contain the run flow.

South Africa tasted early success when Gautam Gambhir was run out as he went for a sharp second run on Sehwag's call. He hit three fours in his 25, sharing an opening stand of 73 with Sehwag.

Murali Vijay (seven) edged Morkel behind the wicket, where de Villiers took a fine catch diving to his right.

Earlier, Zaheer Khan (4-90) ended the South African innings when he trapped Parnell leg-before wicket for 12 in the fourth over of the day

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PHOTO: AFP

Master India batsman Sachin Tendulkar (R) and dashing opener Virender Sehwag stroll for a single during a superb third wicket stand of 249 runs on the second day of the second Test against South Africa at the Eden Gardens in Kolkata yesterday. Both Tendulkar (106) and Sehwag (165) scored centuries to put the hosts in command.

MILAN V MAN UTD

Clash of the titans

AFP, Milan



AC Milan and Manchester United will go head-to-head at the San Siro in arguably the biggest tie of the Champions League round of 16 on Tuesday.

One of the main reasons for the tie's magnitude will be the return of David Beckham to Old Trafford as an away team player for the first time since he left United in 2003 to join Real Madrid. United manager Sir Alex Ferguson recently spoke of his concern that there would be a circus surrounding Beckham's return but that is looking slightly less likely now.

Beckham has been dropped for Milan's last two matches, having previously occupied the right-sided berth in the club's three-pronged attack.

The signing of Mancini from Inter

Milan and young Brazilian forward Alexandre Pato's return from injury have seen Beckham drop to the bench as a replacement for one of the midfield trio.

But even without 'Golden Balls', this promises to be a potential classic.

It will be the fifth time the two sides meet in the knockout stages of Europe's premier club competition and for the first time it is the English champions who will be heading in as favourites.

United have won three of their four home matches against Milan but have never managed to progress against the wily Italians, losing every one of their four away games.

The last time the two sides met a Wayne Rooney-inspired United came from behind to win a thrilling first-leg match 3-2 at Old Trafford.

Brazilian superstar Kaka produced a dazzling display in the return leg, though, as Milan romped to a 3-0 success in Italy to reach the final, where they beat

Liverpool 2-1 to lift their seventh European Cup crown.

Milan even look upon United as a lucky omen as every time they have faced United, they have gone on to reach the final -- although three of their four previous meetings were in the semifinals.

Yet this Milan team is shorn of Kaka and the likes of Andrea Pirlo, Clarence Seedorf, Alessandro Nesta and Gennaro Gattuso are all the wrong side of 30.

The return of Pato from injury in Friday's 3-2 win over Udinese will have been a relief to his compatriot coach Leonardo and the player himself insists he will be in optimal shape come Tuesday.

"I feel good now even if the (Udinese) game was tough for me but I have another day of rest before Tuesday's match against Manchester United so I can train well," he said.

"I really want to do well in this game. I've watched all the matches of

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What to WATCH

SuperSport6
New Zealand v Bangladesh
Only Test, Day Two
Live from 4:00am

NEO Cricket
India v South Africa
Second Test, Day Three
Live from 9:45am

SuperSport3
UEFA Champs League
AC Milan v Man United
Live from 1:00am (Wednesday)

SuperSport7
UEFA Champs League
Olympique Lyonnais v Real Madrid
Live from 1:40am (Wednesday)

STAR Sports
English Premier League
Stoke City v Man City
Live from 1:40am (Wednesday)

'Pakistan need a strong coach'

Cricket

AFP, Karachi

Legendary paceman Wasim Akram said Monday that irrespective of nationality, Pakistan needed a passionate and wise coach to rescue the team after humiliating defeats in Australia.

"What Pakistan needs is a passionate coach who is more involved with the boys and can form an effective strategy for the team," Wasim told AFP. "A good coach, foreign or local, with a high energy level is needed in modern cricket."

Pakistan is facing difficult times after Australia blanked them 3-0 in Tests and 5-0 in

one-day internationals, then beat them in one Twenty20 on a tour that ended earlier this month.

Chief selector Iqbal Qasim resigned and the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) has formed a committee to investigate the reasons for the humiliating defeats.

Coach Intikhab Alam and wicket-keeper batsman Kamran Akmal were left out of the 14-man squad for two Twenty20 matches against England in Dubai on February 19 and 20.

The PCB has hinted at hiring a foreign coach to replace Alam, but former Australian captain and ex-India coach Greg Chappell has

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