

## Motta switches identity

Inter Milan's Brazilian midfielder Thiago Motta was on Monday given permission by FIFA to play for Italy allowing him to make his debut for them against Germany in Wednesday's friendly. The 28-year-old - whose ancestors emigrated from Italy to Brazil - had expressed his desire to play for Italy, where he has been based for the past three years first with Genoa and then with Inter. Italy coach Cesare Prandelli had selected him in the squad for the Germany friendly and was delighted to be able to announce that FIFA had given the green light to Motta.

- AFP



## 'We're capable of qtrs'

SPORTS REPORTER

There is hardly any cricketer in this country equivalent of Shakib Al Hasan on the field and there is not a single man who can be as effervescent as he gets in front of the microphone. In the first official press conference of the World Cup at Hotel Sheraton yesterday, the Bangladesh captain was typically breezy in his responses and though not as quirky as Englishman Graeme Swann, the 23-year-old Shakib kept the show alive with his usual self.

"If I am good enough, I am old enough. If I can play at this level, I think I am good enough," he said when asked how he would face up to more experienced sides, given that his side is one of the youngest in the tournament.

Shakib is certainly the youngest captain with Zimbabwe's Elton Chigumbura being the second at 24. But the all-rounder is certainly unafraid of the opposition, the hype of playing at home, and the occasion.

"If we think of the tourna-

ment to be a big deal, then there'll be pressure. It is just another cricket match where we play with bat and ball. There's nothing extraordinary, nobody will be bowling at 180-190mph.

"The crowd supports us. Hosting the meet is a bonus for us. All players know the conditions better than anyone," he added.

Shakib said the wins over West Indies, England, New Zealand and Zimbabwe over the last year and a half have given him belief that he can hope of bigger things. But Shakib, though a dream for the media, stayed realistic about his goals.

"We have to win at least four matches to win a place in the second round. It will be a bit difficult. I think we are capable of booking a place in the second round," he said.

India, South Africa, England, the West Indies, the Netherlands and Ireland are the other teams in Group B, with the top four making it to the quarterfinals. Bangladesh start their campaign in Dhaka with the tournament's opening game on February 19 against India, and also play two practice matches against



Bangladesh captain Shakib Al Hasan in a cheerful mood as he answers question during ICC's official World Cup press conference at Dhaka's Sheraton hotel yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

Canada (on February 12) and Pakistan (February 15).

"We won't lose confidence if we lose to a team like Pakistan but if we beat them, then we will certainly feel positive and confident," said Shakib, the No. 1 all-rounder in the world.

He was also confident that Bangladesh could iron out the mistakes they had made, citing the Powerplay as one of the areas which would be different during the World Cup. "We have done well in the Powerplays in the last two series. The

players have thought of it from a personal point of view and have worked on it during the Premier League," he said.

With all the planning and media and sponsor commitments, Shakib is

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## BATTLE PLAN

## The secret behind the stumps

BISHWAJIT ROY



During every Tigers practice session it is a common scene that computer analyst Nasir Ahmed is seen working with wicketkeeper Mushfiquur Rahim. The reason was simple; the former wicketkeeper has got the additional task of making sure that the young stumper improves his keeping skill.

When the Bogra-lad was picked in the World Cup team four years back in place of then stalwart Khaled Mashud, many had raised their eyebrows but the youngsters silenced the critics by playing a magnificent match-winning knock against India in the 2007 extravaganza in West Indies.

Without any doubt he was the automatic choice for the team this time for the 2011 World Cup where Bangladesh is one of the co-hosts along with India and Sri Lanka.

And there has hardly been

any doubt over his ability as a batsman as his solid technique has been highly rated by the cricket pundits. However, a question remains about his expertise as a wicketkeeper.

The 22-year old has often dropped simple catches and sometimes missed vital chances but it would be really hard for the team to afford that sort of mistakes when we are going to play the World Cup in the sub-continent where bowlers have to sweat for a scalp.

Besides his batting, everybody will look forward to seeing Mushfiquur making the least amount of mistakes behind the stumps so that the Tigers can fulfill their first dream of making the quarterfinal berth in the showpiece event.

Mushfiquur has to ensure a big role during the Tigers journey in the World Cup.

"Catches win the matches". It's a very popular saying in cricket and for an improving team like Bangladesh a dropped catch

can change the whole scenario of the match.

"One cannot be a hundred percent successful as a wicketkeeper. My observation is that Mushfiquur improved a lot in wicket keeping. He has some problems to grip the ball properly against the spin bowlers but now he is more comfortable," observed Nasir Ahmed.

"I never have seen such a hard-working boy like Mushfiquur and what I believe is that his work ethic can be a real example for the others. It's not a joke to work hard for wicket keeping practice after batting two hours in the nets. You know wicket keeping is such a job where experience is a major factor. Mushfiquur is now more matured," he added.

Nasir Ahmed also praised the young man's mental strength.

"You simply can't imagine how tough he is as a player. And toughness is a vital part if someone wants

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## 'Potter' Tamim's favourite

SPORTS REPORTER

Room to Read, an organisation which focuses on increasing literacy and gender equality in education will be partnered by the ICC in promoting the global literacy campaign during the 2011 World Cup.

Among the cricket-playing countries in which Room to Read publishes books, establishes libraries and builds schools are Cricket World Cup hosts Bangladesh, India and Sri Lanka.

During the World Cup, there will be a series of player interactions promoting Room to Read, while fans will be encouraged to donate money to fund projects through [www.roomtoread.org/worldcup](http://www.roomtoread.org/worldcup). The ICC has also helped establish Room to Read libraries in Bangladesh, India and Sri Lanka.

A player from each of the 14 competing teams at the tournament has contributed to the ultimate World Cup reading list as part of the campaign

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## AB Bank TT

SPORTS REPORTER

Mahbub and Saleha lifted singles titles of the 31st AB Bank Table Tennis Championship in Chittagong yesterday.

Mahbub defeated his Ansar teammate Manosh 3-2 in the men's singles final while Saleha defeated Soma 3-2 in the women's singles final.

However, Soma paired with Rumi to clinch the women's doubles title handing a 3-2 defeat to the Saleha-Jyoti pair while Himel defeated Javed 3-2 in the final to emerge champion in boy's singles event.

In the boy's doubles final, Zubair and Hridoy pair defeated Himel and Palash pair to become champions.

Tensions flare at Mirpur  
Siddons, Mashrafe get into a tiff

SPORTS REPORTER



Coach Jamie Siddons and Mashrafe Bin Mortaza was embroiled in a heated exchange of words during the Tigers training at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.

In the venue's indoor facilities, the two faced-off against each other as soon as Siddons arrived for the afternoon session. The Australian coach immediately pulled Mashrafe aside, within the indoor building, and had a long discussion. After more than 20 minutes, the paceman walked into one of the rooms as Siddons walked out. Admittedly, the conversation began with Mashrafe complaining to the coach about the comments he'd made about the injured fast bowler a day ago.

"The physio will comment on my fitness and the coach on my performance. In this situation, I think the physio is more dependable than the

coach," said Mashrafe in an immediate reaction to the waiting media.

Later, Siddons admitted Mashrafe was disappointed at not being included in the 15-man World Cup squad. "He [Mashrafe] has been upset since he was left out. I was trying to explain the situation, make sure he knew where he stood," he said.

"He [Mashrafe] was wondering why he is training but I told him that 'even though you are out of the 15 and injured, we still need you.' Mash is upset, he wants to be in the team but unfortunately he's not," added Siddons.

About Mashrafe's gripe with the statement he'd given the media a day before, Siddons said, "Why would he be upset by that statement? I've got to focus on the fifteen players in the squad. It is not my job, it is the physio's job and the bowling coach's job."

Mashrafe, on the other hand, admitted that he had little idea why he's asked to train when there's hardly any chance for him to be

picked, according to the coach. "He pulled me inside to talk... I asked him then why am I practicing? He said, 'to play in the team'. I didn't say anything after that," he said.

"I told him that when I talk about February 7, I am not speaking my words, it is your words. But I don't want anyone to get injured so that I could get into the team. I am bowling as a net bowler now, if you think I'm a problem to you, let me know," said Mashrafe.

As the Tigers leave for Chittagong tonight to play the February 12 practice game against Canada, Siddons said he would want the Narail Express to travel with the team.

"I'd like him to go to Chittagong. He'd come in if anyone's injured but Division Cricket's [National Cricket League] coming up. [Shahadat Hossain] Rajib's training hard and so is Mashrafe [Bin Mortaza].

"Their attitude has to be about wanting to play, their heart should be in it to play. This has to be their attitude. That's

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BOILING POINT: Bangladesh coach Jamie Siddons (L) and injured fast bowler Mashrafe Bin Mortaza involved in a heated debate at the indoor facility of the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium yesterday.

PHOTO: SHEIKH ENAMUL HAQUE

## Tigers' jerseys showcased

SPORTS REPORTER

Green on the body, red collar and sleeves with pale yellow stripes that's what the Tigers will be wearing when they take on the might of the cricketing world in the World Cup that is less than ten days away. The trousers will be all green while the practice jerseys are coloured blue and black.

These attires were showcased by the sponsors Grameenphone and handed over to the Bangladesh Cricket Board at a small but eloquent presentation at the Dhaka Club yesterday.

It was the official presentation of the Grameenphone Jersey Utshob, arranged in October 2010 to get the best design for the jersey of the national cricket team. Winners from 4000 designs were submitted for a final selection of five from which this winning jersey, designed by Habibullah Al Emran, was chosen by BCB as the official attire of the Tigers.

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## Sony nat'l tennis

SPORTS REPORTER

Amol Roy, Laxman Lal, and Delwar Hossain filled the remaining quarterfinal berths in the Sony National Tennis Competition.

Amol beat Khandaker Mamun 6-3, 6-4; Laxman defeated Mizanur Rahman 7-6, 6-0 while Delwar edged Zafar Imam 4-6, 7-6, 5-0 in their respective matches at the National Tennis Complex in Ramna yesterday.

In the women's group, Sathi Sarker outplayed Safina Saha 6-1, 6-0; Nadia Afrin beat Pinky Bepary 6-3, 6-1 while Ishita Afroze came out on top by 7-6, 6-4 against Rebeka to move into the semifinals, said a press release from Bangladesh Tennis Federation yesterday.



PHOTO: STAR

OLD HEAD ON YOUNG SHOULDERS: Bangladesh wicketkeeper-batsman Mushfiquur Rahim is barely able to hold on to his three bats during a practice session at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium yesterday. The young star's performance with bat and gloves will be integral to the Tigers' showing in the World Cup.

## Sreesanth replaces Praveen

CRICINFO



Praveen Kumar, the India fast bowler, has been ruled out of the World Cup due to an injured elbow and will be replaced by Sreesanth. The decision comes a day after Praveen underwent a fitness test at the National Cricket Academy in Bangalore to gauge whether he had recovered from the injury sustained before the start of the one-day series in South Africa last month.

Praveen, 24, had been sent back immediately from South Africa as a precautionary measure to recuperate at the NCA. The recovery did not go as planned, however, and he consulted Dr Andrew Wallace, a London-based surgeon who has treated many Indian players including Sachin Tendulkar. Praveen has been a regular with the Indian one-day side for the past couple of years and was set to be a certain starter in the World Cup, but his injury healed too slowly to allow him to participate in the global tournament.

Sreesanth has established himself in the Test side but has

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