

FINAL BD-ENG ODI TODAY

All's well that ends well

ATIQUE ANAM from Chittagong

Bangladesh take on England in the third and final one-dayer of the three match Beximco ODI Series at the Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium here today. While the game is a dead rubber in terms of the series, the Tigers will feel they have another chance to end their barren run against the last frontier unconquered. The pitch that has been prepared for this match is hard and looks a very good batting track but is expected to have some turn later in the day.

"When we play in home conditions, we prefer to make our plans spin-oriented. It looks like a good batting track, there will be some runs as the outfield is fast too. But once the ball starts to spin later, it might turn more than in Dhaka. It might be a bit difficult to bat later," said Bangladesh captain Shakib Al Hasan.

Spin was what ran England down to the very end in the second match in Mirpur accounting for seven wickets out of eight to fall but England got home in the penultimate over riding on an unbeaten hundred from Eoin Morgan.

"They did not play spin that

well. If it turned more in the earlier matches, they might have been in a lot more trouble. Morgan played really well, as he did when he played against us for Ireland. [Paul] Collingwood doesn't look that confident even though he played well in the first game. But overall, I think they have problem facing spin."

With the confidence gained from that match, Shakib believes that a long-awaited win against England might be round the corner.

"We have been playing at a level for the last 18 months or so where we had never been. We are consistently making

big scores which wasn't the case previously. It's just a matter of all departments clicking on a particular day.

"Probably one or two decisions not going our way, a few catches being dropped or even one or two mistakes I have made are proving dear. But the way we are improving right now, we will need just a step forward to start winning."

Coach Jamie Siddons was also expecting at least another good fight, if not a win, from his boys in the last match. Lavishing praise on their ground fielding and the enthusiasm of the players, he cited his continuous concern

for the number three and four positions.

"The number three and four positions are a big concern for us. No one is clicking in those positions. Mushfiqur [Rahim] has proved a temporary solution in number four, at least under home conditions. Tamim [Iqbal] and Imrul [Kayes] are doing well at the top. Shakib and Mahmudullah [Riyad] too are doing great in their positions. Those who were tested in those positions [Aftab Ahmed, Mohammad Ashraful] have failed consistently in recent times."

For his counterpart Andy Flower, this tour and the match in particular, holds bigger significance for the England coach as they will have to face Bangladesh at this venue in the World Cup in a year's time.

"This series has been a great learning experience for us, to get used to the conditions. The World Cup in 2011 is very vital and we are taking it as a good rehearsal since the matches have been so keenly contested.

"Bangladesh have played some very good cricket in the series, but it's nice that we have wrapped up the series 2-0. Hope it will be 3-0 tomorrow. And we don't want to lose, since that will not only slur our unbeaten record, but also cost us 3 important points in the ICC rankings."

The number of injuries to their players, though, concerns the former wicketkeeper batsman from Zimbabwe.

Ryan Sidebottom has been ruled out for the match and the Test series as well with his

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PHOTO: ZOBAER HOSSAIN SIKDER

BOTH HAVE TO CLICK: If Bangladesh are to win the third and final ODI against England today, captain Shakib Al Hasan (L) and opener Tamim Iqbal, who are here seen stretching at the Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium in Chittagong yesterday, have to lead from the front.

AIRCEL-PGTI GOLF

Siddikur joint 4th

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh golfer Mohammad Siddikur Rahman is tied jointly in fourth place with five other professionals after the first round of the Aircel-PGTI Players Championship at the Panchkula Golf Club in India yesterday.

Siddikur has a score of two under 70 and is some way behind leader Ranjit Singh of Chandigarh who produced a fabulous seven under 65 to grab the lead. Dinesh Raghuvanshi of Pune fired a four under 68 to

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DMFL's new body formed

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) formed an 11-member new Dhaka Metropolis Football League (DMFL) committee yesterday.

Harunur Rashid has been named chairman while Badal Roy and Golam Rabbani Helal made deputy chairmen.

The other members are Fazlur Rahman Babul, Azfar-uz-Zaman Sohrab, Mainul Islam Moyna, Sabbir Hossain, Saleh Zaman Selim, Abu Hasan Chowdhury Prince, Shafiqul Azam Bhuiyan Shueb and Mahidur Rahman Miraj.



BTV & SuperSport2
Bangladesh v England
Third ODI
Live from 9:00am



Bangladesh v England
Third ODI
Time: 9:00am
Venue: Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium, Chittagong
Bangladesh League
Arambagh v Beanibazar
Time: 6:00pm
Venue: Bangabandhu National Stadium

Mashrafe all around

ATIQUE ANAM from Chittagong



Three days after the ace pace bowler had withdrawn himself from the last two matches of the Beximco ODI Series against

England, Mashrafe Bin Mortaza still looms large on talks surrounding this series.

Even coach Jamie Siddons and captain Shakib Al Hasan, who were in thick of things during the Mashrafe labyrinth, tried to clear the air without back-peddling a bit from their previous position.

Both had telephonic communication with Mashrafe, and claimed that things were back to normal and whatever went wrong was put behind, as they looked towards the last ODI and then the Test series.

Mashrafe walked out on the team the day before the second ODI citing family reasons, but as it turned out he withdrew himself from the rest of the series after learning that he had been dropped from the team for the second match. What struck him more, as he felt, was that nobody had informed him before making that decision and also the air in the side which he felt was not welcoming one since his return.

Skipper Shakib Al Hasan said he talked to

Mashrafe over phone on Wednesday night and claimed that everything was fine now between them.

"Everything is fine between us, whatever happened is beyond us. Our relation is good as ever. I see him as a big brother who guided me since I came in to the side. He [Mashrafe] has wished us good luck for the third match," said the captain.

Shakib, who was handed the captaincy after Mashrafe got injured during the West Indies tour in July last year, claimed that Mashrafe's walking out was an instance of indiscipline and he was within his rights to recommend to selectors not to include him for the third one-dayer.

"As far as I knew he was in plan for the third ODI. But he made himself unavailable citing family reasons which we could not have done anything with. However, if I have to say I will say that he did a breach of discipline. And I was right in suggesting that we did not need another player once he was unavailable, even if there was a case for him to be coming back," said Shakib.

Coach Siddons has asked Mashrafe to join the squad for practice on March 7 through text message on Wednesday night. Siddons was at

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PHOTO: STAR

Action from yesterday's Bangladesh League encounter between Chittagong Abahani and Muktijoddha Sangsad at the Bangabandhu National Stadium.

'We need more runs'

Cricket

CRICINFO, undated

Ricky Ponting has called on Australia's batsmen to lift their game ahead of Saturday's second ODI against New Zealand in Auckland. Ponting was unhappy with the way several players, including himself, failed to capitalise on promising starts in the first game in Napier, where Australia's 275 was overhauled by New Zealand.

It was the first one-day loss for Australia since October 31, when they went down in the

third game of their tour of India. However, Ponting was in no mood to be generous after his men raced to 50 for 1 from six overs, only to finish with a sub-par total.

"After we got off to such a great start, we probably just took things for granted a little bit and expected that the run-rate was going to continue to go that way," Ponting said after the game. "Before we knew it we had lost two or three wickets and all of a sudden we were back under pressure again."

There were problems in the middle overs as Ponting fell for 44, Michael Clarke for 22 and

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BANGLADESH LEAGUE Ctg Abahani win narrowly

SPORTS REPORTER

Chittagong Abahani handed a 2-1 defeat to Muktijoddha Sangsad in their Citycell Bangladesh League match at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

An injury time strike from Shawkat Hossain enabled the Chittagong side secure their second victory. After the barren first-half, the winners took the lead in the 60th minute by courtesy of Mithun, but Muktijoddha bounced back after 15 minutes as their Liberian recruit Eugne Slahgray levelled the margin.

With the day's outcome, Chittagong Abahani improved their tally to eight points while Muktijoddha remained at four points from same number of eight outings.

In today's match Arambagh KS will meet Sylhet Beanibazar at the same venue at 6pm.

Niaz's fine initiative

SPORTS REPORTER

Country's first Grand Master Niaz Murshed has taken an initiative to inject new blood in chess and in his first step towards this he is organising a tournament named Parachute Advance International Chess Tournament is being organised in Cox's Bazar over March 8 to 14.

A total of 10 players from Bangladesh, India, Iran, Malaysia and Russia will participate in the round-robin league event. Women participants can earn Grand Master and International Master norms from this tournament.

"Our main objective is to inject new blood in the game because you all know we have lack of players," said Niaz while talking at a press conference at the National Sports Council conference room yesterday.

Niaz is the head of Six Seasons Chess which is organising the tournament sponsored by Marico Bangladesh Limited.

Six Seasons will also organise a Grand Masters Tournament from March 15 to 21 at the Uttara Club. A total of ten players including Niaz himself, GM Dibyendu Barua and GM Yuldachev Saidali will participate in the Grand Masters Tournament.

High hopes for Tamim

NUR UDDIN ALAMGIR from Chittagong



Cricket fans here in Chittagong are looking toward to local hero and in-form Tamim Iqbal to put up a good show after displaying

his class in the last few matches.

Tamim always holds an extra appeal to cricket fans of the port city since it is his home ground and he has good batting record at the Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium (previously the Birshreshtha Ruhul Amin Stadium).

The flamboyant opener scored 125 runs off 120 balls featuring 13 fantastic boundaries and three sixes against the visitors in the first ODI, where the entire team scored 228. In the second ODI, he started brightly but fell after a brisk 25 ball 30.

The Bangladeshi left-handed batter also scored 62 runs off 69 balls against New Zealand in the first match down under last month.

Beside this, Tamim also scored a sparkling 151 featuring 18 boundaries and three sixes in the second Test match against visiting India in January this year.

On a positive note, the Tigers have a sweet experience of bundling Zimbabwe within 44 runs in an ODI match at the same venue in

November last year.

Tamim's mother Nusrat Iqbal is quite confident about her son's ability and hoped he (Tamim) will continue the performances.

"Tamim was also confident while having lunch with the family at our home after his arrival in Chittagong on Wednesday and is scheduled to have dinner tonight [Thursday]," she said adding that he was trying to keep pace with good performances.

Meanwhile, the organisers also reduced the price of tickets considering the presence of the viewers in the gallery. Tk 200 was fixed for tickets of Club House while Tk 100 for Special Enclosure and Tk 50 for Gallery against the previous Tk 300, Tk 200 and Tk 100 respectively.

On the other hand, yesterday's cloudy skies made everyone a little tense. However, the local met office forecast the pleasing prediction of no rain over the next 24 hours starting from 3.00pm yesterday (Thursday).

As regards the pitch, curator Shafail Alam Belal said Friday's match would be held on the third pitch among seven on the ground.

"The pitches of the Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium are brown in colour while the colour is black in Dhaka," Belal said opting not to disclose the pitch's character.

Bowling pleases Saurav

CRICINFO, undated



Kolkata Knight Riders captain Saurav Ganguly believes the team's strong bowling lineup may help turn their fortunes around in the third season of the IPL. Having finished sixth and last in the last two editions Ganguly felt the pace arsenal, led by New Zealand fast bowler Shane Bond, would be crucial for a turnaround.

"We will be getting the services of Shane Bond from the second match," Ganguly said. "His raw pace can make a lot of difference. There is Ishant Sharma, who is a current India player. We have a seasoned campaigner in Ajit Agarkar. I wouldn't count Eklak Ahmid out as he is a left-arm pacer. Left-arm pacers have done quite well in the IPL. Eklak brings in the necessary variation. We have a good prospect in Varun Aaron, who can bowl at 90 miles per hour."

Ganguly, who was speaking at Eden Gardens after a practice session on Thursday, said he had almost finalised the composition of the squad for the first match against Deccan Chargers on March 12, also the tournament opener. "I have a fair idea about the kind of squad we would take to Mumbai for the first match. We will have a couple of practice matches before we take a final call."

He felt it would be difficult to choose four foreign players for the matches. "When you

have players like Chris Gayle, Brad Hodge, David Hussey, Angelo Mathews and Ajantha Mendis in your ranks, it becomes a difficult choice."

He was also unsure about his batting position - whether he would open or bat one-drop. "Throughout my international career, I have mostly opened or batted at No. 3," Ganguly said. "Though I haven't decided, it will be either opening or at No. 3."

Manoj Tiwary, a new recruit, Ashok Dinda and Wridhiman Saha are involved in the Deodhar Trophy and will not be available for the KKR preparatory camp but Ganguly said he wasn't too bothered. "It's always good to play matches," he said. "They will get some serious match practice in the process."

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