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Holistic practice for Illievski

Football

SPORTS REPORTER

In a bid to give the Under-19 national football team enough opportunity to play practice matches before their AFC U-19 Championship campaign, the National U-21 national team reached the Bangladesh Krira Shikha Protisthan (BKSP) for a 10-day trip yesterday.

It is common phenomenon in Bangladesh that the national teams take part in international tournaments with a lack of practice matches. This has meant that respective coaches have always pointed finger towards this lack of preparation, continually citing that they are not given enough practice matches to combine the team.

But this time the scenario has been changed after Macedonian coach Nikola Illievski has also been given the charge of the national team including the U-19 side. Illievski has prepared a programme to train the four national teams U-19, U-21, U-22 and the senior side part by part and hold matches amongst them so that he can judge the players as well as prepare them around the year. His intention to train the age-group teams is to build a pipeline for the senior side.

However, his prime intention this time is to prepare the U-19 team well so that they can fight against their rivals Saudi Arab, Iraq, Oman Nepal and Maldives on home soil.

Bangladesh will host AFC U-19 Championship's Group A matches at the Bangabandhu National Stadium from October 25.

The Under-19 side will play four warm-up matches (on September 17, 19, 21 and 25) against the Under-21 side, which are comprised mostly of the booters who have experience in playing the Bangladesh League and also have experience representing Bangladesh in the different age groups.

Apart from practice matches, the Under-21 side will also train under head coach Illievski in the middle of matches during their 10-day stay there.

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BCB Cup match abandoned

SPORTS REPORTER

Incessant rain ruined the BCB Cup match between the Bangladesh A team and GP-BCB National Cricket Academy team at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium yesterday.

Not a single ball was bowled as the players stayed in the dressing room before umpires called off the match at 1.45pm. Today is the rest day of the tournament and as per playing condition the points were split between the teams. The rain deprived the players from match practice as well as the chance for many to draw the attention of the national selectors ahead of the home series against West Indies. There is also no reserve day considering the workload of the players and the conditions of the wicket.

"It's really frustrating as we missed the opportunity to play a match due to rain. But we can't do anything about the weather," said Bangladesh A team captain



Australia's Shaun Marsh cuts during the first day of the third and final Test against Sri Lanka at The Sinhalese Sports Club Ground in Colombo yesterday.

Bolt targets 100m best

AFP, Brussels

World record-holder Usain Bolt has targeted a season's 100m best at Friday's final Diamond League meeting of 2011 to help ease a little of the lingering pain of his sensational World Championships disqualification.

Olympic champion Bolt, who saw compatriot Yohan Blake take his world title in Daegu last month after his infamous false start, believes the Memorial meeting track in Brussels will encourage a fast time.

"I really want this world year best and I feel good. I think I have it in me to run the fastest time of the year. The track in Brussels is simply excellent", said Bolt.

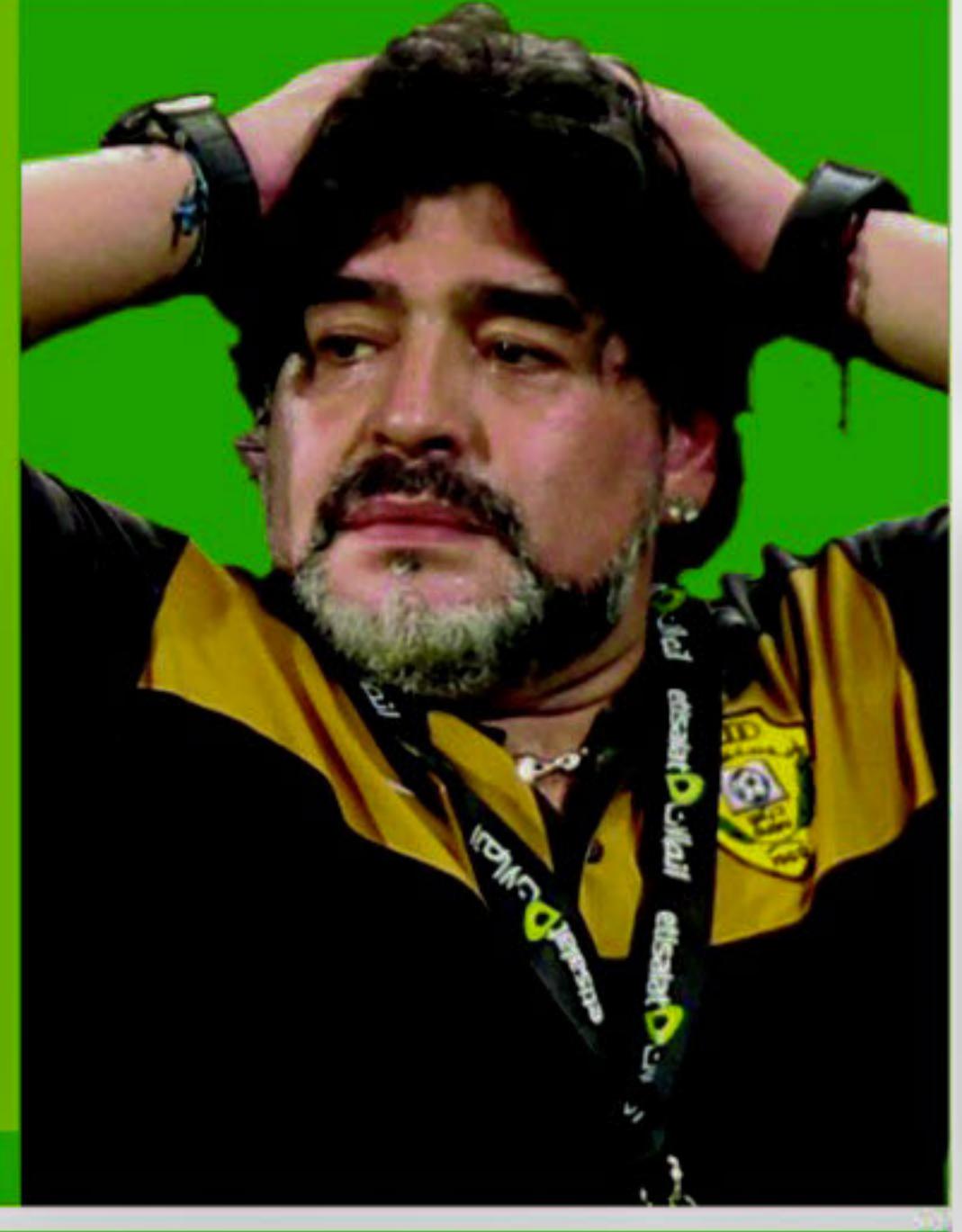
Maradona loses debut match

Argentine legend Diego Maradona's first match in charge of Al Wasl in the United Arab Emirates ended in disappointment when they lost 4-3 to an injury time strike to Al Jazira on Thursday.

Al Wasl had battled back from 3-1 down at half-time to pull level with all of their three goals coming from Argentine import Mariano Donda.

"My players fought well and I am very happy with them," said Maradona. "The second half, my team was the only one on the pitch. The players did their best and the result should have been 3-3."

- AFP



Sachin hails Rahul

AFP, New Delhi

Indian batting superstar Sachin Tendulkar paid glowing tribute Friday to the never-say-die attitude of team-mate Rahul Dravid, who is retiring from one-day cricket.

"A great thing about Rahul is that he has always loved to work hard, always trying to stay a step ahead of the game," Tendulkar told the Indian Express.

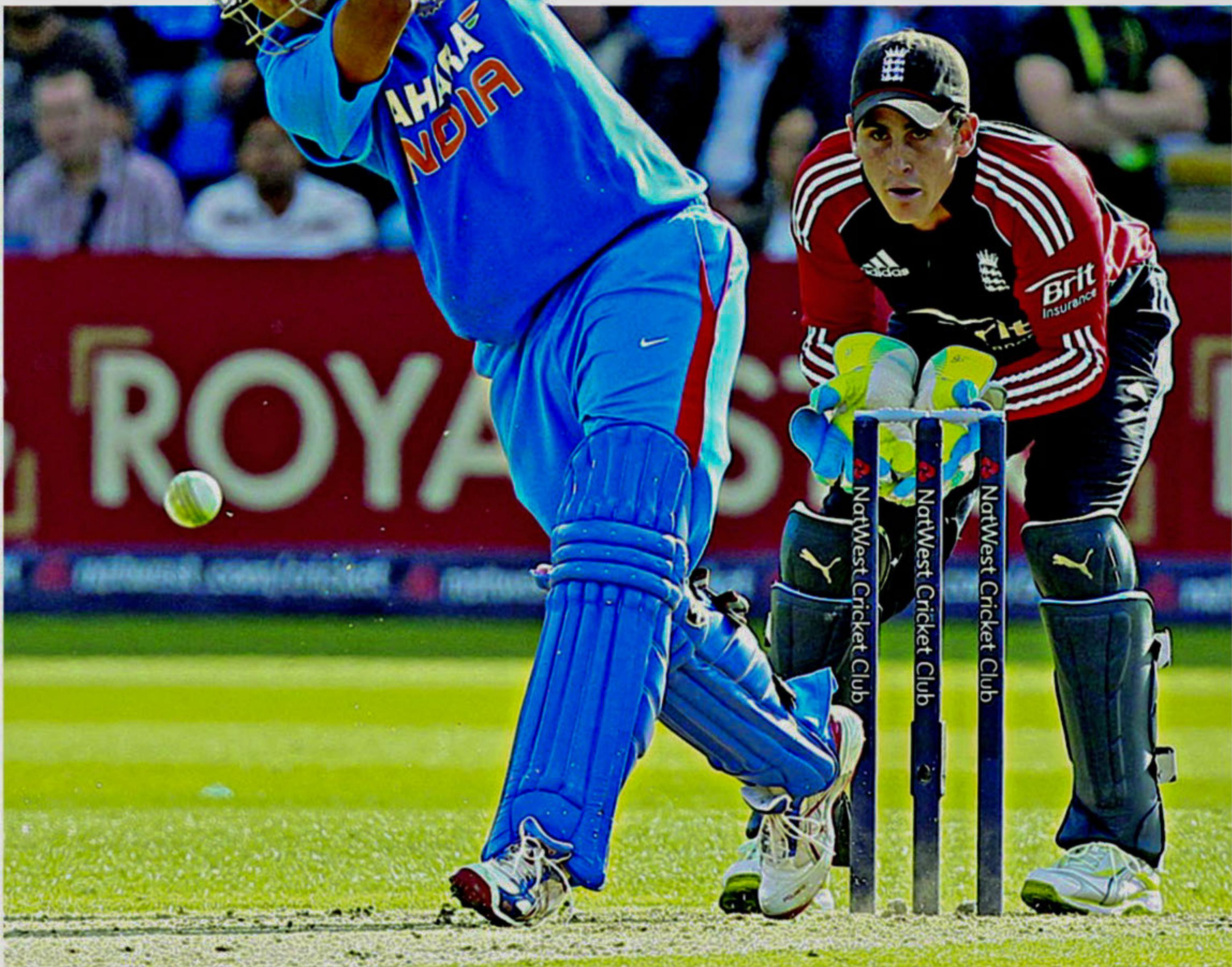
"When he started playing ODI cricket, he faced some initial difficulties, but he was never one to give up. He worked very hard on his flaws, and he made sure to fight it out."

"He has had a fabulous career as a one-day player and has contributed so much to Indian cricket. I have no doubt that he is and will continue to be a role model for all of us," said Tendulkar.

"He may not give you a quick start, but he will surely make his innings count in terms of time spent at the crease. You need such players in the team, and he was the best man for the job."

"It wasn't that he couldn't bat quickly, he just made sure that he batted according to the situation. He also had that ability to finish a game."

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THE END OF AN ERA: Indian batting superstar Rahul Dravid drives down the ground on his way to scoring 69 during the fifth ODI against England in Cardiff yesterday. India finished on 304-6 in Dravid's final appearance in ODIs.

PHOTO: INTERNET

Shaun saves Australia

Cricket

AFP, Colombo

Shaun Marsh hit a gutsy 81 to steer Australia out of trouble at the start of the third and final cricket Test against Sri Lanka in Colombo on Friday.

Sri Lankan captain Tillakaratne Dilshan's decision to send Australia in to bat on a moisture-laden wicket paid off as the tourists slumped to 22-2 in the ninth over.

Marsh, who made 141 on debut in the previous Test in Pallekele, led the revival to help Australia reach 235-5 by stumps on the opening day at the Sinhalese Sports Club.

The left-hander put on 79 for the third wicket with Ricky Ponting (48) and 70 for the fifth with Mike Hussey (63 not out) to upstage a superb debut by Sri Lankan seamer Shaminda Eranga.

Eranga grabbed a wicket with his first delivery in Test cricket -- just as Australian spinner Nathan Lyon had done in the opening Test of the series -- and ended the day with 2-52.

The 28-year-old Marsh missed his second consecutive century when he was bowled by left-arm spinner Rangana Herath in the final session of play.

Brad Haddin returned unbeaten on 21, having put on 45 runs so far for the sixth wicket with the ever-reliable Hussey.

Eranga, 25, one of the three changes in the Sri Lankan side, struck as soon as he replaced Chanaka Welegedara for the eighth over of the innings.

Shane Watson, who made eight, chased a ball outside the off-stump and drove straight into the safe hands of Dilshan at point.

Watson's unexpected dismissal came after his opening

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Dravid bids bye to ODI

Cricket

PTI, Cardiff

He may not have been among the flamboyant ones in ODI cricket, but Rahul Dravid's determination and penchant to thrive under extremities made him a man for all seasons in the Indian team.

Having announced his retirement from the 50-over format following his surprise inclusion into the team for the ongoing disaster tour of England after a hiatus of nearly four years, 'The Wall' stands tall with an aggregate of 10,820 runs in 343 matches. His Test records are equally phenomenal scoring 12775 runs from 157 matches with an impressive average of 53.00.

As Dravid donned the Indian colours for the last time at the Sophia Gardens here, he left a legacy that will inspire the youngsters and will be cherished for years to come.

He may not have had an auspicious debut scoring just three runs against Sri Lanka during the Singer Cup in Singapore on April 3, 1996, but to his credit he scored at a healthy average of just over 39 runs in a career spanning over 15 years -- a success story in itself.

Initially seen as a liability in the one-day arena, Dravid retooled his game over the years to become an adept middle-order finisher, a high coming in

during the 1999 World Cup in England where he finished as the top run-getter with an aggregate of 461 runs.

During the tournament Dravid also etched his name into the record books becoming the only Indian to have scored back to back centuries during the World Cup, scoring an unbeaten 104 against Kenya at Bristol before knocking a masterly 145 against Sri Lanka in the following match at Taunton.

Dravid, who became a synonymous to consistency in Indian cricket, has often been forced to live under the shadow of the likes of Sachin Tendulkar.

Whether it be a record 331 run partnership with Tendulkar himself against New Zealand at Hyderabad in 1999, where he scored a brilliant 155 or be it the breathtaking knock of 180 against Australia at Eden Gardens in 2001 to see India register one of the historic Test victories, Dravid has seen his doings being eclipsed, first by an unbeaten 186 by the master and then by a superb 281 by VVS Laxman.

His wicketkeeping skills allowed the team to accommodate an additional batsman, a move that paid huge dividends for India particularly during the 2003 World Cup which saw the side finish runners-up, but even that seems to go under the radar in final analysis.

Often criticised for a low strike rate, Dravid ironically scored a 22-ball half-century against New Zealand at

Hyderabad in 2003 to register the second fastest fifty by an Indian in ODI cricket.

Dravid also has to his credit 82 fifties, a feat that is only superceded by Tendulkar (95) and Pakistan's Inzamam-ul-Haq (83). He also has 12 centuries to his name.

Though being a pivot of the Indian batting in both forms of the game, life has not been a bed of roses for 'Mr. Dependable'.

Replacing Sourav Ganguly at the helm in 2005, Dravid along with the then coach, Greg Chappell had a not so good time in the office as far as one-day cricket was concerned.

Dravid began on a winning note with Team India recording 16 consecutive successful chases but the side hit an all time low after making an uncertain first-round exit from the 2007 World Cup in the Caribbean and following it up with a loss to England in the Natwest series.

He subsequently drew criticism for not being assertive enough and let Chappell make too many decisions. The loss also saw him relinquish the captaincy with Dravid terming it a right time to step aside.

"I enjoyed the captaincy, I loved it, but it can get tough after a while and some of the enjoyment can go away. So I thought it was the right time to step aside," never the one to complain, Dravid had said after tendering his resignation.

Siddikur struggles at Macau

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladeshi golfer Siddikur Rahman improved his performance slightly on the second day of the Macau Open after playing at par that took him to the joint 81st with 15 players.

Siddikur had a poor start this time around after playing three-over par 74 at the 71-par Golf Course on the opening day and finished joint 86th position but managed not to take more strokes on the second day to finish at par 71 and with an overall two-day score of three-over par 145.

At the other end of the table, Chinese Taipei's Chan Yih-Shin, who shared the lead along with four players on the opening day, took solo lead after playing a four-under par 67 to have an overall score of 133.

But the story of the day belonged to Joonas Granberg of Finland. He had finished in 59th position on the first round after playing a one-over-par 72, but managed a

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