

TOUR REPORT

A disappointing tour of Zimbabwe saw few top class showings and plenty to lament as Bangladesh drew the Test and T20 series and lost the ODI series. Paceman Robiul Islam was a sole bright spot with his accurate bowling in the Tests, while Nasir Hossain's consistency in the ODIs was remarkable. Shakib al Hasan struggled in ODIs but imposed himself with a player-of-the-series showing in the T20s. Mahmudullah came back strong in the ODIs while T20 specialist Ziaur Rahman did well in everything but T20s.

TEST

ROBIUL ISLAM

Wickets 15

Average 19.53

ODI

NASIR HOSSAIN

Runs 167

Average 55.66

T20

SHAKIB AL HASAN

Runs 105

Bowling 6/41

FLOPS

MAHMUDULLAH

Runs 24

Bowling 0/26

SHAKIB AL HASAN

Runs 53

Bowl 1/112

ZIA

Runs 2

Wickets 0

BHF preparing for elections

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Hockey Federation (BHF) has applied for extension of sending councillorship for its election of the executive committee.

"We have sent letters to the affiliated districts and clubs to send a total of 71 nominations by May 20. So, we have asked for a week's extension on the previous date of May 15 to the election commission," said BHF's general secretary Khaza Rahmatullah yesterday.

A total of 71 councillors, from districts of clubs which have participated in national or youth hockey twice in the last four years, will be eligible to participate. The date for the election has not been fixed yet. Director of National Sports Council Haiyul Quyum has been nominated as the chief of the election commission.

"We will announce the schedule of election after we get the list of councillors," said Quyum.

The list of councillors is expected to reach the NSC by May 22.

BCB okays A team's Eng tour

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) has confirmed Bangladesh A team's tour of England this August.

The second string national side is expected to play five one-day games against five county sides, after which they will play three 50-overs matches against the England Lions.

The tour however, will not be accommodating any four-day games.

Proteas at a crossroads

REUTERS, Cape Town

Less than a year after climbing to the top of the Test rankings, South African cricket is suddenly faced with an uncertain future with respected coach Gary Kirsten set to depart and two top players at a crossroads in their careers.

Kirsten's decision not to extend his contract when it expires in August comes as captain Graeme Smith battles recurring ankle problems and all-rounder Jacques Kallis admits his desire to play international cricket is on the wane.

For a team hoping to nail down a dominant spell in international cricket, the loss of their World Cup winning coach is a major setback. To lose all three components at the same time would be a hammer blow.

The last two years have seen the Proteas become the most consistent performers in world cricket at Test level, opening up a 14-point lead at the top of the International Cricket Conference ratings.

'Everything went against us'

BISHWAJIT ROY

A draw in the Test series; disaster in the one-dayers; and finally sharing the T20s 1-1 were not the target when the Tigers embarked on their African safari. Mushfiqur Rahim's men were far away from realising their expectation of turning the table on Zimbabwe this time in their own backyard.

The remarkable Asia Cup performance, an outstanding home series against West Indies and historic tour of Sri Lanka even with a depleted side, had clearly indicated a steady progress of the team under the leadership of diminutive wicketkeeper-batsman Mushfiqur, thus making everyone believe that they were going to establish their supremacy over their nearest rivals.

But things remained almost same for the Tigers.

True, one can't come down hard on a team just after one poor series

but the reality is that the battle against Zimbabwe is always considered as an opportunity for the Tigers to show some credentials and that's why the ordinary performance in the just concluded series came as a shock for millions of cricket fans in the country.

The team was thought to be a better side from the one that toured Sri Lanka the previous month with the return of two star players -- Shakib Al Hasan and Tamim Iqbal, but that was not to be.

So the people concerned should find out the reasons: Why did the team fail?

Chief selector Akram Khan however blamed many things except the players.

"Yes, the expectation was high but I think the luck didn't favour the team. The condition, the wickets, umpiring, the toss factor, all went against us. I don't want to give any excuse but some off-the-field problems, like the problem in hotel, also affected the performance.

"Injury was also a big problem for

us," explained the burly man, who praised Shakib and Tamim after the way they showed their commitment towards the team playing the series soon after recovering from injuries.

"I must say the players tried their best. The efforts were there. Questions were raised about the batsmen's responsibility, but if you see the scorecard you will find that our batsmen tried to spend time in the middle."

And what Akram suggested was that they needed to focus on two issues -- proper treatment and rehabilitation programme for the injured players and proper planning for the pace bowling department -- before the next international assignment which is against New Zealand in October at home.

Mushfiqur's resignation was another bad part of the series and the chief selector said: "I didn't like it. He is a nice guy and very positive. But I was surprised by his decision. He is the captain of the team, so no way could he take such a decision. We have a long term plan and this kind of thing will not help," added Akram.

Rendezvous with Robiul

Robiul Islam has been the find of the Zimbabwe tour for Bangladesh. He has been Bangladesh's mean fast bowler, coming into the tour as one of the promising pace prospects but leaving it as the Test spearhead. On the field he is characterised by a singular determination to bowl, and bowl well. In the Tests he bowled long spells with metronomic accuracy and emerged the player-of-the-series with 15 wickets, including two 5-fors.

Off the field he is always ready with a smile, ever approachable and with a playful sense of humour. At the end of the tour, he made time at the team hotel in Bulawayo to talk to The Daily Star's Sakeb Subhan. Following are excerpts from the interview:

Daily Star Sport (DSS): How has the tour been?

Robiul Islam (RI): From a personal viewpoint, it was a good tour for me, but not so much for the team. We wanted to win all of the series.

DSS: Coach Shane Jurgensen said the month you spent at the Academy before going to the Sri Lanka tour really helped you as a bowler. How did that come about?

RI: The BPL was on and I was in Satkhira at that time and was practising, but it's not the same as in Dhaka. Shane called me and told me to come to Dhaka and practise -- there would be a camp at the Academy for fast bowlers. But everyone was at the BPL and it was only me. Shane was there for the first three days but then he left for Australia. Richard McInnes and Stuart Carpinen took over the practice, gave me a schedule and I worked according to that.

DSS: Was it hard work?

RI: Spot bowling for spinners is okay, but for pacers it's a little tough. The schedule was six overs on one day, 10 overs another, and 13 overs the other. The day when I had to bowl 13 overs I used to bowl seven overs, bat for a while and then bowl six more overs. For almost one and a half months I stayed alone, and when it was time to practise I practised, when it was time to go to the gym I went to the gym. When you go to the gym and run regularly that helps you in terms of fitness. I got the result of that in Sri Lanka, where I had to bowl in the heat, and here especially in the Test series.

I worked hard in the Academy with spot bowling and particularly on swing. Outswing comes naturally to me but what I did in the Academy was concentrate on bowling at a particular spot. It sometimes became boring as I was bowling to an empty net. So there were a few days when I called Imrul Kayes to come over and bat, and on some other days Shahriar Nafees came to bat in the nets. Sometimes I bowled to BPL teams when they came over to practise. I even bowled to Brendan Taylor.

DSS: What are your plans once you go back home?

RI: I will rest once I go back to the country. They have asked me not to bowl for some time.

DSS: Who has been your idol?

RI: Mashrafe bhai is a fighter. His strength of mind is such that if you do not sit and talk with him, you will not understand. Only Mashrafe bhai could still be playing with the injuries he has had to overcome. He is a special person.

For the full text of this interview, please visit <http://www.thedailystar.net/beta2/sports/>

8TH BANGLADESH GAMES BOA still counting medals

SPORTS REPORTER

Two weeks after the end of the 8th Bangladesh Games, Bangladesh Olympic Association was still struggling to add up the number of medals that have been distributed.

The BOA has not been able to publish the final medals tally due to non-compliance by the karate and wushu federations and confusion over medal distribution in wrestling.

Wing commander Rafikul Islam, member secretary of technical committee of the Games informed that they could not find any conclusion about 10 events of karate and wushu which made it impossible to finalise the medals tally.

"We requested the two federations several times but they did not issue the final results," said Rafikul Islam.

"We prepared a preliminary tally on the basis of media committee report and found discrepancies on the number of medals. We are trying to sort-out the problem," Rafikul added.

It was alleged that Karate Federation initially informed BOA that they will arrange 20 events but they held only 11 events.

BOA was still awaiting the results of wushu but Abdul Matin Azad, the general secretary of Bangladesh Wushu Federation, is said to be in hiding due to a case filed against him which by four players a few months ago.

Meanwhile, in wrestling, many events were concluded with three participants while BOA had provided four medals (one gold, one silver and two bronze) which created confusion over the number of medals.



Shaqrان, the mascot of the U-17 World Cup, gestures during the unveiling ceremony in Dubai yesterday. Shaqrان is named after a popular type of falcons in the Emirates.

Epyllion to sponsor Narayanganj DFA

SPORTS REPORTER

Narayanganj, once the breeding ground of stars in domestic football, can once again dream about big things as it is going to get substantial sponsorship money from the Epyllion Group. The Narayanganj District Football Association yesterday signed up an agreement with the garment manufacturing group which will disburse an amount of Tk 75 lakhs over three years. Aamra Networks and Clemon will be the cosponsors.

The deal was signed at the Bangladesh Football federation yesterday where president of the Narayanganj DFA, Ashrafuddin Ahmed Chunnu said, "We have come to an agreement for three years which may be extended further in future. First division, second division, Gold Cup, and women's football will run under Epyllion's sponsorship".

Chairman of the Epyllion Group, Riazuddin Al Mamun, was also present at the ceremony.

Ctg Abahani on top

SPORTS REPORTER

Chittagong Abahani moved to the top of the Premier Bank Bangladesh Championship League with 16 points from eight matches after a 4-1 win over Farashganj SC at the MA Aziz Stadium in Chittagong yesterday. Palash Shamanta scored a hatrick while Javed scored the other goal for Abahani. Ripon scored a consolation goal for Farashganj.

In the other match of the day, Rahmatganj drew 1-1 with Victoria SC at the Birshreshtha Mostafa Kamal Stadium in Kamalapur.

Mumbai take top spot

AGENCIES, Mumbai

Mumbai Indians defeated Sunrisers Hyderabad by seven wickets in their T20 League match, in Mumbai yesterday.

An unreal Kieron Pollard blitz transformed a daunting run chase into a cakewalk for Mumbai at the Wankhede, as he tore the match from Hyderabad's grip in a seven-ball stretch that yielded 36. At the end of the assault, Mumbai dethroned Chennai Super Kings and rose to No.1. Sixes rained down on a delirious Mumbai crowd, whom for much of the run chase may have anticipated the hosts' first loss at home this season. But with 62 needed from the last four overs, 29 was plundered in the 17th from Thisara Perera, in which he bowled three balls in Pollard's slot and was duly smashed

over the straight boundary three times.

Earlier, Shikhar Dhawan led the way with a stroke-filled half-century as Sunrisers Hyderabad posted a challenging 178 for three.

Electing to bat, Dhawan made a fluent 41-ball 59 laced with six fours and two sixes and later captain Cameron White played a breezy knock of 43 off 23 balls to enthral a near sell-out crowd at the Wankhede Stadium.

SCORES IN BRIEF

SUNRISERS HYDERABAD: 178/3 in 20 overs (Dhawan 59, White 43 not out, Vihari 41; Malinga 2/26)

MUMBAI INDIANS: 184/3 in 19.3 overs (Pollard 66 not out, Tendulkar 38 retired hurt; Sharma 2/22)

Result: Mumbai Indians won by 7 wickets

Player of the match: Kieron Pollard

Tendulkar gold coins launched

PTI, Mumbai

A limited edition Sachin Tendulkar gold coins, with the senior cricketer's face and signature embossed on them, were launched on Monday on the auspicious day of Akshaya Tritiya.

Valuemart Gold and Jewels launched one lakh Sachin Tendulkar gold coins, each weighing 10 grams, in the senior cricketer's presence here.

The 24 karat gold coin is priced at 34,000 rupees and will be available on valuemartgold.com and leading jewellery stores across the country.

League by mid-June?

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Cricket Board president Nazmul Hasan Papon has said that the board is planning to start the Dhaka Premier League, the country's lone 50-overs domestic tournament, by mid-June this year.

Following a meeting with the clubs' representatives at the BCB headquarters in Mirpur yesterday, Papon told reporters that the league would be based on a new format from this year onwards.

"We listened to all the problems stated by the clubs. They also provided their proposals. We will be incorporating these and create a new format based on which the

league will take place," said Papon.

While the president did not provide a clear picture of the proposed changes, he did however state that the division of players in different categories for the players' transfer -- similar to the Bangladesh Premier League's auctioning system -- was one such proposal that the clubs had provided.

He further stated that the exact stance regarding the format of the league and the competition's timing will be confirmed following another meeting with the clubs, which is scheduled to take place on May 20.

Apart from the league issue, the board also decided to send pacer Nazmul Hossain to either India or Australia for a surgery on his left knee. He received the injury in Sri Lanka in March.



Bangladesh Cricket Board's president Nazmul Hassan Papon speaks to representatives of the Dhaka Premier League clubs at the board's headquarters in Mirpur on Monday.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHME