

Booters stun Tajikistan

SPORTS REPORTER

The Bangladesh national football team have found precious little to celebrate in their 38-year football history, especially with regards to beating recognized forces in Asia. But one such moment arrived yesterday

when they handed a 2-1 defeat to former champions Tajikistan in the opener of the AFC Challenge Cup finals at the Sugathadasa Stadium in Sri Lanka yesterday. Striker Enamul Haque, who was dropped from the squad by departed coach Zoran Djordjevic, put Bangladesh ahead in the 68th minute before Yusuf Rabiev levelled the margin for Tajikistan two minutes later.

Defender Atiqur Rahman Mishu struck the match winner in the 79th minute against a side ranked 148th in the world (and not 165th, as mentioned in yesterday's preview), to send the football fraternity home into raptures. The last triumph of a similar magnitude for Bangladesh was against Chinese Taipei, who they beat 2-1 in 1997 in the World Cup Qualifying round. Besides, Bangladesh had

also some good moments of celebration against Philippines (3-2) in 1984 and Thailand (3-1) in 1989 and both victories came during the World Cup qualifying round. The boys of Bangladesh started from where they left in the just concluded South Asian Games last week and their never-to-die attitude not only gave Bangladesh a first-ever victory against Tajikistan, but also offered them an

advantage on way to the semi-finals before facing Myanmar and Sri Lanka. Coach Saiful Bari had earlier hinted that he might adopt a defensive strategy and counter-attack against the Tajiks, who are comparatively skilled and physically more imposing than Bangladesh. But the boys stunned Tajikistan, a state of the former Soviet Union after a heavy downpour drenched the playing surface just prior to kick-off.

Tajikistan dominated the opening exchanges before Bangladesh's striker Zahid Hasan Emily was halted by a tight offside flag after 17 minutes following Mamun's perfectly weighted pass, according to the official website of the Asian Football Confederation.

A last ditch tackle from Bangladesh defender Rezaul Karim halted Regar-TadAZ striker Davronjon Tukhta sunov firing in the first shot in anger as the persistent rain began to ease.

Bangladesh, though, should have opened the scoring after 24 minutes when Mohammedan striker Emily surged into the area and after being forced wide by goalkeeper Alisher Tuychiev, sent a chipped cross back across the face of goal but Shakil Ahmed could only head wide with the goal at his mercy.

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PHOTO: COURTESY

Bangladesh's Atiqur Rahman Mishu (R) goes airborne as he heads in the winning goal against Tajikistan during their AFC Challenge Cup match at the Sugathadasa Stadium in Colombo yesterday.



PHOTO: INTERNET

Dashing Bangladesh opener Tamim Iqbal pulls one on the second day of the one-off Test against New Zealand in Hamilton yesterday. Tamim scored a quickfire 56 off 48 balls before bad light stopped play.

NATIONAL CRICKET LEAGUE

Robiul gives Khulna edge

Cricket

SPORTS REPORTER

Pacer Robiul Islam tore Dhaka apart with a five-for to put Khulna on top after the end of second day's play of the four-day 11th National Cricket League at the Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium in Chittagong yesterday.

Khulna's new ball pair Robiul and Dollar Mahmud triggered a collapse soon after Dhaka resumed their innings with nine for no loss. They together captured seven wickets as Dhaka were bundled out for 111 runs to give Khulna a handsome 133-run first innings lead.

Robiul, who initiated the rot by removing Rony Talukdar for 7 runs, claimed five wickets for 30 runs while Dollar picked up two for 40 runs. Dhaka however managed to cross the three-digit figure, thanks to a 45-run eighth wicket stand between Nadif Chowdhury (27) and Mohammad Sharif (20 not out).

Khulna extended their lead to 331 runs as they scored 198 runs for three wickets in the second innings before stumps were drawn for

the day. Opener Amit Majumder hit 125-ball 68 that featured 13 boundaries while Mohammad Mithun put the opposition bowlers to the sword by scoring run-a-ball 62 that contained six fours and four sixes.

At the Shaheed Chandu Stadium in Bogra, leaders Rajshahi tightened their grip around Chittagong. Two overnight batsmen Anisur Rahman (70) and Forhad Hossain (56) completed their fifties as Rajshahi managed a 60-run first innings lead. Resuming the day on 125 for three, Rajshahi were all out for 258 runs in reply to Chittagong's 198.

Chittagong top order suffered similar batting blues like the first innings but seasoned batsman Faisal Hossain restored the party for his team by making unbeaten 62 as Chittagong scored 183 for five before stumps were drawn for the day.

Left-arm spinner Saqlain Sajib took two wickets for 53 runs.

BRIEF SCORES
RAJSHAHI V CHITTAGONG

CHITTAGONG: First innings 198 and second innings 183 for five in 40 overs (Salahuddin 25, SEE PAGE 18 COL 1

Mashrafe flies for Australia

SPORTS REPORTER

Pace spearhead Mashrafe Bin Mortaza will fly for Australia today to have a check-up of his injured knees.

The "Narail Express" was all set to make his comeback in international cricket in New Zealand after a break of seven months but suffered a viral fever at the eleventh hour to prolong his absence.

"I am now looking forward to the home series against England if my Australian surgeon gives green signal. It was actually bad luck that I missed the New Zealand trip. I hope everything would be okay with me to play in the coming home series," said Mashrafe yesterday.

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HAMILTON TEST

Guptill, McCullum put Tigers to the sword

Cricket

CRICINFO, undated

A terrific 339-run sixth-wicket stand between Martin Guptill and Brendon McCullum put hosts New Zealand firmly in the driver's seat against Bangladesh on the second day of the one-off Test at Seddon Park in Hamilton yesterday.

Both batsmen came agonisingly close to maiden double-centuries, before falling to an inspired Rubel Hossain spell soon after drinks in the second session, and the Kiwis

later declared with a massive total of 553 for seven.

Bangladesh started their innings in smashing form, with Tamim Iqbal looking comfortable against the New Zealand bowlers, but the visitors still face a mountain to climb as they reached 87 for one by stumps.

Guptill (189) and McCullum (185) had batted faultlessly until that point, scoring heavily on both sides of the pitch in the first session by making full use of a surface that had significantly improved for batting from Day One. The Bangladesh attack

was unimaginative in the morning, continually bowling short with men back on the square boundary, even as the New Zealand batsmen picked the gaps between them with deft precision. Guptill exploited the short pitched bowling well, repeatedly flaying errant deliveries to the backward point fence, and brought up his maiden Test century from 188 balls early in the day. McCullum too, was especially brutal on the pull, heaving Shaiful Islam over the square leg boundary to bring up his fourth Test ton and his second against Bangladesh.

The batsmen continued to make merry in the morning, preying on lacklustre bowling and wearing down the opposition fielders with some slippery running between the wickets. McCullum was the first to reach 150, with Guptill following suit just before the break, after a spate of boundaries off the Bangladesh pacemen towards the end of the session.

Shakib Al Hasan's ploy to relax his aggressive field placings after lunch made for a more sedate start to the second session, in which a revitalised

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What to WATCH

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

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

STAR Sports
English Premier League
Wigan v Bolton
Live from 1:55am (Thursday)

ESPN
Sportscentre India
Sports News
Live at 8:30pm

TEN Sports
UEFA Champions League
FC Porto v Arsenal
Live from 1:45am (Thursday)



PHOTO: STAR

Khulna pacer Robiul Islam (L) celebrates taking the wicket of Dhaka's Robin on the second day of the four-day 11th National Cricket League match at the Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium in Chittagong yesterday.

DU annual athletics

SPORTS REPORTER

Dhaka University Inter-Hall Annual Athletics Competition finished yesterday at the central playground. Jagannath Hall became champions while Sir AF Rahman Hall became runners-up in the men's team event.

In the women's team event, Begum Rokeya Hall became champions while Fazilatunnesa Mujib Hall became runners up. Mohammad Rajon Mia of Sir AF Rahman Hall became individual champion and Mohammad Amanullah of Zahurul Haque Hall became runners up in that category.

In the women's individual, Merzan Binte Azad of Fazilatunnesa Mujib Hall became champion while Afrin Afroze of Begum Rokeya Hall became runner up.

Lee's apprehension

Cricket

CRICINFO, undated

Brett Lee has conceded that he might never bowl again, although he has not completely given up hope of returning to international cricket. Lee is recovering from elbow surgery that he described as the most painful he had ever encountered and he remains uncertain of when or if he will be able to resume bowling.

The operation in early December ruled Lee out of Australia's entire home summer of Tests and ODIs and he has not played at any level since mid-November. Lee, 33, last walked out in a Test team in December 2008 and while he remains an important one-day player when fit, he knows his future depends on how he recovers from his latest injury.

"As far as my cricket goes, anything is possible," Lee told the Herald Sun. "I may play one-dayers, or no cricket at all. I may never bowl another ball and if that's the case, I'm so satisfied with my career and my longevity. I'm not saying it's definitely over, but I'm not sure what I want to be just yet."

"To be perfectly honest, I'm not sure what I still want to do in my cricketing life. I need to get to the stage where, if I want to, I can do what I need to do on the field. If it's the case that I don't play again, well, that's the case. There is a part of me that would like to play some sort of cricket again."

Lee has endured plenty of injuries over his decade-long international career but has still found time to take 310 Test wickets at 30.81 and 324 ODI wickets at 23.01. However, he said the elbow problem was proving especially tough to get over.

"This has been the hardest surgery I've been through," he said. "It's certainly been the most painful. There's no miracle treatment for me. It's taking time. I still don't know when I'll be able to bowl again. I can't even give you an exact time. I will see how the arm pulls up because I can't achieve any aspirations in cricket unless my body is functional."

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CYCLING FIASCO

Atahar will submit report at 'right time'

SPORTS REPORTER

Sheikh Atahar Hossain, director (admin) of the National Sports Council (NSC) who has been entrusted with the task of investigating the incident during recent South Asian Games' women's 50-kilometre cycling road race mass start in Khulna, has finished his Khulna-part of investigation.

And he is adamant to submit his report to the 'proper authority' at the 'right time'.

Atahar, a civil servant with a rank of a deputy secretary, reached Khulna on Sunday to look into the February 1 matter which not only cost hosts Bangladesh a medal, but also tarnished the country's image on the world map.

The Games turned dirty and ugly when Marma Fatema Chingby was spotted for receiving an undue push from an overenthusiastic official -- said to be Walid Hossain, an ex-general secretary of Bangladesh Cycling Federation -- during competition and was eventually disqualified despite finishing first in the event at Fakirhat turning point in Bagerhat district. It was also learnt that Fatema Chingby and the other Bangladeshi cyclist did not take the compulsory U-turn.

Our Khulna correspondent reports that after talking with high-ups like Mayor Talukder Abdul Khaleque, Divisional Commissioner Md. Eunusur Rahman, Deputy Commissioner NM Ziaul Alam, Assistant Superintendent of Police Arefin

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KOLKATA TEST

Laxman, Dhoni put India on top

Cricket

AFP, Kolkata

Venkatsai Laxman and Mahendra Singh Dhoni slammed unbeaten centuries to put India in firm control of the second and final Test against South Africa on Tuesday.

Laxman hit 143 and Dhoni made 132 as India piled up a record 643-6 before declaring their first innings shortly before stumps on the third day at the Eden Gardens in Kolkata.

The tourists, trailing by 347 runs, were six for no loss in their second knock when play was called off due to bad light after just five deliveries from Zaheer Khan.

India's powerful batting boosted their chances of squaring the series after they lost the first Test in Nagpur by an innings and six runs.

A drawn series will also enable Dhoni's men to retain their number one position in the official Test rankings.

India's total was their highest against South Africa, surpassing the 627 during the Chennai Test in 2008.

Laxman and Dhoni put on 259 for the unbroken seventh wicket as India lost just one wicket, of nightwatchman Amit Mishra, during the day.

Laxman, who missed the Nagpur Test due to a finger injury, played some trademark pulls and drives for his 15th Test century and the fourth at the Eden Gardens. Dhoni clobbered part-time

spinner Jean-Paul Duminy for two sixes in a row and another off Paul Harris to underline India's dominance over the second-ranked Proteas.

There were four centuries in India's innings after Virender Sehwag and Sachin Tendulkar made hundreds on Monday.

The South Africans, who made 296 in their first knock,

squandered a few chances in the field, which could prove costly as they seek their first Test series victory in India for nearly a decade.

Duminy spilled his second catch of the match when he dropped Laxman on 48 at backward point off Wayne Parnell (0-103).

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PHOTO: AFP

India skipper Mahendra Singh Dhoni (R) congratulates teammate VVS Laxman after he scored a century on the third day of the second and final Test against South Africa at the Eden Gardens in Kolkata yesterday. Dhoni too scored his century on the day.