

Arsenal centre-back Thomas Vermaelen is set to remain out of action until the New Year at the earliest, manager Arsene Wenger said Monday.

Vermaelen has not played for the Premier League leaders since Belgium's Euro 2012 qualifier in Turkey on September 7 after suffering an Achilles injury.

Arsenal had hoped his injury was short-term and Wenger, speaking to the Gunners' official website, said there was "no logical explanation" for the 25-year-old Vermaelen's extended absence.

"Vermaelen is in a (protective) boot," said Wenger.

"We want him back and I hope he will be back soon, but not before January."



# SPORT

DHAKA TUESDAY DECEMBER 14, 2010, E-MAIL: sports@thedailystar.com

## Tamim's 'luck' with umpires

SAKEB TAHSIN SUBHAN

Luck seems to have deserted Tamim Iqbal. On either side of his encouraging 52-ball 44 in the second game against Zimbabwe, the left-handed opener has suffered the anguish of poor judgement, as it seems, at the hands of local umpires.

Though the first decision had "howler" written all over it, the ball pitching half a foot outside leg-stump and hitting his pads, the second also had an element of unfairness about it.

The ball pitched in line and it hit him high on the pads, the dashing left-hander missing the regulation outswinger from Chris Mpofu. But the instant decision of the umpire befuddled Tamim as he showed his bat in bemusement. The television replays were not conclusive enough of an inside edge, but regardless it was a bit high and going down the leg-side too.

Tamim was also wrongly given out leg-before in the first game. His first match after recovering from a wrist injury, Tamim played well to get to 23 before being adjudged leg-before to the same Mpofu, when the ball clearly pitched outside the line of leg stump.

The umpire then was Enamul Haque while in the third ODI yesterday it was Sharfuddoula Ibne Shahid Saikat.



**THE HUNT CONTINUES:** Bangladesh left-arm spinner Abdur Razzak appeals for yet another wicket against Zimbabwe at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium yesterday. He continued his dominance over his favourite prey with four wickets yesterday, taking his series tally to an unbelievable 13 from three matches.

PHOTO: STAR

## 2-1 in more ways than one

MOHAMMAD ISAM

The five-match series is now tilted 2-1 towards Bangladesh and during Monday's match the scoreline stood as a metaphor in terms of their performance.

Shakib Al Hasan's inclination to shaping 100-plus partnerships, especially from dire situations, and the marked improvement in pace bowling are the two areas where the Tigers have scored, but a continuing failure remains in the form of the batting Powerplay's use and timing was what they conceded.

The skipper, the highest ODI wicket-taker so far this year and among the top ten with the bat during the same period, again stepped up when the chips were down. Bangladesh were 47 for three when he walked in and lost a set Imrul Kayes in the 20th over, the score 71-4. Beginning with his trademark square-cut off his fourth ball, the left-hander's next boundary came in his 55th as he rebuilt after the top-order letdown. Mushfiqur Rahim fed off Shakib's confidence, hitting two early boundaries before going through some nervy moments against Graeme Cremer's leg-spin.

After more than eight months, the

wicketkeeper-batsman showed a semblance of form, reaching his seventh ODI half-century. Whether he was deliberately aggressive or not, it paid off for the Tigers who were in a lot of bother when he walked in to bat.

Mushfiqur had reached his fifty after Shakib had completed his 1000th run as captain and a 17th half-century. The two former BKSP students added 116 for the fifth wicket, incredibly the 10th that Shakib has been involved in. In his 101-match ODI career, Shakib has also been part of a 50-plus partnership on 25 occasions.

The left-hander's driving was also eye-catching, attractively lofting Ray Price twice over the bowler's head and carving Chris Mpofu over extra-cover.

But the arrival of the Powerplay, automatic because Bangladesh are really poor when taken earlier, was pretty much an alarm bell for Shakib. He fell leg-before to his opposite number Prosper Utseya, having already survived a dropped chance in the first over of the Powerplay.

He later joked about his exit, saying, "It seems my responsibility is till the Powerplay. The moment it starts, I'm gone. We should work at it but I don't know what's going on. I used to get out in the first over but now it's the second."

Bangladesh made 44 runs from the batting side's Powerplay thanks to a few blows from Naemul Islam and Mashrafe Bin Mortaza.

"We didn't take the Powerplay earlier because we don't do well in it. If we took it earlier, the innings would've been over earlier."

"I don't think we did too badly today [Monday], we scored over 40 and anything over 50 is good. We played ten dot balls in this Powerplay so if a boundary came off those, it would have been much better," explained Shakib.

In the only other time that Bangladesh did take the Powerplay (in the first ODI), they remained terrible at it: 25 runs at the cost of three wickets.

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## Rubic picks 54 for trials

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh football coach Robert Rubic has picked 54 booters including 16 new faces for a two-day trial in a bid to select a U23 preliminary squad for the pre-Olympic qualifiers.

Among the probables, only five players, defender Mintu Sheikh, midfielders Shahedul Alam, Imtiaz Sultan Jitu, strikers Touhidul Alam Sabuj and Mithun Chowdhury, who were members of Bangladesh's U23 Asian Games squad, have been recalled for the trial while another 16 players have not been considered following the age-limit prohibition of the 2012 Olympics.

A maximum of 27 defenders have been chosen followed by 18 midfielders and nine strikers with most of the players having the experience of playing in different age-group teams as well as the seniors side.

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## Razzak deadlier by the day

SPORTS REPORTER

In the space of just three games, Abdur Razzak has almost doubled his wicket-tally for the year.

Wicketless in the first five one-day matches of 2010, the left-arm spinner has gradually built into the sort of year we have gotten used to from this steady performer. Before the Zimbabwe series, Razzak had picked up 16 wickets but after two four-wicket hauls and a five-for in consecutive matches, the law of averages has certainly moved in his favour.

Barring his first two years (2004 and 2005) when he took only seven ODI wickets, Razzak has been solid as he took 45 wickets in 2006, 30 the next year and another 29 in 2008.

This year he already has 29 wickets at an average slightly over the 30-mark, but with two matches to go and his left-arm spin having become so dangerous for the Zimbabweans, another handful is almost a certainty. Against them, he already has taken 53 ODI wickets at 15.30 runs per wicket, his next highest being 12 wickets each against Kenya and Sri Lanka.

Razzak is now second to Muttiah Muralidaran in the wickets against Zimbabwe list, the amazing Lankan having taken 56 against the Zimbabweans.

These statistics and the fact that Zimbabwe have had no answer to his bowling, made it clear that the visitors would talk a lot more about him. When asked about the difference between the two sides, Zimbabwe coach Alan Butcher said, "I don't necessarily think there's a big difference between the two sides. [Abdur] Razzak is winning matches for them as a bowler. Our bowlers, though effective, haven't given a match-winning performance, so I think that's the difference."

"Razzak has taken a lot of wickets early on, making life difficult for us," he added.

The left-armed was more devastating yesterday, though he did take a five-for and the hat-trick in the second game. His ten-over spell yielded only 14 runs, beginning Zimbabwe's slide towards a terrible defeat.

Chamu Chibhabha was done in by the arm-ball while Hamilton Masakadza didn't even look back as Mushfiqur Rahim stumped him. Brendan Taylor's poke found Junaed Siddiqui at slip while

Regis Chakabva was the easiest wicket of the lot. The head coach Butcher was hardly impressed by all of this.

"It is as much a technical problem than anything else. You have to give credit to him [Razzak]. He's bowling exceptionally well."

"It's disappointing that we keep giving him three wickets in two overs. Whether it is psychological or that we are not picking him, we have to work on it in the next couple of days," said the former England batsman.

It was not much of a surprise for the usually reserved Razzak to be humble about his performance. "I am confident and there's help from the wicket. These two things are combining and working in my favour," he said.

And the final proof that Razzak feels confident to bowl was found in the statement of the two captains, both spinners. Prosper Utseya and Shakib Al Hasan both mentioned the factor of the ground not being dry and the difficulty in gripping the ball.

Razzak too probably felt it was difficult but it was far from his mind, a sure sign of his increasing self-belief that has come through in these last 13 wickets.

## ICC CRICKET WORLD CUP HISTORY

### Rain fleeces SA

There was one black mark against the 1992 World Cup that called into question the fairness of some results, particularly the semi-final between England and South Africa in Sydney on 22 March. It was the rain rule - specifically the calculations regarding overs and runs to chop off from a target in the event of rain disrupting a match. The previous rule was unduly harsh on sides batting first, with the target being reduced in proportion to the run rate. It ignored the received wisdom that chasing a target gives a side more opportunity to plan their innings.

For example, chasing 250 in fifty overs was a difficult ask, but if twenty overs were doctored due to rain, under the old system the target would be reduced to 150 from 30 overs, making the task of the chasing team much easier as they would not have to worry about being bowled out in thirty overs, while only having to score at the original asking rate.

A new rain rule was introduced in the 1992 World Cup, devised to redress the balance in favour of the side batting first. An elite panel of experts that included former Australian great Richie Benaud were given the task of devising the new method of calculation. They came up with a system that, in the event of rain disrupting a chase, would dock off the lowest scoring overs. For instance, if a side scored 250 in fifty overs of which three were maidens, and two cost just one run each, in the event of five

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## WARM-UP MATCH Massive win for female booters

SPORTS REPORTER

The Bangladesh women national team handed a 7-0 defeat to Bhutan in one of two practice matches ahead of the SAFF Women's Football Championship at the Mohammadpur Physical College ground yesterday.

Bhutan, who have been drawn in Bangladesh's group along with India and Sri Lanka, came to Dhaka on Sunday, one week before the start of the first-ever championship in Cox's Bazar in a bid to prepare themselves well.

The hosts dominated the game and took a three-goal lead in the first half with Omra

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## SPORTS POLL WEEKLY QUESTION

Do you think Bangladesh will win the ongoing series against Zimbabwe?

Visit the sports page of www.thedailystar.net to cast vote

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## BTB and ICC join hands

BSS, Dhaka

Bangladesh Tourism Board (BTB) is joining the road show of the International Cricket Council (ICC) to promote tourism to the local tourists across the country that starts from the capital today.

The road show will travel to all 64 districts of the country in 35 days as part of its endeavour to create hype for the upcoming ICC Cricket World Cup that will be jointly organised by Bangladesh, India and Sri Lanka over February-April.

Two colourful convoys will travel across the country and make stopover in all the district towns for holding the road show. The district administration will receive the convoys and hold cultural programmes.

"As BTB has become partner of ICC for the World Cup, we have decided to join the road show with our tourism branding materials to make the domestic tourists familiar with our exciting tourist destinations," Civil Aviation and Tourism Secretary Shafique Alam Mehdi told BSS yesterday.

Two vehicles colourfully branding various tourism destinations will join the ICC convoys and provide various tourism related information to the spectators during the road show.

Besides, staff of the BTB will collect votes for the Sundarbans to make it one of the seven natural wonders wherever the road show makes a stopover.

"I hope, we can collect lots of votes for the Sundarbans during the month long road show," Mehdi said adding that as the convoy will travel across the country people from the periphery

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Not even a last minute rescheduling of the match due to malfunctioning floodlights could deter the fans from turning out in force and cheering on the Tigers en route to a crushing win at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

## What to WATCH

**NEO Cricket**  
India v New Zealand  
Fourth ODI (D/N)  
Live from 3:00pm

**STAR Cricket**  
Australia v England  
Second Test, Day 5  
Live from 6:00am

**ESPN**  
Sportscentre India  
Sports News  
Live at 8:30pm

**TEN Sports**  
UEFA Champions League  
Barcelona v Rubin Kazan  
Live from 1:45am (Wednesday)

**TEN Action+**  
UEFA Champions League  
Man United v Valencia  
Live from 1:45am (Wednesday)