

Referee force-fed
his own whistle

An amateur footballer in Italy has been given a 20-month ban for trying to force a whistle down a referee's throat after he was sent off. Andrea Biondi was dismissed by the referee in his Florence-based team Albereta 72's 2-2 draw at Sancat. After being sent off for insulting the referee he grabbed the back of his head and tried to push the whistle into his mouth, the Ansa news agency reported. Biondi continued to insult and threaten the referee as he left the field, the agency added.

- AFP



BANGLADESH FACE CANADA TODAY

Tigers aim for
a tune-up

BISHWAJIT ROY from Chittagong

Bangladesh will hope everything falls right into place when they take on Canada in their first warm-up match in the lead-up to the ICC Cricket World Cup at the Zohur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium today.

There has been a lot of talk about Bangladesh's ignominious defeat against the same opponents in the 2003 World Cup in South Africa but it seemed that the new-look Tigers are hardly bothered with what transpired eight years ago, choosing instead to look forward and focus on their own game plan.

"Past is past. We never thought and discussed about what happened in 2003. It's a totally new team, which has a new approach towards the game. We just need to play our normal game, nothing else, to get the expected result," said a confident Bangladesh vice-captain Tamim Iqbal.

Bangladesh coach Jamie Siddons said, prior to the day-night match yesterday, that their first focus would be definitely to win the game but besides they were also looking forward to seeing the team put through their paces before the kick-off of the tournament proper.

Siddons also assured that his team were

not overconfident but were instead trying to be relaxed so that they could play their best cricket and make sure they do not crumble under pressure in front of the home crowd.

The Australian wanted to see his batsmen stick to the team rules and capitalise on the Powerplay properly while stressing the importance of the new ball bowlers to do well so that the team need not rely only on the two slow bowlers in captain Shakib Al Hasan and the seasoned Abdur Razzak.

The main interest was surrounding the team selection with everyone curious to know the fate of both Mohammad Ashraful and Shahriar Nafees. Both the stalwarts have apparently been snubbed from the team for the first match, especially considering the amount of time they were allotted to spend in the nets.

Siddons however stated that the only big question mark was who among Ashraful and Rokibul Hasan would get the nod. Ashraful is the only member of the squad to have played in the 2003 World Cup but late developments suggest that he will not be in the team for today. Sources also suggested that wicketkeeper batsman Mushfiqur Rahim may be tried once more at number four. Left-handed batsman Shahriar Nafees and all-rounder Naem Islam are likely to be left out of the team.

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PHOTOS: ANURUP KANTI DAS

(L) Bangladesh captain Shakib Al Hasan leads his troop in a training session at the Zohur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium yesterday while opponents Canada (R) are also seen having their own drills.

Moga proves
the difference

SPORTS REPORTER

Sudanese striker James Moga struck his league first goal as Muktijoddha Sangsod came from behind to defeat visitors Chittagong Abahani 3-2 in the Grameenphone Bangladesh League at the Birshreshtha Mostafa Kamal Stadium in Kamalapur yesterday.

Federation Cup top-scorer Moga, who missed the first five games for Muktijoddha due to his decision to go back home to care of his family in troubled Sudan, levelled the margin one minute from the break after Towhidul Alam had put Chittagong Abahani ahead in the 30th minute.

After the resumption, midfielder Alamgir Kabir Rana gave Muktijoddha the lead in the 55th minute while defender Rajani Kanta Barman struck his third goal in the league to make sure of victory though Peter reduced the margin for Abahani just one minute from time.

The sixth victory in eight matches took Muktijoddha Sangsod to the top of table with 19 points, two more than holders Abahani while Chittagong Abahani remained stuck to the bottom of the 12-team table with only two points from eight matches.

Double
delight for
Amol, Sarda

SPORTS REPORTER

Amol Roy and Sarda Alam lifted the men's and women's singles titles of the Sony National Tennis Tournament beating their respective rivals at the National Tennis Complex in Ramna yesterday.

Amol defeated Alamgir Hossain 6-1 and 6-2 in the men's singles final while Sarda crushed Sathi Sarkar 6-2 and 6-0 to clinch the women's singles title. However, Sathi Sarkar found success in the men's doubles event as she paired with Sarda beat Ishita Afroz and Ayesha Sultana 6-2 and 6-3.

It was also double delight for Amol, who pairing with Ranjan Ram beat the Anwar Hossain-Dipu Lal pair 4-6, 6-2 and 6-2 in the men's

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BATTLE PLAN

The Tigers' talisman

SAKEB SUBHAN



It was the third day of the first Test against a second-string West Indies side in St. Vincent in mid-2009. There had been some rain around, but the big story of the match was that Bangladesh had lost their new skipper, Mashrafe Mortaza, during play the previous day.

Mashrafe, the team's best bowler as well as their leader, had pulled up after bowling the third ball of his seventh over with an injury to his right knee. Into the breach stepped Shakib Al Hasan. His Test career had just completed its second year, and he now found himself in a quite unfamiliar

position; leading the country in a Test they were expected to win, and that too with a strike bowler shy of a full attack.

The West Indies opener, Omar Phillips, was batting well, and threatening to make short shrift of the visitors' first innings total of 238. The stand-in skipper, after lunch, had instructed his bowlers to bowl a tight line just outside off stump and packed the infield with run-saving fielders. Soon, one of the fielders on the offside, Rokibul Hasan, was brought closer in and positioned in an unusually square short cover. Sure enough, Omar Phillips, who had displayed the tendency to drive in the air square on the off side, drove on the up straight to Rokibul off Rubel Hossain, in the pro-

cess falling six short of a morale-boosting century.

That dismissal of Omar Phillips hinted at a cricketing mind the sharpness of which Bangladesh had been missing all through their existence as one of cricket's elite teams. Let alone Bangladesh, it is a shrewdness few international captains exhibit in the era of burgeoning backroom staff and computer analysis. Above all, it showed Shakib's propensity to think on his feet rather than be tutored by the coach and backroom staff during the breaks.

It is no coincidence, therefore, that Shakib is the ideal man to lead the team into a new era of competence and strength. As a captain he is the most

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Pakistan captain Shahid Afridi (L) and all-rounder Abdur Razzak flash the thumbs-up sign at their hotel after their arrival in Dhaka last night.

PHOTO:
ANISUR RAHMAN

A cry for football

SPORTS REPORTER

The thought of having to share the Bangabandhu National Stadium with cricket came as a big surprise to many sports organisers especially those involved with football but they wanted to believe that the premier of the government has been provided with a one-sided information on purpose.

"We have come to know it through newspapers and don't want to believe that until confirmation from the government comes, though we believe that the group that raised this issue has provided one-side information to the Prime Minister. We will try to make her understand the need of BNS for football," commented Bangladesh Football Federation's executive member and former general secretary Harunur Rashid yesterday.

Bangladesh Cricket Board's director Jalal Yunus on Thursday told the media that Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has said that both cricket and football should share the BNS when finance minister drew Prime Minister's attention by saying that cricket has a rich and traditional bonding with the BNS.

"Who will hold the rights over the BNS is a settled issue and BCB has only been allowed to use the venue for staging the opening ceremony of the Cricket World Cup. I don't want to divide the country's sports arena

ahead of the World Cup, but I am sure what has been said is deceiving and is being done on purpose," said BFF vice president Badal Roy.

Cricket was shifted to the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium from BNS in 2005 paving the way for a rejuvenation of ailing football and the popular sport is seemingly going in the right direction under the current committee. Football is once again drawing big sponsors and also crowds in numbers to the stadium after its return to the BNS.

"If the government takes this move, football will be extinguished from the country for ever because it will not be possible to hold both football and cricket matches in the same field; firstly because of the round-the-year schedule of both sports and secondly for the rigours of the two sport on the ground," said Zakaria Pintu, the captain of the Swadhin Bangladesh Football team. Pintu believes a sports-friendly Prime Minister would not take any initiatives that would harm the country's football.

It is very rare that two demanding team sports like cricket and football are played in the same ground, even more so when both are aimed to be run with a professional attitude.

It might be added that football's governing

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