

Star SPORT

DHAKA SATURDAY DECEMBER 17, 2011, E-MAIL: sports@thecitizenstar.net

Reid forgives Maradona

Former England midfielder Peter Reid had said he would never forgive Diego Maradona for the 'Hand of God' goal which helped knock England out of the 1986 World Cup finals. But when Reid bumped into Maradona while filming at the Argentina legend's new club in Dubai, they literally kissed and made up. 'It was good to see him and we had a bit of light-hearted banter and a good laugh. I think I look in better shape than he does now anyway', says Reid.

- INTERNET



No point in looking back

Bangladesh-Pakistan 2nd Test from today

MOHAMMAD ISAM

Mushfiqur Rahim's frustrating reply yesterday summed up the environment around the Tigers ahead of the second Test against Pakistan.

It will be yet another uphill task for Bangladesh as Pakistan have completely dominated them in the five matches on tour so far. As if the back-to-back defeats weren't enough, the team had to put up with the utmost levels of unprofessional activities by the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) with the delay in the naming of the squad for the game at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium today with the addition (Shafiqul Islam) joining the team less than 48 hours before the game.

The onus fell on the under-fire cricketers to move ahead from the mess, the skipper leading the way when asked of his opinion during the pre-game press conference. "It isn't the first time such a thing has happened in our team. We are used to it," said Mushfiqur.

He has of course been witness to the different ways the board has disregarded a professional approach, especially when it comes to dealing with selection matters. But the 23-year-old was quick to move on. "We are totally focused on the Test ahead. Since we haven't been able to play to our ability, we are focusing to improve on that," he said, the young man aware that it is the team that has to pull through since they are out in the glare.

Mushfiqur said that the failure of the team's leading players have also hampered progress.

"We are trying to put together a balanced team which we haven't done so far. Against such a good side, there's a problem if you don't have a balanced line-up. Our top players haven't done well in this series. This is the main reason.

"It becomes difficult for the younger lot when the top players don't perform, but everyone is trying hard," he said.

This being their last game of the year would slightly add to the pressure on the Tigers, especially since it has been quite an ordinary 2011.

"Our target will be to finish off well so that we can go into our next international commitment with the memory that yes, we did well in the last game.

"We have nothing to lose. Everyone knows this is a good chance. We have no pressure. This is the last match of the year and we have to do well," he explained.

Curiously, this is the "last" game in charge for Mushfiqur as well, at least from the BCB's appointment of him as the captain till the Pakistan series. Though it is probably a moot point, the wicketkeeper-batsman said that he hasn't felt that the captaincy has been extra baggage for him.

"It is a great honor to lead the side. I knew it would be a challenge to lead in international cricket where there's a lot of pressure. Our problem is that a lot of our players can't perform at the moment," he said.



Bangladesh captain Mushfiqur Rahim leads his teammates as they go for a sprint during a training session ahead of the second Test against Pakistan at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR



Pakistan fast bowler Umar Gul focuses on his push-ups while the rest of the Pakistan team is busy stretching prior to their second Test against Bangladesh at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.

'Just a phase for Tigers'

SPORTS REPORTER

Misbah Ul Haq said that Bangladesh are currently going through the bad phase which every other team goes through at some point.

He has overseen Pakistan's five consecutive wins on tour which has included all formats and the second Test at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium from today is also expected to be a stroll for the visitors.

"Every team does have their phases and Bangladesh is going through that phase because their batting is not up to the mark," said the Pakistan captain during the pre-game press conference yesterday.

"This is really a testing time for them but at the same time, if you are playing against any team you will have to give your 100% because cricket is a very uncertain game."

"So don't just think about the opposition rather every time you come out, just try to give everything that you have because any time this game can turn around and you can find yourself in a different position," he explained.

Despite walking all over the hosts, Misbah still talked

V-DAY FOOTBALL FRIENDLY Muktis win comfortably

SPORTS REPORTER

National striker Mithun Chowdhury struck one goal to power Muktijodha Sangsad to a comprehensive 4-1 win over Sheikh Russel KC in the Victory Day friendly match at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

Muktijodha Sangsad, one of title contenders of the upcoming season, dominated the show from the outset to seal the victory in the friendly match which was organised by Ministry of Liberation War Affairs in association with Bangladesh Football Federation to mark the 40th Victory day of Bangladesh.

Coach Shafiqul Islam Manik fielded a virtually second string side resting star players like Zahid Hasan Emily, Shakil Ahmed, Ariful Islam, Rezaul Karim, goalkeeper Mamun Khan, yet they proved too good for Maruf Haq's Sheikh Russel.

All Reds, however, took 21 minutes to open their account and it was national striker and last season's second-highest scorer Mithun, who beat Sheikh Russel goalkeeper Biplob Bhattacharjee with a right-footed grounder from inside the

'Unbearable' interference

Cricket

BISHWAJIT ROY

If the team's miserable performance in the ongoing series against Pakistan was not enough, the high-ups of the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) added more woe to the wounds by delaying the announcement of the squad for the second Test, which will get underway today at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur.

The latest incident with the announcement of the team once again shows how poorly the board is running. The lack of professionalism is really a major issue given the way the board dilly-dallied with the announcement and also handed out extremely poor treatment to Mohammad Ashraful. This not only demonstrated that cricket in Bangladesh has a problem with regards to showing on the field but that our administration is also in dire straits.

The BCB boss AHM Mustafa Kamal finally approved the selectors' team for the final Test but by the time the decision came through, a lot of the damage had already been done leaving the Akram Khan-led

selection panel so upset that they didn't even turn up to attend the Tigers training for the last two days in Mirpur.

But despite all this, the question remained: was it purely the team from the selectors?

Many were surprised when an out-of-form Ashraful was picked for the Test series because it was the same selectors who believed that the right-hander who is the biggest enigma of Bangladesh cricket, needed a long break to get back his rhythm.

Things, however, got worse when they dropped him for second Test purportedly under pressure from the high-ups. The final stand-off however occurred with the wished-for inclusion of the uncapped Mominul Haque.

The way the BCB boss is reportedly interfering in every affair has not only annoyed the selectors but also left the two groups in a Cold War. "It's really unbearable the way they put their nose in the selection process. We have some plan and you should keep faith on us when you gave us the responsibility. What you can do, you just dissolve the committee if you don't like their activities but no way can you interfere in selection," said a selector on condition of anonymity.

BCB's director and cricket operations

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V-DAY CRICKET Soumya shines in massive win

SPORTS REPORTER

A strong batting display helped Mushtaqe XI to secure a massive 129-run victory over Shaheed Jewel XI in the Victory-Day exhibition cricket match at the Dhanmondi Cricket Stadium yesterday.

Put into bat first, Shaheed Mushtaqe piled up 303 runs for nine wickets in their stipulated 40 overs thanks to man-of-the-match Soumya Sarkar and Shuvogoto Hom, who made blistering half-centuries.

Soumya smashed eight boundaries and two sixes during his 66-ball 75 while Shuvogoto contributed 63 off 50 balls that contained six fours and two sixes.

Captain Nafis Iqbal was the other notable scorer with 36 off 32 balls that included seven boundaries.

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PHOTO: BANGLARCHOKH

Zia still leads

SPORTS REPORTER

Leader GM Ziaur Rahman dropped point but still maintained solo lead in the Walton 37th National Chess Championship at the close of the fifth round at the Bangladesh Olympic Association yesterday.

After four straight victories, Zia drew against GM Reefat Bin Sattar and both parties accepted a draw after 12 moves.

Zia has now 4.5 points at the top of the table as GM Niaz Murshed also drew against Emon to remain behind Zia with four points.

IM Abu Sufian Shakil also drew his board against FM Minhazuddin Ahmed Sagar, who is now in the third position with 3.5 points while Reefat and Debaraj Chatterjee share the fourth position with three points each.