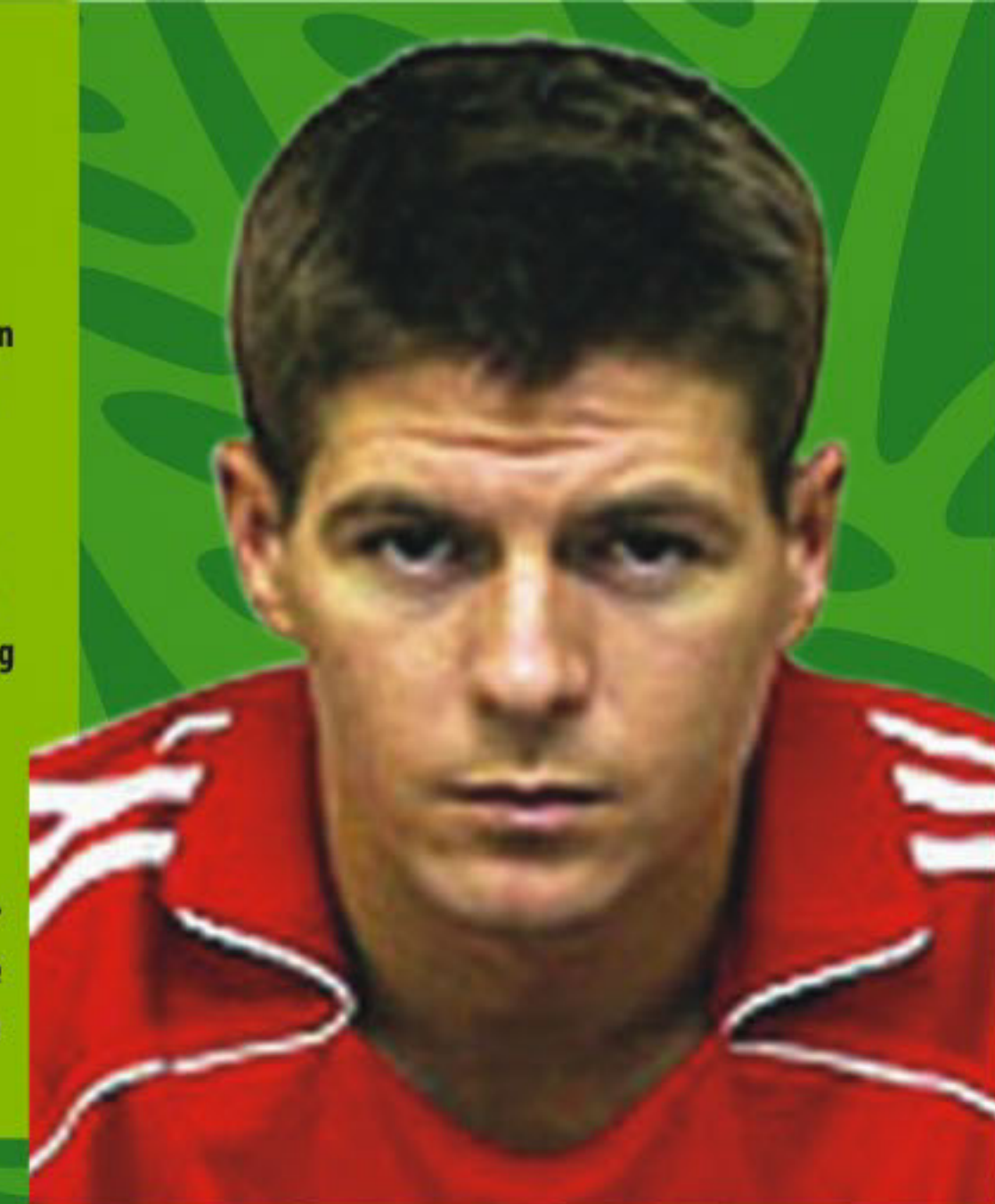


Star SPORT

DHAKA SATURDAY APRIL 9, 2011, E-MAIL: sports@thedailystar.net

Gerrard out for season

Liverpool skipper Steven Gerrard has been ruled out for the rest of the season after suffering a groin injury, manager Kenny Dalglish confirmed Friday. Gerrard had recently returned to training following a groin operation in early March but broke down last Friday after sustaining a similar injury, dealing a blow to Liverpool's push for a European place. News of Gerrard's injury is another major headache for Dalglish, who is already without defender Daniel Agger for two months after he damaged knee tendons against West Bromwich Albion last month.



Bangladesh captain Shakib Al Hasan (L) speaks to coach Jamie Siddons during training session at the Mirpur Indoor yesterday, ahead of today's first ODI against Australia.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

'Series will be competitive'



BISHWAJIT ROY

Has the World Cup experience changed Shakib Al Hasan completely or was he disturbed for any unseen reason?

The question was raised after the way the young Bangladesh captain portrayed himself during a pre-match press conference at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur. Indeed it was a different Shakib who appeared in the first such press briefing since their World Cup exit.

Compared to the euphoria of the past two months, everything looked quiet with ahead of another international cricket series at Bangladesh's "home of cricket" and the Bangladesh captain also didn't add any fuel while talking to the press prior to today's first one-dayer of the three-match series.

The all-rounder was not in his usual aggressive or jubilant disposition and many were surprised when he responded to a question by saying that a 3-0 result in favour of Australia could be a realistic outcome in the series.

"If you think clearly than you can expect a 3-0 outcome in favour of Australia in the series. But it's possible for us to win at least one game," said Shakib when asked about what was his expectation from the series.

There has never been any shortage of confidence from Shakib when speaking in any press conference previously but it was altogether a different experience for many yesterday and that's why the whispering was there about the reason for his changed attitude. Many has guessed it might have happened due to the fact that his team failed to fulfill the expectation in the recently concluded World Cup or it might have happened due to the fact that things have not been going as per his expectation due to unexpected interference from the high-ups.

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'Bring back consistency'

SPORTS REPORTER

Australia's new full-time captain Michael Clarke will look to bring back stability through this short trip to Bangladesh.

The visitors play the first of three one-dayers at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium today, two weeks after their quarterfinal exit in the World Cup.

Clarke's assertion comes on the back of a poor season for his side, one where they conceded the Ashes at home after 24 years as well as the failure to hold on to the World Cup, a tournament they have dominated for the last 12 years. Though Australia have a fine one-day record over the last two years, Clarke believed consistency hasn't been a regular feature.

"The one thing I'm trying to bring to this team is for us to be a bit more consistent with our play. Over the last couple of years we've played some really good cricket, but in patches," said Clarke during the press conference yesterday.

And through this new-found consistency, Clarke would also like a series whitewash, but quickly stuck to the reality. "I would like it to be 3-0 from Australian point of view but that might not be the case. I want to see Australia play some really good positive cricket and hopefully we can win every game we play," he said.

Clarke was also concerned by the lack of hundreds from the top four, so far only three this year and one during the World Cup and

would like to see the likes of Shane Watson, Brad Haddin and probably himself (Clarke is without a hundred from October last year) get the big ones.

"When Australian one-day teams have had success, somebody in the top four has gone on to make a big score.

"We only scored one century through the World Cup, so we'll be focussing on someone from the top order going on to make a big score in all three games [against Bangladesh]," he said.

The said hundred was by his predecessor Ricky Ponting in Australia's quarterfinal against India, the man still in the team unlike any since Kim Hughes.

"Ricky's advice has always been very helpful to me, whether that be as his deputy or now as the captain.

"I've said openly to Ricky that his experience and knowledge of the game is something we [the team] will continue to need, especially me as an inexperienced captain. I've been fortunate enough to captain Australia in a few one dayers and Twenty20s, and one Test



MICHAEL CLARKE

match, but his knowledge is going to be crucial to the team going forward.

"Our relationship has always been very strong on and off the field, and I'm certain that won't change. It was good to see him make some runs, he looks in really good nick, after scoring that hundred against India in the recent World Cup. I'm confident he'll come out tomorrow and score some more runs for us," explained Clarke.

He was also keen on seeing his bowlers mix it up and all-round improvement in fielding. "Discipline is still the key with the ball - to hit the right areas with the new ball, to change the pace, to use the bouncer, and the yorker are areas we're working on as a bowling unit. And the focus is also on improving our standards in the field. I think our fielding has been pretty inconsistent over the last 12 to 18 months and it's important now to continue working hard on that part of our game."

Batting woes hound BD A too

SPORTS REPORTER

Hosts South Africa A seized control of the four-day match as Bangladesh A collapsed to 156 all out on the second day at Senwes Park in Potchefstroom yesterday.

The hosts took an overall lead of 250 after making 105-3 in second innings at stumps. Jacques Rudolph and S van Zyl were unbeaten on 30 and 10 respectively as off-spinner Nasir Hossain claimed all three wickets for 35.

Replying to the hosts' first inning score of 301-7 declared, Bangladesh having resumed the day on 12 for one added 144 runs for nine wickets in the face of some brilliant bowling from medium pacers Ethy Mbhalati (2-42), Quinton Friend (2-40), medium pacer Craig Alexander (3-18) and left-arm slow bowler Dean Elgar (2-22).

Bangladesh lost national discard Junaed Siddique in the third delivery of the day and others followed his

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Academy team set for SA matches

SPORTS REPORTER

The Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) yesterday declared a 14-member squad for the GP-BCB academy team for two four-dayers against the South African Cricket Academy.

The South African side are scheduled to arrive here on April 14 to play two four-dayers, three one-dayers and two Twenty20 matches.

Squad: Mohammad Mithun, Rony Talakder, Mysukur Rahman, Anamul Hoque Bijoy, Shuvagata Hom Chowdhury, Muminul Hoque Showrav, Asif Ahmed Ratul, Soumya Sarkar, Mahmudul Hasan, Shaker Ahmed, Sanjamul Islam, Alauddin Babu, Shuvashis Roy and Al-Amin.

Mashrafe's 'last int'l match?'



SPORTS REPORTER

After much talk of this and that, Mashrafe Bin Mortaza has finally decided to stay with the team and will most likely play today's first of three ODIs against Australia at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur.

Bangladesh captain Shakib Al Hasan said during the pre-match press conference yesterday that the pace spearhead had cleared himself to play in the three-match series and also hinted that he may now make his return to international cricket after he had injured his right knee in December last year.

"He (Mashrafe) has decided he'll be staying with the team and he'll be part of this series and he is fully fit. And you all know he never sits on the bench when he is in the team. We are yet to decide on the team but there is a chance to bring at least one change from the World Cup team," Shakib said.

Apparently Mashrafe was allowed to make up his own mind about participating in the series and ultimately had chosen to stay after much drama. But his remarks still left everyone with a sense of ambiguity.

"I don't know whether I will play tomorrow's first match. And if I ultimately play the match, than it can also be my last international game. I don't want to say anything more about why I'm considering this as a possible last game," said a dejected Mashrafe, who was reportedly put under tremendous pressure to play the series.

"I could continue my career despite repeated operations on my both knees because of my confidence. But this time

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PHOTO: STAR

Bangladesh fast bowler Mashrafe Bin Mortaza is seen in his delivery stride during practice at Mirpur yesterday.

BCB gets poor deal for title sponsor

SPORTS REPORTER

The three-match one-day series between Bangladesh and Australia will be known as the Zoom Ultra ODI series.

It was revealed at a press conference in the media conference room of the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium yesterday.

The title sponsor money is 100,000 US dollars and it includes prize money for the three man-of-the-match as well as the man-of-the-series awards. It is "Package 1" but Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) could not sell "Package 2". The total floor price was set at 395,000 dollars with the first package set at 165,000 dollars.

According to BCB CEO Manzur Ahmed, there was no tenders after it was opened between March 8 and 21.

"A company came to bid on March 22 but it was incomplete. We then had to negotiate to get this sponsor," he said.

Some cited the completion of the World Cup and the clash with the Indian Premier League (IPL) the reason for such disinterest in the Bangladesh-Australia series.

Tamim in Wisden's grandest list



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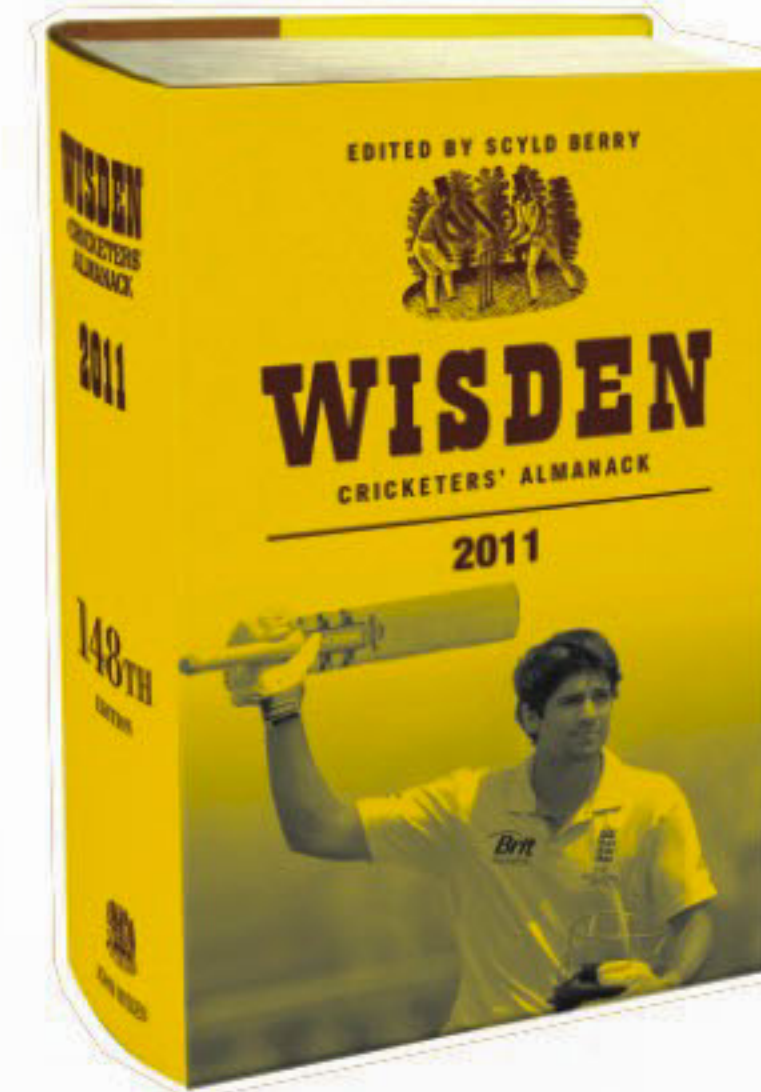
Wisden editor Scyld Berry's decision to drop one name from the list of Cricketers of the Year of the 2011 edition of the Wisden Cricketers' Almanack has made waves across the cricket world. But the big news here is the flight that Tamim Iqbal has taken, becoming the first Bangladeshi to be part of this vaunted selection.

The dropping of the fifth player is certainly a break with ancient tradition but it has been the reflection of an English summer in which allegations of corruption during Pakistan's tour of England left a stain on the sport's reputation.

Apart from Tamim, Wisden picked Jonathan Trott, Chris Read and Eoin Morgan.

"There was no question about Jonathan Trott's selection, as England's

great stock-piler of Test and one-day runs. Nor about Tamim Iqbal, the first Bangladeshi to be a Wisden Cricketer of the Year. Not once in Australia were



England's Test bowlers crashed and trashed as they were by Tamim in his two hundreds at Lord's and Old Trafford," wrote Berry in his Daily Telegraph column yesterday.

The truncated list will feature in the Almanack's 148th edition, which is officially unveiled on Wednesday. The tradition, which dates back to 1889, is the oldest individual honour in cricket, and though the format has occasionally varied, with six great bowlers being chosen for the original award, Wisden has chosen five names in every year since 1926, barring a hiatus during the Second World War.

Though Wisden chose not to name the omitted player, it was the performance of Amir - then 18 - which really captured the public imagination during Pakistan's tour. Bowling at genuine pace with deadly late swing from a left-arm line, he claimed 19 wickets at 18.36

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