

Triumph brings relief to Pakistan

AFP, Karachi



Pakistan on Friday celebrated a nail-biting victory in the Asia Cup after a two-run win over Bangladesh that was hailed as providing some much-needed relief to the troubled country.

Pakistan clinched only their second Asia Cup title in Dhaka late Thursday, sending delirious fans pouring onto the streets in major cities to celebrate, though some missed the action on the field because of power cuts.

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Despite orders from the prime minister for no power cuts during Sunday's match against arch-rivals India and Thursday's final, fans still complained of outages at home.

"We had to come out and watch the matches on big screens in the streets as power outages were as frequent as ever," complained Raza Elahi, a pupil at middle school.

Former players were delighted, having been sceptical that Pakistan would perform well after being routed 4-0 by England in a one-day series last

month.

"It's a wonderful performance," said Moin Khan, who was captain when Pakistan won their first Asia Cup, in 2000, also in Dhaka. "Our players have given the nation great joy and we are proud of them."

"Congratulations to our team for winning the title," said chief selector Iqbal Qasim, who also had warm words for Bangladesh.

"They beat India and Sri Lanka in the tournament and proved a tough opponent," he said.

Bangladesh proved that "they are no more the minnows of cricket", said Qasim. "I hope they will carry on the good work and be reckoned

as one of the major forces in Asia and the world."

Former captain and director general of the Pakistan Cricket Board, Javed Miandad, said the dramatic win was testament to the side's never-say-die attitude.

"It's a great win and showed the fighting abilities of the team, but the hosts played very well," said Miandad, a member of Pakistan's World Cup winning team in 1992.

But another former captain, Rashid Latif, cautioned that Pakistan must not run away with themselves and should "sit down and analyse our weaknesses".

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LOCAL snippets

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Army registered a 66-54 point victory over Boarder Guard Bangladesh in the Citycell Independence Cup Basketball Tournament at the Dhanmondi Basketball Gymnasium yesterday.

Army led the first half 37-26. Ataur and Amanat scored 16 and 15 points respectively for Army while Darad and Emran caged 13 and 11 points for the losing side.

In the day's other match, Rangers defeated BKSP by 48-37 points while Bangladesh Navy beat Bangladesh Police 78-41 on Thursday.

Independence Cup Kabaddi

Bangladesh Army and Board Guard Bangladesh played out 26-26 draw in the opening match of the Independence Cup Kabaddi Tournament at the Kabaddi Stadium yesterday.

Boarder Guard took a one point lead in the first half but could not hold the lead and were forced draw against Army.

Earleir, Bangladesh Kabaddi Federation president and Inspector General of Police Hasan Mahmud Khandoker declared the four-team meet open.

2nd Div Football

Bangladesh Police AC and PWD Sporting Club played out a goalless draw in the Destiny Group 2nd Division Football League at the Bishreshtha Shaheed Mostafa Kamal Stadium yesterday.

Riana and Samaha scored one goal apiece for Scholastica.

At the same ground, Dhanmondi Kamrunnessa High School defeated Kakoli High School 1-0 with Afrin Akter scoring the solitary goal.

Siddheswari Girls High School beat Natun Kuri High School 2-0 with Shakila and Nusrat scoring one goal each at the Motijheel Govt Boys' High School ground while Motijheel Govt Girls' High School and Post Office High School played out a goalless draw.

BAF Shaheen School and College recorded a lone-goal win over Dawn Grammar School with Pinki scoring the all-important goal while Rajdhani High School and BAF Shaheen English Medium School shared points.

Finally

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instead it was the unheralded seamer who held sway.

The final was watched across the world and the tight finish left many breathless. Apart from the sadness of defeat, the game itself can be reason enough to be proud of the Tigers.

Asia Cup

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rate of 3.85.

This was Pakistan's second Asia Cup triumph while India have won it five times and Sri Lanka on four occasions.

Randiv back for SL

AFP, Colombo

Sri Lanka's cricket selectors on Friday recalled off-spinner Suraj Randiv for the home Test series against England, but left out in-form batsman Chamara Silva.

Randiv, who was dropped for the tour of South Africa in December-January, won back his place in the 14-man squad after picking up 37 wickets in five first-class matches this season.

The 27-year-old was selected ahead of unorthodox spinner Ajantha Mendis to partner left-arm Rangana Herath in the two-Test series starting in the coastal town of Galle on Monday.

Randiv has taken 21 wickets in six Tests since his debut against India in July, 2010 following the retirement of world bowling record holder Muttiah Muralidaran.

Silva, 32, who played the last of his 11 Tests in 2008, continued to be ignored despite scoring 163 against England in a practice match in Colombo earlier this week.

Mahela Jayawardene, who took over as captain from Tillakaratne Dilshan after the South Africa tour, will have all-rounder Angelo Mathews as his deputy.

The second Test will be played at the P Sara Oval in Colombo from April 3.

SQUAD

M Jayawardene (captain), Mathews, Dilshan, Tharanga, Thirumanne, Sangakkara, Samaraweera, Chandimal, P Jayawardene, Lakmal, Prasad, Welegedara, Randiv, Herath.

Ashraful proud

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in 1988 and 2000, the Bangladesh matches sometimes didn't get a full house," he added.

He obviously had special praise reserved for the man-of-the-tournament: "Shakib is a world-class cricketer. I told him in the morning that you are the best player in your category and he told me to pray for him."

"He bats, bowls and fields so well. We have two world-class cricketers but Shakib is a notch higher than Tamim [Iqbal]. I am really proud of him," said Ashraful.

The long-serving organiser also pointed out that it was the Tigers' self-belief which gave them so much confidence, despite all the controversies ahead of the tournament.

"The eleven players who walked out believed that they are the best cricketers in the country."

"I have read in the newspapers that there were interference in selection and that would have put them under pressure. But they played very well," he said.

SA reign in Wellington

Cricket

APP, Wellington

South Africa took control of a weather-disrupted opening day in the third Test against hosts New Zealand, compiling 136-2 on Friday on a wicket expected to favour the bowlers.

At the close of play at Basin Reserve, Alviro Petersen was unbeaten on 44 with JP Duminy on 23, while the New Zealand bowlers were left to rue their failure to capitalise on a green-tinged wicket and overcast conditions.

Only 42 of the possible 90 overs were bowled following overnight rain that ruled out the morning session and bad light forced an early end to the day.

New Zealand captain Ross Taylor had no hesitation opting to bowl when he won the toss saying he hoped "for some early wickets", and had cause to celebrate with the disputed dismissal of Graeme Smith for five and the total at 13.

However, from there the honours rested with South Africa -- who lead the three-Test series 1-0 -- with Hashim Amla (63) and Petersen putting on 93 for the second wicket.

Amla posted his 23rd half-century in an effortless batting display, pushing the bowlers to all corners and offering few opportunities to the field.

The South African captain appealed against the decision and television replays were inconclusive with a clear sound as the ball passed the bat but no touch registered with the hotspot



South Africa batsman Hashim Amla pulls one on the opening day of the second Test against New Zealand in Wellington on Friday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

desperate move to break the partnership.

Mark Gillespie, New Zealand's top bowler in the second Test, had difficulty with his line when bowling with the wind in the first session, but had better control and success running into the breeze after the tea break.

He lured Amla into attempting a pull shot with a short pitched delivery and the batsman ended up getting a top edge which was safely claimed by the South Africa-born van Wyk to have the tourists at 106-2.

Bracewell finished the day with one for 30 off 11 overs while Gillespie had one for 37 off nine overs.

SCOREBOARD
SOUTH AFRICA: First innings
Smith c Van Wyk b Bracewell 5
Petersen not out 44
Amla c Van Wyk b Gillespie 63
Duminy not out 23
Extras: (w-1) 1
Total: (For 2 wkt in 42 overs) 136
To bat: De Villiers, Rudolph, Boucher, Steyn, Philander, Morkel, De Lange.
Fall of wickets: 1-13, 2-106.

Bowler O M R W
Martin 9 3 21 0
Bracewell 11 1 30 1
Gillespie 9 1 37 1
Vettori 11 3 28 0
Brownlie 2 0 20 0

NEW ZEALAND: Flynn, Guppill, McCullum,

Taylor (captain), Williamson, Brownlie, Vettori, Van Wyk, Bracewell, Gillespie, Martin.

Toss: New Zealand

Umpires: Aleem Dar and Richard Kettleborough.

Top seeds roll in Miami

Tennis

APP, Miami

Serena Williams, saying she felt nervous and rusty, made a triumphant WTA return from a left ankle injury, defeating China's Zhang Shuai 6-2, 6-3 on Thursday at the WTA and ATP Miami hardcourt event.

The 13-time Grand Slam singles champion advanced to a third-round match against Italy's Roberta Vinci, who ousted Bulgarian Tsvetana Pironkova 7-5, 6-1.

Tenth seed Williams, a five-time winner at Miami, missed the event the past two years because of illness and injury.

Former World No. 1 Williams played for the US Fed Cup team last month, winning two singles matches in a 5-0 World Group II victory over Belarus.

But she had not been in a tour match since losing to Russia's Ekaterina Makarova in the round of 16 at Melbourne.

Williams withdrew before her Brisbane quarter-final with a sore ankle in her only other WTA start this year.

Williams won a day after her sister, seven-time Grand Slam champion Venus Williams, beat Japan's Kimiko Date-Krumm 6-0, 6-3 in a first-round match.

It was the first WTA event for Venus since she pulled out of last year's US Open with the auto-immune disorder Sjogren Syndrome, which

saps her energy and causes pain in her joints.

Russian second seed Sharapova advanced by rallying to defeat Israel's Shahar Peer 4-6, 6-3, 6-3, after two hours and 24 minutes.

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Russian tennis star Maria Sharapova celebrates her victory over Shahar Peer of Israel in the Sony Ericsson Open in Miami.

Australian wicketkeeper Brad Haddin may have played his last Test after withdrawing Friday from the series against the West Indies for undisclosed family reasons.

Haddin shocked the team before the one-day matches in the Caribbean by returning home but the veteran had been expected to be available for the three-Test series that begins next month.

Cricket Australia fully supports Brad's decision to remain in Australia and sends its best wishes to him and his family at this time," Cricket Australia general manager Pat Howard said.

Usha, Air Force

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with us throughout this tournament," said Usha manager Rafiqul Islam Kamal.

Kamal informed that Rana Zahir came to Dhaka to assess the performance of the Usha squad which is formed mostly of BKSP students and he would decide on bringing Pakistani recruits for the league on the basis of his assessment.

The Premier Division Hockey League is supposed to get underway in May after Bangladesh National Hockey Team's participation in the AHF Cup in April.

People's

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Nail biting finish. Well done."

The readers of The Daily Star also flooded the newspaper's website with comments.

Ash wrote, "You've done the unthinkable and made it clear that these incidents are not unthinkable from now onwards", while Ishtiaque from Michigan said, "Apart from what happened today, we are very proud of our cricket team. YES, we are disappointed, make no mistake about it, but we all KNOW this is just the BEGINNING. Hats off to the Tigers!!!

Syed Sohail Ahmed wrote: "I am a Pakistani but I must say that Bangladeshi team won the heart of all of us. Your team is living in our hearts. Keep it up."

Directorate General of Forces Intelligence