

Five ODIs in place of two Tests?

SPORTS REPORTER

The upcoming New Zealand tour to Bangladesh could only have one-day matches due to the upcoming World Cup early next year.

The schedule was supposed to have two Tests and a three-match one-day series but it could well be replaced by five one-dayers between New Zealand and Bangladesh.

According to sources in the Bangladesh Cricket Board, New Zealand Cricket (NZC) had initially asked them to shift the two Tests after the World Cup, resulting in BCB's plan to host the five-match one-day series.

A decision hasn't been taken on the matter but it is looking like a good option ahead of the mega one-day event to be held in February-March 2011.

A sponsor's delight

SPORTS REPORTER

Siddiquir Rahman's ground-breaking Brunei Open triumph has delighted Grameenphone, the leading mobile phone operator of the country.

"We are very happy and proud of what Siddiquir has achieved. He has proved his mettle at the professional-level and that really makes everyone pleased," said the company's head of corporate communications Tahmeed Azizul Huq.

"We would also like to thank the Kurmitola Golf Club because they told us that he was a genuine golfing prodigy. Since then we have found out that he's not just a talented golfer but also a gentleman," added Tahmeed.

"Golf is a prestigious sport and we have been associated with the game in Bangladesh for quite a long time now. We were always looking to back someone who has a lot of talent

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PHOTO: AFP

Siddiquir Rahman gives a broad smile as he lifts the Brunei Open trophy after the final round at the Empire Hotel and Country Club in Bandar Seri Begawan on Sunday.

Siddiquir makes history

Golf

AFP, Bandar Seri Begawan

Siddiquir Rahman became the first Bangladeshi to win on the Asian Tour after defeating South Africa's Jbe Kruger in a nerve-racking play-off at the Brunei Open on Sunday.

Siddiquir secured his career breakthrough with a par on the first extra hole as Kruger missed a 10-foot putt on the par four 18th hole at the Empire Hotel and Country Club.

Co-overnight leader Siddiquir bogeyed the last hole in regulation play for a four-under-par 67 to slip into the play-off after Kruger established the clubhouse target of 16-under-par 268 in the 300,000-dollar tournament.

Filipino Juvic Pagunsan secured third place after a sizzling 64 for 269 while India's Gaganjeet Bhullar, last year's runner-up, was one stroke back

on 270.

English duo Nick Redfern and Simon Griffiths shared fifth place on 271 while Malaysia's Ben Leong, tied for the third round lead with Siddiquir, finished a disappointing tied 10th after a closing 73.

"It is very exciting. I'm the first Bangladeshi to play on the Asian Tour and in the two years that I'm on Tour, I have finally won a tournament," said the unheralded man from Dhaka.

Siddiquir grew up from humble beginnings and worked as a ball boy at a Dhaka golf club to pay for his school fees. He learned the game by fashioning his first golf club with a seven iron head on a piece of metal rod.

Siddiquir showed signs of a breakthrough at the Queen's Cup in Thailand in June where he was in contention before settling for a career first top-10 on the Asian Tour, the region's elite professional circuit.

Siddiquir, who shot a hole in one in

the second round, got off to a strong start on the final day, when he eagled the par four first hole followed by birdies on two, four and 13. His only blemish came on the last hole when he failed to sink a 15-foot putt for the outright victory.

A battling Kruger, playing in the penultimate group behind Siddiquir, charged up the leaderboard after turning in 30 but posted a double bogey on the 11th hole before battling back with birdies on 12 and 17 to set the clubhouse mark.

The diminutive South African, who claimed his best Asian Tour finish, was disappointed to finish second but was gracious in defeat.

"It is always disappointing when you lose in a play-off but to finish second is a good result in any tournament. I feel that I'm getting better and I'm confident of landing my first win in Asia soon," said Kruger.

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A dream son

Golf

AL-AMIN

Sometimes reality exceeds dream. Shafiqul Islam had never dreamt that his second son Siddiquir Rahman would do something extraordinary in a sport he hardly followed for its complexity, and above all for its aristocracy, that he could ever afford.

He was only aware that his son was competing at the Asian Tour in Brunei, a championship where the best of Asia and from across the world was fighting for glory.

Shafiqul was enjoying his 'retirement' days



PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

Feroza Begum, mother of Siddiquir Rahman, shows some of the trophies that the golfer has won in his decade-long career. The photo was taken yesterday at their Manikdi residence.

in Pakdi village of Madaripur district when his youngest son called him on his cell phone and informed that Siddiquir has won the Asian Tour golf title.

"I could have never dreamt of what he has done today. I'm proud of him," was the first reaction of Shafiqul to The Daily Star Sport on Sunday.

His next statement was the stunningly simple answer of a man who started his work-

ing life as a farmer and ended it as a CNG driver.

"My youngest son got the news from the Sahibs (he was referring to army officers in Kurmitola Golf Club) who got it through the Internet," said the 60-year-old.

"Before he left Dhaka, Siddiq (Siddiquir) just told me he was going to compete in a big tournament," said Shafiqul, adding that he has kept all the medals and trophies his son has won in a showcase.

"I have also kept a paper-cutting where the headline reads 'From Zero to Hero'. It was the first time my son won a medal," recalled Shafiqul.

"He worked at the golf club as a ball boy and was very interested in that sport. His first break came when the club arranged a trial for 110 ball boys from where they choose the top ten and then the top three where Siddiq became first.

"The club also sent him for training in Pakistan. Since then he was doing so well that the club took full responsibility," said Shafiqul while recalling his son's admission to an expensive sport he could not manage to pay for.

"At that time I was driving a CNG or a taxi cab but Siddique forced me to go into retirement in the fear of being mugged or physically harmed," said Shafiqul whose biggest pride is that all four of his sons have obeyed him and have not been spoiled.

"We have been living in Manikdi. It is a place people call the criminal's den. I have seen so many youths being spoiled. But I'm very happy that my four sons have avoided bad company in extreme hardship," said a proud Shafiqul.

Siddiquir's mother too was very happy with his son's achievement. "I am so happy that he has won. I pray that every mother has a son like him. He has made the whole country proud," she said and also informed that he brought his first golf club for 2.5 taka in 1987 after earning 25 paisa each for finding balls in Kurmitola.

They, however, hardly know how big this achievement is, especially in a country where golf is considered a sport for the elites. They only know that their son has won a lot of trophies.

It is indeed a fairytale run for Siddiquir so far. Starting as a ball boy Siddiquir has not only won all the major tournaments in South Asia as an amateur, but has also become the first ever Bangladeshi to win a major Asian golf crown in only his second year as a professional.

His achievements only reflect that sport is a great leveler. Otherwise who would have thought of Siddiquir, from a humble background, would put Bangladesh in the world's golfing map.

In an inspiring league

Golf

MOHAMMAD ISAM

The journey that brought him from Madaripur to the Kurmitola Golf Club where he turned himself from a ball boy to a champion golfer is inspirational enough for everyone who dares to dream in this country.

But Siddiquir Rahman dared to dream big and his aspirations now have him placed among the select-few sportsmen whose journey from humble beginnings inspire as much as their talent. He can be spoken of in the same breath as American Francis Ouimet, South African Papwa Sewgolum and even superstar Tigers Woods

as these men too have defied unbelievable odds and championed a sport as thorough as golf.

The 26-year-old Siddiquir took his game to the Indian circuit in 2006 and earned a place in the top five over the years, he began to take strides in the Asian Tour too. The Brunei Open triumph is certainly a flash point in his professional career. Ouimet, Sewgolum and even Woods broke through barriers when they won their first pro tournament.

In the early 20th century, Ouimet grew up poor which was hardly the position of any American golfer at the time but he went on to win the 1913 US Open. Sewgolum, a man of ethnic Indian origin, caused a major stir in the

1960s with his Natal Open win over Gary Player. He was forced to receive his trophy outdoors in the rain, because, due to apartheid, he was not allowed to enter the clubhouse and duly, the picture made him a symbol of the sports boycott movement.

In modern times, Woods has inspired millions of black Americans with his magical talent and accomplishments that rank him among the most successful golfers of all time.

One is also tempted to compare him with professionals from neighbouring India -- Arjun Atwal, Jyoti Randhwa and Jeev Milka Singh -- but all three were brought up in affluent settings with the latter being the son of famous athlete Milkha Singh.

But golf is a major sport in the United States and South Africa for a long time and in India, it is an emerging sport. It is especially popular sport among the wealthier classes and has not yet caught on with middle class and poor people due to the fact that it is expensive.

This makes Siddiquir's success even more noticeable as golf's popularity in Bangladesh is peanuts compared to cricket and football and for someone to get into the professional level and win a tournament certainly makes him the face of golf in Bangladesh.

Siddiquir can certainly look up to the Indian them to get into the European tour as well as the US PGA Tour, something he has set his eyes on since 2008, something that he termed previously as 'not impossible'.

The country certainly hopes he can go as far and wide as he wants to and keep inspiring anyone who dares to take their 'game' to the next level.

Jimmy swings Pak away

Cricket

AFP, Nottingham

James Anderson took ten wickets in a Test for the first time as England beat Pakistan by a crushing 354 runs in their series opener at Trent Bridge here on Sunday.

Pakistan were dismissed for just 80 - their lowest Test total against England, replacing the 87 they made at Lord's back in 1954 - before lunch on the fourth day.

They had been set a fourth innings target of 435 for victory that would have been a new world record had they achieved it.

But they got nowhere near, with swing specialist Anderson taking six wickets for 17 runs in 15 overs, including five wickets for 10 runs in 45 balls on Sunday, to add to his first innings five for 54.

That gave Anderson, who turned 28 on Friday, his best match haul of 11 for 71 in his 49-Test career, beating the nine for 98 he took against New Zealand on this ground two years ago.

Danish Kaneria (16 not out) and opener Imran Farhat (15) were the only Pakistan batsmen to make double-figure scores in the innings.

Pakistan resumed on 15 for three after their latest collapse in the face of accurate swing bowling in helpful, overcast conditions.

It wasn't long before they were 37 for five.

Farhat edged Anderson to England captain Andrew Strauss at first slip before Umar Akmal was lbw after missing an inswinger.

Fast bowler Steven Finn then took two wickets for no runs in four balls as Pakistan's wretched slump continued.

He struck fourth ball Sunday to end night-watchman Mohammad Aamer's hour-long resistance, courtesy of Kevin Pietersen's catch in the gully.

Wicketkeeper Kamran Akmal, who had a poor game behind the stumps, then suffered his second nought of the game, lbw aiming across the line at Finn.

Anderson then had Umar Gul brilliantly caught by a leaping Paul Collingwood at third slip and the duo combined again to give the Lancashire seamer his 10th wicket when Shoaib Malik exited for nine.

And he wrapped up the match when last man Mohammad Asif fell for nought, caught in the slips by Graeme Swann.

England's batsmen too found runs hard to come by against Pakistan's pace trio of Mohammad Aamer, Asif and Gul.

But former Ireland left-hander Eoin Morgan, whose 130 was his maiden Test century, and Collingwood (82) shared a stand of 219 that saw England to a first innings total of 354 despite the accurate Asif's five wickets for 77 runs.

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PHOTO: AFP

SIX-STAR ANDERSON: England pacer James Anderson (R) bowls while Pakistan wicketkeeper Kamran Akmal watches on the fourth day of the first Test at Trent Bridge in Nottingham yesterday.