

## AFC CHALLENGE CUP - COLOMBO

# Booters' tame exit

SPORTS REPORTER



Bangladesh ended their AFC Challenge Cup finals campaign in a pathetic way when the 10-man team went 3-0 down to a second-string Sri Lanka side in their last group match at the Sugathadasa Stadium in Colombo yesterday.

In order to confirm a semifinal place in the tournament for the third-tier Asian nations, Bangladesh not only needed a win against hosts Sri Lanka but also needed to win by a big margin as Tajikistan and Myanmar also locked horns to secure the last four place from the same group.

With Myanmar leading the points table with maximum six points from two outings, Bangladesh and Tajikistan started their respective games with three points each at the same time -- Bangladesh taking on Sri Lanka while Tajikistan played against Myanmar.

Last year's runners-up Tajikistan thrashed Myanmar 3-0 to emerge group champions by goal difference while Myanmar finished group runners-up to qualify for the semifinals.

Bangladesh, who made a stunning

start beating former champions Tajikistan 2-1 in their first match before going down 1-2 to Myanmar despite having dominated the match, were dealt a huge blow with just seven minutes on when Mohammed Kaiz put Sri Lanka ahead, firing home a low shot after Shanmugarajah Sanjeev headed a speculative long ball into his path.

Things got worse for Bangladesh when goalkeeper and captain Aminul Haque was sent off in the 37th minute by Thai referee Chiya Mahapab as Sri Lankan Kaiz was body-checked by Aminul when the skipper latched on to a defensive blunder, broke clear down the right flank and with only Aminul to beat to score his and his side's second, according to the official website of the Asian Football Confederation.

Bangladesh took off striker Enamul Haque to bring on second goalkeeper Biplab Bhattacharjee, But that could not keep the Sri Lankans from scoring as they doubled the lead in the stoppage time of the first half when Chathura Gunarathne struck a freekick that took a wicked deflection off the wall and looped into the net leaving Biplab completely flat-footed.

Bangladesh conceded the third one in the 78th minute when Fazul Rahman found the back of the net after latching on

to a through ball and skipping past the goalkeeper to shoot into an empty net.

It was the third and the best ever victory for Sri Lanka against Bangladesh their 11 previous meetings. With this win, Sri Lanka put Bangladesh behind to finish third, virtue of a superior goal difference.

Bangladesh coach Saiful Bari Titu said the eagerness to winning by a big margin in the group final match let them down against Sri Lanka.

"In a bid to qualify for the semifinals with a big margin victory, the boys took too much pressure and went down in the early which was the main reason behind our defeat," Titu told Daily Star by phone from Colombo.

Titu also admitted that his side failed to reproduce their impressive performances of first two matches against Sri Lanka as they could not defend their territory according to strategy.

After going down in the seventh minute, Bangladesh's chances of bouncing back were evaporated when Aminul was sent off on the half-hour mark.

"Our chances of coming back into the game ended when Aminul was given marching orders but we never played defensively and went all-out and ended up conceding two more goals," said the

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Bangladesh goalkeeper Aminul Haque makes a save during their AFC Challenge Cup clash against hosts Sri Lanka at the Sugathadasa Stadium in Colombo yesterday. The Bangladesh captain was later given marching orders in the 37th minute.

PHOTO: COURTESY

# Shakib third best Test all-rounder



SPORTS REPORTER

Virender Sehwag, the Indian opener, has taken the No. 1 spot in the ICC Test rankings after hitting successive centuries against South Africa. With a rapid 165 in the Kolkata Test, which India won to stay top of the ICC rankings for teams, and 109 in Nagpur before that, Sehwag has displaced good friend and fellow Test opener Gautam Gambhir.

Sehwag sits top of the pile with 863 points, while Gambhir has dropped to fifth position with 824. He had tremendous success in 2009 -- an average of 108.98 in six Tests -- and in the four Tests he has played this year, Sehwag already has two centuries. He was also the

recipient of the prize for best Test innings, for the second year running, for the ESPNcricinfo Awards where his audacious 293 against Sri Lanka in Mumbai was chosen over four other nominations shortlisted for the award.

South Africa's Hashim Amla, whose three centuries in three innings against India earned him two Man-of-the-Match awards and the Man-of-the-Series accolade, has leaped to second place in the rankings with 842 points. Sachin Tendulkar, who also scored two centuries in the two-Test series with South Africa, occupies sixth place with 805 points.

In the ICC Player Rankings for Test all-rounders, Bangladesh's Shakib Al Hasan continues his rise, gaining a further two places to sit in third position on the log. The 22-year-old scored 87 and 100 in his team's one-off Test

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## Bashar starts new innings

SPORTS REPORTER

Former national cricket captain Habibul Bashar is all set to start his new journey as an official as he will supervise a BKSP Under-17 team in an invitational tournament in India.

The team leaves Dhaka today to play the WFL Afro-Asian T20 tournament in Hyderabad where teams from Pakistan, Sri Lanka, South Africa and Zimbabwe apart from the hosts will also take part.

"Actually the organisers have selected some former players as 'icon leaders' to supervise the team in the tournament. Yes, it's a new journey for me," said Bashar, who recently announced his retirement from all forms of cricket.

## Asif fails again

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh's ace shooter Asif Hossain Khan again showed his inconsistency when he finished fifth in the individual 10m air rifle event in the Commonwealth Shooting Championship at the Dr. Karni Singh Shooting Range in New Delhi, India yesterday.

Asif scored 586 out of 600, eight less than what he had scored on Friday on way to winning bronze medal in the team 10m air rifle event pairing with Shovon Chowdhury, to finish eighth in the qualification round. But later he recovered from his poor performance in the shot-off to be content with the fifth place, informed National Shooting Federation, Bangladesh

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# Tigers back home

## Ashrafal may still stay put!



SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh cricket team was scheduled to return home last night after the series in New Zealand where some individual achievements by the Tigers hogged spotlights even in defeats against the Black Caps. Shakib Al Hasan's men will hardly get any rest as they have to prepare for the home series against England who arrive here tonight to play three one-day internationals and two Tests.

But within this short time the national selectors, led by Rafiqul Alam, will have to reassess the top-order batting, which was terrible on the New Zealand trip, particularly many will be looking forward to seeing the fate of former national skipper Mohammad Ashrafal who continued his poor form in this tour as well to make the tag of 'consistently inconsistent' even more consistent.

The general sentiment after the home series against India was that this heavy-weight underachiever should be thrown out of the team for the New Zealand trip but the selection panel came up with the impression that Ashrafal was 'indispensable'. But this time it was not only the general sentiment rather coach Jamie Siddons also pointed his fingers at the right-hander by saying that "We might have to reassess Ashrafal when we get back".

Chief selector Rafiqul however was not ready to single out any player for the top-order failure and he was also against any

changes in the team which, he believed, had been playing good and competitive cricket over the last sixteen months.

"I am not in favour of any major changes in the team. We go for change only if it's needed for condition. This young team has been playing good and competitive cricket because of collective effort. We are a bit concerned about the top-order batting but we can't blame only one player for this failure," said Rafiqul when asked about Ashrafal's continued failure.

It seemed that the chief selector was ready to tolerate Ashrafal further in the hope of a once in a blue moon performance.

The former national player was also happy with the outcome of the New Zealand series.

"Yes we lost all matches on the tour, but we only lost badly in the first two one-day matches. There were signs of improvement in the team. I am very much hopeful with this team," said a confident Rafiqul.

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# Woods says sorry



AFP, Ponte Vedra Beach, Florida

An emotional Tiger Woods haws apologised for his "irresponsible and selfish behaviour" as the golf superstar broke his silence on the sex scandal that engulfed him last year.

In a brutally honest self-assessment broadcast live around the world Friday, the 34-year-old admitted to a string of infidelities and confirmed he had been undergoing treatment in a rehabilitation center for 45 days.

However after repeatedly apologising to family, friends and fans during his 13-minute address, Woods did not con-

firm when he would return to golf, saying only that it would be "one day," possibly this year.

"I want to say to each of you simply and directly: I am deeply sorry for my irresponsible and selfish behaviour engaged in," Woods told a hand-picked audience of friends and journalists at the USPGA Tour Headquarters in Florida.

"I was unfaithful. I had affairs. I cheated. What I did is not acceptable, and I am the only person to blame," a humbled Woods said, at times staring directly into the camera during his blunt admissions of wrongdoing and apology to his fans and associates.

"For all that I have done, I am so sorry. I have a lot to atone for."

Woods's squeaky-clean image was left in tatters last year after a mysterious late-night car crash outside his home in Florida was followed by a string of lurid revelations about his personal life.

More than a dozen women were linked to the billionaire sports star in the weeks following the car crash. Woods later admitted "transgressions" but had not been seen or spoken in public until this week.

On Friday he emerged before a spellbound nation for the biggest televised mea culpa since president Bill Clinton admitted an "inappropriate" relationship with Monica Lewinsky in 1998.

Friday's apology even

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PHOTO: INTERNET

Russia's Maria Sharapova in action against Petra Kvitova of the Czech Republic during their WTA Championship encounter at Memphis in Tennessee on Friday.

## Andy ousted but Maria moves on

AFP, Memphis

Eighth-seeded Sam Querrey upset top-seeded Andy Roddick 7-5, 3-6, 6-1 to book a semifinal berth Friday as top seed Maria Sharapova moved into the women's final at this combined ATP/WTA tennis tournament.

Querrey, who lost to Roddick in the San Jose semifinals last week despite never facing a break point, poured it on in the third set to notch his best result in Memphis.

Roddick's double-fault in the second game of the third set gave Querrey the upper hand, and Querrey made the most of it.

"You're not going to get that too many times from Andy, but I'll take it," said Querrey. "When that rare opportunity comes, you've just got to take advantage of it. I thought I did a good job there, and just kept the momentum going and played an unbelievable third set."

"It was disappointing," said Roddick. "Today I played one sloppy game in the third set and that was it. Sometimes at this level there's not much in between it."

With the victory America's Querrey improved on his quarterfinal finishes here in 2007 and 2009.

In the semifinals he'll take on 21-year-old Latvian Ernests Gulbis, who rallied for a 3-6, 6-3, 7-6 (7/3) victory over fifth-seeded Czech Tomas Berdych.

Gulbis trailed 4-1 in the final set when he received treatment on his left knee, then rallied for the victory.

He said the patella tendinitis that bothered him was a long-term problem.

"I've been dealing with for more than one-and-a-half years," Gulbis said, adding that

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## INDIA-SOUTH AFRICA 1ST ODI TODAY

# Teams hit by injuries



CRICINFO, undated

The Test series wasn't closely fought -- both India and South Africa won by an innings -- in the conventional sense but the matches were intense and dramatic contests. It has, thus, left everybody hoping that the ODI series, that starts today at Jaipur, will be as interesting.

Some key players are missing from both sides but, as Australia proved on their last trip in India, the absence of personnel can be overcome.

For India, who were beaten by a severely-depleted Australian team, this is a chance to raise their limited-overs game to a level they are capable of. Their last ODI outing was a tri-series in Bangladesh, where they lost in the final to Sri Lanka, who reopened some old wounds. The pitch had something for the seamers and the Indian batting line-up folded cheaply. South Africa might not get the pitches necessary to

exploit India's vulnerability but it's bound to be an interesting battle.

This three-match series will offer a greater Test for South Africa. They will miss Graeme Smith and without him the top-order, even with the inclusion of the in-form Hashim Amla, doesn't have the same strength. Much will depend on AB de Villiers, who had a quiet Test series, if they are to put up totals around 300.

The first game is huge for India ahead of the 2011 World Cup as Jaipur has faced some terror threats and the cricket world will be watching how the security issue is handled. It's been reported that there will be unprecedented levels of security: the Indian Air Force will be manning the skies and the police have divided the city into five centres -- the airport, the route leading to the hotel and stadium, the team hotel, and one each inside and outside the stadium.

The question remains will Yusuf Pathan finally prove what he is capable of in the international arena? Yusuf has done well in the

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## Cook-led England arrive here today



SPORTS REPORTER

The England cricket team, led by Alastair Cook, will arrive in Dhaka tonight for a month-long tour consisting of three one-day internationals and two Tests.

The team will be accompanied by a big official contingent of fifteen members.

Two separate teams have been announced for the one-day and Test series which will kick off with a limited-overs warm-up game against the Bangladesh Cricket Board XI on February 23 at the Fatullah Cricket Stadium where the second one-day warm-up game will also be held on February 25.

The first two one-day internationals will be held at

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## ITINERARY

Feb 23:	Warm-up one-dayer against BCB XI at Fatullah
Feb 25:	Warm-up one-dayer against BCB XI at Fatullah
Feb 28:	1st ODI at Mirpur (day-night)
Mar 2:	2nd ODI at Mirpur (day-night)
Mar 5:	3rd ODI at Chittagong
Mar 7-9:	3-dayer against Bangladesh A at Chittagong
Mar 12-16:	1st Test at Chittagong
Mar 20-24:	2nd Test at Mirpur



<b>STAR Cricket</b>
Australia v West Indies First T20I Live from 1:30pm
<b>NEO Cricket &amp; SuperSport2</b>
India v South Africa First ODI Live from 3:00pm
<b>STAR Sports</b>
English Premier League Blackburn v Bolton Live from 5:55pm
Aston Villa v Burnley Live from 8:00pm
Wigan v Tottenham Live from 10:00pm
<b>ESPN</b>
English Premier League Man City v Liverpool