



DHAKA MONDAY MARCH 19, 2012, E-MAIL: sports@thedailystar.net

Yuvraj out of hospital

India's World Cup cricket hero Yuvraj Singh announced Sunday that he has been discharged from hospital after undergoing chemotherapy for a cancerous tumour.

"3rd chemo cycles over, back from hospital I am free.... Can't wait to be back home," the 30-year-old all-rounder said via Twitter from the United States, where he has been receiving treatment.

Left-handed Yuvraj, named man-of-the-tournament after India's World Cup triumph at home last April, was diagnosed with a rare condition, mediastinal seminoma -- a malignant tumour between his lungs -- soon after the event.

-- AFP



Kohli trumps Pakistan

BISHWAJIT ROY



The pre-match hype had built this up as a battle

between India's batting and Pakistan's bowling. But yesterday at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur, the willow triumphed over leather as India crushed arch-rivals Pakistan in their high-voltage Asia Cup encounter.

India's magnificent six-wicket win owed much to Virat Kohli's spectacular 183 off 148 balls as the world champions overcame Pakistan's formidable 329 with more than two overs to spare. Pakistan's loss now means that Bangladesh have to beat Sri Lanka to secure a place in the final of the prestigious tournament for the first time.

Kohli's second ton of the tournament upstaged centuries from both of Pakistan's openers Mohammad Hafeez and Nasir Jamshed who propelled their side to what looked like a perfectly defendable, if not mammoth, total. But Kohli was in imperious form as he struck 22 boundaries and one six to make him the highest individual scorer against Pakistan ever, eclipsing Brian Lara's 156 at Adelaide in 2005. It was also India's highest successful run chase in one-day internationals ahead

of the 326-8 against England in the famous Lord's final in 2002. For Pakistan, this was the first time since 2000 that they lost a game after posting an over-300 scoreline.

It had all looked so unlikely when India made a disastrous start on the flat track as spinner Hafeez trapped Gautam Gambhir in front from the very second ball of the first over. But Kohli joined Sachin Tendulkar to steady the ship with a 113-run second wicket partnership.

Saeed Ajmal broke the partnership when Tendulkar, who followed up his hundredth century with a 48-ball 52 with five fours and a six, was deceived by a doosra which got an outside edge to find Younis Khan at first slip.

Rohit Sharma then came to share a 172-run third wicket stand with Kohli to take the game away from Pakistan. Sharma was out for 68 leaving his team needing 25 runs from as many balls.

It was however the story of Kohli who almost single-handedly controlled the Indian innings to secure the magnificent victory and keep the holders' final hopes alive. The young right-hander looked confident from the very first ball and tackled the variety of the Pakistan attack brilliantly to hog the spotlight from Hafeez and Jamshed.

Earlier, Pakistan won the toss and decided to bat first in a batting paradise

and Hafeez and Jamshed proved their captain's decision right by associating in a 224-run opening stand, Pakistan's second-highest in one-day international. After having failed to defend 289 against Bangladesh, the Indian bowling attack once again looked helpless against the two batsmen as they even failed to provide any penetration.

Right-hander Hafeez and southpaw Jamshed stroked boundaries at will against a toothless bowling on their way to centuries and later Younis Khan smashed 52 off 34 deliveries at the death to lift Pakistan to their second-highest total against India.

India were made to wait for 35.5 overs and 224 runs to get their first wicket, that of Jamshed for 112, but not before the duo had entered themselves into the record books.

It was their second century stand in three games, having earlier put on 135 for the first wicket against Bangladesh in the Asia Cup opener.

India employed eight bowlers in total as skipper Mahendra Singh Dhoni tried everything to break the stand. The only chance came off Sachin Tendulkar, a rare sight at the bowling crease these days, when he dropped a hard hit caught and bowled chance off Jamshed in the 26th over with the score

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Virat once again

SAKEB SUBHAN



Less than three weeks ago, India were in a similar situation in the CB Series in Australia, needing to beat Sri Lanka at Hobart to stay in the triangular tournament. It was Virat Kohli who stormed the Lankan fortress with a century of blinding brilliance to chase down 322 in 36.4 overs. Yesterday at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium here in Dhaka, they had to chase 330 against Pakistan to stay in the Asia Cup, and it was again Kohli who delivered with an epic 183.

It defies belief that a batsman can score two defining innings in such a short span of time, and the brilliance of his latest knock will stay in the minds of spectators at the Mirpur ground, where Kohli has scored three hundreds in four appearances.

"I will rate it with Hobart because of the sort of game we were playing today," said Kohli when asked if this was his best innings, adding that there was always pressure when India played Pakistan.

Although recent trends hint that chasing 300-plus is no longer as difficult as it used to be, it is still a tough assignment, especially against a strong bowling line-up. This was only the third time Pakistan have lost after posting a total in excess of 300 and also the highest successful chase by India.

"We lost a wicket [Gautam Gambhir] on the second ball and my plan was to go in there and get a big partnership for the second wicket," a tired-looking but cheerful Kohli said after the match. "Chasing 330, if you have wickets in hand, say you are 140 for one, there's something to think about. That was our plan, to put pressure on them. I think we executed it perfectly."

How does Kohli keep scoring such big hundreds under such pressure? "There's no recipe. I go out there and try to give myself the best chance to perform. I am there till the end and the team is in a comfortable position, that's the only aim. I decided to apply myself to play past the 40-41st over because it was an important game for us," said Kohli.

How important this innings was for Kohli was obvious when he reached his century off

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Lay down the Law

When the Bangladesh dressing-room was going bonkers on Friday, one man sat quietly in the dugout outside. Tigers coach Stuart Law is in his ninth month in charge and has finally seen his charges slay the world champions. In his first interview to The Daily Star Sport, he spoke to Mohammad Isam about his time in Bangladesh so far:

Daily Star Sport (DSS): How big was the India win for you?

Stuart Law (SL): It's very important for us as a group after all the hard work we have put in for this tournament. We didn't have a great preparation time but it has been intense. To win against India, the current world champions, is a feather in our cap. However, we've still got a very important game in two days time and if we don't win that game [against Sri Lanka], the win the other night won't matter.

DSS: The changes you have made in the batting-order, is it part of your grander plan for the team?

SL: I'm only reacting to what I see. There are no changes for getting people who you like. It's picking your team and players that you see quality in, not only on the field but off it as well. That's a massive part of international cricket

these days, it's about everything else the player brings to the table.

I feel the group we got now is very hard working. They're willing and want to get out there and be the best they could possibly be. Hopefully it's a benchmark for the rest of the cricketers in the country.

DSS: What is your assessment of the Bangladesh cricketer's mental make-up?

SL: I've seen immense talent, just a matter of harnessing, utilising and practicing in a more beneficial way. I believe you can go out and hit balls for four hours a day and you can improve as a cricketer.

You have to practice for a purpose. Talking is a big part of learning. These boys have access to the greatest players in the world in this tournament. If I was them, I'd be picking someone's brains: guys like Kumar Sangakkara, Mahela

Jayawardene and Sachin Tendulkar. I've seen them from close quarters and they're more than willing to talk. That's the only issue I have with the Bangladesh cricket team: we don't play enough international cricket.

DSS: Is Stuart Law a strict coach?

SL: I like to say I'm hard but fair. I don't demand perfection because that's a bridge too far for anyone. I like to see things done with a purpose, understand time is precious. Don't waste it.

DSS: Are you happy with this batting group?

SL: They've all got the batting talent, it's the mentality and situations we get in is very excitable. Not just the players but the whole nation, something happens, we are on the brink of victory, we all get very excited. The blood-rush happens and we lose two wickets in three overs.

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Arambagh, F'ganj split points

SPORTS REPORTER

Arambagh KS and Farashganj SC shared the spoils in their Grameenphone Bangladesh Premier League encounter when they played out a goalless draw at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

The outcome left both sides in their previous positions with Arambagh at seventh with seven points from six matches while Farashganj are in ninth position with six points from as many matches.

After upsetting defending champions Sheikh Jamal Dhanmondi Club in their previous match, Arambagh KS were favourites against last season's Independence Cup winners Farashganj SC but both sides lacked zeal to secure full three points. There were no remarkable attempts in the first half before both sides had a couple of attempts on target in the second half.

"Neither side wanted to lose points. After winning

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Thorpe misses London bus

AFP, Adelaide



Five-time Olympic swimming champion Ian Thorpe failed to qualify for the London Games Sunday but said he had no regrets about returning to the pool and vowed to continue his comeback.

Thorpe lost his last chance to make it to this summer's Games after failing to make the semi-finals of the 100-metres freestyle earlier in the Australian selection trials.

The 29-year-old won his heat but posted 50.35 seconds which was the 21st fastest time behind world champion James Magnussen (48.26) and his Olympic odyssey was over.

The Olympic great, who had retired in 2006, said the bitter disappointment would not stop him from planning ahead to his next competition.

"I'm still swimming. I wanted to start racing again, I wanted to be competitive again and I wanted to go to the Olympics," he said after failing to make the cut.

"I still want to do all of those things. I've missed out on what was a huge goal for me to accomplish in this short period of time, but still the desire I had before this, it's still there. I still want to swim."

Thorpe said he has no regrets about returning to the sport, adding he hoped to turn the failure into a "great motivator".

"I'm disappointed that I really haven't been able to race in a way that's reflective of the work that I've done and how I've trained. But I don't regret giving this a go," he said.

Thorpe was coy on the chances of a tilt at the 2016

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Ashraf, Mani come to town

SPORTS REPORTER

Pakistan Cricket Board president Zaka Ashraf witnessed the match between India and Pakistan at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium yesterday. He was among the several dignitaries who arrived in town ahead of the big game as guests of the Asian Cricket Council (ACC).

International Cricket Council (ICC) CEO Haroon Lorgat and former ICC president Ehsan Mani were also present at the Mirpur venue, though Pakistan's Interior Minister Rehman Malik didn't come to the country due to his busy schedule. Pakistan's former national team coach and manager Intikhab Alam was also present at the high-voltage match.

Meanwhile, the Bangladesh Cricket Board could not confirm if any talks took place on the sidelines on the burning topic of the day -- Bangladesh's proposed tour to Pakistan next month.



IAN THORPE



Bangladesh coach Stuart Law gives a batting lesson to all-rounder Mashrafe Bin Mortaza during yesterday's practice session at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur. The Tigers will need to beat Sri Lanka tomorrow to book a berth in the Asia Cup final.

PHOTO: STAR

Jet fuelled spectators

SPORTS REPORTER

It was already loud at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium when the India-Pakistan clash started yesterday, but even that was drowned by a tremendous noise coming from up above.

It was one of those fighter jets screaming over the city and sometimes entertaining the crowd with loops and daring twists, probably as practice ahead of the Independence Day parade. It was so loud that umpire Ian Gould stopped Indian speedster Ashok Dinda who was halfway through his run-up.

But soon the jets were away and the crowd continued their unabated support for Pakistan. It didn't stop for much of the first innings, during which the outfield looked in extremely good condition despite the overnight thunderstorm.

IND-PAK SCOREBOARD

PAKISTAN				
Hafeez lbw b Dinda			105	
Jamshed c Irfan b Ashwin			112	
Akmal c Gambhir b P Kumar			28	
Younis c Raina b P Kumar			52	
Afridi c Kohli b Irfan			9	
Azam c Kohli b Dinda			4	
Misbah not out			4	
Gul not out			0	
Extras: (b-1, lb-3, nb-1, w-10)			15	
Total: (For six wkts in 50 overs)			329	
Did not bat: Ajmal, Cheema, Riaz.				
Fall of wickets: 1-224, 2-225, 3-273, 4-313, 5-323, 6-326.				
Bowler	O	M	R	W
P Kumar	10	0	77	2
Irfan	10	0	69	1
Dinda	8	0	47	2
Raina	2.2	0	15	0
Sharma	3	0	19	0
Yusuf	5	0	30	0
Ashwin	10	0	56	1
Tendulkar	1.4	0	12	0
INDIA				
Gambhir lbw b Hafeez			0	
Tendulkar c Younis b Ajmal			52	
Kohli c Hafeez b Gul			183	
R Sharma c Afridi b Gul			68	
Raina not out			12	
Dhoni not out			4	
Extras: (b-5, lb-1, w-4, nb-1)			11	
Total: (For 4 wkts in 47.5 overs)			330	
Did not bat: Y Pathan, I Pathan, Ashwin, Kumar, Dinda.				
Fall of wickets: 1-0, 2-133, 3-305, 4-318.				
Bowler	O	M	R	W
Hafeez	9	0	42	1
Gul	8.5	0	65	2
Cheema	8	0	60	0
Ajmal	9	0	49	1
Afridi	9	0	58	0
Riaz	4	0	50	0
Result: India won by six wickets.				
Man-of-the-match: Virat Kohli.				