

Mikel closes his Twitter account

Chelsea's Nigeria midfielder John Obi Mikel was forced to close his Twitter account on Thursday after suffering a barrage of racist abuse prompted by his costly mistake against Juventus. Mikel removed his profile from the micro-blogging website less than 24 hours after his blunder contributed to Juventus's late equaliser as Chelsea were forced to settle for a 2-2 draw in the opening match of their Champions League defence at Stamford Bridge on Wednesday. Chelsea originally insisted it was coincidental that Mikel had decided to delete the 'Mikel120fficial' account he only set up earlier this



Siddikur misses the cut again

Siddikur Rahman's season is going pear-shaped as the flag-bearer of Bangladesh failed to make the cut for the second time this season and in space of three weeks. The 27-year old golfer racked up a sorry score of 4-over-par (146) at the end of the second round of the Asia-Pacific Panasonic Open yesterday to miss the cut by five shots. Siddikur, who had a first round score of 2-over-par (73), failed to make much impression in the second round either as he traded six bogeys for four birdies to end the event at 106th position.

This is the second time this season after the Omega Masters in Switzerland earlier

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New Zealand cricketers celebrate the dismissal of Bangladesh all-rounder Shikib Al Hasan (L) during their Twenty20 World Cup match at the Pallekele Cricket Stadium yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

The Tendulkar of T20s

SPORTS REPORTER from Kandy

There were records galore during Brendon McCullum's explosive 123-run innings at the Pallekele International Stadium on Friday. But the man in charge was not thinking of records, rather he trying to maximise the scoring opportunity against a hapless Bangladesh in their Group D match of the ICC World Twenty20.

"I was not thinking about Richard Levi's knock (117) when I was batting. It was all about maximising the scoring opportunity and certainly not about records," said McCullum in the post-match briefing yesterday.

The 30-year old dashing batsman holds almost all the major records in the T20I format. He is the highest run-getter (1566 runs), highest individual scorer (123 runs), the only batsman to make two hundreds, has the most fifties (9), has hit the most sixes (64) and also the most fours (150). Little wonder then, that one veteran journalist branded him the Sachin Tendulkar of T20 cricket.

"Twenty20 is a game that does suit me. It suits my style of play. My temperament is to be naturally aggressive. I am fortunate enough to have played enough Twenty20 cricket to understand the pattern of the format. I now know how to pace your innings and when you are required to go for the boundary," he said, explaining the reason behind his success in the newest format of the game.

McCullum however was not sure whether it was his best knock in this format.

"Obviously I have had a couple of innings which I remember for various reasons. This one is really up there among the best Twenty20 knocks that I have played. The uncertainty factor of having to play two pool games meant we had to turn up. If we played incredibly well in the first game, then the chances of qualifying improved, so I am pleased with the effort," he said.

Bangladesh captain Mushfiqur Rahim defended his decision to bowl first after the post-match press conference and McCullum also said that he was not surprised by the decision.

"We were uncertain ourselves about what to do at the toss with rain about. It may have

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'We failed in all departments'

BISHWAJIT ROY from Kandy

You have little else to do but watch the game in awe when the highest-run scorer in Twenty20 cricket hits form. And that was the reason why Bangladesh captain Mushfiqur Rahim also showered praises on Brendon McCullum, even though his side was thrashed in their first game of the ICC World Twenty20 by 59 runs at the Pallekele International Cricket Stadium yesterday.

Bangladesh played an extremely below-par game as per their pre-match expectation, however, a lot of that did happen because of McCullum's explosive batting. He put the Bangladeshi bowlers to the sword during his record-breaking 123-run innings, the best individual score in this format.

"Credit must go to Brendon (McCullum). He once again proved why he is the best batsman in the T20 cricket. He made us look bad on the field and we had no answers against his aggressive batting," said a dejected Mushfiqur.

The Bangladesh skipper further stated that they had an off-day on the field and said that their spinners were nowhere near their best. Mushfiqur though lamented Bangladesh's bowling effort as the erratic bowling gave McCullum enough room to take the match away from the Tigers.

There's no doubt that Bangladesh lost the match in the first innings, after New

Zealand posted 191 runs for three wickets. The early wickets of Tamim Iqbal and Shikib Al Hasan in the second innings ended any slight hopes that may have lingered.

"We made a good start but our spinners failed to bowl as per our expectation. Frankly speaking we failed in all three departments in the match. I don't think the players were nervous initially but rather everybody was focused. But actually you can't do much when players like Brendon come up with a counterattack," said the captain.

"We didn't do the right things in the match and I think this match is a good lesson for us," added the wicketkeeper-batsman, who along with his other teammates was in a completely different state of mind as opposed to during the pre-match briefings when they

exuded confidence of pulling off an upset in the tournament. Regarding their batting, the Tigers skipper said that it would have been a different story if they could restrict New Zealand for either 160 to 165 runs.

"191 is too big a score to chase. Our plan was to utilise the first six overs, but we lost two quick wickets and then there was nothing for us to do in the match," explained Mushfiqur.

The little man believes that they have to rethink their strategy before their second and last group match against favourites Pakistan on September 25 at the same venue.

Three more qualify for Fed Cup

SPORTS REPORTER

Khulna Abahani, Bangladesh Police and Noakhali Football Academy qualified for the Federation Cup after their respective matches of Grameenphone Federation Shield yesterday. Khulna Abahani played out a goalless draw against hosts Jessore DFA to secure seven points from three matches, one point ahead of Bangladesh Police who lost 2-1 against Uttar Baridhara Club yesterday.

Khulna Abahani and Bangladesh Police qualified for the finals from the Jessore venue and they will face off in an inconsequential match on Sunday.

The third qualifier will be decided on Sunday when Uttar Baridhara take on BKSP. If Baridhara beat BKSP, they will qualify and hosts Jessore, who have five points from four matches, will be scrapped.

Meanwhile at the Feni venue, Noakhali Football Academy qualified as the last team by virtue of scoring more goals than Rangpur, who played out a 2-2 draw against Noakhali Football Academy yesterday. Rahmatganj MFS emerged champions in the venue while Rampur Boys Club finished second to qualify for the 16-team Federation Cup which is to get underway from October 5 in Dhaka.

England crush Afghanistan

AGENCIES

Luke Wright's unbeaten 99 got England's defence of their ICC World

Twenty20 crown off to a perfect start in a record 116-run trouncing of Afghanistan at the Premadasa Stadium on Friday.

Wright crunched eight fours and six sixes from only 55 balls, and became the second Englishman this year to miss out on his country's first Twenty20 century by just a single run.

He powered England to 196 for five, overwhelming any prospect of a successful Afghanistan chase as the minnows folded to 80 all out in reply.

Afghanistan started off impressively with a maiden-wicket over from Shapoor Zadran who put England on the back-foot after claiming their opener Craig Kieswetter for a duck.

But Adam Hales and Luke Wright put England back on track with a useful second-wicket partnership of 69 runs.

Hales was run out for 31 but Wright continued to clobber the bowlers as he raced to an unbeaten 99. He added 72 runs for the third

wicket with Eoin Morgan who made 27 in 23 balls.

Izatullah Dawlatzai claimed two wickets despite being the most expensive bowler for Afghanistan.

Afghanistan crashed earlier on in their run chase and were in deep trouble after losing eight of their batsmen for 26 but a fighting knock of 44 off 32 balls from Gulbodin Naib helped them recover before being bundled out for 80.

Samit Patel, Stuart Broad, Jade Dernbach and Graeme Swann claimed two wickets each.

It was down only to number eight Naib's brisk intervention that they bettered by 13 runs the lowest-ever score by any international team in this sprint format.

England are therefore assured of a place in the Super Eight stages, irrespective of how they fare back on Sunday against India - who have also qualified after their own opening Group A victory over Afghanistan.

SCORES IN BRIEF
ENGLAND: 196 for 5 in 20 overs (Wright 99 n.o, Hales 31, Morgan 27; Dawlatzai 2/56) beat

AFGHANISTAN: 80 all out in 17.2 overs (Naib 44; Patel 2/6, Stuart Broad 2/10, Jade Dernbach 2/16, Graeme Swann 2/22)

4-day game begins today

SPORTS REPORTER

The West Indies High Performance team will begin their second four-day game today against the Bangladesh A side at the Sher-e-Bangla National Cricket Stadium in Dhaka. The visitors' first four-day match, against the BCB's National Cricket Academy, resulted in a draw as the home side struggled against the West Indian spin attack.

Rokibul Hasan will be leading the home-side, with discarded opener, Imrul Kayes as his deputy. The four-day game will be followed by three one day internationals

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B chess

SPORTS REPORTER

Six players shared the lead in the 38th Access Group National Chess B Championship at the close of the seventh round at the Bangladesh Chess Federation hall room yesterday.

IM Minhazuddin Ahmed Sagar, IM Abu Sufian Shakil, FM Debaraj Chatterjee, FM Taibur Rahman, FM Mohammad Javed and FM Mehdi Hasan Parag secured six points each from seven games to share the lead jointly.

Golam Mostafa Bhuiyan was in second position with 5.5 points.

SA aim to tame Mendis

AFP, Hambantota

South Africa skipper AB de Villiers said his batsmen will put Sri Lanka's magician spinner Ajantha Mendis under pressure when the two teams meet in a group C match in Hambantota on Saturday.

Mendis, 27, sounded a warning to all batsmen by picking up 6-8 -- the best figures in all Twenty20 cricket -- to crush Zimbabwe in the opening match of the World Twenty20 on Tuesday and promises further destruction.

But De Villiers said his team will be ready for the mystery spinner. "Mendis is a world class bowler," said the South African captain on Friday. "When he's going well he will always pick up wickets. But we've seen him perform under pressure and seen him break down under pressure as well.

"So, hopefully, we can get the upper hand against him and not let him bowl to us." South Africa also thumped Zimbabwe by 10 wickets in

their opening match on Thursday to qualify for the Super Eights round with Sri Lanka but De Villiers promised no let-ups.

"I don't think there will be any drop in intensity. We're in the beginning stages of a very, very big event, a tournament that we really want to win," said De Villiers of South Africa, who are among the title favourites in the 12-team event.

The South African captain admitted his team were underdogs against the fancied hosts.

"We know we're not a perfect team. Sri Lanka are the home team and we're probably underdogs. We'll try and gain more momentum out of the game," said De Villiers, whose country has not won a major event since winning the 1998 ICC knock out event in Bangladesh.

Sri Lanka skipper Mahela Jayawardene played down the hype around Mendis, who is often compared with world record holder countryman Muttiah Muralidaran.

"They're big boots to fill. It's going to be tough for anyone to fit into Murali's shoes because of the quality of the

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Sri Lanka's Kumar Sangakkara (L) and Lasith Malinga warm up during a practise session at the Mahinda Rajapakse Stadium in Hambantota on Friday.

PHOTO: AFP

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BD-NZ SCOREBOARD

NEW ZEALAND				
Guptill b Razzak	11			
Franklin c Sunny b Mashrafe	35			
B McCullum c Tamim b Razzak	123			
Taylor not out	14			
Extras: (lb-2, w-6)	8			
Total: (For three wickets in 20 overs)	191			
Did not bat: Nicol, Williamson, Oram, Vettori, N McCullum, Southee, Mills.				
Fall of wickets: 1-19, 2-113, 3-191.				

BANGLADESH				
Tamim c Gupta b Mills	0			
Ashraf ul lbw b Southee	21			
Shakib c Williamson b Mills	11			
Mushfiqur c Williamson b Mills	4			
Mahmudullah c Williamson b N McCullum	15			
Nasir c Gupta b Southee	50			
Ziaur not out	14			
Mashrafe c Franklin b Oram	5			
Sunny c Oram b Southee	5			
Razzak not out	0			
Extras: (lb-3, w-4)	7			
Total: (For 8 wickets in 20 overs)	132			
Did not bat: Shaiful				
Fall of wickets: 1-0, 2-19, 3-33, 4-37, 5-87, 6-115, 7-123, 8-128.				

Bowler				
Mills	4	0	33	3
Southee	4	1	16	3
Oram	4	0	34	1
Vettori	4	0	31	0

CLEAR MEN
BREAKTHROUGH IN MEN'S SCALP CARE

ICC WORLD T20 TODAY'S MATCHES

MATCH	TIME	VENUE
Sri Lanka v South Africa	4:00pm	Hambantota
Australia v West Indies	8:00pm	Colombo