

What to WATCH

STAR Cricket

India v Australia

Sixth ODI (D/N)

Live from 2:00pm

Serie A

Juventus v Catania

Live from 1:45am (Thursday)

TEN Sports

Paris Masters

Round 2

Live from 3:30pm

TEN Cricket

South Africa v Pakistan

First ODI (D/N)

Live from 5:00pm

STAR Sports 2

Primera Liga

Real Valladolid v Real Sociedad

Live from 1:00am (Thursday)

Osasuna v Rayo Vallaçano

Live from 3:00am (Thursday)

ESPN

Primera Liga

Valencia v Almeria

Live from 1:00am (Thursday)

Real Madrid v Sevilla

Live from 3:00am (Thursday)

‘Not a miracle, he deserved it'

Naimul Karim

Bangladesh's last few matches have had a tendency to take a page off some highly intense movie finishes and it's therefore not a surprise if you have not had to use your nail cutters this month!

At first they seem to be under pressure and then a hero is born. And just when you think things can't get any better, there sprouts another hero who, in fact goes on to take away the limelight!

It happened in the first Test when Mominul Haque's 181 was outshone by Shohag Gazi's hattrick and in the second Test there was Tamim Iqbal and Mominul yet again.

The first ODI at Mirpur yesterday too wrote a similar script. Mushfiqur Rahim's 90 was good enough to take Bangladesh to a respectable total, but just when the hosts needed that extra push towards the end, Rubel Hossain jumped in with a hattrick and the best bowling figures by a Bangladeshi -- 6 for 26 -- which he shares with Mashrafe Bin Mortaza.

Rubel, like his teammates Gazi and Mominul, was slightly shy during the post-match conference yesterday; it actually looked as though he was merely trying to come to terms with what happened.

"It's every bowler's dream to take a hattrick in international cricket and I thank the Almighty that things worked out for me. I bowled in good areas today and I got support from the wicket as well," said Rubel.

"The hattrick ball, I just tried to bowl stump to stump. It went down the leg and the batsman for some reason played a shot. Mushfiqur bhai took a very good catch," Rubel recalled.

The captain, who's generally very specific with his instructions, claimed to have had no say in the hattrick. "Usually Rubel always follows the plan we tell him,

there's a ball-to-ball plan. But to be honest, in that spell, I did not instruct him at all. He understood how the wicket behaved and bowled with his own ideas. The variations were very important. The credit goes to him," said Mushfiqur.

Rubel stated that he got assistance from the pitch after it rained. "After the rain, the slower ball turned a bit, there was also some bounce and if you bowled a straight line you would get help so I extracted that," said Rubel.

The 23-year-old had produced a similar performance in 2010 at Mirpur, when his four-wicket haul helped Bangladesh secure a three-run win over the Kiwis and seal the 4-0 whitewash. It was something that he clearly remembered. "I think I just enjoy bowling against the Kiwis, that must be it," he said with a smile.

The bowler who underwent a shoulder injury last year, has been working on his recovery ever since. After yesterday's game Rubel stated that he was more confident than ever.

Musfiqur concurred. "It's not just today [yesterday]. He has been bowling well for the last few months in the Dhaka League. Apart from taking wickets [19] he also had an economy rate of 3 to 3.5. So that's a good sign. This was not a miracle, he deserved it."

"We probably did not expect such a good performance, maybe no one did, but he still deserved it," said Mushfiqur, who admitted that he was slightly hesitant to bring Rubel on after the rain-break.

The captain, whose 90 set the tone for Bangladesh's innings, stated that despite missing out on a century, he had no regrets, "No not today. I have no regrets because the team won. I was feeling a little bad yesterday because I had not scored a 50 for a while but today Naeem and I did well," he said.

Mushfiqur provided a fitting end to the day yesterday, when he dedicated his side's win to former Bangladeshi off-spinner Sheikh Salahuddin, who passed away yesterday morning.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

Bangladesh fast bowler Rubel Hossain leaps for joy after completing his hattrick, which all but sealed the match, in the first ODI against New Zealand at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.

‘Rubel was outstanding'

SAKEB SUBHAN

Leading up to the first of three ODIs against Bangladesh, most of the talk surrounded what had happened the last time New Zealand played Bangladesh in Bangladesh -- a 4-0 series loss in 2010.

Then Bangladesh's whitewash was sealed by Rubel Hossain's four-for in the final match. While New Zealand insisted that 2010 was not on the minds of a younger team, Rubel again, with a hattrick and six wickets this time, reminded the Black Caps that they need to turn things around fast to avoid a repeat.

Skipper Brendon McCullum however graciously gave Bangladesh and Rubel their due when speaking at the presentation ceremony.

"Getting a hattrick is an achievement. Rubel was outstanding. We have two games to go in the series and we need to win them to win the series. We allowed them, [Mushfiqur] Rahim and Naeem [Islam], to get away and get that partnership going," said McCullum.

After Mushfiqur and Naeem's 154-run fourth-wicket stand lifted Bangladesh to 265 after being 25 for three, New Zealand reached 82 for three when rain forced a 90-minute break, after which the Kiwis required a reduced target of 206 from 33 overs.

"I wouldn't say it was the rain. We lost a few wickets early. The rain actually pegged it back to what we like, a shorter game with some hitters down the order," said all-rounder Corey Anderson, whose fireworks with the bat after the rain break raised hopes for the visitors. "They bowled really well -- I mean hattricks aren't taken that often. I think a cluster like that is always going to make a difference. We were going well and obviously that hattrick put us behind a long way."

"I think he [Rubel Hossain] bowled smartly. We were out there bowling cross seam and slower balls and I think he did the same thing. Batters were caught off the splice with some balls popping up off the pitch," Anderson said of Rubel.

When asked whether New Zealand rued letting Bangladesh off from 25 for three, Anderson chose instead to give the home batsmen credit. "I don't think you have to hit yourself when you had a team three-down. Mushfiq played beautifully, a superb innings and a big partnership. Big partnerships like that always assist in winning games. I think they got on top of us in the middle period, and we let them play the way they wanted."

"I don't think we have to be worried about anything. Someone got a hattrick today, fingers crossed it doesn't happen in the next one. I think we just have to come back in the next game firing and ready to go," said Anderson when asked how the Kiwis would turn things around for the second game tomorrow.

Sellout sees empty seats!

SPORTS REPORTER

Empty seats in certain stands of the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium during the first ODI once again brought into question the Bangladesh Cricket Board's (BCB's) ticket distribution system.

On Sunday the BCB had sent a press release stating that the tickets for the game had been sold out. Despite the notice there were a number of fans waiting outside the stadium in hopes of buying tickets from scalpers. Certain tickets, according to passersby and fans, were even sold at five times the original price.

Despite the last-minute sales, there were gaping spaces seen at the Shaheed Jewel Stand and the Grand Stand; a scene that raised many eye-brows. The BCB follows the practice of providing 60 per cent of the tickets to banks -- for this series the ticket partners are United Commercial Bank -- for public consumption, 20 per cent are kept complimentary and the rest held back to meet the demands of the stakeholders.

But the strategy, as seen yesterday and during a number of tournaments in the past, tends to leave

FIFA REVEALS SHORTLIST Bayern dominate list

REUTERS, Zurich

Six players from Bayern Munich's treble-winning team were included among the 23 nominees for the World Player of the Year award announced by FIFA on Tuesday.

Jose Mourinho was included on the shortlist for Coach of the Year despite failing to win any major trophies with Real Madrid last season, a performance the Portuguese himself described as "disastrous".

The only British player to make the list was Wales international Gareth Bale.

African Nations Cup winning coach Stephen Keshi of Nigeria was overlooked and Manchester City midfielder Yaya Toure was the only African to make either list. There were no representatives from Asia or CONCACAF.

German internationals Manuel Neuer, Bastian Schweinsteiger, Thomas Mueller and Philipp Lahm, Frenchman Franck Ribery and Dutchman Arjen Robben were the Bayern players on the list.

Joining the Bayern contingent were the usual favourites such as Lionel Messi, Andres Iniesta and Cristiano Ronaldo.

De Villiers seeks early lead

AFP, Sharjah

South Africa captain AB de Villiers vowed to attack Pakistan for a winning start in the opening one-day match in Sharjah on Wednesday despite his team being down two key playmakers.

The Proteas are missing both star batsman Hashim Amla and spearhead Dale Steyn for the first two matches of the five match one-day series.

But de Villiers insists his team are brimming with confidence, especially after they managed to square the Test series 1-1, winning the second showdown in Dubai by an innings and 92 runs.

"We didn't have much time for preparation so it's really up for us mentally to get prepared but it's important to have a good start, get used to the conditions and adapt as quickly as possible and attack them in areas where they are not strong," said de Villiers on Tuesday.

India must win today

PTI, Nagpur

Handicapped by the poor form of some of their key bowlers, India will be under intense pressure as they go into the do-or-die sixth one-day international against an upbeat Australia on Wednesday, fully aware that any slip-up at this stage could cost them the series.

The visitors are sitting pretty with a 2-1 lead in the best-of-seven series after the successive wash-outs of the fourth and fifth games.

The onus is on India, whose under-performing players, need to pull up their socks and fire in unison to upset the apple cart of the Australians.

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Flamini out for weeks

REUTERS, London

Arsenal midfielder Mathieu Flamini could be out for two to three weeks, missing a run of hugely significant games, after injuring his groin in Saturday's 2-0 Premier League win at Crystal Palace.