

Star SPORT

Becks to captain LA Galaxy

David Beckham is to captain the Los Angeles Galaxy for the first time in three years. Bruce Arena, coach of the Major League Soccer club, decided that former England captain Beckham will wear the captain's arm band on Saturday when the Galaxy visit MLS rivals Real Salt Lake. "Bruce has asked me to wear it, and I'll be proud to wear it," said Beckham, who is in the final season of the contract that brought him to Los Angeles. "It doesn't change the way I play. It's something you're very proud to wear."

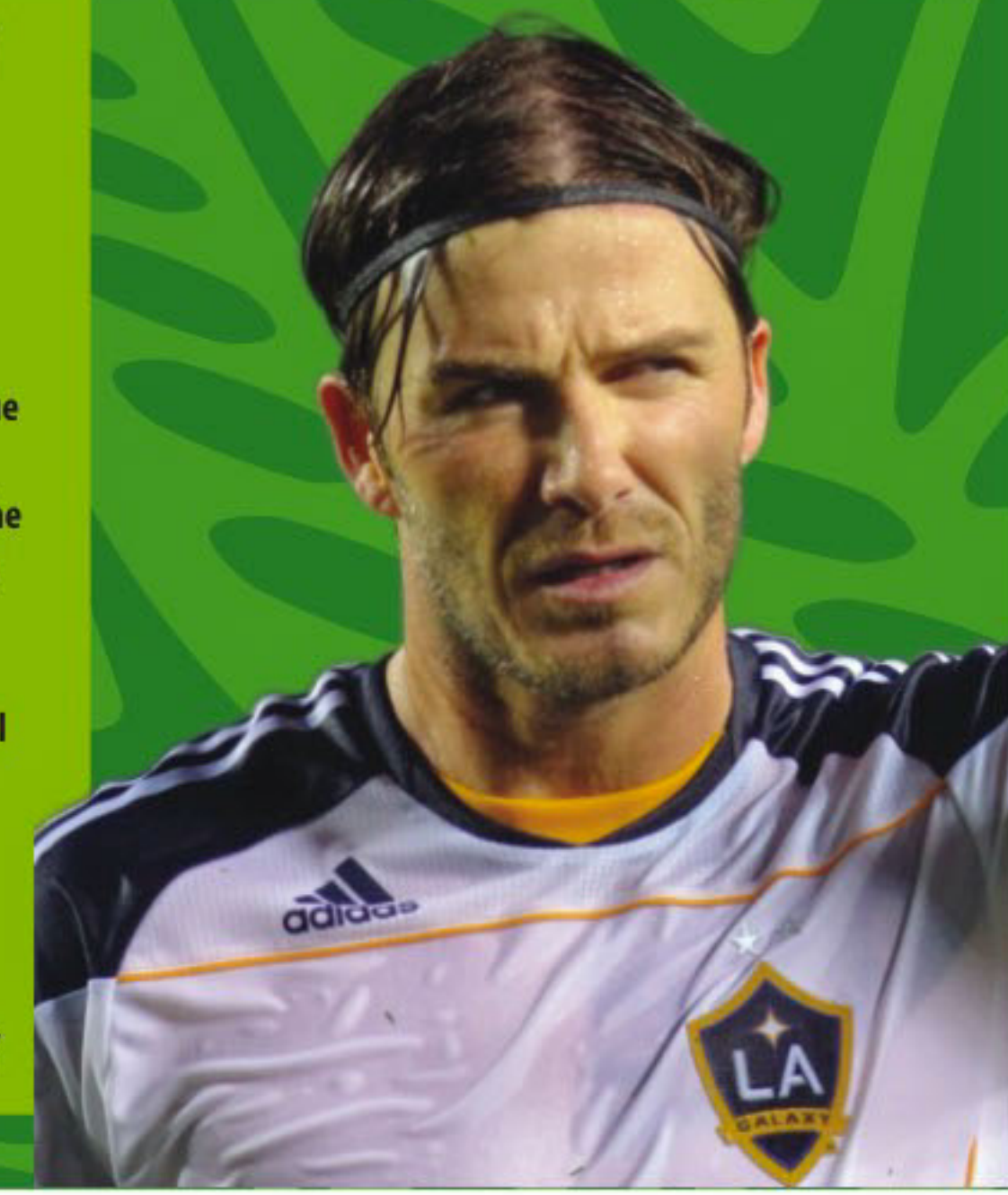


PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

UP, UP AND AWAY: Fireworks go up inside the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur last night to mark the end of Bangladesh's hosting of the 2011 ICC Cricket World Cup.



Ignominy & ecstasy

SAKEB SUBHAN



Another World Cup, another South African exit at the knockout stage. A score of 220 seemed too little for New Zealand in yesterday's quarterfinal against the Proteas at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium, especially when Jacques Kallis and AB de Villiers had taken the score to 108 for the loss of two wickets with more than half the overs left.

Then, the all-too-familiar happened, and whether it be called choking or not, the simple fact of the matter was that South Africa crumbled under the pressure New Zealand's disciplined bowling and spectacular fielding were exerting.

Pawar praises Bangladesh

SPORT REPORTER

ICC president Sharad Pawar congratulated Bangladesh for the successful hosting of the World Cup. Mr. Pawar, who watched the World Cup quarterfinal match between New Zealand and South Africa at the Sher-e-Bangla National Cricket Stadium on Friday said: "It has been wonderful to experience the hospitality of the people of Bangladesh. "I'd like to thank the Prime Minister,

The pain of defeat showed on South Africa captain Graeme Smith's face as he took his seat at the post-match press conference, which is understandable because he had one of the most balanced teams at his disposal.

"It's a little hard to tell you why (it happened) so soon. We thought 220 was a decent total to chase," said a bemused Smith. "We certainly bowled well enough to win today. I think the batting let us down in the middle period. New Zealand squeezed us, we knew it would get a bit difficult from the twenty over mark to the ball change in the 34th.. The ball would get soft, and the wicket would get slower and lower. We just had to keep our composure in that period, which we didn't."

The captain stood by his team, saying that he could not fault their work ethic. When asked what message he would like to relay to all the fans back home who must be exasperated at yet another World Cup failure, he said, "There's nothing I can say that will make them feel better. It was just that we did not perform on the day. We've given our best, we've trained hard and committed to our skills. I cannot fault the way the team have prepared and trained. Today we let ourselves down and let the people back home down. We will get on the plane and when we get home the daggers will be out, and we've just got to take it on the chin."

As he had earlier announced, Smith confirmed we would step down from the one-day captaincy. "I got the captaincy at a very

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The best of times, the worst of times

QUAZI ZULQUARNAIN ISLAM

It all started with fireworks on a cool February evening at the Bangabandhu National Stadium in Mirpur on another pleasant March night thirty-seven days later. But while the physical distance between the two locations is a few short miles at best, the distance travelled by Bangladesh in that period, of a little more than a month, has been astronomical.

Yesterday's quarterfinal between South Africa and New Zealand marked the end of Bangladesh's participation in the World Cup, after our beloved Tigers had crashed out to the Proteas about a week ago.

A return of three wins and three losses for the Tigers and a total of eight matches as hosts spread over Dhaka and Chittagong represents fairly good value, but there will be more than a few in the crowd complaining about the manner of wins and more importantly, the margin of the losses. Despite that, for Bangladesh, both as hosts and participants, it would be foolish to say that this was a World Cup of anything but dizzying heights, the zenith of which, from a sporting perspective, was surely the last-gasp win over England in Chittagong. The 'back from the death' denouement in that game

surely added to the mythical value of that encounter, but the one thing that was consistently brilliant across the tournament was the support from the fans who put in full-houses in all seven games. Even yesterday, with the Tigers a rapidly distant memory, about 22,000 packed into the stands sporting South African or New Zealand colours. And they cheered almost as loudly as they did when Bangladesh were playing.

For Dileep Preemachandran, a

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cricket journalist for more than a decade, the fans were the best part of watching the game in Bangladesh. And while the atmosphere in the games had been great, for Dileep, nothing beat the heights hit during the opening ceremony.

"It was a fantastic atmosphere at the

stadium for the opening ceremony. It showed just how much interest in the game there was among the people here. There were almost as many people outside the stadium singing and dancing as there were inside," he said. It was a view concurred by Andy Zaltzman, resident comedy writer for cricket website Cricinfo.

"The sense of civic pride among the people here at the fact that they are organising the World Cup is amazing to say the least," he said.

For Zaltzman, a Liverpool resident on his first trip to the sub-continent the sheer interest in the game in this part of the world, and especially in Bangladesh, was the highlight.

"Some people have told me that cricket in Bangladesh now is like what it used to be in India fifteen years ago. No matter who is playing, there is always remarkable interest."

Dileep voiced the same and said that it might have been better to have more of the neutral games in Bangladesh.

"The neutral games have been far better attended here than it has been in Sri Lanka and I, for one, would have loved to see more games here," he said.

For Zaltzman, the way the game is received here was a definite eye-opener.

"Cricket is very much the people's sport in this part of the world, whereas in England it is very different. People get nowhere near as excited, not even

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Dream becomes reality

MOHAMMAD ISAM from Colombo

Mohammad Basheer saved since 2008 to come to this World Cup and even had to hear a few stern words from his wife, but now he thinks that every penny (and his wife's ridicule) is worth it because India will play Pakistan in the semifinal on March 30.

In his mid-50s, the bearded Chicago resident said "he did what he had to do" for his favourite sport and his beloved Pakistan cricket team, a side he followed

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SAIL OPEN Siddikur finishes second

SPORTS REPORTER

Golfer Siddikur Rahman finished second in the Sail Open, an event of Asian Tour, in India yesterday.

Siddikur led the table till the third day with five-under-par but on the final day he lost to Thailand's Kirandech Apibamrat, who finished top with 16-under-par, said a press release. Siddikur bagged a prize money of US\$ 32,550 (Taka 23 lakh).

SRI LANKA V ENGLAND

Colombo expects, quietly

Do the utmost to win: Sangakkara

MOHAMMAD ISAM from Colombo



The buzz around the Sri Lankan capital today is as much as it was for Thursday's India-Australia clash with virtually everyone talking about the impending firecracker in Mohali.

But even it was the India-Pakistan clash that made tongues wag, it is obviously the Sri Lanka game that got everyone excited. But captain Kumar Sangakkara believed that expectation on England will be as much as it will be on the home side for today's final quarterfinal at the R Premadasa Stadium.

"It depends on what you lose and it is the semifinal spot. I don't think any side would want to lose that. There will be intensity and both sides will feel it," said Sangakkara during yesterday's press conference.

Sri Lanka are of course the last World Cup's finalists and became champions in 1996, winning all their matches here. Incidentally, they beat England in the quarterfinals in that tournament, another plus for the home side who will find tremendous support at the Khetarama.

"That's the way cricket is played here, every single

game we get a packed house here whether it's a World Cup or not. I don't think it'll be any different tomorrow (Saturday)," he added.

Colombo has been decked out for the last two months for the World Cup but of course, it is only in Bangladesh where the general public has been so expressive during this competition. The India-Australia game has served as the alarm clock with every big-

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SRI LANKA-ENGLAND ENCOUNTERS

Matches	Sri Lanka won	England won
44	21	23
Most hundreds: Mahela Jayawardene (4).		
Most wickets: Dilhara Fernando (36).		
<i>At the R Premadasa Stadium, England have only defeated Sri Lanka</i>		

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

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England - Sri Lanka

Sri Lanka head into this quarter-final as one of the form teams of the competition after dropping only one game on their way to finishing second to Pakistan in Group A, and could have topped the table had their clash with Australia not been washed out. England have been much more difficult to get a read on, with some ordinary performances against the Netherlands and Ireland countered by a win over tournament favourites South Africa and a tie against India. In fact, Andrew Strauss' men only made sure of their place in the last eight with an 18-run win over the West Indies in their final group match. Heading into the clash, all indicators seem to be pointing towards a Sri Lankan win in front of what is sure to be a parochial crown in Colombo.

Mehedi Hasan Suhan

ovi

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