

Former Italy defender Marco Materazzi has confirmed that a meeting and handshake between himself and Zinedine Zidane in Milan last month did take place. The pair have had a long-running feud since the 2006 World Cup final when Zidane was sent-off for headbutting Materazzi in the chest. Last month, ahead of Milan's Champions League clash against Real Madrid at the San Siro, a Spanish journalist claimed to have seen the pair shake hands and make up at a Milan hotel, although Zidane later denied this. But now Materazzi claims that such an exchange did indeed take place.



SPORT

DHAKA SATURDAY DECEMBER 11, 2010, E-MAIL: sports@thedailystar.net



Bangladesh coach Jamie Siddons (L) and two of his most lethal weapons Tamim Iqbal (C) and Shakib Al Hasan inspect the wet outfield at the Zohur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium yesterday.

Washout at Chittagong

MOHAMMAD ISAM from Chittagong

"A better ground for soccer? You might get football matches called off here." Zimbabwe coach Alan Butcher's comments summed up the frustration that was prevalent at the soggy Zohur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium yesterday, after match referee Chris Broad called off the first one-dayer due to a wet outfield. Even though the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) officially announced the decision to the media at around 12:45pm, the abandonment was in the cards from Thursday afternoon when the downpour first began at the port city. Though the groundsmen hoped for a curtailed match, a sharp spell early yesterday morning turned it into the second game in as many months in this country to be called off without a ball being bowled. "Thursday's rain didn't really hamper the ground. It wasn't necessary to run the super-sopper. There was no water-logging last [Thursday] night. But the hour-long shower early this [Friday] morning created the main problem. Everyone knows what this ground is like. The grass here doesn't grow tall but it thickens out," said Zahid Reza, the newly-appointed curator at the Chittagong venue, who took over only one and a half-month ago. More than the grass however, it was very obvious that the water drainage facility (or the lack of it) ensured the no-show. The cricket ground here doesn't have the basic draining system or even the two-foot slope that is a given in mod-

ern cricket venues. BCB CEO Manzur Ahmed, who took a look at the outfield virtually at the same time the match officials were doing their final inspection half-hour past mid-day, said that only covers that are large enough to envelop the entire ground is the solution for this ground. "I think a large cover can be very helpful to this ground," said Manzur, adding, "We have to bring the cover to protect this ground since the drainage system is not up to the mark. The ground level cannot be raised now because the World Cup is too close and the wickets wouldn't be ready in time but for now, I think we need bigger covers." Unfortunately for Bangladesh and Zimbabwe, the covers present at the venue are small, covering only till the 30-yard circle and on Friday, it was hardly enough to save the game. "It is frustrating [that the weather is sunny but we can't play]. When the sun does break through the cloud, it is very warm. Maybe if it had happened 4-5 hours ago, it would have been better. As I said, it is very wet, very muddy, very boggy," said Butcher an hour after the call-off. "If we had any hopes of winning the series, we had to play and win today. It's a pity. The best we can do is to draw the series by winning the game on Sunday." Jamie Siddons echoed Butcher, but obviously from Bangladesh's point of view. "It is very frustrating, considering the sun was out virtually the whole day but we couldn't play the match. A little bit of rain last evening and this morning but we still

couldn't play. We are disappointed not to drive home the advantage and make it 3-1," said the Australian head coach of the Tigers. Though it is the visitors who are down by a game, they now have a good chance to level the series and Butcher hopes a drawn series could be salvaged. "It does hamper our plans. If we won two, we would have won the series. Now, we know that we need to play better than we have done. The chance was there to win the series, now the chance is there to draw the series. That would be an achievement, to come from behind. We hope to get a 2-all draw, something we would be happy with," he said. Abdur Razzak, on the other hand, is not considering the possibility of a 2-2 scoreline. "In our situation, we do not think we are at any risk of conceding the series," said the left-arm spinner with 13 wickets from three games so far. The match being called off also hindered his chances of creating a new world record as the first bowler to take four or more wickets in an ODI in four consecutive matches. At the moment, Razzak is equal with Narendra Hirwani, Waqar Younis (on three occasions), Shane Warne, Vasbert Drakes and Khuram Chohan on three games each. "Definitely it is disappointing, just like any player would tell you. But I have no hard feelings regarding my own situation, whatever that is. Whatever was in my fate, it panned out," said Razzak who still has one more chance to break the record. But a spell of rain from now till Sunday morning stands in his way or the left-arm

Siddons wants int'l matches

SPORTS REPORTER from Ctg
Bangladesh coach Jamie Siddons is keen on the Tigers playing international cricket next month after yesterday's washout in Chittagong. The current series against Zimbabwe is the last international fixture Bangladesh have ahead of the 2011 World Cup. The Tigers head coach, who returned from Brisbane on Friday night after wife Kim gave birth to his second child Toby, said he would ask the board to find an opponent, though that could be the hard part of the bargain. "I'm pushing for an international series at the end of January or early February. I will discuss this, and a whole range of other issues, on December 14 when I meet the board," said Siddons. "It is aimed to get all the players together before the World Cup. But I am not sure if we will get a team at that time," added the 46-year-old Australian. Though the proposed one-day series may remain a "proposed" one, Siddons is pinning his hopes on the Premier League later this month to give his charges the much-needed match practice ahead of the World Cup.

ICC CRICKET WORLD CUP HISTORY

Warne pulls one out of the hat

The baton of cricket's sole superpower passed from West Indies to Australia when Australia beat the West Indies at home in '94-'95. A clutch of greats and would-be greats had arrived for Australia, while West Indies lost a few household names. No longer were there Malcolm Marshall, Joel Garner or Michael Holding to steamroll opposition with their fury. There were still great players like Curtly Ambrose and Courtney Walsh with the ball, and of course, Brian Lara with the bat. So when these two gladiators squared off in Chandigarh on March 14 for the semifinals of the 1996 World Cup, a great match was in the offing. It was all West Indies in the early going. Choosing to bat after winning the toss on a grassy pitch, Australia's main task would have been to see off the threat of their pace bowling

trio of Ambrose, Walsh and Ian Bishop. They failed in spectacular fashion, as Ambrose and Bishop exacted four wickets by the time Australia reached 15. Bishop bowled Mark Taylor and Steve Waugh for one and three respectively, while Ambrose trapped Mark Waugh and Ponting leg-before-for ducks. That brought to the crease Stuart Law and the limited overs specialist Michael Bevan. They slowly went about the task of rebuilding the innings. They picked up the pace as the bowlers got tired, and at the end of their stand of 138 off 32 overs, Michael Holding in the commentary box reflected on how in his day West Indies would not have allowed the Aussies to recover, hinting at the decline of West Indian cricket, which would manifest itself fully by the end of the match.



Dejected supporters make their way back home after the fourth ODI of the Micromax Cup between Bangladesh and Zimbabwe was called off due to unplayable ground conditions at the Zohur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium yesterday.

Rowdy fans mar fourth ODI

SPORTS REPORTER from Ctg
The fourth one-dayer between Bangladesh and Zimbabwe was a debacle both inside the Zohur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium and outside. A large crowd, in the region of eight to ten thousand, that gathered an hour or so ahead of the game had waited patiently as the security officers kept them outside the stadium premises. But as the announcement came through that the match has been called off, they took out their frustration on the ticket booths as well as a nearby institution which had its signboard smashed in the fracas. The Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) announced last night that four Grameenphone booths across the port city -- GEC roundabout, Andarkilla, Agrabad and CDA -- will sell tickets for the fifth ODI on Sunday. It was also informed that tickets bought for the fourth ODI will be valid for the final game of the series but it is not applicable for the complimentary tickets issued for the fourth ODI.

Kiwis annihilated

home since their 5-0 triumph over England in 2008. "It was fantastic to see our bowlers perform even after sealing the series 4-0," said Indian captain Gautam Gambhir. "I thought the wicket would turn in the second innings, but it started turning in the first over itself. I always felt we had the talent to win 5-0." Parthiv Patel (56 not out) struck his second half-century in a row and added 97 runs for the third wicket with Yuvraj (42 not out) to guide India to a comfortable win in the day-night game at the Chidambaram Stadium in Chennai. New Zealand suffered their second series whitewash on the trot, having lost 4-0 to Bangladesh in a preceding one-day tournament. "It was an incredibly difficult wicket to bat," said captain Daniel Vettori. "We thought we would put up a decent score, but India bowled really well. When you continue to lose wickets, it takes the entire momentum away." India's chase was rocked by early setbacks with Gambhir and Virat Kohli being dismissed inside the first four overs. Gambhir edged Nathan McCullum behind the stumps off the third ball of the innings and Kohli was snatched up in the slips off captain and left-arm spinner Daniel Vettori. Patel, back in the Indian team after a six-year hiatus, survived some early jitters to hit six fours and a six in his 70-ball knock. Yuvraj, named man-of-the-match, smashed six fours and two sixes off 46 balls. Nothing went right for New Zealand after Vettori won the toss and elected to bat. Fast bowler Praveen Kumar struck in the first over, removing Martin Guptill with his fourth delivery before left-arm pacesman Ashish Nehra dismissed Brendon McCullum and Ross Taylor in successive overs. The Indian spinners, led by Ashwin, then got into action, accounting for the rest of the seven wickets to fall. New Zealand's batsmen struggled in overcast conditions, with a 43-run stand by Jamie How (23) and Scott Styris (24) the only decent effort. India, fielding a weakened side in the series in order to give rest to their big guns ahead of an upcoming tour of South Africa, proved their bench strength with a clinical all-round performance.

ICC Cricket
AFP, Chennai
Ravichandran Ashwin led a devastating spin attack as a second-string India thrashed New Zealand by eight wickets in the fifth and final one-day international Friday for a 5-0 series clean sweep. The off-spinner grabbed three wickets for 24 runs off eight overs to help the hosts bowl out New Zealand for 103 off 27 overs before India coasted to the target with almost 29 overs to spare. Part-time spinners Yuvraj Singh and Yusuf Pathan chipped in with two wickets apiece as New Zealand were bundled out for their lowest total in one-day internationals against India. For India, it was their second clean sweep at



India all-rounder Yuvraj Singh (R) and his teammate Parthiv Patel celebrate the winning runs in the fifth and final ODI against New Zealand at MA Chidambaram Stadium in Chennai yesterday.

Siddikur slides

SPORTS REPORTER
Bangladesh's golfing sensation Siddikur Rahman once again showed the erratic nature of his game as he slid down from third position to joint 23rd after round two of the 300,000-dollar Johnnie Walker Cambodian Open yesterday. Siddikur finished round two with a disappointing 1-over-par 73 for an overall score of 4-under-par 140. The 26-year old bogeyed on the ninth and thirteenth holes and double-bogeyed on the 17th to see his chances of a second Asian Tour title almost fade to almost nothing. Japan's Kenichi Kuboya extended his lead with a second round five-under-par 67 for a two-day total of 12-under-par 132, while Australia's Adam Groom, who had taken the morning lead, carded a 66 to take second place with Korea's Kim Hyung-Sung, who posted a 65 at the penultimate full field Asian Tour event before next week's season finale.

SAFF WOMEN'S FOOTBALL All set for inception

SPORTS REPORTER
Women's football will enter a new horizon in the subcontinent when the inaugural SAFF Women's Football Championship gets underway tomorrow at Cox's Bazar, the site of the largest sea beach in the world. While their male counterparts have been competing against each other every two years since 1993 the women are finally set to get a platform to showcase their skills some 17 years later with the help of the South Asian Football Federation (SAFF) committee in collaboration with FIFA and AFC. "With the participation of all eight members in the championship, it is a testament to how interested national federations are in developing women's football," said Sirajul Islam Bachchu, member of organizing committee and former SAFF general secretary, at a press conference at the BFF House yesterday. India, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Bhutan, Maldives and Afghanistan, split into two groups, will fight for the championship and except Afghanistan, all the teams have already reached Cox's Bazar. Afghanistan were scheduled to reach Dhaka yesterday night. BFF general secretary Al Musabbir Sadi informed that Grameenphone has enrolled in the meet as presenting sponsor after KFC and Internet provider aamra became official partners of the championship. It is estimated that a whopping Tk 1.5 crore will be spent for the championship, although there will not be any prize money or participation fees

Collingwood, Strauss share captaincy

AGENCIES, London
England have named two captains for their series of shortened matches against Australia -- Andrew Strauss for the seven-match one-day series and Paul Collingwood for the two Twenty20 matches. The England and Wales



BCB's senior vice president Mahbub Anam (L) briefs an ICC inspection team official about the progress of the renovation work of Bangabandhu National Stadium which will host the opening ceremony of the ICC Cricket World Cup in February, 2011.

ICC inspection team satisfied with BNS

SPORTS REPORTER
The inspection team of the International Cricket Council (ICC) expressed their satisfaction over the progress of the Bangabandhu National Stadium; the venue for the opening ceremony of the 2011 World Cup on February 17. The 19-member ICC delegation accompanied by ICC event manager Chris Tetley visited the country's premier venue yesterday. The team had started their last leg of inspection from November 21 and will submit its report after finishing the inspection of the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur on Sunday. They will visit the Zohur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium in Chittagong today. "It is amazing, as the stadium looks totally different after the renovation. It is totally different from the one I have seen during U-19 World Cup in 2006," said Tetley adding that the progress is quiet satisfactory. The delegation however was eagerly waiting to see the progress of the renovation work of the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur where six matches will be