



South Africa captain Graeme Smith (L) and his Pakistan counterpart Misbahul Haq hold the Test series trophy at the Dubai Cricket Stadium yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

Siddikur makes decent start

SPORTS REPORTER

After a fantastic showing in his first PGA Tour event earlier this month, Siddikur Rahman made a good enough start in the Barclays Singapore Open at the Sentosa Golf Club yesterday.

He finished with a four under par 67 alongside Danny Chia (Malaysia), Gregory Havret (France), Phil Mickelson (USA), Thongchai Jaidee (Thailand), Matteo Manassero (Italy) and Zhang Lian-wei (China) and ended on 31st place.

"I have played in a few big tournaments this season and gained a lot of experience. My game has been good and I'm looking forward to this week," said Siddikur.

Meanwhile, rising South Korean star Kim Bi-o went on a birdie rampage to share the first-round lead with England's Chris Wood.

After rain delayed play at the six-million-dollar event for about four hours, the 20-year-old South Korean made the most of his early start to finish the round and post an eight-under 63 on the back of eight birdies. Wood also made the best of the soggy conditions and, like Kim, was bogey-free, thrilling the crowd with an eagle at the sixth hole.

Vuvuzela banned

AFP, Guangzhou

The vuvuzela trumpet, which became the droning soundtrack to the football World Cup in South Africa, has been banned from the Asian Games, organisers have confirmed.

Vuvuzelas provoked strong emotions in South Africa, with some fans loving the distinctive low-pitched bellow while others -- including many players, coaches and commentators -- driven to distraction.

But athletes gathered for the 16th Asiad which opens on Friday will have no such concerns after a local government official confirmed that the plastic trumpet, often in garish colours, will be banned from all venues.

Zhang Youquan, deputy director of the civilisation office of the Guangzhou government, named the vuvuzela amid a list of banned items.

The Tide

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for a unique room inside the company's sprawling offices.

In that room Huang proudly displays Vatti's very own museum of torches. Over the past five years the company has spent enormous time, effort and money to collect previous Olympic torches in a bid to make theirs the best. They have managed to collect almost every Olympic torch since 1936, with their collection only missing the Helsinki and Melbourne torches. Berlin 1936 is their most expensive acquisition and Vatti had to pay upwards of 100,000 Euros to acquire the unique pre-war relic.

But it is a price Huang Qijun is willing to pay. For in the race to fulfil the company's goal to be globally recognised, no expense will be spared.

Rivals plan spin war

Pak-SA first Test starts today

Cricket

AFP, Dubai

Rival captains Misbahul Haq and Graeme Smith geared up for a spin battle in the first Test starting here from Friday, as Pakistan seek their first series win in four years.

Pakistan's last Test series win was against the West Indies at home in 2006 and since then they have lost six and drawn the remaining three, but newly inducted captain Misbah hopes his team makes a fresh start at Test cricket's newest venue.

"We are focusing only on cricket and will play to our strength which is spin. We hope it's a new beginning at a new Test venue," said Misbah of the Dubai Stadium which becomes Test cricket's 101st venue.

Misbah, who missed Pakistan's last seven Tests after being left out of the team, was drafted in as captain after Test skipper Salman Butt was suspended along with bowlers Mohammad Asif and Mohammad Aamer last month.

The three players were suspended after British newspaper News of the World claimed several Pakistani players obeyed orders from book-makers during Lord's Test against England in August.

Misbah hinted at the inclusion of off-spinner Saeed Ajmal and left-arm slow bowler Abdul Rehman in the side, who will also get assistance from opener Mohammad Hafeez, who bowls off-spin.

"We have this option to include two spin-

ners and looking at the nature of the pitch I think spinners will play a key role in the Test," said Misbah who will become Pakistan's fourth Test captain this year.

Wicket-keeper Adnan Akmal, brother of Kamran Akmal -- not selected for the tour due to fitness problems -- will make his debut after the only keeper of the tour, Zulqarnain Haider fled to London after receiving death threats.

South Africa, high on confidence after winning both of the preceding Twenty20 matches and five-match one-day series 3-2, were also pondering at the option of playing two spinners.

"There is definitely an option," said Smith of playing off-spinner Johan Botha and left-arter Paul Harris. "We have done that in the Caribbean (in June this year) which proved successful for us."

Smith stressed South Africa needed to win the two Test series and then against world number one Test team India at home.

"Our focus has shifted to five big Tests ahead of us," said Smith whose team hosts India for three Tests next month. "We want to be as successful as possible in that format in which we have been successful in the last three years."

Smith agreed the confidence level was high in South African camp.

"I think the players have gained confidence through the one-day win, but its going to be a new start on a venue which is used for the first time in Test cricket," said Smith, who believes Dubai's heat will be a big test for his players.

The second Test starts in Abu Dhabi from November 20. The series was shifted to United Arab Emirates over security fears in Pakistan.

Countdown

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critical issue, as many fans breached the perimeter to enter into the VIP area. Although they were controlled for the most part, it raised questions about how a breach like that would be controlled at the World Cup proper.

A police officer at the venue, on condition of anonymity, said that the event was uncoordinated and mismanaged.

"The event is a total mismanagement. No one contacted us beforehand from the BCB (Bangladesh Cricket Board) side and even today the PS to the BCB President was seemingly unaware of the event that would take place at night," he said.

But what left a sour taste in the mouth of the watching thousands was the lack of a proper dress code maintained by both the convener of the Local Organizing Committee (LOC), Dewan Shafiqul Arefin and the Bangladesh captain Mashrafe Bin Mortaza.

Both men turned up for what a formal event, dressed casually and gave off a distinctly unprofessional impression. While their appearance might not have stood out on other occasions, on Wednesday night, both men looked very out of place beside Indian representative Sourav Ganguly and the ICC's Campbell Jamieson who were both attired in suits.

While many were quick to point out that Mashrafe might not have been informed of his need to be on stage, it does not excuse his appearance as the face of the nation since he is the national captain of one of the co-hosts. Either way it represents a failure on the part of the organization or Mashrafe himself.

The presenter of the event also looked a fish out of water and seemed to have hardly had done her homework for such important occasion.

The rank mismanagement of their first important event added fuel to the whispers about the capacity of the members of the LOC to properly organize the tasks related to the World Cup.

With the biggest sporting extravaganza the country will host closer on the horizon, the members of the LOC need to pick up the slack soon or risk an embarrassing portrayal of the country's professionalism with the whole world watching.

Asiad opens today

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more concerned about eking out a living than watching any of the 42 sports.

"I would like to go watch some Asian Games matches, but I have to work and I won't get any time off," said sales clerk Chen Liwei, 25, in comments echoed by others.

While most athletes were enjoying the atmosphere, Chinese football goalkeeper Wang Dalei was not one of them after sparking outrage for calling home fans "morons" and "a bunch of dogs".

The highly-rated 21-year-old, linked with European champions Inter Milan and big-spending Manchester City, let loose on a micro-blogging site after being singled out for his failure to stop Japan's second goal on Monday.

After being suspended by the Chinese delegation -- and dropped for Wednesday's 2-1 win over Kyrgyzstan -- he issued an apology.

"I apologise sincerely to the media and supporters of the whole nation for my unpleasant words, which damaged the image of the football

Nobin fires

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Jugantor by five wickets at the same venue.

The Daily Star, who were ousted at the hands of Channel i from the quarterfinals last season, raced to 74 for 2 with four balls to spare after the defending champions put up a fighting total of 68-3 in the stipulated six overs.

Facing the target, The Daily Star fell in trouble losing opener Abul Khan Azad (3) and one-down Morshed Ali Khan (7) before Nobin showed his nerve to propel his side home as Jasim Uddin proved the perfect supports to the man-of-the-match.

Nobin first took two wickets after Channel i decided to bat first and broke the heart of the defending champions with a mesmerizing display with his bat. The man-of-the-match struck 35 off just 14 balls sending the bowlers over the boundary three times and hit three fours before retiring from the batting as per the tournament rules.

Jasim was also attacking as he struck an unbeaten 16 off 7 balls before Wasim Bin Habib hit the winning six off his first ball.

team, sports and China," a repentant Wang said. "I'll never make the same mistake in the future."

Cai Jiadong, secretary general of the Chinese Asian Games delegation, said Wang's action were "unsportsmanlike and irrational and hurt the feelings of Chinese soccer fans."

The football competition got underway last Sunday, the only event to start ahead of the official opening of the Games, which are traditionally dominated by China, Japan and South Korea.

With the focus on the hosts, China is taking no chances that it will be embarrassed by positive doping tests, with every one of its athletes having to submit to at least one before being allowed into their 1000-strong delegation.

"We have been working hard to send a clean team to the Asian Games and ensure there is no positive case in our delegation," said Jiang Zhixue, anti-doping chief in China's State General Administration of Sport.

The Games run until November 27.

MS stands by Gautam

2nd Test against NZ starts today

Cricket

AFP, Hyderabad

Under-fire Indian opener Gautam Gambhir earned firm backing from skipper Mahendra Singh Dhoni Thursday ahead of the second Test against New Zealand.

The left-hander has struggled with the bat of late, aggregating a mere 86 runs from his last 10 Test innings.

Gambhir, 29, missed India's Test against Australia in Bangalore last month with a knee injury and his replacement Murali Vijay scored a solid 139, putting pressure on his more experienced teammate to perform.

"Players do go out of form," Dhoni told reporters at a press conference Thursday before the Test starts on Friday.

"It happens to everyone in cricket. Gambhir has set the benchmark so high that expectations of him have grown. With Gambhir, it is more about the pressure to perform than the fear of failure."

"The kind of innings he has played in the past shows how good a cricketer he is. He is returning from an injury and is working hard on his fitness. I am sure he will come good with the bat sooner than later."

Gambhir, with 2,846 runs from 34 Tests at an average of nearly 50, has been pivotal in India's rise to the top of Test rankings.

He was named International Cricket Council Test Player of the Year in 2009 for a series of good starts in tandem with opening partner Virender Sehwag.

Gambhir's 11-hour, second-innings knock of 137 against New Zealand in Napier last year helped India salvage a hard-fought draw.

Dhoni said Gambhir was a proven performer and Vijay would have to wait for his chance to make it back to the squad.

"Gambhir is our best bet for the opener's slot. Vijay has done well whenever he has been given the chance. But I think he will have to wait his turn."

Vijay, 26, has scored 509 runs from the eight Tests he has played so far at an average of 42.41.

Dhoni also supported Suresh Raina, who cut a sorry figure in the drawn first Test in Ahmedabad, scoring three and a duck.

"You cannot form an opinion on a player based on one match," Dhoni said. "We must give everyone a chance."

"It is easy to sit outside and make

comments. But one must step into the player's shoes to understand how tough it is to go out and perform each time."

Dhoni hoped the wicket at the new Rajiv Gandhi Stadium -- hosting its first Test -- would give the bowlers a fair chance after a placid one in Ahmedabad made the draw all but inevitable.

Hyderabad has hosted three Test before, all against New Zealand, but at the older Lal Bahadur Stadium.

"We have played quite a few one-day games on this wicket. It is not difficult to judge this wicket. It is flat but will offer a bit of bounce which will allow the batsman to play his shots."

New Zealand skipper Daniel Vettori said the team was looking to sustain the momentum gained in Ahmedabad.

"We did well as a team in Ahmedabad," he said. "But that does not count much now. It is always a big challenge to take 20 wickets in India where the wicket suits the batsman."

"The wicket is reasonably flat here but hopefully it will have more pace and assist the bowlers."

The third and final Test will be played in Nagpur from November 20-24 followed by five one-day internationals from November 28.

Sachin made ambassador for WC 2011

AFP, Dubai

Iconic Indian batsman Sachin Tendulkar, who is set to become only the second player in the history of cricket to play six ODI World Cups, was named on Thursday the official ambassador of the event to be held in the sub-continent next year.

Tendulkar will be called upon to promote and support a variety of ICC initiatives for the tournament, which is the third biggest sporting event in the world and will take place in Bangladesh, India and Sri Lanka from February 19 to April 2 next year, the ICC said in a statement.

"There are just 100 days to go and I am really looking forward to playing in another Cricket World Cup," said Tendulkar, who will join Pakistan's Javed Miandad as the only other player to take part in six World Cups.

Amol Joha passes away

SPORTS REPORTER

Amol Joha Khan, sports in-charge of Daily Jai Jai Din and eldest son of late journalist Toha Khan, passed away yesterday at his residence in Mirpur.

He was at 38.

Amol, who worked at the Daily Jugantor and NTV and was a member of Bangladesh Sports Journalists Association (BSJA), left behind two daughters, his wife, one brother and two sisters and a large number of well-wishers.

He was laid to rest at the Mirpur 11 graveyard and a Milad Mahfil will be held at his residence (Section-10, Road-2, Block-B, House-12 in Mirpur) on Saturday after Maghrib prayers.

BSJA president Manjurul Haq and general secretary Syed M Mamun expressed their deep shock at the death of Amol and extended their deepest sympathies to the family.

Odd man Arafat leads Barisal

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rescued his team with a thoughtful half-century that made sure of a fighting 213-run total at the Dhanmondi Cricket Stadium.

A bustling character, much like his bowling which sometimes resembles the English dilly-dobblers of the county scene, Arafat explained his method to batting at No 7.

Arafat mainly faces two situations when batting at a position that rounds off the middle-order. On a good day, he bats a few overs with a set batsman but the challenge is when he has a tail-ender for company with a lot of overs, basically a lost cause at times.

"I bat according to the situation, whether it is batting with the tail or with a set batsman. Usually I get less number of overs to bat but I want to squeeze in at least 40 runs from my position."

"There are also times when I have to hold the innings, especially when I bat with a tail-ender. I try to keep the strike in those times, although I know they can hold their own. I feel it is better to be on strike and make use of my form," he explained.

Chris Harris (2130) and Abdur Razzak (2004) are the only players to score more than 2000 runs from that position in one-day internationals, while the likes of Shaun Pollock, Kapil Dev and Moin Khan have become legends through their last ditch efforts. Former captain Khaled Mashud too is among the top ten with more than 1000 runs. Mahmudullah Riyad is incidentally the leading scorer from No 7 this year with 410 runs.

These cricketers are obviously the sort who inspires Arafat to make the most of the limited number of balls he gets to face. Like many

Premier League players, he also dreams of representing the country one day, but the 26-year-old from Mymensingh's weight issues has stunted his growth as a player.

Arafat is not exactly fat but he wouldn't stop himself calling that while describing how some would use it as an excuse for not picking him. "I have always performed, scored 30-35 regularly and bowled 10 overs, sometimes on the trot. But they always have an excuse about me; they say I'm fat. It is a common dialogue," confessed Arafat, who signed for the promoted Prime Dolshwar in the Premier League this season.

"I have not played for Abahani or Mohammedan but in the last three years, I have played the Super Six with Victoria and City Club."

He has held his own while playing for Barisal too, making two first-class hundreds and picking up 151 wickets. In one-day cricket, he has averaged 32 with the bat and given away 3.74 per over. "I have played with confidence for seven years and I've never had a problem playing with them," he said.

Barisal have previously depended on outside help and it paid off handsomely in 2008-09 when they won the one-day trophy. This time, they have local lads like opener Fazle Rabbi and paceman Kamrul Islam Rabbi who top both the batting and bowling charts with left-arm spinner Monir Hossain and Asif Ahmed Ratul providing support at times.

Rajshahi take on Khulna in the day's other game which could decide one of the finalists, but these youngsters have certainly shown mettle in tight situations and Barisal would bank on these characters, and of course Arafat, to take them to the final.

Booters' Asian Games over

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way inside the box though his drive found the back of the net with a deflection off a Hong Kong defender, according to a BFF website news.

However, Bangladesh could not hold off their opponents for more than nine minutes as Chung again gave Hong Kong advantage in the 33rd minute capitalising on another mistake from Bangladesh defender. This time Wali Faisal was the culprit as he tried to tackle Hung Ting and Chung fired a left-footer home from close.

Hong Kong almost made the result safe four minutes from the break as Yu Ying Zhi curved a shot to beat goalkeeper Aminul Haq and made it 3-1.

After resumption, Bangladesh brought in three changes sending Shakil Ahmed, Mithun Chowdhury and Mintu Sheikh on, but the

change failed to make any impact on the game. Even Bangladesh conceded the fourth goal in the 87th minute with Chan Man Fai sealing the fate of the game and took Hong Kong into the second round.

"Hong Kong played better than our expectation as they were so quick and ran a lot throughout the game," said Bangladesh's Croat coach Robert Rubic after the game.

Rubic said that his charges played comparatively well than the match against UAE but blamed the defensive errors for the margin of defeat.

BANGLADESH SQUAD

Aminul Haque, Nasiruddin, Wali Faisal, Ariful Islam, Rezaul Karim Atiqur Rahman Meshu (Mintu Sheikh), Zahid Hossain, Mamunul Islam, Enamul Haq (Shakil Ahmed), Mamun Mia, Abdul Baten Komol (Mithun Chowdhury).

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS

1 Cruise or Hanks

4 Cabbage salad

8 MRI predecessor

12 "Exodus" hero

13 Estate recipient

14 Bygone times

15 Slender stogie

17 Dregs

18 Panacea

19 "Uialume" writer

21 Unfriendly

22 Anderson of "Bay-watch"

26 Furtive sort

29 Dict. explanation

30 Central

31 Survey

32 Knight's title

33 Fourth dimension

34 Census datum

35 \$ dispenser

36 The fifth element

37 Work of fiction, south of the border

39 Sgt. Pitch

41 Female warrior

45 Platter

48 Horn made famous at the 2010 World Cup

50 Shaving cream additive

51 — out (supplements)

52 Atmo-sphere

53 Indistinct view

Solution time: 25 mins.

DOWN

16 The A in "CAT scan"

20 Klutzy one

23 Eastern bigwig

24 Wheels of fortune?

25 Mideast gulf

26 Bridge

27 "Forget it"

28 Ht.

29 Badly lit

32 Famished

33 November birthstone

35 Chicken-link

36 Baffle

38 Bygone anesthetic

39 "Bolero" composer

42 Ardor

43 Hodge-podge

44 — a soul (nobody)

45 Slight application

46 Under the weather

47 Old French coin

49 Guita's cousin

SWAT OPEC BUG
OHIO PITA ANA
BADMOUTHS DDT
STATUUS TABOO
OR DWELL
ICBM PRO EONS
MOA OER OAT
PODS OAK EDGY
WORLD SN
ATONE TIDBIT
IRR BABBREATH
RED ULNA ABLE
YES SPAR RELY

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CRYPTOQUIP

F D E U S E Q U B Q G E E R U X F B
J D D E Q U K S J G Y C , E Q U
F B E S J Y F G E B Z U R U T S F E U C
X M E Q F T M K R F G Y Z Q R G Y Z Q .

Yesterday's Cryptoquip: POPULAR MUSICAL ABOUT A PROFESSOR GIVING A FEMALE CABDRIVER ELOCUTION LESSONS: "MY FARE LADY."

Today's Cryptoquip Clue: D equals F