

Star SPORT

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If Sachin has to be given Bharat Ratna

The calls for bestowing Sachin Tendulkar with the 'Bharat Ratna' may have got louder after India's World Cup triumph but giving the country's highest civilian honour to the batting icon would require tweaking of the criteria that has been laid down for the coveted award. The Bharat Ratna was started in 1954 and has so far been given to 41 eminent personalities, none of whom are sportspersons, the reason being the criteria for the coveted honour. Constitutional expert Subhash Kashyap says given the current rules "Tendulkar does not qualify for the honour and giving the award to him would require a change in the rules." According to the criteria at present, the award is given for exceptional contribution in the fields of art, literature, science and social service. The criteria do not have any mention of sports.

-- PTI



PHOTO: STAR

Bangladesh coach Jamie Siddons (L) offers some words of advice to batsmen Rokibul Hasan (C) and Imrul Kayes (R) during practice at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium yesterday.

NATIONAL CRICKET LEAGUE

Sylhet survive scare, go slow

SPORTS REPORTER

Sylhet continued their go-slow approach even in the second round of the National Cricket League while Rajshahi tried the opposite yesterday.

On the first day at the Fatullah Cricket Stadium, Rajshahi were 253-7 at stumps with wicketkeeper Dhiman Ghosh unbeaten on 80 after off-spinner Sohag Gazi picked up four wickets for Barisal.

At the Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium in Chittagong, Sylhet's Rajin Saleh struck his second century of the season though his side petered along at just a fraction more than two an over.

RAJSHAHI-BARISAL

Rajshahi opener Mizanur Rahman batted boldly despite losing Rahat Sadik early, the right-hander hammering seven boundaries in his 35. He added 50 for the second wicket with Farhad Hossain, before Dhiman and Jahurul Islam added 61 for the fifth wicket. Jahurul, a forgotten man from the Tigers camp, made 46 off 154 balls with three boundaries.

Dhiman's innings however was one that impressed as the

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Delving into the 'give-up'

SPORTS REPORTER



At the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium yesterday, it was all about "yesterday" although a match was to be played "tomorrow". It was clear that answers were to be given, or found, on what exactly the team management thought of Saturday's abject performance with the bat.

Some brutal truths awaited to be told and Jamie Siddons, the head coach, did not hide his displeasure at the Tigers batsmen's meek surrender in the first one-day international against Australia.

The home side made only 210-5 from 50 overs after Australia had set them a target of 271 runs. After losing three wickets by the 13th over, skipper Shakib Al Hasan and his deputy Tamim Iqbal added 67 runs for the fourth wicket but they scored at less than four an over and after Tamim's dismissal, the Shakib-Mushfiquur Rahim partnership yielded just 33 runs from 67 balls with the required rate climbing. Between overs 30 and 40, the Tigers scored only 32 runs, resulting in the run-rate jumping from 7.5 per over to 12.3 runs an over.

Siddons was particularly unhappy about this period, confirming that he too believed the Tigers had in fact given up much before they reached the 50th over.

"At about the 35th over, definitely. We went too slowly in the middle but we lost three wickets in a real hurry," said

Siddons during yesterday's optional training session in Mirpur.

"I think it is unacceptable. You can't make 270 when you have that sort of score.

"Shakib didn't really have a lot of answers for me why they went so slow, other than the wicket was very difficult. I didn't like the running between wickets, didn't like them walking between wickets.

"We had three guys score runs and that's a good improvement. We got 200 but we should have used up our ten wickets and got 240 and given 270 a chase. I was disappointed in that. Don't think I was supportive of Tamim and Shakib," he added.

He also revealed that the moment a message was sent off to Shakib, he was caught in the deep for 51 off 89 balls, his team at 149 for five in 41.1 overs.

"I tend to try to let them grow and learn as captain and vice-captain, and didn't want to send messages out there; as soon as I sent a message out, Shakib got caught at long on the next ball. So that's my fear: as soon as I say hit the odd boundary, get the ones but hit the odd boundary, that [a dismissal] happens, so I tend to stay away from it," he said.

He pointed out the fifth wicket partnership's inability to find the boundaries when all that was required for them was to find one every over.

"Mushfiquur and Shakib followed on from Shakib and Tamim and didn't score enough boundaries. We ended up 60 runs

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Smith and Shuvo's all-round dreams

MOHAMMAD ISAM



If fast bowlers were all the rage for 50-odd years and spinners the 'in thing' for two decades after a certain blonde leggie debuted in 1992, this seems to be the time for all-rounders who can spin the ball, bat aggressively and take breathtaking catches.

With pitches across the world slowing down and getting flatter, the need for more spinning all-rounders has risen. Quality is undeniably key here and there is no doubt that Shakib Al Hasan, Daniel Vettori, Graeme Swann and Shahid Afridi will walk into any team, any day.

After this group come the likes of Steven Smith and Sohrawardi Shuvo, both having debuted in ODIs last year and both age-group stalwarts in their respective countries.

Both are pretenders and have been likened and compared to their greater compatriots: Smith can't take a step without being compared to the great Shane Warne and though Shuvo has it much easier, he has to play in the shadow of his younger, more illustrious BKSP buddy.

Though one is a left-arm spinner and the other a leggie, Shuvo and Smith have similar ambitions to be the finished product, i.e., they want to become complete all-rounders rather than just play supporting roles.

"I get very few opportunities to bat and when I do, I either have to hit or defend. I like to take my time and would like to bat at five or six in the future. Definitely, I would like to be an all-rounder in the near future," said Shuvo.

Smith, on the other hand, didn't know his exact playing role, preferring to fit in but like Shuvo, he also wants to be the genuine article.

"I'm not too sure at the moment. Hopefully I can play whichever role, whether as a batter or a bowler.

"Down the track I would want to be considered a genuine all-rounder. So it is about working hard in the nets and whenever I get the opportunity, I put my best foot forward and do the job for the team," said Smith.

Shuvo, through his 3-44 from eight overs on Saturday against a top-notch line-up, made sure he felt some warmth of the lime-light. His length and variation of pace made sure Cameron White and Michael Hussey

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Bangladesh captain Shakib Al Hasan (L) and his Australian counterpart Michael Clarke pose with the Zoom Ultra ODI Series 2011 trophy at Hotel Sonargaon yesterday.

PHOTO: SK ENAMUL HAQUE

BEYOND THE BOUNDARY

Cult of the Anti-Heroes

SHAKIL KASEM

After the World Cup, where our own cup of woe had considerably runneth over, what with those scores of 58 and 78, it was time indeed to have moved on. And, did we not move on or what?

A sizeable number of masochists had gathered at the SBNCS for another dose of collective flogging of cricket sensibilities as we took on the Aussies the other day. We watched in spellbound awe the manner in which we just turned it on. For a start we won the toss and fielded. Why? I hear you ask. Because, silly, when in doubt schizophrenia is the safest refuge. Notwithstanding the early morning start to the game we could still afford to huddle under the crowded umbrella comprising of a reluctant pace bowler and three of the world's best spinners, all of the same kind. What chance there for the Aussies, ranked number one in the ODI rankings? As Shania Twain said, that don't impress me much. Certainly not, when we had in our ranks a Wisden Cricketer of the Year and the world's best all rounder!

So the wicket was meant to get slower as the day progressed, but what of it? 270 to get, was that going to be stiff? Our liking for stats depends on which of them strike our fancy. There are times when we take the dew factor seriously, as against India, and then there are times when we don't. We play our cricket differently, although there are some with no sense of humour who at times insist, we don't play cricket at all. Ah well, you can't win them all. We had an agenda, irrespective of when we had to make our move. We bat out 50 overs. We don't lose all our wickets. In this dull prosaic world where mundane outcomes of a match are considered to be of significance, we refreshingly bring a breath of fresh air with our approach and attitude. We belong of course to a new school of thought. Again, the cynics might insist it is the only such school of thought existing in the cricket world. Our theme song over the years has been, We Shall Overcome. But only our neuroses, not our insecurities. Those we carry on our sleeves, our past traumas we wear as a badge.

We love to dream. We relive Cardiff, of that distant English summer ago; we replay it ad nauseam, ad infinitum in our mind's eye till it acquires the size of Sisyphus' boulder of expectation. We forget conveniently, we had a Mohammad Ashraful then who could score runs for us. We do not have him anymore, nor anybody else who has that similar fire in the belly to take on what the best in the world could hurl at us. The subconscious mind does play tricks with our urges. The ghost of Ashraful is a silent spectre in our dressing room. Unconsciously we have submitted to the realisation that we do not have what it takes to take on the best in the world. It is a mindset which after promising so much to the contrary, is beginning to haunt us again.

There had to have been a purpose to our madness in that first match of this series. To have actually been observed to be playing for a draw in a limited over match had to mean there was a reason behind it all. To fathom what that reason was is like trying to comprehend what lies beyond outer space. Is the answer simply blowin' in the wind, or

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