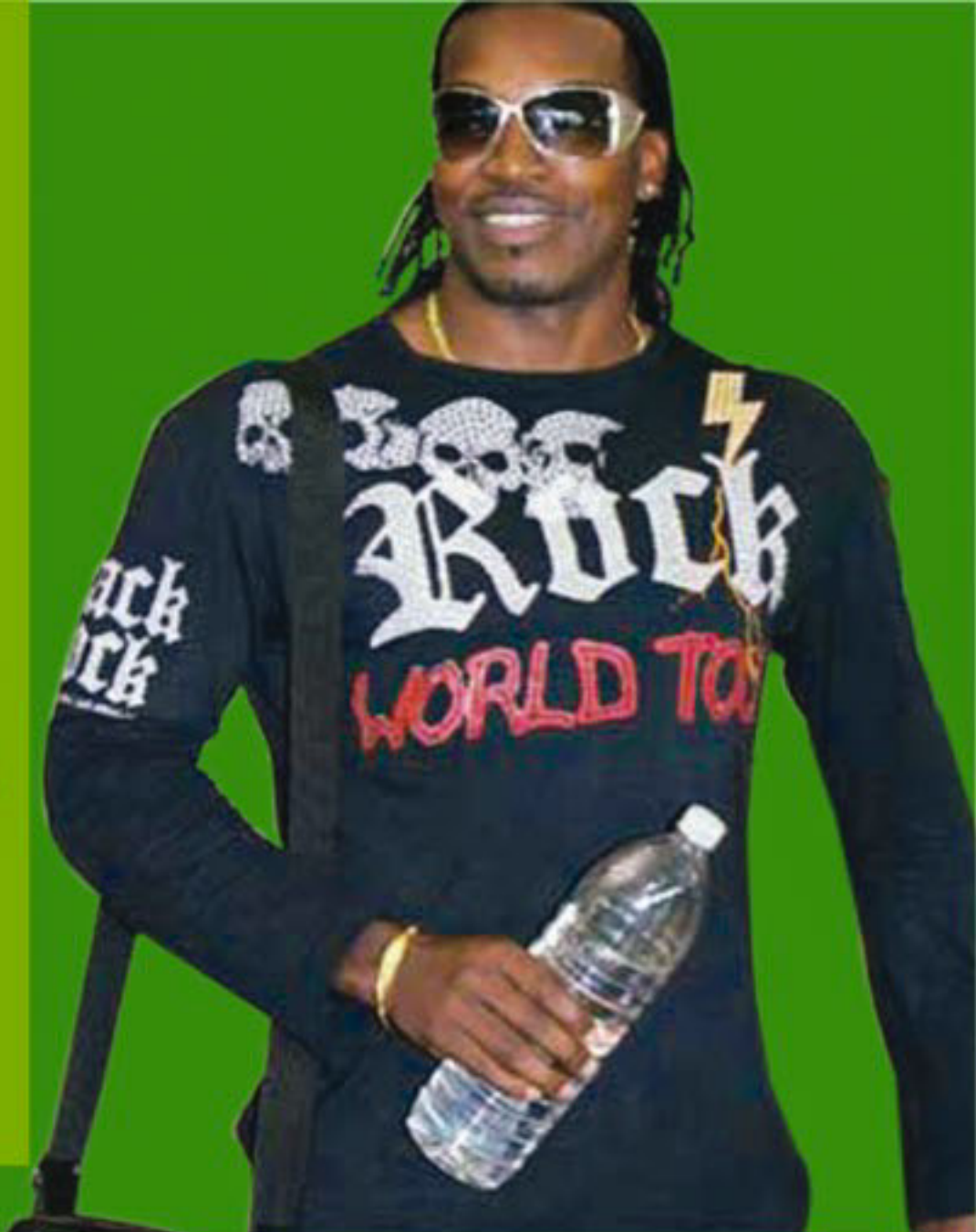


West Indies blaster Chris Gayle claims he has paid little attention to Australia's Ashes demise, saying his busy party lifestyle prevented him from watching the series.

"I didn't follow much of it because it kind of clashed with my party events in Jamaica," Gayle said of the Ashes. In the nights, cricket starts late my time. "I heard England retained the Ashes, so congrats to them on their part."

— SYDNEY MORNING HERALD



# SPORT

DHAKA FRIDAY DECEMBER 31, 2010, E-MAIL: sports@the

## Irony at the heart of SIDDIKUR'S

## ascent

Finally, all votes are in. When polling finally closed at 9pm last night, more than a thousand of you had put in votes to select your sportsman of the year. In a neck-and-neck battle, golf sensation Siddikur Rahman edged out cricket star Shakib Al Hasan by just three votes to claim the award of BANGLADESHI SPORTSPERSON OF THE YEAR.

Narrow yes, but margins at the top usually are.

So to appease your appetite for both your favourite picks, THE DAILY STAR SPORT today brings you exclusive interviews with both Siddikur and Shakib. And there is Tamim Iqbal for the cherry on top. Read on.

ANISUR RAHMAN AND QUAZI ZULQUARNAIN ISLAM

In 1991, a young seven-year old boy from Madaripur enlisted at the Kurmitola Golf Club as a ballboy to earn some extra money. His job was relatively simple; pick up all the balls after the *shahibs* had hit rounds in the eighteen-course hole throughout the day. His family lived in Manikdi, a run-down area in the northern outskirts of the city, and for Siddikur Rahman the extra income came in quite handy, even as his parents requested him to concentrate on his studies. But Siddikur insisted. The money from Kurmitola would finance his education, he argued.

Some 19 years on, Siddikur still hasn't really shone in academics.

But that matters little since he is now arguably Bangladesh's most famous sportsman.

He is certainly the richest, after roping in a mind-boggling, USD 267,692 this year alone. The figures are nauseating under any circumstances, but when one takes into account the abject poverty and class ladder that Siddikur has had to fight through to succeed, it becomes all the more impressive.

But then again, he does ply his trade in the most elitist sport of them all, golf.

Cricket and football are the sport of choice for youths in Bangladesh. Both games are relatively inexpensive and can be played in creative surroundings in the back-alleys, which are a hallmark of this over-populated city. Golf is a game restricted for a select few, it always has been and it possibly always will be.

So when the boy from Manikdi took the decision to enroll at Kurmitola, fate played its card to change his life.

"Mondays were the only day when staff were allowed to use the club facilities," recalls Siddikur, his eyes focusing to remember details from such bygone years.

"I remember holding my breath and waiting for Monday to roll around. It was always the highlight of the week. It was the day that I could finally get a chance to go on the driving range and practice playing the game I served during the week."

Hundreds of such Mondays followed, as Siddikur pursued the sport he was born to play. Unfortunately it was not until 1999 when his talent really got noticed.

"I finished first in a competition amongst some 150 caddies. This proved to be the breakthrough moment of my career," recalled Siddikur.

The stocky Siddikur was a caddie by



PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

then, but 1999 saw him graduate into a national amateur level player.

"I got into the national team in 1999, and I served the side ably for seven years."

His words are modest, but the truth is that he did not just serve; he dominated.

Siddikur won five tournaments at home and claimed seven other titles abroad; a magnificent achievement.

And it was three successive victories at his home turf in Kurmitola as an amateur golfer that started him dreaming of playing in the professional golf tour in India otherwise known as the PGTI.

"This was another crucial juncture in my life," says Siddikur. I realized that if I could go pro, I would be able to quite successful in life, at least monetarily."

His performances against top

players from the region spurred on this motivation.

"When I became champion thrice ahead of well-known golfers from India and Sri Lanka who usually play in the PGTI, I knew that I was ready to take the next step."

Initially Siddikur's target was simple. Establish himself in the PGTI so that he could forge a decent income

SEE PAGE 17 COL 6

## WC tickets on sale from Jan 2

SPORTS REPORTER

Tickets sale for the ICC Cricket World Cup 2011 matches in Bangladesh have been delayed by a day and will now start from January 2, 2011 across the country.

It was a belated realization from the authority concerned that Saturday is a weekly holiday and all the banks will be closed on the day.

Tickets will be available at fifteen City Bank and thirty Agrani Bank branches all over the country and one individual can buy only two tickets per match.

"It will be better if someone can show his National Identity Card or any other kind of identity card when purchasing tickets but it's not mandatory. But one has to give the proper information if he doesn't carry any identity card," said Ali Ahsan Babu, host tournament director.

He also informed that they have yet to decide on when the tickets will go on sale for the opening ceremony which will be take place at the Bangabandhu National Stadium on February 17 next year.

Only twelve to thirteen thousands tickets will be available for the 25,000-capacity Bangabandhu National Stadium as more than half the tickets for the opening ceremony will be reserved for dignitaries.

A total of six matches including two quarterfinals will take place at Mirpur while the remaining two games will be held in Chittagong and practice matches will take place at Fatullah.

## Nafees, Kapali sink MSC in Bogra run fest

SPORTS REPORTER

Shahriar Nafees held together Gazi Tank to secure one of the biggest chases in Premier League history when his unbeaten 114 dealt a major blow to Mohammedan Sporting Club yesterday in a game that had 679 runs and only eight wickets.

The defending champions were beaten by seven wickets with eight balls to spare despite stacking up 339-5 from 50 overs as the Gazi Tank batsmen fired back in style (and runs).

The best player on show, Nafees, said that the key was proper execution of their plans. "Our goal was to play till the end, the full 50 overs, and I knew that would take us close to the target," said Nafees, who struck an unbeaten 114 runs from 131 balls with the help of eleven boundaries.

But crucially, Nafees added 151 for the third wicket with Sridharan Sriram, the left-handed Indian batsman hitting seven boundaries in his 78-ball 73. Then, Nafees and his old Tigers and Dhaka Warriors teammate Alok Kapali took the game out of Mohammedan's reach on the Shaheed Chandu Stadium featherbed.

The classy Kapali smashed four



PHOTO: STAR

Gazi Tank's batsman Shahriar Nafees plays the off drive during his matchwinning score of 114 against Mohammedan in a Premier League highscoring thriller at the Shaheed Chandu Stadium in Bogra yesterday.

sixes and six boundaries in his 63 off just 35 balls and the pair added an unbeaten 118 runs for the fourth wicket.

"We were chasing a huge score, 340 runs, and it was only possible because everyone played well."

Initially we wanted to reach 200 by 35 overs and with wickets in hand, a hundred runs in the last ten overs would have been achievable with our batsmen. Alok Kapali played a tremendous knock," said Nafees, who made his second consecutive ton after an identical 114 not out against

Bangladesh Biman on Tuesday. Nafees, Kapali and Sriram took the limelight away from Nazimuddin and Shamsur Rahman, who both struck centuries for Mohammedan.

**BIMAN-DOHS** Mehrab Hossain did a Nafees at the Shaheed Kamruzzaman Stadium in Rajshahi though here the left-hander's unbeaten 73 was enough for Old DOHS to beat Biman in a low-scoring encounter by four wickets.

The national discard struck eight boundaries and a six in his 122-ball

SEE PAGE 17 COL 1

## BANGABANDHU GOLD CUP Final phase from Jan 7

SPORTS REPORTER

The final phase of the Bangabandhu Gold Cup, for primary schools, is set to get underway from January 7 at the Bangabandhu National Stadium.

Some 56024 primary schools across the country took part in the first phase from where seven divisional champions advanced to the finals, said speakers at a press conference yesterday. Of the seven schools, six will play knock-out matches, with Charbaria Govt Primary School of Barisal joining the three teams at the semifinals stage.

The participating teams are Isdair Govt Primary School of Narayanganj, East Mohammadpur Govt Primary School of Cox's Bazar, Koila Govt Primary School of Satkhira, Rahmania Govt Primary School of Chapainawabganj, Nicchintapur Primary School of Sylhet and South Kanial Khata Govt Primary School of Nilphamari.

## ICC CRICKET WORLD CUP HISTORY

### 'Milestone in our cricket'

Khaled Mahmud Sujon, the former national captain and all-rounder, was one of the star performers in the 1999 World Cup. Though he wants to forget the memories of the 2003 edition, Sujon spoke to The Daily Star Sport about his experiences of the premier one-day tournament.

Daily Star Sport (DSS): How excited were you before the 1999 World Cup began?

Khaled Mahmud Sujon (KMS): It was a dream come true, to play in the World Cup. A thing that often makes me smile is a press conference at the Bangabandhu National Stadium where I, as the vice-captain, said that we will beat Scotland and create one upset. A lot of people laughed it off but later I became a soothsayer (laughs)!

A year before the World Cup, we toured England, Scotland and Ireland. We were on a taxi when the driver, a Bangladeshi, recognized us and requested us to beat Pakistan the following year.

DSS: You also played the 2003 edition, how did the two compare for you?

KMS: I don't want to remember the 2003 World Cup. It was such a nightmare tournament. I think it's better we talk about the 1999 one as we are so close to our first home World Cup.

DSS: How does the 1999 tournament rate in terms of tours?

KMS: I believe that one day, we'll

become world champions. But nobody can ever forget the 1999 World Cup. It was a milestone in Bangladesh cricket.

If you talk about the tour, the cold weather was something different for us too. Specially in Scotland, it was too much for us. And Nannu bhai's innings in that weather, in that condition, I still think it was one of the best innings by a Bangladeshi in international cricket.

DSS: Your favourite memory...

KMS: I had some role in every match, but beating Pakistan was the best moment in my career. Not only did I have a role in the game, I was the man-of-the-match. I still feel thrilled when I think about that day.

DSS: How different is the World Cup for you and this generation of cricketers?

KMS: Everything about the tournament was new for us. But this generation gets to play the World Cup and it is almost a given that they would play in the tournament. But yes, the pressure and atmosphere is similar.



KHALED MAHMUD SUJON