

## Ashraful axed finally

### Shuvo the lone new face on Tigers team

Cricket

SPORTS REPORTER

The axe finally fell on Mohammad Ashraful for poor form as national selectors announced a 13-member squad last night for the three-match one-day series against visiting England.

All focus was on Ashraful as it was not only the public sentiment but also the board members, most of whom were in favour of giving the out-of-form batsman a break in the upcoming home series and the Rafiqul Alam-led selection panel finally took the popular decision.

The selection committee announced but not before the team last night some drama as it they submitted a squad. But the approved the name of batsman Hasan. Shahadat Nazmul Hossain and Hossain were players the last team New Zealand rounder Shuvo was the only the team. As Mashrafe Bin Mortaza side after he red himself to make a come-back to international cricket after an eight-month break.

It was however Ashraful who had been under the spotlight for the last few days in selection debate as the selectors had been in a huge dilemma with the decision on the out-of-form batsman. But apparently it was the player himself who made the job easy for Rafiqul and company to make sure the heavy-weight underachiever is thrown out of the team for the second

time in his career.

"Ashraful himself wanted a break and we also felt that the pressure on him had increased to the extent that his confidence was at an all time low. We believe that a gap from international cricket would be of beneficial for him and he will come back strongly soon and do justice to his calibre," Rafiqul explained their reason behind the decision.

"Just think he was not even in a position to take the pressure of a practice match and that's why he had decided to play the National Cricket League instead of playing the warm-up game against England," said Rafiqul, whose selection panel came under huge criticism when they selected Ashraful for the New Zealand tour despite the batsman made a crime against India during the home series.

Rafiqul expressed satisfaction over the inclusion of premier pace-Mashrafe. "He has played in match today against [Thursday, England] and he declared fit by his like Mashrafe has prove regarding confidence in match player,"

On the other hand he believed that the inclusion of Shuvo depth to the team because he is not only a left-spinner but also a very useful late middle-order batsman.

"He [Shuvo] is a very capable cricketer and is in the team as a specialist left-arm spinner. He can also be a more-than-handful batsman in the middle- and lower-order batsman and is a top fielder. He is someone who has progressed step by step through the development system and has been a consistent performer at Academy and A Team levels over the years," he defended Shuvo's selection.

"Considering the condition and opponents we chose three pacers," said Rafiqul.

The chief selector said that pacers Nazmul Hossain and Shahadat Hossain were left out because of team combination while batsman Rokibul was dropped just for poor form.

Rafiqul however denied that they submitted a 14-member team.



WHERE AM I GOING WRONG? BCB XI's national pace spearhead Mashrafe Bin Mortaza talks to himself after being hit for another boundary during an expensive second spell in the second and final limited-overs warm-up match against England at the Fatullah Cricket Stadium yesterday.

## C'WEALTH SHOOTING C'SHIPS

### Bangladesh's lone bronze

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh pair Iqbal Islam and Noor Uddin Salim bagged a bronze medal in the Commonwealth Shooting Championship yesterday at the Dr Karni Singh Shooting Range in New Delhi.

It was another dry day for Bangladesh who won a single silver medal on Wednesday.

Iqbal (90) and Salim (85) added 175 points between themselves to land the third spot in the skeet shooting event, won by India. The silver went to England.

In another event, 50m prone badge and pairs, Sabrina Sultana (585) came 11th while Tripti Dutta (564) came as low as 22nd.

The Scottish pair of Jennifer and Sheena won gold while England's Michelle and Sharon bagged silver.

## MCC bids for IPL team

CRICINFO, undated

The MCC has confirmed it has explored the possibility of joining a consortium bidding to buy an IPL franchise. There are two new franchises, which will be revealed on March 7, up for grabs with 12 Indian cities in the running.

Bidding starts from a base price of US\$225m, more than four times the US\$50m base price that the original eight franchises were auctioned for in 2008. Lalit Modi, the IPL commissioner, previously announced that "a very famous football club in the UK is very interested in bidding"

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### SQUAD

Shakib Al Hasan (captain), Mushfiqur Rahim (vice-captain), Tamim Iqbal, Imrul Kayes, Zunaed Siddiqui, Aftab Ahmed, Mahmudullah Riyad, Nayeem Islam, Mashrafe Bin Mortaza, Abdur Razzak, Rubel Hossain, Shaiful Islam, Sohrwardi Shuvo.



PHOTO: STAR

OBEDIENT PUPILS: Bangladesh cricket coach Jamie Siddons (C) is telling something to his charges who attentively listen to that prior to a practice session at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.

## NAT'L WOMEN'S CHESS

### Masuda keeps solo lead

SPORTS REPORTER

Masuda Begum of Barisal maintained her solo lead with 4 and a half points after the end of the fifth round in the preliminary phase of the 31st National Women Chess Championship at the Bangladesh Chess Federation Hall Room yesterday.

Six players, Nazrana Khan Eva of Manikgonj, WFM Zakia Sultana, Jahannara Haque Runu, Shamiha Sharmin Shimmi, Protiva Talukder of Rajshahi and Amena Khatun of Moulvibazar share the 2nd position with 4 points each.

Masuda drew with Runu, Protiva beat Farjana Hossain Anne, Shimmi beat Aeon Sarkar, Amena beat Feroza Haque Chowdhury Popy, Moly beat Arifa Khatun Moni and Mithila drew with Titli in the fifth round matches.

## NATIONAL CRICKET LEAGUE

### Ctg plunder Dhaka

SPORTS REPORTER

Chittagong posted a massive 218-run victory against Dhaka on the fourth day of their second round match of the second phase of the 11th National Cricket League at the Sheikh Abu Naser Stadium in Khulna yesterday.

Chasing an improbable winning target of 404, there was only one practical outcome left for Dhaka to make a draw by batting almost the whole day and it was a chance for out-of-form Mohammad Ashraful to take the opportunity but the right-hander continued his poor form.

Marshal Ayub and first innings centurion Mehrab Hossain showed a little bit resistance but their efforts were not good enough to save the match as Dhaka were bundled out for 185 to suffer the heavy defeat. Marshal faced 124 balls to score 47 runs while Mehrab negotiated 102 balls to score 35.

Occasional spinner Faisal Hossain was the most successful bowler with three for 39 runs. Sunny took two wickets for 78 runs while three batsmen fell victim to run outs.

Away at the BKSP cricket ground, the match between Rajshahi and Khulna ended in a draw with no play possible on the fourth and final day due to a wet out field.

### SCORES IN BRIEF

**RAJSHAHI:** First innings 269 for 9 (dec) and Second innings 221 for six in 67.4 overs (Zahurul 54, Sabbir 76, Forhad 23, Anisur 24, extras 22; Rasel 2-56, Dollar 2-52).

**KHULNA:** First innings 243 all out. Result: Match drawn

**CHITTAGONG:** First innings 312 and Second innings (overnight 325-8) 330 for nine dec in 91 overs (Salahuddin 20, Mahbulul 19, Nazimuddin 136, Faisal 59, Arman 32, Sunny 28, extras 20; Sharif 2-64, Rony 2-27, Ashraful 2-32, Nadif 2-64).

**DHAKA:** First innings 239 all out and Second innings 185 all out in 71 overs (Marshal 47, Ashraful 21, Mehrab 35, Shuvagato 24, extras 7; Faisal 3-39, Sunny 2-78). Result: Chittagong won by 218 runs.

## Aussie-NZ 1st T20 today

AGENCIES, undated

Australia will try to mess up New Zealand's successful summer at home when they face off in the first Twenty20 international in Wellington today.

New Zealand have had a great time, losing only one match so far, the second Test against Pakistan. They have played more Twenty20 internationals -- 31 -- than any other country but have not quite mastered the format, with 13 victories. These games are the last chance for both sides to prepare and ascertain their best line-ups before the ICC World Twenty20, which starts in the Caribbean in late April.

The visitors are on a busy schedule, playing a match in another country in the space of three days. The last Twenty20 against West Indies in Sydney was followed by a quick flight across the ditch to Wellington for the first match on a month-long tour of New Zealand. They are coming off a home summer in which they did not lose a match in any format but New Zealand in their own conditions could be a tougher challenge. It is also Michael Clarke's first tour officially in charge of Australia's Twenty20 team -- he captained them in England

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## Mashrafe flat on return

### Eng win easy in 2nd warm-up one-dayer against BCB XI

Cricket

SPORTS REPORTER

Mashrafe Bin Mortaza made his long awaited comeback with an unspectacular performance against England at the Fatullah Cricket Stadium yesterday. The 27-year old from Narail, who has had numerous injuries throughout his career, made his comeback when he took the field as part of a BCB XI against the touring England side in a limited overs practice match.

The tourists walked off with an easy eight-wicket victory in a shortened match due to a wet outfield. Batting first, the BCB XI scored 151 for eight in their allotted 37 overs. Young paceman Alauddin Babu made the highest 43 not out, while Tanvir Haider got 35. The former and current batsmen from the national fold who were included in this game -- Shahriar Nafees (8), Zunaed Siddiqui (7), Aftab Ahmed (12)

and Rokibul Hasan (14) all fell early to the pace and bounce of the England bowlers on a green top wicket. Mashrafe's stint lasted all of three balls, yielding a duck.

England in contrast coasted to their target in 25.2 overs for the loss of two wickets, thanks to an unbeaten 64 off 57 balls from wicketkeeper Matthew Prior and a 52 run knock from skipper Alastair Cook.

Ace paceman Mashrafe has been out of one-day cricket since January 2009 when he played against Zimbabwe at home. His last international match was the first Test against West Indies at Kingston back in July 2009 where he had to limp out on the third day. So, all the focus in this match was how he would cope with the pressure of playing against an international side.

Mashrafe however did little to set himself apart, either with his fast bowling or batting. The pitch that the game was played on yesterday was a green top, an ideal one to welcome him back. He started

his spell pretty well maintaining a tight line and length, although he didn't bowl at a great speed for fear of losing his accuracy.

His first spell of six overs read 6-1-25-0.

Mashrafe returned towards the fog end of the game for two more overs, when the English had already started hurrying to head back to their hotel. He got plenty of stick in those two overs conceding 23 more runs, 17 from his last over embellishing his figures to 8-1-48-0. He induced one opportunity from English skipper Alastair Cook, a caught and bowled chance that he let slip on the follow-through.

But the man whose career has been dogged by injuries was satisfied with his day's work, though he admitted things could have been much different had he grasped on to the catch of Cook.

"I am just happy to be back. It is great to get an opportunity to be a practice match against such a big side after missing out on so many days. If I get a recall, I

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## 'Immortal at 200'

Cricket

APP, New Delhi

Indian media lined up on Thursday to shower the 'God' Sachin Tendulkar with front-page tributes and predict the record-shattering batsman was not finished yet.

Tendulkar, who turns 37 in April, smashed the first-ever double century in one-day international cricket on Wednesday, pouncing the South African bowlers with 25 boundaries and three sixes.

Tendulkar's landmark dominated the front pages of leading newspapers, even overshadowing India-Pakistan diplomatic talks.

"Immortal at 200", screamed a banner headline in the Times of India, while the Indian Express ran a half-page photo of a celebrating Tendulkar with the word "God!"

A similar front-page photo in the Hindustan Times, headlined "200 not out", was followed by an appreciation by Tendulkar's former team-mate and bowling great Anil Kumble.

"The way he celebrated when he reached his 200 epitomised the man's persona," Kumble, an ex-India captain, wrote.

"There were no running laps around the field, no aggressive gestures, nothing over-the-top.

"He did what he always does. Raised both his arms, closed his eyes for a moment and quietly acknowledged it had been done.

"If the youngsters in the team can take even 10 per cent of what he does, they will be better cricketers for it."

The Times of India highlighted the veteran's scintillating form in the last 12 months, during which he has hit 10 interna-

tional centuries, including six in Test cricket. "Treasure this new, improved Tendulkar," the paper said. "He is, by far, still India's most valuable player, and will remain so till he decides to call it quits."

Tendulkar, who made his debut in

1989, has scored 13,447 runs with 47 hundreds in 166 Tests, and 17,598 runs with 46 centuries in 442 one-day matches.

Former India captain Sunil Gavaskar rated Tendulkar over legendary Australian

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PHOTO: APP

TALK OF THE COUNTRY: Sachin Tendulkar's landmark achievement of the first-ever double century in one-day international cricket dominated the front pages of all leading newspapers of India, even overshadowing India-Pakistan diplomatic talks yesterday.

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