

# Star SPORT

DHAKA SUNDAY MARCH 13, 2011, E-MAIL: sports@thedailystar.net

## Balotelli suffers grass allergy

Manchester City striker Mario Balotelli was forced off the pitch in their 2-0 Europa League defeat by Dynamo Kiev with what British media said was a grass allergy. The Italian was rubbing his eyes when he came out late for the second half in Thursday's defeat in Ukraine and was substituted soon after. "Mario had an allergy—I don't know what. His face was swollen—I don't know why," coach Roberto Mancini told reporters. "He wanted to play in the second half but he had this problem 10 seconds before coming out."

REUTERS

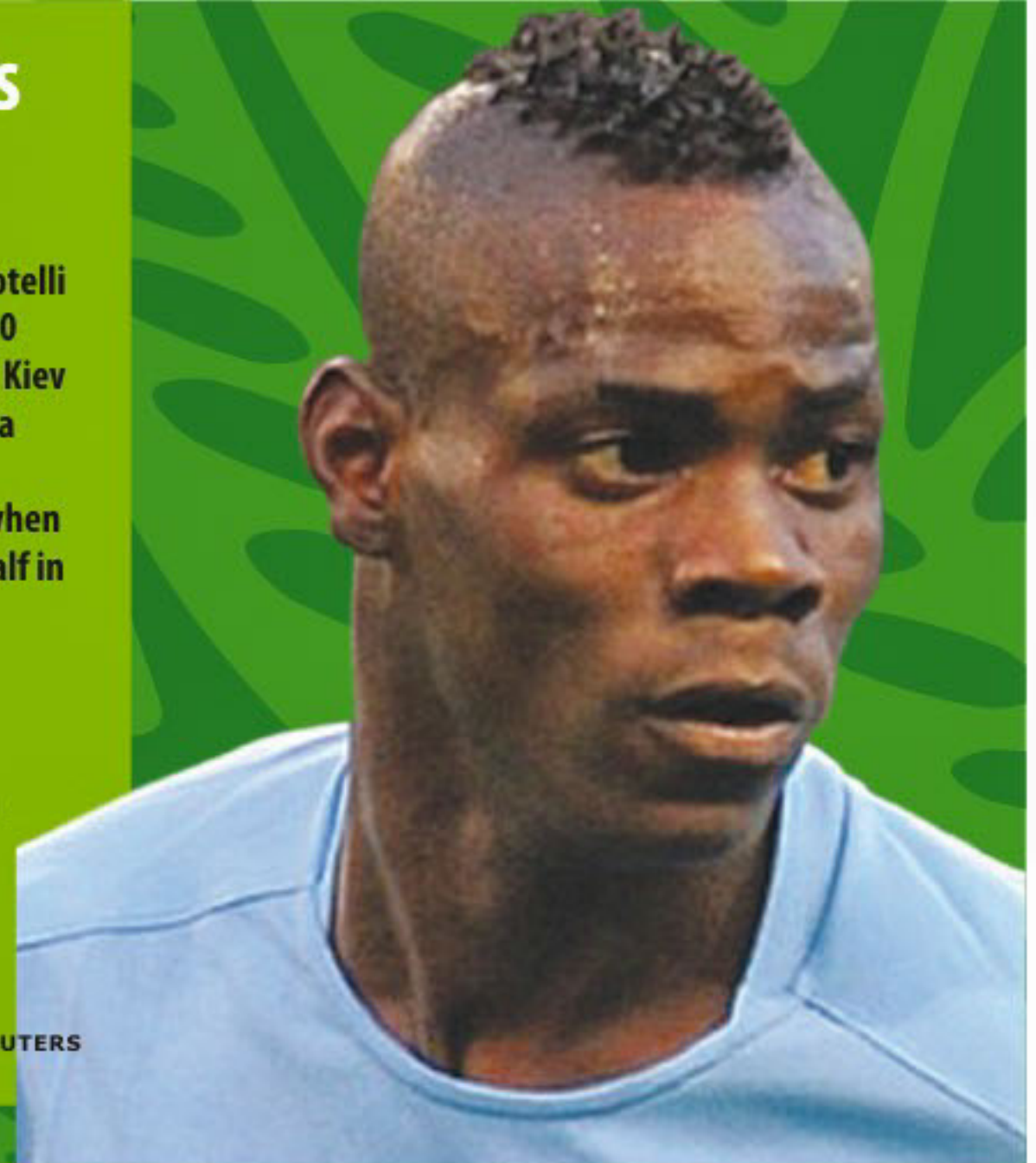


PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

OF RELIEF, OF SATISFACTION: Shafiu Islam (L) and Mahmudullah Riyad, the matchwinners against England on Friday night, can't help having a hearty laugh about it the following morning at the team hotel.

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## Every chance to be in qtrs: Siddons

MOHAMMAD ISAM from Chittagong



If England's World Cup campaign has mimicked the short roller-coaster of Fantasy Kingdom, Bangladesh's hasn't been quite the Friday picnic at Gazipur either, the coming days promising more surprises.

After the emotional high of the opening ceremony came the reality check against India, followed by the close shave against Ireland which resulted in mass euphoria. From the high of the February 25 win the Tigers came crashing down to earth in that soul-crushing surrender to the West Indies. On another Friday, this time in Chittagong, the Tigers' kept their promise to bring down a top side through some inspirational performances of the less-heralded members of the team.

Shafiu Islam and Mahmudullah Riyad have taken the nation by storm with their brilliant ninth-wicket stand, but it was not before Naeem Islam's early strikes, some steady death bowling from Shafiu and Rubel Hossain and the valuable 60 by Imrul Kayes. It was a team effort to the T, a fact reiterated by a very happy head coach.

Jamie Siddons, however, was already looking ahead to the Netherlands game on March 14, hinting that the Tigers could make one surprising change in their line-up.

"It was good that we pulled it off. But it was just amazing that we kept England down

to 225. The bowlers did a fantastic job on a really good wicket. We knew that we had a real chance after that," said Siddons.

"Naeem (Islam) up front was fantastic. We worked with the new ball because we were going to come up against a lot of left-handers in the World Cup. He did the job in three games but now he might not play the next game. They (the Dutch) have a lot of right-handers so we will definitely think about playing another left-arm spinner," he said, though at the time when the 15-man squad was first announced, Siddons had explained that Sohrawardi Shuvo would be included only when the team would come across more right-handed batsmen in the opposition's top and middle-order.

But the proposed change remains arguable as Naeem has shown enough form with the ball against England and played a vital hand against Ireland. Definitely Shuvo's inclusion would add to the ICC Associates' woes but the question remains whether it would be wise to drop a player who has momentum on his side, something the Tigers sweat on.

Siddons praised the manner in which Riyad worked out the length against the English batsmen and also how Rubel and Shafiu did what was asked of them. "They (the pacemen) have done a great job. There are talks of other people being included but these two guys have fought hard," said Siddons.

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## The lean mean Suhash

BISHWAJIT ROY from Chittagong



Shafiu Islam loves to bat against spin bowlers, much like Mashrafe Bin Mortaza. Is there any other similarity between the two players? Yes, both have come from similar backgrounds -- one from the sleepy town of Narail and the other from Bogra -- and both have the beauty of innocence in their characters.

There are, however, some differences in their innocence, as off the field Mashrafe is full of life and as cheerful as one can get while his younger fellow is shy and reserved and you can read many things from Shafiu's infectious smile. Most importantly, though, their on-field approaches are all but same as they have the same killer instinct and Shafiu is as vibrant on the field as Mashrafe. One might point out another dissimilarity -- Shafiu's ability to bowl in the death overs and mastery of the old ball.

It may be a little too early to say that the country has gotten another Mashrafe but many see the shadow of the 'Narail Express' in this young fellow after his valiant batting against England gave Bangladesh a famous two-wicket victory.

Injuries to Mashrafe led the 21-year old right-arm pacer to establish himself as a key member of Bangladesh's pace attack on the back of his performances over the last year, and incandescent contributions in the Tigers' two wins in the World Cup against Ireland and England has taken him to new heights. Like Mashrafe, Shafiu comes to life when he crosses the boundary line and the Bogra-lad has provided glimmers of hope when Bangladesh are desperately looking to find a player like Mashrafe who can not only change the game with the ball but also with the bat.

However, it's not that everything has come out of the blue, as Shafiu, popularly known by his nickname 'Suhash', has proved his worth as a batsman on the domestic scene and managed many improbable wins with the bat.

"Yes, I scored some runs in the domestic competitions and I have got the ability to hit the ball hard. I have the confidence as a batsman because I have won some matches. And I always try to be positive. You know I love to play against the spin bowlers and that's why I targeted Swann [Graeme] in the match," said a delighted Shafiu.

Shafiu revived Bangladesh's dying hope, after the scoreboard once read 169 for eight in reply to 225 runs, by hitting a boundary over the cover region and a massive six over long-on against the champion English off-spinner Swann. It served as a killer blow for England as 16 runs came from the fateful 42nd over.

"I assumed Swann would give me some loop and he did exactly that and I got the ball within my reach to hit the boundary. After that over we thought that it's possible to win the match. And another thing was that I had confidence in Riyad bhai [Mahmudullah] and we knew that if we can play the full fifty overs it will be possible for us to win this game," stated Shafiu.

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## Dutch limber up

SPORTS REPORTER

The last few days were make-or-break for Bangladesh in their hunt to stay alive in the World Cup. They went out in the game against England with a whole lot of pressure on them and then delivered it in almost the correct fashion. Amidst all the tension, expectation and euphoria, the arrival of the Netherlands went almost unnoticed.

The Dutch arrived in Dhaka on Thursday, had a quiet time the day after and hit the field for the first time yesterday when they had a three-hour practice session in the morning at the GP-BCB National Cricket Academy Ground.

When teams' now-a-days tend to warm-up by playing a small game of soccer or touch rugby, it seemed the Dutch only had cricket in their mind. They fielded, had a net session but no fun games. There was one shabby looking rugby ball there though which was being taken care of by the net-bowlers.

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PHOTO: STAR

CAN'T ESCAPE THE LIMELIGHT: Sensational Dutch all-rounder Ryan ten Doeschate, with that Hollywood looks of his and a bat that wields tons almost at will, takes a break from training at the Academy Ground in Mirpur yesterday.

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Match	Time	Venue
New Zealand v Canada	10:00am	Mumbai
Australia v Kenya	3:00pm	Bengalore

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Australia Vs Kenya

The Kenyan cricket team has yet another tough task ahead of them as they face defending champions Australia in the 31st match. The Aussies will go into the match as the clear favourites. Their recent form has been outstanding and with the inclusion of veteran batsman Michael Hussey their batting line-up looks more solid than ever. Mitchell Johnson has been bowling with great venom. He'll be hoping to continue doing that. Over at the Kenyan camp, Steve Tikolo is an experienced campaigner and the young Kenyan cricketers look up to him. He'll be looking to inspire them in this match. Tanmay Mishra played well against Canada and will be hoping to do something similar in this game.

Tanveer Ahmed

Send your opinion in 100 words on Bangladesh Vs Netherlands match to [analysis11@ovi.com](mailto:analysis11@ovi.com). The best analysis will be published.

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