

Giants win World Series after 56 years

A San Francisco Giants squad that had not claimed the World Series crown in 56 years ended its epic drought on Monday by defeating Texas 3-1 to capture the 106th World Series. Edgar Renteria smacked a three-run homer in the seventh inning to provide all the offensive support that lanky pitcher Tim Lincecum needed as the Giants won Major League Baseball's final four games to one. The Giants took their sixth all-time crown dating to 1905, but their first since 1954 and the first since they moved from New York to California in 1958, ending the wait for generations of title-hungry supporters.

-AFP



PHOTO: STAR

Tigers bowling coach Ian Pont (L) conducts a video session with the fast bowlers at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.

Fans will have to wait a little longer for tickets

BISHWAJIT ROY



With the 2011 ICC World Cup knocking at the door, country's cricket lovers' inquisitiveness about how they can buy a ticket has reached a high pitch. The common query among the cricket mad people of the country is when the tickets will be put on sale. And where they can buy them?

But until this moment the issue has not been finalised. Bangladesh will host eight matches, six in Dhaka and two in Chittagong, including two quarterfinals besides the opening ceremony that will be held at the Bangabandhu National Stadium on February 17.

Bangladesh's tournament director Ali Ahsan Babu, who informed that

they had even been getting phone calls from expatriates who were desperately looking for getting a ticket, on Tuesday gave hints that the selling might start by mid-November. But he stopped short of confirming who would get the ticket selling rights.

But there is bad news for the fans because they will have to fight hard for getting a ticket as the local organising committee (LOC) will keep about 40 per cent of tickets to distribute among the International Cricket Council and local dignitaries. LOC wants to make a payback to the local high-ups who are helping them in preparing for the showcase event.

The capacity of the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur is little more than 26,000 but only 16,000 to 17,000 tickets will be available for the fans for each

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Pont's instant impact

Cricket

MOHAMMAD ISAM

Four played, four won. Ian Pont could not have wished for a better start to his stint as the fast bowling coach of the Tigers. And to top it off, the broad-shouldered Englishman has had an instant impact. Within two weeks of joining Jamie Siddons's crew, Pont saw three of his new charges have a major say in each of the wins against New Zealand.

"They have command over the ball and certainly they have gained control, not just control of the ball but of their heartbeat too in pressure situations, especially when the crowd gets on their back," began Pont after a training session at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.

"They have done well at the death, especially the way Nazmul [Hossain] bowled in the first game and Shafiq [Islam] in the third. I thought Nazmul had a bad start but his last two overs were superb, bowling those slower balls," said Pont.

The 49-year old's influence has been quietly praised in cricketing circles, although some are wary not to jump their guns due to past experience with specialised coaches. But Pont is merely looking for quick profits; he wants to tighten the bowlers' techniques and make sure they

remember all his lessons.

One of the barriers (apart from the language) in this case would be the amount of time he has access to the likes of Rubel Hossain, Shafiq and Nazmul.

He arrived in Dhaka two weeks before the New Zealand series and after the 4-0 whitewash, the players were on a break. They have returned to training now to prepare for the Zimbabwe series that begins in early December, after which the players will take part in the Premier League before being clustered for the World Cup camp sometime in early January.

Ideally, Pont would want more time with the fast bowlers, mainly to have them for a longer stretch and not just for 2-3 weeks.

"After the Zimbabwe series, they would be going away. They won't be under our control and it's unfortunate," he said, adding that the players don't really "forget" his lessons, but sometimes "they don't remember".

But what delights him is the enthusiasm the bowlers have shown to learn from him. "They are quick learners," Pont was quick to say. As an example, he explained that the main difference between Bangladesh and New Zealand was the bowling. Where the Kiwi bowlers gave too much room and didn't bowl many wicket-taking deliveries, the Tigers spinners and fast bowlers thrived in the big moments.

"Shafiq got [Brendon] McCullum with his outswing. Rubel had Mills in that last over with a yorker and Shafiq also did well at the death when he had [Kane Williamson] caught in the boundary [in the third game]. They didn't bat too well but our spinners and fast bowlers were great in the series," he said.

Encouragingly, Pont mostly talks about what's coming up, specifically the Zimbabwe series where he wants the bowlers to go up a notch. "In this camp I'm looking at their technical actions and working on building speed and adding new variations," he explained.

For a six-month stint, Pont certainly has novel ideas. His target to bring out a genuine fast bowler from Bangladesh is an encouraging one but he believes it would be a tough task.

"I don't know every fast bowler in the country but I would really like to see a really good one before I go."

"I know it will be hard and I don't get to work with everyone of them but I saw one today [during the Dhaka-Barisal NCL one-day game in Mirpur]," he said.

The stint with the Tigers, mainly due to its timing, would be a welcome addition to his CV and if one were to take a term from baseball speak, it would be wise to call his success in the New Zealand series as a "first strike" -- something Pont would have done a few times for the Philadelphia Phillies in the 1980s.

Dave coming here today

SPORTS REPORTER

Former Bangladesh cricket coach Dave Whatmore arrives in Dhaka today to join the visiting Cricket Association of Bengal (CAB) Under-17 team.

The Sri Lanka-born Australian will travel to Comilla on the same day where the visitors play the second three-day match against Bangladesh Under-17 team from tomorrow.

Whatmore, who is the coaching director of CAB, will join the CAB Under-17 as their coach Gautam Shome is returning to India to attend to his ailing father.

Whatmore took over as the Bangladesh coach in 2003 and stepped down in 2007 after the successful World Cup in West Indies where the Tigers beat India in the first match and then defeated South Africa in the second round.

Zia atop alone

SPORTS REPORTER

GM Ziaur Rahman maintained solo lead in the Berger Six Seasons Grandmasters Chess Tournament at the close of third round at Tulip Lounge of Uttara Club yesterday.

After two successive wins, Zia drew against FM Minhazuddin Ahmed Sagar, who along with GM Niaz Murshed stayed at second position with two points each. Niaz beat India's Bitan Banerjee, FM Sbu Sufian Shakil beat FM Sayantan Das, FM Mehdi Hasan Parag beat FM Yee Soon Wei, GM Vakhidov Tair drew with IM Sahaj Grover.

Inter-private university football

SPORTS REPORTER

Northern University made a good start in Mentors' Inter-Private University Football Tournament beating University of Liberal Arts-Bangladesh (ULAB) 1-0 in the opening match at the Bir Shreshtha Mostafa Kamal Stadium in Kamlapur yesterday.

Rubel scored the winning goal in the 12th minute for Northern University. He was adjudged best player of the match.

In the other match of the day, International University of Business, Agriculture and Technology (IUBAT) defeated Independent University-Bangladesh (IUB) by the same margin. Sohel Rana scored the all-important goal in the 68th minute.

Earlier, vice president of Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) Shawkat Ali Khan Jahangir inaugurated the

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Easy win for Rajshahi

Cricket

SPORTS REPORTER

Rajshahi romped to a ten-wicket victory over Sylhet, but it was not as easy for Dhaka and Khulna as they fought hard to win low-scoring matches in the National Cricket League yesterday.

While it was Khulna's second win in four games, Rajshahi and Dhaka joined Barisal on top of the points

table with three wins.

The last place for the second phase will be up for grabs in the final round of matches on Friday with Chittagong and Khulna battling it out.

Sylhet, once again, are stuck at the basement.

DHAKA-BARISAL

Only Mehrob Hossain tackled the Barisal bowlers with any assurance, hitting 59 off 82 balls that included seven boundaries. But the left-hander found little support as Dhaka were bowled out

cheaply for 170 runs in 46.4 overs at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur.

While it would have been a tough total to defend, early-season blues often ensure tight finishes when modest targets are hard to reach. Mohammad Sharif had the right idea for Dhaka as the former national paceman ripped into Barisal's top-order. Later, he came back to get rid of Arafat Salahuddin (34 off 42 balls), who was making it difficult for Dhaka with some big hits.

Sharif finished with a five-for while the impressive leg-spinner Noor Hossain picked up three wickets as Dhaka won by 34 runs.

RAJSHAHI-SYLHET

Young pacer Alauddin Babu and left-arm spinner Sanjamul Islam took three wickets each as Rajshahi downed Sylhet for 94 all out in 34.3 overs at the Shaheed Chandu Stadium in Bogra.

Rajshahi's reply was equally devastating with Forhad Reza smashing 77 off 82 balls as they completed the ten-wicket thrashing in 26.4 overs.

CHITTAGONG-KHULNA

In a truncated game (starting at 1:20pm after overnight rain delayed the start), Khulna prevailed by two wickets against Chittagong, who made 121-8 in 23 overs at the Shaheed Kamruzzaman Stadium in Rajshahi.

Ziaur Rahman smacked two sixes and as many fours as

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BNS renovation almost complete

SPORTS REPORTER

The renovation and modernisation of the Bangabandhu National Stadium ahead of the opening ceremony of the 2011 ICC World Cup is at its final phase as 85 per cent of the work has already been completed.

Some 24,000 chairs at the galleries and a giant screen have been installed, floodlights have been renovated and the media center and car parking facilities have also been upgraded.

About 85 per cent of work at the hospitality and VIP boxes have been completed. Apart from that the three gates, parking shed for VIPs and installation of CCTVs are going on in full swing.

State Minister for Youth and Sports Ahad Ali Sarker was informed about these progresses yesterday when he visited the country's premium venue, which will hold the opening ceremony of the World Cup on February 17.

Sarker expressed his satisfaction over the pace of work while Abdur Rahman, director (planning and development) of National Sports Council, said 85 per cent work at BNS have already been completed and hoped to hand over the venue before the deadline of November 30.

He also informed that BNS will have a capacity of 26,000 spectators including the VIPs as some 31.06 crore taka is being spent on the renovation and modernisation of the stadium.

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Amla hits hundred

Cricket

AFP, Dubai

Opener Hashim Amla hit a fighting unbeaten hundred to rescue South Africa against an aggressive Pakistan bowling to guide them to 228-9 in the third day-night international here on Tuesday.

The 27-year-old bearded right-hander batted without fuss to notch 119 for his sixth one-day hundred - his fifth this year - after Pakistan won the toss and put South Africa into bat on a tricky Dubai Stadium pitch.

Amla put on a valuable 59-run fourth wicket stand with Jean-Paul Duminy (26) after Pakistani paceman Shoaib Akhtar put them on the back foot by dismissing Jacques Kallis (nought) in the third over and in-form Colin Ingram (four) in the fifth.

Amla, who has so far scored 986 runs in 13 one-day matches this year, held on end during his 126-ball knock, hitting nine boundaries to carry his bat through the innings.

Pakistani spinners - Shahid Afridi and Mohammad Hafeez - also benefitted from the slow turn as they captured four wickets between them and never allowed South African batsman any room for free strokeplay.

Afridi had dangerous-looking AB de Villiers and Albie Morkel - who both scored 19 each - during his 2-53 off ten overs, while Hafeez (2-34) accounted for Duminy

and David Miller (6).

Amla added another valuable 38 with Johan Botha (15) before Akhtar dismissed Botha to finish with 3-39.

South Africa were without their captain Graeme Smith for the second match in a row after he hurt his left hand in the first match at Abu Dhabi, which his team won by eight wickets.

All-rounder Kallis returned while Rusty Theron was

drafted in place of Charl Langeveldt and Robin Peterson.

Pakistan, who won the second match to level the five-match series 1-1, dropped Misbahul Haq to bring Imran Farhat in.

SCORES IN BRIEF

SOUTH AFRICA: 228 for 9 (Amla 119 not out, De Villiers 19, Duminy 26, Morkel 19; Akhtar 3-39, Afridi 2-53, Hafeez 2-34)



South Africa opener Hashim Amla sets off for a single after pushing the ball on the outside on way to scoring a magnificent 109 not out in the third one-day international against Pakistan at the Dubai International Cricket Stadium yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

SPORTS POLL
TODAY'S QUESTION
 Do you think the Tigers should have played in the ongoing NCL?
 Visit the sports page of www.thedailystar.net to cast vote
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 Australia v Sri Lanka
 First ODI
 Live from 9:30am

TEN Sports
 UEFA Champions League
 Chelsea v Spartak Moscow
 Live from 1:45am (Thursday)

TEN Action
 UEFA Champions League
 AC Milan v Real Madrid
 Live from 1:45am (Thursday)

ESPN
 Sportscentre India
 Sports News
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