

Iconic Indian batsman Sachin Tendulkar's record-breaking one-day international double century has found a place in the Times magazine's top 10 sports moments of the year. "Certain sports milestones seem simply unreachable: In cricket, it's the one-day double-hundred: no man had ever produced 200 runs for his team during a one-day international match," the Times said. In February, however, India's Sachin Tendulkar, the greatest run scorer of all-time, hit the magic milestone against a powerful South



SPORT

DHAKA MONDAY DECEMBER 13, 2010, E-MAIL: sports@thedailystar.net

All's well that ends well

SPORTS REPORTER from Chittagong

If the 3-1 series win over Zimbabwe was the ideal end to 2010 the Tigers had hoped for, the upshot of this success is far more important as they approach the home stretch of their World Cup preparations.

Bangladesh have won nine matches out of 27 ODIs they played this year, including the landmark 4-0 win over New Zealand in October and a single win over England back in July. But playing probably their penultimate series before the major tournament, the Tigers showed the tendency to strengthen their basics and iron out some of their flaws in the latter part of this year.

Of course the five wins over higher-ranked opponents don't quite paper over the cracks but the elusive winning habit has again befriended the Tigers before a World Cup, a tonic that worked almost to perfection during the 2007 edition.

Apart from the "shock" defeat (according to skipper Shakib Al Hasan) in the first game, the Tigers were not exactly ruthless but showed a certain "bigger team mentality" against the Zimbabweans over the past two weeks. Spin was put to devastating effect in the second game, also the game when two of the middle-order batslers struck important fifties. The next game saw the return of Mashrafe Bin Mortaza's bowling form while the skipper continued his fine touch with the bat. An aban-

doned game later, Tamim Iqbal also eased back into form after missing the New Zealand series due to a wrist injury, the left-hander hitting a Bangladesh record of seven sixes in his 95.

"If I were to pick out the positives, I would say that the top-order made runs today. The fast bowlers also came to the party in the last two matches of this series after doing well against New Zealand. Fielding too was good in this series like the last one," said Shakib in the post-match press conference yesterday.

"There was consistency in our desire to do well. When the team wins, a lot of the mistakes get passed over. And a winning team has a different outlook, you can see it in their faces that they are confident," added the left-hander who made 156 runs in this series, taking his 2010 score to 787 runs from 27 matches.

Add that to his 46 wickets in the same format and you have probably the best all-rounder in the world. But Shakib thinks his bowling form in the last two series hasn't been up to the mark, probably because he missed out on the 50-wicket mark in the calendar year.

"I don't think I have bowled well in the last two series. From a team point of view, our Powerplay batting is an area we need to work on. Also, the batsmen who get in must make it a big one.

"They should stay till the end rather than making 50s and 60s, something that Gautam Gambhir is doing these days. He bats throughout and makes 110-115. We have to improve on these things and then

we can be like the bigger teams. And of course, the in-form batsmen must also keep that going."

Even in all this goodwill, middle-order batting remains the team management's biggest headache, Shakib reflected that through a hint of warning to one of those fighting for a spot. "Rokibul should have scored at least twice in three games, like Junaid did twice in four games. But anybody can have a bad time, and in that case, we have the back-up," said Shakib.

The Magura lad also admitted that the difference between the two sides that played yesterday was getting bigger by the day. "In terms of our performance, we are definitely ahead of them. Whenever we play our best, we can win against them, 90 per cent of the time," he said.

Zimbabwe too were dissatisfied with their work during the series as coach Alan Butcher said that they were their own worst enemies. "Obviously Razzak was an obstacle but we were our main obstacles because we made unforced errors. When the top-score in the series is 210, you cannot be happy with that," said Butcher.

"Fielding errors cost us 50 in the second game, 60 in the third and 80 in this one. These mistakes in low-scoring matches make life difficult," he added.

Touring skipper Elton Chigumbura said that they still had some positives to take from the four matches. "I thought the spinners bowled well and Craig Ervine looked in good form," the all-rounder pointed out.



PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

SAVED THE BEST FOR THE LAST: Dashing left-handed opener Tamim Iqbal charges down the wicket to smite one of his seven sixes during a dazzling knock of 95 in the fifth and final one-dayer against Zimbabwe at the Zohur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium in Chittagong yesterday.

ICC CRICKET WORLD CUP HISTORY

Cup facts

The Wills World Cup in 1996 was the sixth cricket World Cup and the second to be held in the Indian subcontinent, with India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka co-hosting the showpiece event.

The tournament's format was given a makeover and three associate teams (Kenya, U.A.E, Holland) were invited, making a total of twelve teams, the highest number for a cricket World Cup till then. There were to be two groups of six with the top four from each group making it through to the quarterfinals.

Sri Lanka, Australia, West Indies, India, Zimbabwe and Kenya made up Group A; South Africa, Pakistan, New Zealand, England, U.A.E and Holland were in Group B.

It was also the first World Cup in which the television umpire could be called upon to settle line decisions (runouts and stumpings).

Three weeks before the tournament started, Sri Lanka's capital city Colombo was rocked by a terrorist attack that left over a thousand people injured. This led to West Indies and Australia refusing to play at Colombo, and as a result their group games against Sri Lanka were forfeited.

Kenya, playing in their first World Cup, defeated the once mighty West Indies by 73 runs in Pune on February 29.

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Bangladesh to host 2012 Asia Cup

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh have been awarded the rights to host the 2012 Asia Cup Cricket yesterday after an executive committee meeting of the Asian Cricket Council (ACC) at the Hotel Raddison in the city.

The United Arab Emirates, who hosted the inaugural edition and China were other bidders but Bangladesh have been considered to host the event because of their better offer, said ACC president AHM Mustafa Kamal at a press conference after the meeting. The single-league basis 12th edition of the meet is scheduled for March 1-11, 2012 at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium.

Defending champions India, runners-up Sri Lanka, Pakistan and Bangladesh will

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Boom boom Tamim

MOHAMMAD ISAM from Chittagong



When Tamim Iqbal goes after a spinner, skipping forward, eyes fixed on the immediate left and right of the sightscreen, he uses his full body weight to hit the ball as hard as possible and as far as it is permitted. The shot, admittedly one of his main weapons in his early days of international cricket, is an act of violence when you're the targeted spinner, a cause for nerves if you are at long-on or long-off and a reason to be joyful if you are in the crowd waiting for it to, with a bit of luck, fall in your hands.

At the Zohur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium yesterday, the left-hander smashed seven sixes, five of which was in the general direction that batsmen like to call "down the ground".

The seven sixes broke his own record as a Tigers batsman to hit the most number of sixes in an ODI innings, taking his career count to 41 (Aftab Ahmed has the highest with 49 sixes).

"Don't worry, that record will be broken too," a tongue-in-cheek Tamim said yesterday. The local boy turned into the prime entertainer with his 96-ball 95, even his heart-breaking

dismissal soon after reaching the nineties adding to the drama.

"But that's just me. It obviously feels bad but I'm not too concerned about not getting a hundred. But I won't say this is right. I will learn from it and try not to repeat the same mistake in the future," he said in the post-match press conference.

"Honestly, I get nervous when I'm in the nineties. I have to work on this because I could have scored five singles to reach the hundred but I didn't. I always love playing shots and I hit 7-8 sixes. That's my strength," he added.

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HIGHLIGHTS

- Most sixes by a Bangladeshi batsman in an ODI innings - 7
- Joint highest sixes in Bangladesh soil (equaling Saurav Ganguly and Shahid Afridi) - 7
- Second highest sixes by a Bangladeshi batsman in his career (41), second only to Aftab Ahmed (49).



SMILING TIGERS: The victorious Bangladesh cricket team pose with the Micromax ODI Cup that they lifted with a 3-1 win over Zimbabwe at the Zohur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium in Chittagong yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

Siddikur finishes 19th

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh's golfing sensation Siddikur Rahman bounced back in the fourth and final round but only to improve his position to finish joint 19th in the 300,000-dollar Johnnie Walker Cambodian Open at the Phokeethra Country Club yesterday.

Siddikur finished the round with an inspiring 3-under-par 69 for an overall score of 7-under-par 281 along with Indian golfer Himmat Rai, who also finished on same score.

Siddikur, a 26-year-old golfer, had started his campaign with a fantastic 5-under-par 67 to finish third on the opening day, but then failed to keep the tempo up in the next two rounds and saw his position slide to 23rd with one-over-par 73 and then go further down to stand at joint 28th at close of third round after posting at par 72.

Three-time Asian Tour Order of Merit winner Thongchai Jaidee of Thailand won his unprecedented 13th Asian Tour title as he posted a final round 7-under-par 65 to win the event by four shots with a four-day total of 21-under-par 267.

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If it rains, it's gone

MOHAMMAD ISAM from Chittagong



If you consider its location among chemical factories in one desolate corner of the city, the smell of fumes in its air, the unfinished eastern galleries and the thick seaside grass, there isn't much right about the Zohur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium.

But cricket could be played in polluted air, in an industrial area, in front of empty stands, and even on sluggish outfields, but cricket matches are not possible on a wet ground.

Poor drainage system at the stadium forced the abandonment of the fourth Bangladesh-Zimbabwe ODI, more than four years after its first call off, the final game of the Bangladesh-India ODI series. Granted that a hurricane forced the first abandoned game but last Friday, it was bizarre. Rain from Thursday afternoon continued till late evening. When the groundsman finished work at 10:00pm that night, they were confident that a match, though a curtailed one, could be made possible through another effort early next morning.

But it was a wet beginning on Friday, an hourlong shower at dawn that made sure of more hard work. At around 10:00am, the teams trooped out gingerly, the entrance to the ground proper was muddy and as the first step Mashrafe Bin Mortaza took inside the field, water splashed around. During the entire morning, the sun had peaked through a number of times, but it could still be passed off as a dull day (in terms of light).

By midday, 30 minutes before the match was called off, there was sunshine but the water didn't go away from the surface.

When asked about this poor drainage facility, Bangladesh Cricket Board's (BCB) grounds and facilities committee chairman Shafiqur Rahman Munna said that there wasn't enough time to lift the level of the ground and create the slope so vital for drainage of water.

"We wanted to have a proper drainage system with a 2-foot slope, but for that we would have to dig up all the pitches and lay new ones. In that case the ground would not have any World Cup matches because of the risk involved in playing on new pitches," he said.

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Painting the Passion of Victory on the Green

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