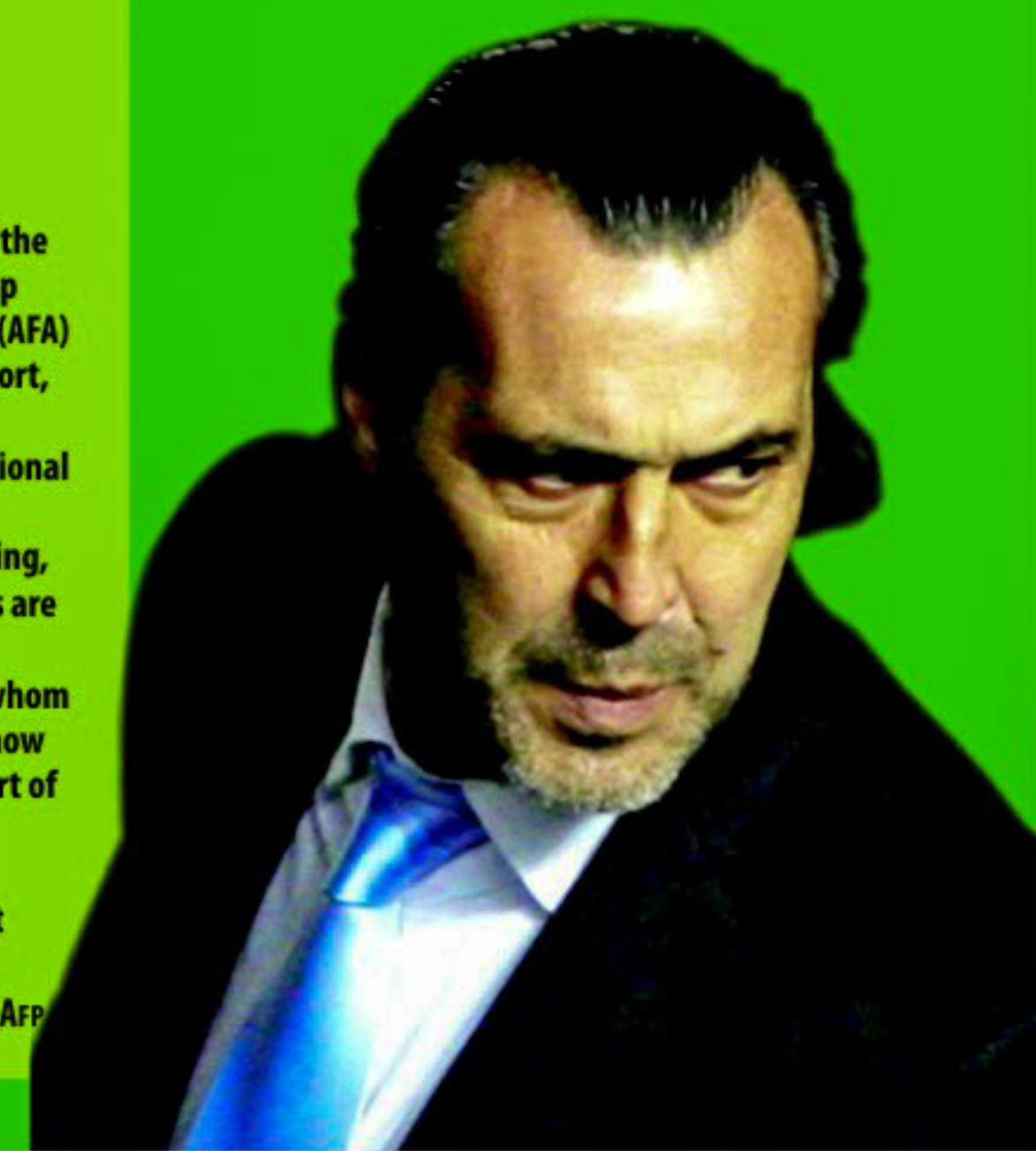


Batista faces the chop

Argentina coach Sergio Batista faces the chop after his side's Copa America flop after Argentine Football Association (AFA) sources indicated he was losing support, media reports indicated Friday. "Batista is more out than in," the national news agency Telam quoted an AFA executive committee member as saying, while broadcaster CSN said: "His days are numbered." The media speculated that Batista, whom the AFA confirmed as being safe for now only last Monday, had lost the support of committee members and forecast a decision would be made Monday in advance of an official announcement Tuesday.

- AFP



BROAD SMILES NOT FOR TENDULKAR: England fast bowler Stuart Broad (L) is ecstatic after claiming the prized wicket of India batsman Sachin Tendulkar, who could not better his Lord's high of 37, during the third day of the first Test at Lord's yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

2014 WC PRE-QUALIFYING ROUND 2 Booters go down 4-0

Football

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh's dream of reaching the Asian group stage of the 2014 World Cup qualifiers was dealt a huge blow when they went down 4-0 against Lebanon in their round 2 pre-qualifying match at the Camille Chamoun Sports City Stadium in Beirut yesterday.

Bangladesh have never reached the proper group stage of the qualifiers since it was introduced in 2003, but this time they were looking to create history, boosted by their impressive win over Pakistan in the earlier round and with the knowledge that the opponents Lebanon are ranked below them in the FIFA rankings.

Nikola Ilievski, the Bangladesh coach was looking to eke out a point to drive home the advantage, and to that end opted for a defensive formation of 4-1-4-1 against Lebanon's attacking strategy of 3-4-3. But it all went awry soon after his charges took the field as Hassan Matouk gave the hosts a 16th minute lead. The striker beat Mamun Khan, the second choice goalkeeper who was being fielded in place of resting regular keeper and captain Biplob Bhattacharjee, with a powerful shot from 20 yards out. After Mamun made two decent saves in the next five minutes, he was again found helpless in the 24th minute when Lebanon striker Mahmoud EL Ali nodded the ball home from close range after Matouk had dribbled past two defenders.

Bangladesh thought they scored a goal when Emily headed in a freekick from Mamun Mia at the fag end of the first half, but the goal was disallowed due to offside.

In search of a goal, Ilievski reverted to a more attacking

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Dravid lifts India

Cricket

AFP, London

England remained in charge of their series opener with India despite Rahul Dravid finally achieving the coveted dream of a Test century at Lord's on Saturday -- 15 years after falling agonisingly short.

At the close of the third day, England were five without loss in their second innings, a lead of 193 runs after bowling India out for 286 in reply to their first innings 474 for eight declared.

The 38-year-old Dravid, dropped on 42, made 103 not out, finally getting his name on the Lord's honours board 15 years after he was dismissed for 95 here on his debut in 1996.

His 33rd hundred in 154 Tests and fifth against England was key to India avoiding the follow-on.

It also went some way to compensating India fans who saw Sachin Tendulkar fall for 34 when what they wanted was for the 'Little Master' to score his 100th international hundred.

Tendulkar fell to Stuart Broad who, in increasingly overcast, seam-friendly conditions, led England's attack with a miserly four for 37 in 22 overs.

India had hoped to have Zaheer Khan, their strike bowler, back for England's sec-

ond innings after the left-arm quick spent most of the first innings off the field with a hamstring strain.

But, worryingly for India, Zaheer did not take the field for the five overs England batted on Saturday.

The 38-year-old Tendulkar was given the unusual honour of a standing ovation by a capacity 28,500 crowd as he walked out to bat in what could be his last Test at Lord's, with India 77 for two.

But a 58-ball innings featuring six fours ended when Tendulkar edged a good length ball from Broad low to Graeme Swann at second slip.

England took the new ball as soon as they could with India 235 for five off 80 overs.

It led to India captain Mahendra Singh Dhoni edging Tremlett to Swann for a painstaking 28.

Harbhajan Singh came and went, but Praveen Kumar, who had taken a Test-best five for 106 with his medium-pacers on Friday, proved a thorn in England's side with the bat.

However, Kumar was out for 17 when he skied a Broad bouncer and Strauss, running back from first slip, held the catch.

Dravid was now on 94 and batting with Zaheer, who had Kumar as his runner.

But Dravid then struck a magnificent cover-drive for four off the backfoot against Tremlett to go to 98.

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Super Cup semis on July 31, Aug 1

SPORTS REPORTER

The semifinals of Grameenphone Super Cup will be held on July 31 and August 1, it was decided in a tournament committee meeting of the Bangladesh Football Federation yesterday.

However, the date of the final has not been decided in the meeting but it may take place on July 4 or 5, said a source inside the BFF.

The crore-taka football tournament was deferred after the group phase finished on July 14 to make room for the national team's practice ahead of their double-legged World Cup Pre-qualifier against Lebanon.

Defending champions Mohammedan S.C., Bangladesh League champions Sheikh Jamal Dhanmondi Club, Abahani, and Muktiyoddha Sangsad qualified for the last four of this lucrative tournament.

Tigers toil till the end

Cricket

SPORTS REPORTER

Tasamul Haque and Alauddin Babu nearly spoiled Tigers' preparation for the Zimbabwe tour but their untimely dismissals gave the national side a narrow escape in their last practice match against GP-BCB National Cricket Academy yesterday.

The Mushfiqur Rahim-led side finally won the game at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium by 40 runs to sign off their nearly two-month fitness and skills camp on a high despite inclement weather heavily interrupting the second camp. Though the fitness sessions throughout June will keep the Tigers in good stead, there is some concern over the much shorter time they got for honing their cricketering skills.

Meanwhile, Special practice sessions have been arranged for Shakib Al Hasan and Tamim Iqbal on July 25, though a few others like Mushfiqur are set to join for the extra nets.

Back to the game, Tasamul and Alauddin gave a glimpse of their abilities through a 102-run third wicket stand after both Academy openers -- Fazle Mahmud and Abdul Majid -- fell within the sixth over.

But the third wicket pair dominated to the point where the Tigers' bowling looked rather futile. Alauddin, the taller of the two and slightly more aggressive, smashed two straight sixes (out of three) off left-arm spinner Abdur Razzak during his 95-ball 63 while Tasamul played the longer innings, hitting ten boundaries in his 73 that came in three hours.

But once the duo exited, the more experienced Tigers

took over the proceedings. From 163 for three, the Academy side slipped to 213 all out in less than twenty overs, giving the bowlers some confidence ahead of the tricky tour.

Razzak, who had his moments during the Tasamul-Alauddin stand in between some big hits, took three wickets but looked far less of a Test bowler despite a long training camp from early June. Rubel Hossain generally bowled within himself but exerted some pace in the late afternoon session to end with two wickets, including bouncing out Asif Ahmed Ratul, who was batting well till he nervously skied one to Nasir Hossain at cover.

Robiul Islam, Nazmul Hossain and Shafiul Islam all bowled shorts spells while Mohammad Ashraf picked up two wickets. Robiul, Nazmul and Mahmudullah Riyad picked up a wicket apiece.

Later, new coach Stuart Law was pleased with the pace bowlers, despite the struggles at times.

"You need to take 20 wickets to win a Test match no matter how many runs you score. It would strengthen the team more than anything if the serious bowlers can attack," said Law. "I am happy with what I have seen in the pace department. With the spin department, it's not about bowling out there and taking wickets; it is about how you bowl to different batsmen, setting different fields and learning when to attack and when to defend."

But the Tigers' batting on Friday was a slight cause for concern as they only batted out 59.3 overs to score 258 runs. "Look, it's a practice match and we bat like that in the Test match and we're bowled out at 70 overs, then we will be in

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25TH NATIONAL SHOOTING

Baki edges Asif

SPORTS REPORTER

Abdullahel Baki edged Commonwealth gold medalist Asif Hossain Khan for the gold in the men's 10m air rifle event as the 25th National Shooting Championship started at the Gulshan Shooting Complex yesterday.

Baki, participating for the BKSP Shooting Club scored an aggregate of 687.6 points to beat Asif (685.5 points) of Chittagong Rifles Club by 2.1 points.

Anwar Hossain of Army Shooting Association grabbed the bronze with a score of 683.4 points.

In the junior men's 10m air rifle event Jesimuzzaman of BKSP took the gold shooting 584 points.



BULL'S EYE: Abdullahel Baki takes aim at the target on his way to beating Commonwealth gold medalist Asif Hossain Khan to win the gold in the 10m rifle event of the 25th National Shooting Championship at the Gulshan Shooting Complex yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

Siddikur finishes 5th

Golf

SPORT DESK

Siddikur Rahman ended the Worldwide Holdings Selangor Masters on a respectable joint fifth position while Finland's rookie Joonas Granberg grabbed the prestigious title in splendid style in Malaysia on Saturday.

Siddikur carded a 4-under-par 68 on the last day to take his aggregate to eight-under-par 276, yet fell three short of the eventual winner. It was a consistent show from the Bangladeshi at the Kota Permai Golf and Country Club over the four rounds (68, 70, 70, 68) that earned him a fifth place finish and a cheque of 13,320 dollars.

Fresh off his Sembilan Masters triumph a week ago, Siddikur started with a 68 in the first round yet had to be content with seventh place after a very competitive round one in which Granberg took the lead with a 10-under-par. While the other contenders were up and down over the four days and the lead changed hands frequently, Siddikur remained steady,

showing the good form he is in.

Thailand's Panuphol Pittayarat held on to the lead in the second and the third rounds while Siddikur stayed in contention. In the end it was Granberg's closing round of six-under-par 66 that edged Panuphol Pittayarat by a shot as Siddikur ended three shots adrift.

Granberg, the 24-year-old rookie, who set a new course record 62 in the opening round, became only the second Finnish victor on the Asian Tour and said the win was more than he had bargained for.

"I thought I had a chance for a top-10 or top-five, but now, I'm a winner," he told the Asian Tours website yesterday.

"I just played it one shot at a time. I said yesterday that 66 would be okay and now I'm the winner. It's amazing," Granberg said.

FINAL SCORES

273 - Joonas Granberg (FIN)
274 - Panuphol Pittayarat (THA)
275 - Adam Groom (AUS), Antonio Lascuna (PHI)
276 - Sukree Othman (MAS), Marcus Both (AUS), Siddikur (BAN)