

Arjen Robben has hit out at teammate Thomas Muller following the pair's clash on Saturday. Muller gesticulated at Robben after he took a poor free-kick and at the final whistle Robben angrily remonstrated with the Germany international.

"I hate it when teammates constantly raise their hands and complain," said Robben.

"It is disrespectful. We are a team. We don't need to do that. We have got to be role models and should not make things any harder than they are."

—INTERNET



SPORT

DHAKA MONDAY JANUARY 31, 2011, E-MAIL: sports@thedailystar.com

'It's World Cup, guys'

SPORTS REPORTER

It doesn't take a rocket scientist to realise how serious the business of playing the World Cup is. Everyone and everything have only one target in mind and you will get sucked into the mindset as soon as you enter the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur.

And as the time draws nearer, the anxiety is palpable and even those with nothing to do, seems doubly busy. Among the Tigers, the level of anticipation is similar as they juggle their training schedule alongside several media commitments.

Even the seniormost member of the current squad, Abdur Razzak, has to adhere by team rules so when coach Jamie Siddons wanted to sit with the 15-member squad ahead of yesterday's evening practice session, the left-arm spinner's dash to join his teammates summed up the mood.

"I am hoping to do something good in the India match... Brother, I have to go now," was the last thing Razzak said before he ran off to the centre of the Mirpur ground.

The Tigers were hard in training as they prepare for the big event, but as the countdown gets smaller everyday, focus seemed to be firmly fixed on what the players were targeting at an individual level. But the 28-year-old however refused to make any such predictions.

"We are preparing well, and now that we are working under lights you never know. We might reach the quarterfinals, semifinals or even the final, you can't really tell," said Razzak.

Though he missed a bit of cricket in the last four years, Razzak is considered as the one with most experience as he is one of the six players who were in the 2007 World Cup squad and has 111 one-day internationals under his belt. But he was sure that everyone else in the team knew their responsibility well.

"Everyone has equal responsibility in the team. Of course I will offer my

Silver, bronze in taekwondo

SPORTS REPORTER

Shahnaj Khatun won a silver medal in the 5th Commonwealth Taekwondo Championship after neck-and-neck battle against a Scottish opponent in the final of the 62-kg category in Chennai yesterday.

Shanj went down 7-5 against Sumari Hill in the final after making way to the final with a 5-4 in the semifinal against Singapore's Si Tang. He beat India's Saria Singh and Sri Lanka's Laksmi by 5-3 and 6-4 respectively in the previous two rounds.

Shanj's male compatriot Arman Hossain however was eliminated from the 74-kg semifinal after losing to Scottish Rose Aden 8-5 but won a bronze after beating Indian Kishor Thapa 5-3, said a press release yesterday.



ON THE FENCE: Wounded fast bowler Mashrafe Bin Mortaza sits near the boundary ropes during the Tigers' practice session under lights at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium yesterday.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

Let's plan sans Mashrafe

AL-AMIN



While watching the Tigers train under the magnificent lights of the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday, one thing that struck me most was the participation of injured fast bowler Mashrafe Bin Mortaza in the extensive workouts with the selected fifteen for next month's showpiece event.

We could not have asked for a better combination had a fit Mashrafe been there and had trained wearing a shirt allotted exclusively for the Tigers instead of sporting his club jersey. Alas, he was actually with the team only as part of his extended rehabilitation program. Still, his involvement in the training was inflicting. A big heart and a gladiator in the true sense, Mashrafe's effort on the field was like someone fighting in a modern day Coliseum with a broken leg.

He was shaving off the hair from his injured right knee, which was operated twice and collapsed in a domestic game again recently, so that he could strap a bandage for good effect when the rest were having a photoshoot in the other part of the ground. When the training started, he made every effort to emulate others while fielding or bowling in the centre with a full run-up. But in every effort it was evident that the braveheart was forceful instead of being his natural rhythmic self.

It is known to everybody that Mashrafe is a fighter who loves to win against adversity. But his latest endeavour is more likely an emotional outburst in the face of a lot of logic. True that he is a champion bowler and everybody wants him to play the World Cup, but it is high time to draw a line between courage and foolishness. We don't want to be emotion-driven and allow Mashrafe to die a premature death, which in his present situation is

not a probability but the most likely prospect. We want to protect him from this imminent tempting invitation so that he can fight battle after battle for at least another five years.

It is also important for the board to clear the air regarding its stand on Mashrafe. The board did not rule out the possibility of Mashrafe playing a part in the World Cup, creating a lot of confusion. They might have a plan B or a plan C in case of injury, but everyone should be smart enough to understand a replacement for an injured player can never be another injured player.

We do strongly believe that the board or the selectors lost an opportunity to logically take a risk with Mashrafe. Had they included Mashrafe in the 15-man squad it could have been a fair deal. It would have allowed them to test Mashrafe in every edge leading up to the World Cup.

Being a standby player, Mashrafe is

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ICC CRICKET WORLD CUP HISTORY

First ball & last ball

Hasibul Hossain was the country's first bowler capable of achieving genuine pace. He was part of the team that played and won the 1997 ICC Trophy, which led the country to its World Cup debut. In the final against Kenya, it was off his boot that the last ball ricocheted to fine leg, enabling him and non-striker Khaled Mashud to run through for the single that gave Bangladesh the ICC Trophy.

The sight of Hasibul running with arms spread out, overcome with joy and relief is one that is tattooed on every Bangladeshi cricket lover's mind.

He was the man responsible for bowling Bangladesh's first ball in World Cups, when he ran up to bowl to New Zealand's Matthew Horne at Chelmsford in the 1999 World Cup



HASIBUL HOSSAIN

in England. He performed above expectations in that match, giving away only 33 runs in his 10-over spell and picking up the wicket of Craig McMillan.

Later in the tournament, he played perhaps his most important hand in his international career by dispatching Scotland's opener and first-down batsman, leaving them floundering at eight for two, a position from which Bangladesh earned their second ODI victory.

It must have been a source of frustration that after performing creditably in the first four World Cup games, he was overlooked for the one match that defined the Tigers' rise in the cricket world, the giant-killing

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Djokovic domination

AFP, Melbourne



The Grand Slam of Asia/Pacific

Novak Djokovic claimed his second Grand Slam title at the Australian Open Sunday with a dominant display which shattered Andy Murray's dream of becoming Britain's first male major-winner in 75 years.

The Serbian world number three controlled the final on a warm Melbourne evening, winning 6-4, 6-2, 6-3 for his second Australian title, after also triumphing in 2008. It was the first major final without Rafael Nadal or Roger Federer for three years, as Djokovic proved superior to the listless fifth seed.

"It's been a fantastic tournament for me and I just take it that way," Djokovic said. "I don't want fly up to the sky and say I'm the best, I cannot compare to Rafa [Nadal] and Roger's success they've had."

"Certainly, this will give me a lot of motivation and confidence for the rest of this season because to win a Grand Slam at the start of the season is the best start you can ask for."

But the disappointing Murray suffered further heartbreak and is now yet to win a set in three Grand Slam finals.

"You always have to try and find a way to get back in. I thought Novak played unbelievably well tonight," Murray said.

"So when I got ahead in some games and even just in points, he was sticking up lobs that were landing on the baseline, passing shots that were very close to the lines."

"I was trying to find a way. I just wasn't able to put enough good points together."

Murray was bidding to become the first British man to win a Grand Slam since Fred

Perry in 1936, and the first from the country to win the Australian Open since 1934.

But he was never in the hunt as his game fell away in the second set and Djokovic ramped up the pressure to take the final in straight sets in 2hr 39 min.

It was Djokovic's second successive Grand Slam final after losing to Nadal in last year's US Open decider.

Symbolically, the last time Djokovic finished runner-up at the 2007 US Open, he went on to win the title at the Australian Open the following year against Frenchman Jo-Wilfried Tsonga.

Djokovic and Murray are close friends from their junior playing days and it was their first meeting at a Grand Slam with the Serb now leading 5-3 in their matches.

Despite the triumph Djokovic will remain the world number three behind Nadal and Federer when the new ATP rankings are published on Monday.

It was another bitter experience for Murray in the majors after going down in straight sets to Federer in last year's Australian final and at the 2007 US Open.

"It's better than it was last year. It's tough, but got to deal with it," Murray said. "I was in a much worse state last year than I was this year. I don't know why. That's it."

In 2010, Murray choked back tears and apologised to British fans after he was unable to serve out the third set while leading Federer 5-3, and then squandered five set points in an agonising tie-break to bomb out in straight sets, 6-3, 6-4, 7-6.

Murray's opening service game Sunday went for 14 minutes and five deuces before holding as both players held their serve until the 10th game.



Serbian tennis star Novak Djokovic kisses the winner's trophy after beating Scotsman Andy Murray in the final of the Australian Open in Melbourne yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

BFCA wants players punished

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Football Coaches' Association (BFCA) condemned the harassment of Sheikh Russel KC coach Mahmudul Haq Liton and demanded exemplary punishment of the players who attacked him after the Bangladesh League match on Saturday.

Liton was struck on his nose by an Arambagh KS player soon after the end of the league match between Sheikh Russel and Arambagh

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Club Cup cricket

SPORTS REPORTER

Haji Shirajul Islam Smrity Shangshad won yesterday's only match of the Club Cup Championship at the MA Aziz Stadium in Chittagong.

The Brahminbaria side defeated Baghbari Club from Laxmipur by a margin of 127 runs.

Nilphamari's Saidpur Cricket Club and Young Society Club of Comilla picked up wins from their respective games on Saturday