



Pakistan batsmen Misbahul Haq (L) and Sohail Tanvir are ecstatic after guiding their team to a narrow victory against New Zealand in the 4th ODI at Napier yesterday.

Pakistan crawl ahead

Cricket

AFP, Napier

An unbeaten 93 by Misbahul Haq paved the way for a narrow two-wicket Pakistan victory over New Zealand with an over to spare in the fourth one-day international Tuesday. The win put Pakistan 2-1 up in the six-match series with one game abandoned as both sides fine-tune ahead of this month's World Cup. Set a modest target of 263 to win on a track described by captain Shahid Afridi as "heaven for a batsman" Pakistan appeared to have misjudged their run chase, despite Misbah's heroics, as the match headed for a tense finish. But tailender Sohail Tanvir took control, arriving in the middle with two overs remaining, two wickets left and 13 runs required to secure a slim victory. Sohail did not give Misbah a chance to reach his century as he smacked 14 off Tim Southee in the penultimate over to settle the outcome.

It was a match with a familiar feel for New Zealand as their specialist batsmen failed on a track where 300 is considered par and it was left to the middle and tail order to bolster the tally.

After winning the toss and electing to bat first, New Zealand captain Daniel Vettori had reason to feel his decision was justified as Martin Guptill (21) and Jamie How (13) raced to 40 in the seventh over.

But the innings soon fell apart in the face of a lethal spell from Wahab Riaz and Abdul Razaq.

In the space of two overs New Zealand lost three wickets for four runs and then stumbled to five for 79.

SCORES IN BRIEF

NEW ZEALAND: 262 for 7 (Guptill 21, Franklin 62, McCullum 37, McCullum 53 not out; Riaz 3-51)

PAKISTAN: 264 for 8 (Shehzad 42, Akmal 20, Younis 42, Misbah 93 not out, Razaq 23; Bennett 2-48, Vettori 2-48, Styris 3-40)

Result: Pakistan won by two wickets.
Man-of-the-match: Misbahul Haq.

18-day break in football league

SPORTS REPORTER

The Grameenphone Bangladesh League will remain suspended for 18 days from February 14 to make way for the Bangladesh U-23 side's preparation as well as Olympic pre-qualifiers against Kuwait this month.

The decision was taken at a tri-party meeting amongst the professional league committee, national team management committee and representatives of 12 professional clubs at the BFF House yesterday.

Croat coach Robert Rubcic had earlier sought a four-week period to prepare his charges, for the clashes against mighty Kuwait, after failing to bring all selected players under an umbrella in training following the non-cooperation of a few clubs, who did not release their players.

The clubs, who had initially opposed to postpone the ongoing league, finally accepted the proposal but asked the authority concerned to make sure that the league would not face any interruption in future and would release their contracted players for the national duty as per the international rules.

Now Rubcic will get one week to prepare his charges at home before playing the away match against Kuwait on February 23. The home game is scheduled to be held in Bangladesh on March 9 but the Bangladesh Football Federation has wished to play their home match in Kuwait on February 28 though FIFA has yet to respond BFF's appeal.

Following the postponement of the league, the clubs have also asked the league committee to revise the mid-term transfer window and asked the league committee to let the clubs know about the national team's next assignment of the AFC Challenge Cup qualifiers, which is scheduled for the third week of March.

U-14 tennis

SPORTS REPORTER

Delwar Hossain reached the final of boy's singles in the ITF 14 & Under Asian Championships 2011 (Group 2) beating his Singapore counterpart in the semis at the Heinbyu Tennis Center, Yangon, Myanmar yesterday.

Delwar handed a 6-4, 2-6 and 6-3 defeat to Isaac Ong to set his final against Yemenis Al Ansi Ghassan, who beat compatriot Al Asi Ghassan, said a press release from Bangladesh Tennis Federation yesterday.

India have to pay back to Tendulkar

AFP, New Delhi



Sachin Tendulkar has been winning matches for India with his amazing batting exploits for more than two decades, and it's time his team clinched the World Cup for him.

Tendulkar, who turns 38 in April, makes his sixth and probably the last appearance in the showpiece event with one notable omission from his eye-catching CV -- a World Cup.

The 'Little Genius' may have amassed a record 17,629 runs in 444 one-dayers with 46 centuries -- the highest by any batsman -- but will be pleased more if the team win the Cup in front of his home crowd in Mumbai on April 2.

"I sincerely wish this would not be Sachin's last World Cup and he would play one more. All members of the Indian side would like to win it for him," said India opener Gautam Gambhir.

India, champions in 1983 in England, runners-up in 2003 in South Africa and semifinalists at home in 1987 and 1996, have the resources to triumph despite injury worries over some of the players.

Batsmen Virender Sehwag, Gambhir and Tendulkar, and paceman Praveen Kumar were all injury scares before or during a recent one-day series in South

Africa, but are expected to be fit.

India open their campaign on February 19 against Bangladesh in Dhaka in what many believe is more than just a match as the visitors will be determined to settle a score or two with the hosts.

Bangladesh exceeded expectations when they upset India in the opening match of the 2007 tournament in the Caribbean, the defeat eventually leading to the former champions' first-round exit.

Things have improved since then, especially with the appointment of South African Gary Kirsten as coach in 2007.

All players, including Tendulkar, have lauded his role in making India a competitive unit at home as well as away.

Tendulkar is expected to lead the charge as batting will be the key to India's fortunes. With an explosive Sehwag as his opening partner, the fireworks are bound to come from both ends.

The pair are a bowlers' nightmare and spectators' delight, capable of dominating any attack with exciting stroke-play and providing a blistering start.

Gambhir, Yuvraj Singh, Virat Kohli and Yusuf Pathan can also step up the run-rate with brilliant improvisation, while skipper Mahendra Singh Dhoni's power-hitting in the closing overs has

often stood the team in good stead.

India are in Group B along with South Africa, England, the West Indies, Bangladesh, the Netherlands and Ireland and should face no difficulty in making it to the quarterfinals as four sides advance to the next round.

But India need to be disciplined in their bowling.

Zaheer Khan is renowned for providing early breakthroughs, while fellow-seamer Praveen Kumar is able to keep the batsmen guessing with his deceptive bowling. Their fitness and form will be the key.

Fans' expectations will be high, but India need to focus on their game and not put pressure on themselves.

Duncan Fletcher, the former England coach, was not off the mark when he said handling pressure would be the key for India.

"India must be favourites at this stage, especially on their home grounds. But they must be under enormous pressure. Whether they can handle that pressure from the home crowd will be significant," Fletcher said.

Although India, missing key players due to injuries, lost a recent one-day series on lively South African pitches, Dhoni was confident of an impressive show from his side in the World Cup.

"The conditions (in India) will be different and it's just a matter of one or two innings (for batsmen). Things will fall in place."

GP Masters from tomorrow



SPORTS REPORTER

The Asian Development Tour comes to Bangladesh for the first time with the tee off of the Grameenphone Bangladesh Masters 2011 at the Kurmitola Golf Club tomorrow.

Bangladesh's golfing sensation Siddikur Rahman is the favourite for the event where some 94 golfers including 42 from Bangladesh and the rest from 15 other nations namely -- Japan, Malaysia, England, Sri Lanka, Singapore, Canada, USA, Ireland, Belgium, Australia, Thailand, Pakistan, Philippines, India, Korea -- are taking part.

"It is a tremendous effort that Bangladesh is hosting its first Development Tour event. We are confident that more events will be added throughout the course of the season to the five tournaments which we have already announced," said Htwe Hla Han, senior director of Tour Development, Asian Tour, at a press conference at the club house in Cantonment yesterday.

"There are many young and talented players who do not have direct entry to the Asian Tour which is very

competitive. The Asian Development Tour was created with the aim of building a platform for the budding golfers across the region to sharpen their skills and through this tour we hope to unearth more champions who will excel on Asian Tour," said Han adding that three top finishers of Grameenphone Masters will have entries to the Asian Tour for the following season.

The Asian Development Tour was launched in 2010 with the aim of creating a career pathway for professional golfers in Asia and was hosted by Myanmar, Malaysia, Indonesia and Chinese Taipei. This season's tour gets underway from Bangladesh. Grameenphone, one of leading telecom operators in the country, are the title sponsors of the event as they came up with a sponsorship money worth US 75,000 dollars while the co-sponsors are Aamra Group, Eastern Bank Ltd, Farid Group, Meghna Group, Pink City and Hotel Radisson Water Garden.

"Hosting the first-ever Asian Development Tour in country is something to be proud of and Grameenphone are delighted to sponsor the event. We hope this

Ponting could train today

PTI, Melbourne

Ricky Ponting is set to start training after a one-month injury lay-off while Nathan Hauritz is hoping to get back into action at the earliest after a radical blood injection treatment, giving some relief to Australia's injury-ridden lead-up to the World Cup.

Australian team physiotherapist Alex Kountouris said Ponting has been given the green light by his surgeon to resume light training, but his progress would become clearer next week, when he starts using a bat.

Trouble in the middle

FROM PAGE 16

prolong their innings at times and sometimes score quickly, often attempting to hit for clearing the fences, especially when Twenty20 cricket has changed the approach of the one-day game also. It is actually a question of how much one could adjust with the match situations.

So there is an obvious question whether Junaed and Rokibul have got the ability to make it happen if they are required to accelerate the innings. Many believe that Junaed can hit the pace bowler from the beginning of his innings though he could hardly prove himself so far, but despite his poor form in domestic cricket he will be one of the contenders for the No 3 spot as he has two fifties under his belt in the last international series against Zimbabwe. Rokibul has hardly been seen hitting the ball hard in international cricket although it is believed that he has enough shots in his arsenal.

Otherwise, the two big names, Nafees and Ashraf, came up for discussion for the spot and many even believe that wicketkeeper-batsman Mushfiqur must play at No 4 as he has been going through an impressive form and successfully played in this position for Bangladesh Biman in the Premier League.

"In my combination, Nafees will play at No 3 because he is the in-form batsman and he has got the ability to build up an innings and play shots all around. There is no question about

opening and Shakib's but we have to think twice for the other positions in the middle-order," said former captain and former chief selector Faruque Ahmed.

"You can think match-by-match and can change the batting order accordingly. I know Ashraf is inconsistent but World Cup is an event where you must take a chance for good results. Rokibul is not in my plan but if you want to play him then you must have a special plan for him. If Rokibul gets out after playing 25-26 balls then he will put the team under pressure," he added.

The statistics of the last year shows that how inconsistent the middle-order is as many have been tried in the 30 ODIs the Tigers played in 2010. Aftab Ahmed, Jahurul Islam and Ashraf played a handful of matches while Mushfiqur fully capitalised whenever he got the chance to bat at No 4 but surprisingly, he was not continued for the whole year.

"You must have a player in the middle-order who can finish the game and in this context, Mushfiqur is a good option for you as a No 4 batsman because he has good technique and the ability to hit the ball hard," said Faruque.

One thing is clear that the think-tank could sometimes take out-of-the-box decisions if they want to see the team reach 250-plus runs or chase something in that region.

Tragic suicide of star teenage swimmer

SPORTS REPORTER

Teenage swimmer Arifa Khatun committed suicide on Monday night at her residence in Khayerpur village under Mirpur Thana of Kushtia district following a disagreement with her parents.

Arifa, a student of Class X, reportedly took poison at night after coming back from school as she had earlier had brawl with her parents regarding some family matters, said Amirul Islam, a member of the Bangladesh Swimming Federation.

Islam said she was found screaming inside the room at night and was taken to the Upazila Health Center and given initial treatment but still could not be saved.

Arifa, who won five gold medals in the 2009 Junior Swimming Championship but failed to retain any of them in the 2010 Championship, was also a bread-winner of the four-member family through her Tk 3,500 salary from Bangladesh Ansar.

Decorations

FROM PAGE 16

International Airport and Bangabandhu National Stadium (BNS), where the ceremony will be held, and between BNS and SBNS will be decorated with lights and flowers.

The mayor also announced that the beautification work will give a new look to the city like never before and he also reasoned the decision of holding back the final beautification work till the last week before the start of the World Cup.

"The beautification work will be much better and more colourful than anything held here before like the SA Games or the SAARC Summits. We are deferring the floral beautification because of perishable nature of those materials."

Apart from these, the main city streets and areas where the cricketers and tourists will stay or go, will be kept neat and tidy while the Ministry of Social Welfare will be ensuring that beggars are kept in vagrant centres and are provided daily subsidies.

Right time

FROM PAGE 16

Bangladesh are hoping Mortaza may still play if he recovers fully before the tournament starts.

The Tigers will bank on skipper Shakib, the leading all-rounder in the official one-day rankings, veteran batsman Mohammad Ashraf and star spinner Abdur Razaq to lift the side.

Left-hander Shakib is a reluctant captain, but has led from the front with 787 runs in 27 one-dayers last year and picked up 46 wickets with his left-arm spin.

The openers have also been in dominating form with Imrul Kayes the nation's top-scorer in 2010 with 867 runs from 27 games and the swashbuckling Tamim Iqbal with 776 from 23.

A key moment for Bangladesh will be the tournament opener against power-packed India at the Sher-e-Bangla Stadium in Dhaka on February 19. A victory -- or even a close loss -- will set the Tigers up for the ride of their lives.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

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| ACROSS | 38 Macho type | DOWN | 19 Mimicry |
| 1 Group character | 41 -- glance | 1 List-ending abbr. | 21 Sticky stuff |
| 6 Craze | 43 Book-keeper (Abbr.) | 2 Old "Up, up and away" carrier | 22 Auto financing abbr. |
| 9 Prescription safety org. | 44 "Oh, woe!" | 3 Badgered a performer | 24 Sun. speech |
| 12 Make minor adjustments | 45 Man with all the answers? | 4 Hawaiian island | 26 Reversible fabric |
| 13 Honest politician | 47 Drunk | 5 Distorts | 28 Coffee-house order |
| 14 Botanical bristle | 49 Swelling | 6 "Turn Me Loose" singer | 30 "There's no -- team" |
| 15 Hidden store | 52 Sch. group | 7 Touch abbr. | 32 Took on |
| 16 Fastened a seat belt | 53 Pink-slip | 8 Calendar | 33 With it |
| 18 Persian Gulf land | 54 Oft-dunked treats | 9 Untrue | 34 -- carte |
| 20 Capri or Wight | 55 Ever-green type | 10 Lived | 36 Solidify |
| 21 Cowboy's sweetie | 56 Peak (Abbr.) | 11 Llamas' range | 38 Glad |
| 23 Resort | 57 13-Across' in-laws | 17 One of a nursery rhyme trio | 39 Upper crust |
| 24 Undoes dees | | | 40 Colorful parrot |
| 25 Newspaper page | | | 42 Monk's superior |
| 27 Cove | | | 45 Libretto |
| 29 Enact | | | 46 Modern-day money |
| 31 Ms. Franklin | | | 48 Felon's flight |
| 35 Possibly could | | | 50 Deity |
| 37 Apprehend | | | 51 Curvy character |

Solution time: 25 mins.

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Gold medal winner of the 10-year age group of the Begum Fazilatunnessa 3rd Intercontinental Asian WUKF Karate Competition, Nafisa Subhan (C), stands on the winners' podium after the tournament's conclusion at the National Indoor Stadium in Mirpur on Monday.

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CRYPTOQUIP

" Q S Q N G D H S L D V O S O G U "
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S J G I O V E G C U D B S D H F G !

Yesterday's Cryptoquip: NAME OF A CLASSIC COMIC ACTOR AFTER OPTING TO BECOME AN ARMY CLERGY MEMBER: CHARLIE CHAPLAIN.
Today's Cryptoquip Clue: L equals W