

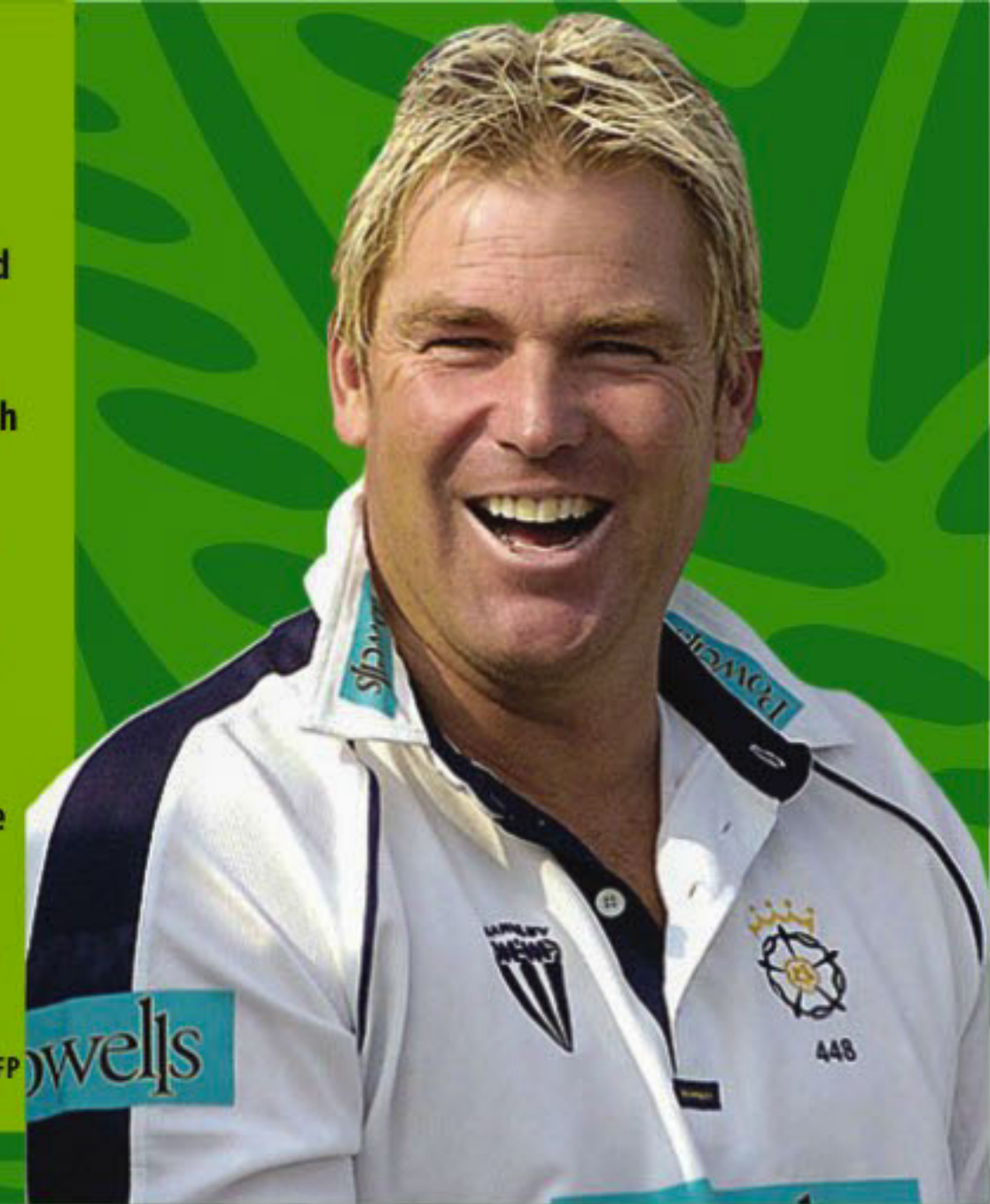
Star SPORT

DHAKA TUESDAY MARCH 1, 2011, E-MAIL: sports@thedailystar.net

Warne tweeted a tie!

England captain Andrew Strauss hailed Shane Warne as a 'genius' after the former Australian spin king correctly predicted Sunday's epic World Cup clash with India would end in a tie. "I think Warne is a genius to have predicted that. What more can I say?" said Strauss after the Group B match which saw England equal India's 338, only the fourth tie in World Cup history. Before a ball had been bowled, Warne had predicted on his Twitter page: "Looking forward to the game between India and England - should be a cracker. My prediction - a tie!"

AFP



Younis slept early that night!

AFP, Colombo

While millions of fans across the world watched a pulsating tie between India and England on Sunday, Pakistan's senior batsman Younis Khan preferred sleep over high-voltage cricket.

"I slept early, so I couldn't watch the England-India match," Younis said on Monday, when asked about the Group B match in Bangalore. "I missed it, but scores show that even... 400 runs is gettable in the sub-continent."

England, chasing 339 to win, finished on 338 for eight in a sell-out match featuring 676 runs, with centuries from Indian maestro Sachin Tendulkar and England captain Andrew Strauss.

Younis said he was happy to take on the responsibility of being a senior player in the team, who have won both of their opening fixtures.

"As a senior player, I am happy to put my contribution in the team's totals," said Younis, who scored 50 against Kenya and 72 against Sri Lanka. "It is a good feeling and the win against

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PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

PACE BATTERY CHARGING UP: (L-R) Bangladesh pacers Rubel Hossain, Shafiu Islam and Nazmul Hossain look closely on the seam as they walk up to their bowling mark during their practice session at the Academy ground yesterday. Contrary to wide expectation, the seamers may come handy against the West Indies on Friday after Shafiu's match-winning four-for against Ireland.

100mph no longer a desire

AFP, Colombo

Former tearaway Shoaib Akhtar admitted on Monday that age has dimmed his energy and desire to deliver the 100mph toe-crushers that once made him the world's most feared fast bowler.

The charismatic but controversial Pakistan seamer, whose career has been plagued by injury and disciplinary problems, knows that, at 35, it is sense rather than speed that will get wickets.

"I left this race of bowling at 100 mph a long time ago. I am nearing 36 now and am more mature, so I am focusing [more] on getting wickets now than bowling fast," said Akhtar, who broke the 100 mph barrier at the 2003 World Cup.

However, he added: "But I crossed 159 kmh [98 mph] the other day."

Akhtar has played 162 ODIs with 246 wickets and 46 Tests, which yielded 178 wickets.

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Rokibul praises team spirit Razzak aims to step up

SPORTS REPORTER

A win achieved from unexpected means always has the power to bring the team together and Rokibul Hasan believes that Bangladesh's come-from-behind win against Ireland has been a much-needed boost. "Team spirit always grows through in these close wins. We are very confident after winning the last match," said the right-handed batsman, yesterday, who made 38 in Bangladesh's modest 205 in their second group B game of the World Cup.

The Tigers returned to training at the GP-BCB National Cricket Academy ground after a two-day break. They will take another break today before returning to the nets on Wednesday afternoon.

Last Friday, Ireland succumbed to the inspired swing bowling of Shafiu Islam who picked up four late wickets, ensuring the Tigers' first win in the tournament.

"We now know that if bowling doesn't work, our batsman can back us up and vice versa. This gives us a lot of mental strength."

"There was a time in that game when they needed less than a run a ball to

win. Shafiu gave us breakthroughs in that situation, which is something we are very happy about. He completely changed the momentum," said Rokibul, who added a crucial 61-run stand for the fifth wicket with Mushfiqur Rahim after the Tigers slipped to 86 for four in the 16th over.

"We discussed the previous match, the positives, negatives and the areas where we can improve. If we could have latched on to the start given by Tamim and Imrul, we could have got 240-250. We lost quick wickets at that time; we would like to improve in that area."

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BISHWAJIT ROY

All the pre-tournament talk about the World Cup had focused on the Bangladesh bowling being dependant on the left-arm spinning duo of Abdur Razzak and Shakib Al Hasan, due to the matches being held in the traditionally spin friendly wickets of the subcontinent.

But with two matches of the World Cup already played, the efforts of both bowlers have hardly been noticeable. Despite this, the smart money is still on the duo playing a major role in the coming games against West Indies, England, Netherlands and South Africa to help Bangladesh press for their goal; a quarterfinal spot in cricket's biggest show.

Shakib, the number one ODI all-rounder, seemed to regain his rhythm against Ireland in the second group match after a poor showing against a dominating India in the opening match but Razzak has yet to find his form despite the fact that he had a much better bowling figure of 8-0-30-1 in the second game compared to his expensive nine over spell against India where the ace spinner conceded 74 runs without any success.

"It was not the same wicket we had played against New Zealand. The wicket had little turn as it did in October last year. In this kind of wicket you must concentrate more on the line and length and you have to bowl wicket to wicket otherwise you will be punished by the batsmen," explained Razzak yesterday.

He has been providing unnatural flight in his bowling without being able to extract much turn and with some odd short deliveries in between, has been handled quite comfortably by most of the batsmen.

"We must accept this condition because there is no other choice. I think any bowler will be successful in this condition

if he keeps the basic things right. Actually this kind of wicket is a heaven for the batsmen," he responded.

The 28-year old bowler, who has so far claimed 163 wickets in 113 matches, however was very much confident that his bowling will be better in the next group matches.

"What I felt that I need to adjust a few minor things to my bowling and I am really hopeful with my bowling and I think everything will be okay from the next game," said Razzak while talking about their next game against West Indies on March 4 at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur.

Is this kind of condition then putting extra pressure on the Bangladesh batsmen? Razzak however was diplomatic while responding to the issue. "What I want to say is that it is really helpful for the bowlers if the batsmen can put a handsome total on the board in this kind of condition," he observed.

Captain Shakib was not ready to comment on the wicket,

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IN THE SPOTLIGHT: Rokibul Hasan turns up for the media after the Tigers' practice session at the GP-BCB National Cricket Academy Ground yesterday. An otherwise shy cricketer, Rokibul has turned the spotlight on him after his sensible 38-run knock against Ireland in a winning cause last Friday.

PHOTO: STAR

TODAY'S MATCH

Match	Time	Venue
Sri Lanka v Kenya	3:00pm	Colombo

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Sri Lanka - Kenya

The last time these two teams had played was in 2003 in a World Cup. Kenya had mowed down Sri Lanka to ensure that they got to the semi-final. Time for some revenge? Sri Lanka has to win this match to survive in tournament. For Sri Lanka, Muttiah Muralitharan and Malinga will be a very difficult proposition for this Kenyan batting line up to decipher and play out, and they will be the bowlers to watch out for. For Kenya, it is the batting that has struggled in both their games. 69 and 112 are their two scores. It should be an easy match for Sri Lanka.

Moinul Hossain

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