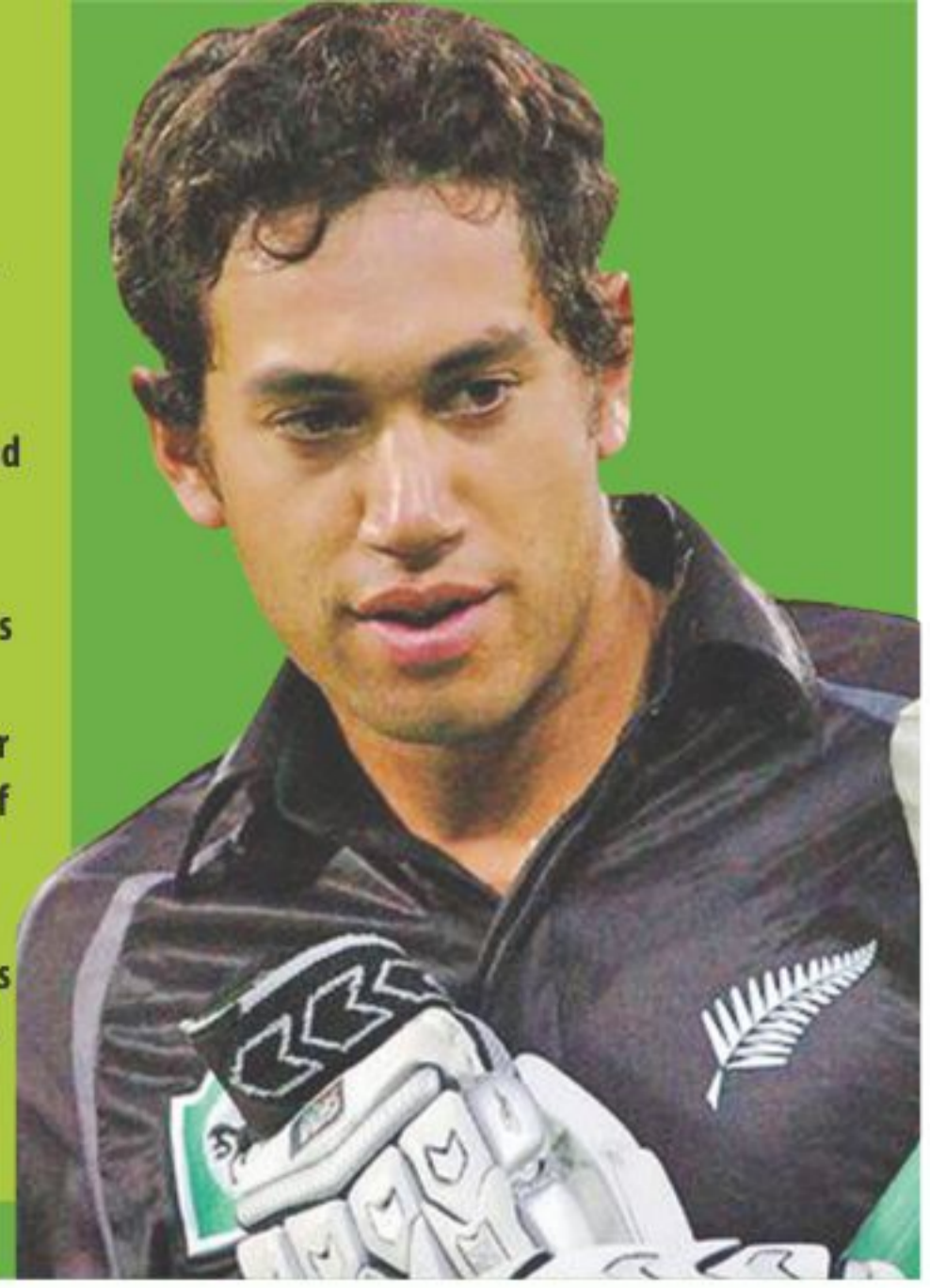


Taylor ridicules Hesson's advice

Disgruntled former captain Ross Taylor has slammed New Zealand's team management, dismissing head coach Mike Hesson's advice as "laughable" and claiming he was not given enough support in his 18-month stint. Taylor was stripped of the limited-overs captaincy last week on Hesson's recommendation, and rejected an offer to stay on as Test skipper in the wake of Kiwis' drawn Test series in Sri Lanka. "I knew it'd be tough from the outset [with Hesson]," Taylor said in comments published on the New Zealand Herald's website on Sunday. "I gave him as much support as I could



A SIMPLE MAN

The Tigers' silent performer Mahmudullah Riyad, who already won the hearts of millions of cricket lovers for his elegant style of batting, was happy with his consistent performance with the bat as well as effective contribution with the ball in Bangladesh's home series against the West Indies, and was delighted with the way his team won the one-day series. The soft-spoken cricketer from Mymensingh hogged the spotlight after the completion of the Test and one-day series but to the stylish batsman the team always comes first. The all-rounder spoke of his philosophy and expectations during a freewheeling conversation with reporters at the poolside of the Pan Pacific Sonargaon Hotel the day after Bangladesh's memorable series victory on Saturday. The following is an excerpt from the encounter.

SPORTS REPORTER

Question (Q): You were promoted to number five in the last match and the plan seemed to have worked fine.

Answer (A): Yeah, the promotion worked. However, it wasn't a different role at all. I batted at number five before. On the match day Mushfiqur (Rahim) asked me to bat at five, Nasir (Hossain) at 6 and Shohag at 7. It was a plan.

Q: Bangladesh was reeling at 30 for 3. What was going through your mind when you came to bat?

A: Honestly speaking I didn't think about anything. I just went there to bat in my natural way. I was confident. I tried hitting the bad balls and they went for boundaries, so I grew in confidence. We had small targets and at first it was about crossing the 100 mark and then the 150. We just wanted to get as close to the total as possible.

Q: The ball that you were bowled by, was the bounce improper?

M: That ball stayed a little low. I initially thought of playing a slog sweep and then I thought that

Q: Good players perform under pressure and that's what you did. How does it feel?

A: I am a very simple man. I see cricket through very simple steps, and the simple fact is that if you don't perform you don't deserve to be in the team. Yes the vice-captain tag is an additional duty but you've still got to perform. There was a little pressure on me before this series but I received support from my captain and teammates.

Q: Do you consider your performance in this series to be the best in your career?

A: Yes, I think this was one of the rare series where I performed well both in the one-dayers and the Test matches.

Q: You have the distinct record of scoring the maximum runs in world cricket while batting at number 7 since your debut. Do you want to continue batting at this position?

A: I wasn't aware of that record firstly (smiling). And well, it's the team's decision. This series is



Mahmudullah Riyad goes on a 'joyride' in Nasir Hossain's rickshaw at the Sonargaon Hotel yesterday.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

(Sunil) Narine is their strike bowler, let's play a safe shot. I was in two minds and that cost me my wicket.

Q: Before the series there was talk about your lack of form. Were you worried?

A: I thank God that I found form. I wasn't thinking about my form or the situation before the series. My last few matches weren't that great. Since I normally bat at number 7, I can't always make big scores. I have mostly had the contributor's role, something that not many people notice.

Q: Did your good form in the Test match give you the confidence to excel in the ODIs?

A: I performed well in the first innings of the first Test match and I think that gave me a huge boost.

special because we have been playing well right from the beginning throughout the month and so it feels really good to have won the series.

Q: How has the presence of Saqlain Mushtaq in the team helped the spinners and the dressing room as a whole?

A: He is a great guy, not only does he support the bowlers, but he also provides support on a mental level. He talks to all of us individually which helps a lot. He has gone through a lot in international cricket and it helped quite a bit.

Q: How has the vice-captaincy role been so far?

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Cricket fans in huge numbers line up in front of the Uttara branch of Social Islami Bank yesterday to buy tickets for the only T20 International between Bangladesh and West Indies. The final game of the Caribbeans' tour to Bangladesh takes place at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur today. The match starts at 6pm and Channel 9 and Bangladesh Television will provide live coverage.

PHOTO: STAR

'A result of belief'

BISHWAJIT ROY



Mashrafe Bin Mortaza might not have been in the playing eleven which scripted a two-wicket victory in the fifth and final ODI to clinch a memorable series victory against the formidable West Indies, but the amount of encouragement the brave-heart cricketer provided from behind the scenes played a vital role for the Tigers to achieve their best success in ODI history.

"Mashrafe was a source of inspiration as he kept the dressing room vibrant all through the match," was the statement from the team manager Tanjeeb Ahsan Saad. The presence of the 'Narail Express' in the team not only uplifts the morale of the players on the field but is also a source of encouragement off the field for every team member, junior or senior. The manner in which he has repeatedly returned to international cricket from injury has in itself been an inspiration for any cricketer and especially his teammates.

It would be foolish to judge his contribution in the team during the series just by



MASHRAFE BIN MORTAZA

statistics -- five wickets from four ODIs before missing the last through injury -- because the pace spearhead bowled with a lot of heart and was integral in giving the team good starts with the ball.

"Honestly speaking we deserved it. I would be happier if we could make it at least 4-1. Everybody is happy and I am too because in my opinion it is the best success in Bangladesh's one-day history. I have not forgotten our 4-0 success against New Zealand but there were some key players missing. Just look at the figures of the West Indies team and ours, then you can understand the difference between these two sides, so it's a wonderful achievement for our cricket," said an excited Mashrafe about the series win.

He however lambasted those who dismissed the Tigers before the start of the one-day series despite their stupendous performance in their last ODI assignment -- the Asia Cup

in March.

"Before the start of the series many were unwilling to show any respect to us and had only negative things to say about the outcome of the series. How could people forget our heroics eight months ago in the Asia Cup? Thankfully the belief was there among the cricketers and finally we got the result of that belief. People should understand that we are now a very competitive side in one-day cricket and it was wrong to judge our strength on our performance in the Test series," said the pace spearhead.

"We made it happen without our best player (Shakib Al Hasan) because we played the series as a team. Everybody tried their best to contribute for the team which filled the vacuum left by Shakib. I was a little nervous with so many players making their debut but the way they realised their potential was simply outstanding," he added.

When asked about the reason behind West Indies' failure in the one-day series, Mashrafe explained: "They fell under pressure after Chris Gayle was dismissed early and they don't think about playing under pressure; instead they always try to play their natural game and it's not easy for them to play their natural game on these kinds of wickets.

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'Excitement got the better of me'

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh's ODI series win over the West Indies was undoubtedly the talk of the town yesterday. Right from the addas at roadside tea stalls to the get-togethers in different homes propelled by the road-blockade programme, cricket, it seemed, found the prime spot in almost every conversation that took place in the country.

While some praised the performances of Mushfiqur Rahim and Mahmudullah Riyad, others excitedly talked about the newbies in the team -- Shohag Gazi and Anamul Haque.

The most talked about point though was the drama that unfolded in the second last ball of the 44th over when a cut shot by Nasir Hossain, which failed to reach the boundary but brought the entire Bangladesh team on to the ground, spread a lot of confusion on the field. Since the non-striker,

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The dream begins here

Football

SPORTS REPORTER

Mohammad Rubel's life revolved around nothing but playing football and working as a ball-boy since he dropped out of school a year ago because his family could not bear his educational expenses anymore. But the 13-year old boy from Narayanganj can dream again of a good future as he has made the cut as one of the 37 footballers selected for the Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) Academy in Sylhet. Now he can concentrate on his football as well as studies, which will be taken care of by the academy.

Rubel is one of the 17 U-14 level footballers who have been chosen, apart from 20 members of the BFF U-14 squad that recently toured Japan for the BFF Academy U-14 squad.

"Since my father's death seven years ago, the family has been run by my elder brother who works at a metal workshop, and I had to leave school a year ago when I was in class

four," said Rubel. "But I will get another chance to study after being selected for the BFF Academy. However, I am especially happy because I will get the chance to play football which I love most."

Many of the footballers who have

been selected are from needy families like Rubel, but there are some from well-off ones, like Suruz Rahman, who have been allowed by their families to join the academy to pursue their love for the game.

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The 37 U-14 footballers, who were chosen for the BFF Academy in Sylhet, sound out their jubilation as they hold the 'yes' card on the podium at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR