

Post-Sachin
India's new
beginning
1st SA Test from today
PTI, Johannesburg

The thrashing in ODIs behind them, India will be aiming to start the post-Sachin Tendulkar era in Test cricket on a positive note but the task looks daunting as they would be up against the world's number one side South Africa in the two-match series starting on Wednesday.

At the Wanderers Stadium, after losing the three-ODI series 2-0, the visitors will be looking to make their first mark on the tour, in what will be a new era in the annals of Indian cricket.

For this is the first Test match for Team India following the retirement of Sachin Tendulkar. The Master Blaster bid farewell after playing his 200th Test versus West Indies in Mumbai, in what was an emotional roller-coaster for the entire nation's cricket fans.

Since then, six ODIs have been played against the Windies and here in South Africa. The contrasting results in these two series had taken some focus off the issues emanating from Tendulkar's retirement. Now, they need to be addressed.

The first question to be asked is who will bat at number four? The true realisation of Tendulkar's departure will dawn when a new face comes in to bat at the fall of the second wicket during India's first innings in this Test.

It probably will be Virat Kohli, attempting to fill in the big boots, an unenviable task surely.

It fits the context of this Test series. This is India's first overseas Test in nearly two years, since their tour to Australia in 2011-12.

World Cup trophy lands in Dhaka

ATIQUE ANAM



Rumour has it that the FIFA World Cup trophy was once stolen. Rumour also has it that a chunk of it came out while under possession of the then Italian captain Fabio Cannavaro, the night after their triumph in 2006. But those are only rumours, unfounded ones. Rumours tend to latch on to high profile and desirable objects whether there be any truth in them or not. The FIFA

World Cup trophy, the most coveted prize in football and probably all of sport, has courted rumours ever since its creation in 1971 by the famed Italian designer Silvio Gazzaniga.

The truth is that the trophy was never stolen or broken, and remains under the vigilance of FIFA all the time. The truth is that the original FIFA World Cup trophy never toured Bangladesh before -- well, not before yesterday, when it came for its maiden visit to our country as part of its 267-day journey around 89 countries ahead of the 2014 FIFA World Cup in Brazil.

The trophy spent a hectic first day in Bangladesh yesterday. It arrived from the United Arab Emirates on board an MD-83 aircraft -- liveried in the colours of Coca Cola and the 2014 WC host nation Brazil -- which touched down at the Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport at 12:35pm and was received by the Bangladesh Football Federation president Kazi Salahuddin and other BFF officials. After a short photo session, the trophy paid a courtesy call on the President of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, Advocate Abdul Hamid at his Bangabhaban residence and later paid a visit to the Prime Minister's residence, Ganabhaban.

As per FIFA protocol, only a head of state and the national football captain of a country can touch the gilded trophy on these tours. So at Bangabhaban the president laid his hands on the trophy while at Ganabhaban Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and her family took pictures with the trophy. Salahuddin and national football coach Lodewijk de Kruif were also present on the occasion.

The trophy was then brought to the Radisson Blu Water Garden Hotel in the evening where it was officially unveiled before the media. The biggest prize of them all will spend the night at the hotel and will be on display at the hotel from 9:00am to 6:00pm today for ticket-holders.

KEY FACTS ABOUT THE TROPHY

Designer: Silvio Gazzaniga
Height: 14.4 inches
Weight: 6.175 Kilograms
Content: Gold (18 carat) with malachite base
What it depicts: Two human figures holding up the earth as a sign of victory.
Year of making: 1971



BFF's senior vice-president Abdus Salam Murshedy (2nd from L) and Coca-Cola officials admire the FIFA World Cup trophy during its unveiling ceremony at the Radisson Hotel in city yesterday.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

Trophy at Radisson, not BNS

SPORTS REPORTER



After daylong confusion about the venue of display of the FIFA World Cup trophy, it was confirmed last night that the display will take place at the Radisson Blu Water Garden Hotel, instead of at the Bangabandu National Stadium (BNS) as originally scheduled. Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) president Kazi Salahuddin and Coca Cola's country manager Debashish Deb briefed the media at the hotel shortly before 9:00pm saying that the display will take place at the hotel as there are logistical issues involved which are not feasible at the BNS.

"This is due to logistics that we

cannot afford at the BNS. It was our fault that we had fixed the programme at BNS, without really analysing all the logistical issues. We have been instructed from the Coca Cola head office in Atlanta and Zurich (FIFA head office) to hold it here at the hotel because they want to keep track of who is getting in and out of the venue," said Salahuddin, claiming that it was not due to any security reasons.

"Only the venue has been shifted, but the programmes of the two days will remain the same and the ticket-holders will be able to enjoy the programmes," said Deb. Earlier however, a Coca Cola official had said that the event may have to be curtailed.

The press briefing came two hours after the trophy was unveiled before the media, which itself was deferred by more than an hour. A scheduled

interactive session with the media was called off as the FIFA delegates, Coca Cola representatives and BFF officials all left without answering questions.

It was learnt that BFF had tried all day to convince FIFA to hold the trophy display at the BNS, which had undergone all the preparations for the two-day display. It has also been learnt from an unconfirmed source that FIFA had expressed their unwillingness for the trophy to travel and be put on public display at the BNS on security grounds.

None of the BFF officials, FIFA and Coca Cola representatives however cited security fears as the reason to shift the venue. The securities committee chairman and BFF member Sheikh Mohammad Maruf Hasan confirmed that the highest level of security was ensured.



Australia cricketers celebrate after taking the final England wicket on the final day of the third Ashes Test in Perth yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

Ashes back in Australia

AFP, Perth



Australia fought past a determined rearguard to seal their third big win in a row against old enemy England and regain the Ashes in emphatic style after a gap of four years Tuesday.

In front of a delirious crowd at Perth's WACA ground, England's resistance came to an end after lunch on the last day as they were all out for 353, a deficit of 150 runs.

The victory, which followed wins of 381 and 218 runs in Brisbane and Perth, gave Australia an unbeatable 3-0 lead in the five-match series and their first Ashes triumph in four attempts.

It capped a remarkable turnaround for Australia, who were unfancied going into the series just months after a 3-0 loss in England. They also suffered defeats in 2009 and 2010-2011.

English rookie Ben Stokes, 22, frayed Australian nerves with a dogged 120, his maiden Test century, before he was caught brilliantly by Brad Haddin after lunch, triggering a clatter of England's last wickets.

Fittingly fast bowler Mitchell Johnson, whose destructive spells have played a large part in Australia's victory, took the decisive scalp when he had tail-enders James Anderson caught at short leg.

England captain Alastair Cook, who on Monday was out for the first golden duck of his career in his landmark 100th Test, admitted the heavy series defeat was painful.

However, the pain may not be over for England as Clarke, now seeking a return to the world number one ranking for Australia, sets his immediate sights on a 5-0 whitewash.

"I am going to enjoy 3-0 for as long as I can tonight. I am going to enjoy this feeling, but I can guarantee you there won't be any complacency," he said.

"We will turn up [for the next Test] in Melbourne 100 per cent ready to go and be doing everything we have done in the first three Test matches."

Set a record 504 to win, England went to lunch on the final day at 332-6 after losing just one wicket in the morning session, that of Matt Prior for 26.

SCOREBOARD

AUSTRALIA: First innings 385 (Smith 111; Broad 3-100)		Bresnan c Rogers b Johnson		12
ENGLAND: First innings 251 (Cook 72; Siddie 3-36)		Swann c Smith b Lyon		4
AUSTRALIA: Second innings 369-6 decd (Warner 112, Watson 103; Bresnan 2-53)		Broad not out		2
ENGLAND: Second innings (overnight 251-5)		Anderson c Bailey b Johnson		2
Cook b Harris		Extras: (b-13, lb-13, w-6)		32
Carberry lbw Watson		Total: (All out in 103.2 overs)		353
Root c Haddin b Johnson		Fall of wickets: 1-0, 2-62, 3-76, 4-121, 5-220, 6-296, 7-336, 8-347, 9-349		
Pietersen c Harris b Lyon		Bowler	O	M
Bell c Haddin b Siddie		Harris	19	2
Stokes c Haddin b Lyon		Johnson	25.2	6
Prior c Haddin b Johnson		Lyon	22	5
		Siddie	26	11
		Watson	11	1
		Result:	Australia won by 150 runs and lead	

Pak-SL first ODI today

AFP, Sharjah

In-form Pakistan are seeking to build on their recent thrilling one-day triumph in South Africa when they take on dangerous but rusty Sri Lanka in a five-match series starting in the United Arab Emirates on Wednesday.

Pakistan last month sealed their first-ever ODI series win against the Proteas, beating them 2-1 just weeks after a 4-1 drubbing against the same opposition in the UAE.

Skipper Misbahul Haq, whose side lie sixth in the one-day rankings, two places lower than Sri Lanka.

T20 tourney still in the works

SPORTS REPORTER



The next course of action for the national cricketers after the completion of the three-match T20 Challenge series is yet to be determined as the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) is still trying to organise another T20 tournament.

There has been widespread support for the arrangement of another T20 competition for the national players ahead of next year's ICC World Twenty20 as the Tigers do not yet seem fully comfortable playing the newest version of the sport.

The board is desperately trying to arrange a four-team T20 tournament so that they best utilise the leisure time before the home series against Sri

Lanka, who will arrive in Dhaka on January 24 to play two Tests, three ODIs and two T20 Internationals. A few rounds of the National Cricket League -- one of two domestic first-class competitions -- is scheduled to take place in early January and the board is keen to squeeze in the T20 tournament before that.

It was learnt that the players for the four teams have already been selected and efforts are now underway to sell the team to corporate houses. Negotiations with two corporate houses have been completed, while another has given its preliminary consent. Uncertainty however remains over the fourth team.

This time the board is also trying to gain a sponsor and negotiate with TV channels for live coverage of the tournament. The recently concluded

series involving the national side and the A team garnered huge interest among cricket lovers but the board failed to capitalise on its commercial value.

"Hopefully you will get a concrete result regarding this tournament tomorrow (Wednesday) but the board wants to utilise the leisure time in the best possible way," said BCB's media committee chairman Jalal Yunus.

In case the board does fail to form four teams, the national players will then start training as per the guideline of head coach Shane Jurgensen, who handed over his plan to the cricket operations committee yesterday before flying home.

The foreign support staff, Jurgensen included, have gone for long holidays to celebrate Christmas and New Year and are likely to return to business by

V-DAY SPORTS

Army move into semis

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Army confirmed their semifinal berth of the Victory Day Hockey Tournament after mauling Ajax SC 9-1 in their group match at the Maulana Bhasani Hockey Stadium yesterday.

National striker Abdul Malek struck five goals, Milon Hossain scored twice and Tarun Tripura and Ripon Kumar netted one goal each for Army, who dominated the first half 4-1 before adding five more goals. Prashanto scored the consolation goal for Ajax, who had earlier suffered a 7-0 defeat at the hands of Abahani.

Schedule set for MSC polls

SPORTS REPORTER

The election commission for the Mohammedan Sporting Club Limited declared the schedule of the polls to be held on December 29 to elect its board of directors.

Some 210 permanent members will elect the president and 16 members of the MSC board of directors for a two-year term for the second time since the Black and White outfit turned into a limited company in early 2011.

The current board of directors were elected unopposed in the September 21 elections in 2011 following the withdrawals of some heavyweight candidates like Abdus Salam Murshedy, Badal Roy, Mahbub Anam, Mustaq Ahmed and others while former president Mosaddek Hossain Falu did not submit the nomination despite buying it.

The first election was also deferred three times following lawsuits filed by it members.

This time those heavyweight members -- who were absent from the board of directors for the last two years -- intend to return to the board through a 'compromised panel' in the greater interest of the club, which has been struggling to form strong teams, mainly in football and cricket.

However, Lokman Hossain Bhuiyan, members' in charge of current board, ruled out of any possibility of forming a 'compromised board'. Instead, he believes the elections will make the elected directors accountable to its members and a large number of supporters.