

# Star SPORT

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## Aguero escapes FA action

Manchester City striker Sergio Aguero won't be punished by the Football Association for his ugly challenge on Chelsea's David Luiz in their FA Cup semifinal clash.

Aguero escaped without punishment from referee Chris Foy after the Argentina international threw himself into a ferocious two-footed lunge on Luiz late in the second half of City's 2-1 win at Wembley on Sunday.

Luiz suffered no serious harm and played on until the end of the match, but the Brazilian defender did call on Aguero to apologise.

- AFP



Shakib Al Hasan (R) shares a light moment with Nasir Hossain (C) during Tigers' training session at the Harare Sports Club yesterday.

PHOTO: COURTESY OF PROTHOM ALO

## MUSHFIQ wants to change Harare stats



SAKEB SUBHAN from Harare

Today's first Test between Bangladesh and Zimbabwe at Harare will see a collision of tides, and reveal much about the current state of the unlikely rivals. There are not many strands that bind the laid-back southern African country of Zimbabwe with the bustling Bangladesh, but cricket is possibly the strongest. The two have occupied the bottom rungs of Test cricket's ladder for more than a decade, and contests between each other therefore take on an importance higher than their respective rankings suggest. By the end of this match, whichever way it goes, a new pattern will be set. Bangladesh do not have happy memories of the venue, having lost all three of their Tests at the Harare Sports Club including an ignominious defeat on their last tour in 2011 against a Zimbabwe that returned to the Test fold after five years. A lot has changed since then -- the aftermath saw Shakib Al Hasan losing the captaincy and Bangladesh becoming a force to be reckoned with at home. Zimbabwe's star, on the other hand, failed to sustain that early high as their team struggled against stronger opposition since, culminating in a convincing 2-0 defeat in West Indies in March, a tour in which their batsmen struggled.

So when the two captains, Mushfiquir Rahim and Brendan Taylor, walk out for the toss today they will be looking to uphold their respective histories. On the eve of the match yesterday, Taylor talked about their last match against Bangladesh in 2011 and how the wicket was still the same, hoping that Bangladesh's batsmen still find the going tough on what the Zimbabwe skipper described as a 'lively' wicket.

Mushfiquir however was looking to sustain the Tigers' successes in recent years at home and to continue their trend of improving with each series.

"Not really. It's a great chance for us to change those stats," said Mushfiquir when asked whether the last tour weighed heavily on his team, "As I said we did not have good memories against Sri Lanka, but we did it this time. This is another opportunity for us, so hopefully we are up for it and we would definitely like to change those stats."

"We had a great tour of Sri Lanka, so all the guys are pretty confident. The result is not in our hands, but we will make sure to do the processes right. As the coach told us yesterday, we do not need to think about who we are playing against, we are just thinking of the processes and doing the basics right and improving series by series, which we have been doing over the last one and a half years."

About the pitch on which the Tigers struggled in 2011, Mushfiquir did not seem too bothered. "It is expected in Harare. As the coach (Shane Jurgensen) said, we played in similar conditions in Pallekele so we are used to it. If some

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## Green light to green stadium

BISHWAJIT ROY

With a mission of building a nature-friendly facility instead of the traditional concrete structure, the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) begins work today to build an international cricket stadium in Cox's Bazar.

Upon completion it will add another to an already comprehensive list of international stadiums in the country. But this will be different in many ways. BCB is yet to formally get the 50-acre land in Cox's Bazar but has started the work to prepare the venue for next year's ICC T20 World Cup, based on the assurance of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina.

The board will appoint a professional firm to develop a stadium as soon as they get documents of the land from the authorities. But even before that BCB has decided to demarcate the area and start work on preparing the pitches to have it ready for the global event, which will kick-off with the women's competition from March 16, 2014.

Like the Sir Vivian Richards Stadium in Antigua, which has a casual Caribbean flavour, and the Adelaide Oval in Australia, one of the cricket's most picturesque Test venues which gives a quintessentially English feel, the BCB has also plans to make a stadium with Cox's Bazar flavour.

"We will now only try to do the most essential works so that the venue gets ready before the World Cup and it would be just a part of the bigger picture in 2014. It would be a completely different stadium than the existing ones in the country," said BCB's senior member Ahmed Sajjadul Alam, who has been involved with the project for the last ten years.

It was a long cherished dream for the country's most affluent sports body to make a stadium in the coastal town at their own cost and the dream has finally come true with the assurance from the Prime Minister last month.

As per the Prime Minister's desire, the board will make sure that the jhau bon now facing the sea will remain well-preserved and one side of the field will remain open for views of the Bay of Bengal. "We are even thinking to make the entire surroundings by jhau bon, actually our main focus is to make it nature-friendly and a green stadium and for that we will do everything necessary and definitely it will take time to complete all the works," said Alam.

The BCB however has the plan to make a complete stadium with the facilities of the training academy, indoor facilities, a modern gymnasium, swimming pool and most importantly two open outer stadiums. Initially there was a plan to make a dormitory but right at the moment they believe that it's not a smart choice. Instead they want to sign a memorandum of understanding with the Parjaton Corporation so that they can use their all facilities.

"And we also want to use the wind and solar project for power generation," informed Alam.

And finally the board's main objective is to make a true picturesque stadium for the country.

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## Taylor spiced up by pitch



SPORTS REPORTER from Harare

The tussle between Bangladesh and Zimbabwe has always been special. From the Zimbabwean perspective, Bangladesh were the side they beat after ending a five-year self-imposed exile from Test cricket. That historic result was achieved nearly two years ago at the same ground on which they will encounter their old foes today, the Harare Sports Club. Since then, however, Zimbabwe have played five Tests against Pakistan, New Zealand and West Indies, and lost all by convincing margins.

It is therefore only natural that skipper Brendan Taylor was looking forward to today's encounter, as they will take on their nearest neighbours at the bottom of the Test rankings. The state of Harare's wicket, which is expected to have more pace and bounce than the visitors are accus-

tomed to, is also a source of confidence for the Zimbabwe skipper.

"If we go head to head then they have probably got a few games over us," said Taylor while speaking on the eve of the match. "Going on our last Test match, I know it was a couple of years ago, but it will be similar conditions. The wicket will be fairly lively I am sure. I am sure there is going to be pace and bounce. I am pretty sure that they [Bangladesh] would rather play on a low, flatter wicket but they have got the skill and the talent to score big against any team. So our bowlers are still going to have to bowl in the right areas to create problems."

"But you have to back your own team. I certainly believe on the day we are a good side and we can go out and win," added Taylor.

But unlike their opponents, Zimbabwe are coming off a pretty poor tour of West Indies in which they lost both Tests by big margins. The batting was particularly shoddy

in the Caribbean with Zimbabwe crossing the 200-mark only once in four innings.

"I think all the batters would like to redeem themselves. Players do go through a slump every now and then, but it is about how you pick yourself up from that," said the skipper, whose own form was below par on the tour. "I have literally hit thousands of balls since then. And our preparations have been excellent. Definitely of the top four, I am confident, one or two could get a big one and put us in a good position."

There was one positive that came out of the Caribbean tour -- the bowling of Kyle Jarvis. "Certainly Kyle, he has been fantastic. He had career-best figures in West Indies on a pretty flat wicket. It's nice to see some guys coming through. Keegan Meth is pushing other bowlers to make it to the side. He is a possibility for tomorrow," said Taylor.

## Shakib can bowl if he wants

SPORTS REPORTER from Harare

As earlier revealed Tamim Iqbal will not play the first Test while Shakib, who recently recovered from a shin bone injury, will likely play as a batsman. Coach Shane Jurgensen however seemed to leave a window open for Shakib the bowler. "He is still going through the rehabilitation process, but if needed he may bowl at some stage over the next five days."

In Tamim's absence Shahriar Nafees and Jahurul Islam are expected to open the innings with Mohammad Ashraful, Shakib, Mushfiquir and Nasir Hossain to follow. There may be a toss-up between vice-captain Mahmudullah Riyad and Mominul Haque, who had a successful initiation into Test cricket in Sri Lanka. Mushfiquir said that depending on the pitch, the Tigers will play either a combination of two pacers or two spinners, or

## Athletes jostling for space

ANISUR RAHMAN



As the 8th Bangladesh Games edges closer to its opening, the athletes of different disciplines are making do

with their last-ditch preparation in unhealthy conditions of the National Sports Council Gymnasium. Too many athletes from different disciplines are crammed into a small space and sweating profusely inside the warm and ill-lit gymnasium, had their work cut-out.

Wrestlers, gymnasts, karatekas and taekwondo players have been sharing the 35-year old gymnasium in

which half of the space is being used by gymnasts and the rest is being used by the other three disciplines. The weightlifters meanwhile have been pushed into the tiny space adjacent to the Bangabandhu Stadium.

The condition of both the gymnasium and the swimming pool is unhealthy to say the least. The huge number of athletes who turn up every day for practice cram into whatever space is available. Some 50 taekwondo players, nearly 30 karatekas and 20 wrestlers were separately practising at the same time, but they could hardly move around freely in the congested space.

The players were sweating pro-

fusely at the non-air-conditioned NSC gymnasium as there was no arrangement of even electric fans. The taekwondo players managed some fans at their own cost and tried to keep themselves cool but the others had no such luck. Many athletes alleged that they feel suffocated due to the huge number of athletes under one roof. One side of the gymnasium is used as a store room for weightlifting stages.

"We often suffocate during practice and can't concentrate due to the chaotic and unhealthy environment," grumbled taekwondo player Shaboni Das yesterday.

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The colourful Bangabandhu National Stadium, the chief venue of the 8th Bangladesh Games, is getting all fixed up for a glitzy opening ceremony on April 20. (Inset) But the athletes, who are the life of the Games, are preparing in stingy and deplorable conditions in one of the NSC facilities.

PHOTOS: STAR

## 'Tamim and I should have a dinner'

SPORTS REPORTER from Harare

The last time Zimbabwe and Bangladesh met in a Test match was in Harare in 2011 and it resulted in a 130-run victory for the hosts upon their return from Test exile. The big success from Zimbabwe was new bowler Brian Vitori, who rushed the Tigers' demise with five wickets in the match.

It was no ordinary match especially as it marked Zimbabwe's return to the Test fold, but 'ordinary' is a word that is still associated with that one-off Test series. Bangladesh Test opener Tamim Iqbal described Vitori as ordinary during the match, and it was a term that the press in both nations had field days with.

Fast forward two years to Bangladesh's current tour, and both the stars have been relegated to the background. Vitori, after some injuries that saw the emergence of newer talents is

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