

Star

SPORT

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Bend it like Beckham

David Beckham's 69-second video showing him bending three footballs into a trio of far away rubbish bins on a California beach has received more than 1.3 million hits on YouTube. Wearing khaki shorts and a white shirt, Beckham puts down a soft drink he is holding and drifts three ball into the rubbish bins while people off camera express shock and admiration. The stunt is all the more amazing because the former Manchester United star is barefoot. Beckham then speaks into the camera and says "told you."

Batters win hearts

SAKEB SUBHAN

The three-match ODI series between Australia and Bangladesh ended predictably yesterday at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium, Australia winning 3-0. However, after the drubbings of the first two games, Bangladesh supporters will find some succour from the fact that the home team put up a much better fight in what was the last match before a lengthy break for both teams. Set a mammoth 362 to win, Bangladesh were in the contest for much of the game, riding on good innings from Imrul Kayes, Shahriar Nafees and Mahmudullah Riyad to post a more than respectable 295.

It was also an emotional day for the Tigers, with yesterday's game being the last of coach Jamie Siddons's tenure. At the post-match press conference captain Shakib Al Hasan said that though it wasn't said out loud in the team meeting, the significance of the event was at the back of the players' minds.

"We did not talk about it. Jamie gave us a talk before the match, but it was probably in everyone's mind to put in a special effort in Jamie's last match," said the Bangladesh captain. Although the effort was better than their first two encounters with the Aussies, the match was still lost.

Shakib thought that the Bangladesh's bowling had let them down in the series. "In this game we did not start well, but we came back strong, and finished well. In this series our bowling was not good, and I would say that our fielding was not up to scratch after the high standards we set in the

World Cup," said Shakib. He also alluded to the Shane Watson factor, saying that the Aussie opener was in red-hot form and that he did not allow the bowlers to bowl to plan.

The captain had praises for the batsmen, who he thought fared well against a very good bowling attack. "Our batting in this series was good, the top-order played well. Today it was Imrul [Kayes] and [Mahmudullah] Riyad, in the other two matches Tamim [Iqbal] and Mushfiqur [Rahim] batted well," said Shakib of the batsmen who notched up scores of 210, 229, and 295 in the series, an improvement on some of the abject World Cup performances.

Australia captain Michael Clarke was in good spirits, happy with pulling

off a clean sweep. "We knew it was going to be a tough tour, with Bangladesh being a good team in their conditions. Also, they have very good spinners," said the Aussie skipper. He credited the batsmen for the win yesterday, with Michael Hussey scoring a spectacular century.

He also gave credit to Bangladesh's batsmen for putting up a fight.

"Credit must be given to the Bangladesh top-order. They got off to a fantastic start and came hard at us. The best time to bat is in the first twenty overs when the ball is new, and they cashed in during that period," Clarke said.

Although the Aussies could not take ten wickets in any of the games, Clarke was still appreciative of the bowlers' effort. "The wicket was not conducive to getting ten wickets, but it is something we will continue to work on. Our bowling and fielding I thought was excellent, especially in such great batting conditions."

SCOREBOARD

Scoreboard of the third and final one-day international between Bangladesh and Australia at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday:

AUSTRALIA	
Watson b Razzak	72
Ponting lbw b Razzak	47
Clarke b Mashrafe	47
Smith c & b Shuvo	5
Hussey lbw b Shafiul	108
Ferguson c Kapali b Mashrafe	3
Johnson c Kayes b Mashrafe	41
Paine lbw b Razzak	7
Hastings not out	21
Doherty not out	2
Extras: (lb-3, nb-1, w-4)	8
Total: (For 8 wkts in 50 overs)	361

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IN FULL FLOW: Bangladesh opener Imrul Kayes flays one over mid-wicket during his fluent knock of 93 against Australia in the third and final ODI at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

SA A take command

SPORTS REPORTER

Dean Elgar slammed an unbeaten hundred as South Africa dominated the first day's proceedings in the second and final four-dayer against Bangladesh A at the City Oval in Pietermaritzburg yesterday.

The home side finished the day on 233 for 2 in 62 overs. Elgar remained not out on 120 while Farhaan Behardien accompanied him with 75 runs.

South Africa A made a solid start after deciding to bat as Elgar and Andrew Puttick added 79 runs in the opening stand before the latter was trapped in front by Noor Hossain for 29 runs.

The second string South African side however lost another batsman very quickly when captain Mohammad Ashraful trapped Jacques Rudolph leg before wicket for one, but Elgar and Puttick steadied the ship with undefeated third wicket stand of 147 runs.

Meanwhile, after completion of the second four-day match, the two teams will play five limited-over games.

Opening batsman Jahurul Islam, all-rounder Forhad Reza and left-arm spinner Elias Sunny are scheduled to fly out for South Africa to join the team for the one-dayers that get

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No stopping Hussey



MR CRICKET: Australia batsman Michael Hussey meets the ball with the sweet part of the bat during his brilliant innings of 108 against Bangladesh yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

Daily Star Sport (DSS): Have you ever seen so many sixes in one innings? Michael Hussey (MH): Not really (laughs). I haven't seen hitting like that since probably Adam Gilchrist in the World Cup final against Sri Lanka.

Shane Watson has been in amazing form in the last two years and I hope he can continue on.

DSS: How do you see your future as an international player?

MH: I haven't looked too much into the future at the moment, I'm just concentrating on now. I want to keep going as much as I can because it took me so long to get one game for Australia and I want to play as many as I possibly can.

I still feel I can contribute to the team. I'm hoping to keep playing for a while.

DSS: Throughout your career, you have adjusted so well, be it your lack of height in the early days or being a middle-order batsman from being an opener. How do you do that?

MH: I don't know (smiles), I'm probably still learning. I think I was lucky that I had to play a lot of first-class cricket so I learned a lot about the game of cricket, about batting and learned a lot about my own game, in first-class cricket and county cricket before coming into the international scene.

So I had a good understanding of my own game before coming to international cricket. I think that really helped as I came into international cricket. That can be the difference between success and failure.

DSS: How did you keep yourself going when you couldn't break into the national team for all those years?

MH: It was tough at times, definitely. Maybe if I'm honest, I thought that my time has passed and wasn't going to get a chance to play for Australia.

I probably, through certain stages, tried too hard and put too much pressure on myself and trained too hard. When I just relaxed and just went back to enjoy the game and play in my way, that's when the opportunity came.

DSS: What would you tell youngsters on how to handle instant fame and pressure?

MH: I don't know about handling fame as I keep a low profile. I don't seek out that sort of stuff.

Handling the pressure is a big, big thing. For me personally, I know my game and know how I need to prepare. So I really just focus on those things.

I don't let the media or any outside pressures or distractions come into my mind. I just concentrate on

what's important for preparing well for every game. I make sure my things are right to give myself the best chance to do well.

DSS: What is your favourite format? MH: Test cricket, because it is the pinnacle. It's the hardest game and you are tested on so many different levels -- skills, tactics, mentally and physically.

That's where you are judged by your peers, plus we get to play with the baggy green cap on so it is very special.

DSS: You started off very well in international cricket and then tapered off in 2009. There are youngsters in Bangladesh who have had similar paths...

MH: I was pretty philosophical about it. I couldn't believe the start I had myself. I thought, 'this can't last forever'.

There's always going to be a time in cricket when things won't go your way. I was prepared for that but again I didn't let all the external things come into my mind.

I kept working hard at my game, kept doing the basics well, focussing on my preparation and having faith in that. I knew that if I kept doing things, success would come back again my way.

DSS: Going back to your childhood

Even before he was an international player, Andrew Flintoff called him Mr. Cricket. Such was his hard work, he even drove his batting coach Ian Kevan to the ground in one epic session in his teens, inspired by his childhood idol. Michael Hussey, in an extensive interview with The Daily Star Sport's Mohammad Isam, talks about his adjustments, the long wait, the pride of the baggy green, some of his great knocks and what keeps him going even at the age of 35.

days, you used to be a right-hander and I believe you saw Allan Border and converted yourself into a left-hander...

MH: When I was about 7 or 8 I think I changed. Yes, I used to be a right-hander and Allan Border was my idol. I wanted to bat like him. I watched him on TV and loved the way he went about his cricket.

He never gave his wicket away, he was always passionate about the way he played. He was tough and determined and I wanted to be like him, so I tried it and stuck with it. DSS: He once told you to prepare yourself by batting for six hours in the nets...

MH: That's a true story as well. He was coach of Australia A and he said, "How do you expect to bat all day when you don't practise all day?"

I stupidly took it literally and batted a whole day in the nets.

DSS: Do you practise six hours a day now?

MH: Not anymore, I only did that once in my life. That was enough, I was exhausted.

DSS: How do you get along with your brother (David) these days? I've read that you guys had lots of fights when you were little.

MH: It's a lot better now than when

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'Be patient'

Siddons bids emotional goodbye

QUAZI ZULQUARNAIN ISLAM



The final match in a long and winding season for Bangladesh cricket could describe coach Jamie Siddons's tenure in a microcosm.

In certain parts of the game, Bangladesh were brilliant; Imrul Kayes's belligerent 93, almost as good an innings as played by Michael Hussey on the day. At certain other moments though, they were abysmal too, a fact best highlighted by a bowling performance that was taken to the cleaners by Shane Watson, Ricky Ponting and later Michael Hussey.

In the end, it was an apt metaphor for an inconsistent three-and-a-half years spent under the Australian, the zenith of which was the series whitewash over New Zealand last year, and the nadir of which was the two shocking collapses against West Indies and South Africa in the World Cup, less than a month ago.

Unpredictability and a constant struggle to meet the demands of an expectant public had marked the tenure of the shaven-headed Siddons, and in his final press conference the Australian left behind a simple

message: "Be patient with your players.

"These are all young guys, 22-23 years old at best and the best thing we can do is support them during their down times," said Siddons.

He drew references to the dark days of March when two consecutive batting collapses on the biggest stage of them all had left the public and the press distraught, and perversely perhaps, led to his own demise as a coach.

"These players need the support of their fans and their press to get ahead. During those two games, all you did was criticise, while it was left only to me to pick up the players.

"So be supportive," he insisted.

Siddons held his own quite well at the press conference and insisted that the team had achieved much of what he had thought they could in his three-and-a-half-year tenure. He was also quick to mention the three high points that marked the legacy of his tenure.

"We have the best all-rounder in the world in Shakib Al Hasan, and he has been at that stage for two years now. We have Tamim Iqbal in the team and we have Abdur Razzak, who is also one of the top ten bowlers in the world," he said.

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Indian govt's 'green signal' to Pak tour



PALLAB BHATTACHARYA from New Delhi

India has decided in principle to resume cricketing ties with Pakistan.

Before the World Cup semifinal at Mohali on March 30, India last played against Pakistan in an Asia Cup match in June 2010 at Dambula in Sri Lanka.

The last bilateral cricket series between the archrivals was held in 2007-2008 when the Pakistani team visited India.

Indian government sources said the time of the visit by the Indian team to Pakistan, the venues of the matches and other logistical issues would be decided by the cricket boards of the two countries.

The decision to resume cricket ties with Pakistan came after Prime Ministers

Manmohan Singh of India and Yousuf Raza Gilani of Pakistan had met at the Mohali match and watched the high-voltage semifinal.

The sources said if everything goes according to plans, the Indian cricket team will visit Pakistan first and the cricket team of that country will pay a return visit.

However, there is no slot available for Indian cricket team to visit Pakistan in the near future. According to the tour schedule prepared by the International Cricket Council, Pakistan should visit India for a three-Test and five one-day internationals series in March 2012.

No international cricket team has visited Pakistan after the terror attack on the Sri Lankan cricket team on March 3, 2009, when six members of the visiting team were injured. Six Pakistani policemen and two civilians were also killed in the incident.