

# SPORT

## CELEBRATING 2014

### THE YEAR OF SPORTS



Bangladesh captain Mushfiqur Rahim (L) and all-rounder Shakib Al Hasan play a game of football as part of their training at the Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium in Chittagong yesterday.

## We stuck to our disciplines: Kumar

NAIMUL KARIM from Chittagong

The phrase 'cool as a cucumber' would perhaps be an understatement to describe Kumar Sangakkara's chilled demeanour in Bangladesh. The 36-year-old seemed to be in no hurry at all in the training session at the Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium yesterday. And why should he? He has hammered more than 1300 runs against the hosts at an astounding average of 81.88. In fact, some even dismissed his 75 in the first Test as a below-par performance.

It was no surprise when the former Sri Lankan captain exuded confidence ahead of the second Test yesterday

"It was very good to see that we stuck to our disciplines and our basics really well – especially from Mahela, Kaushal Silva and Kithuruwan. I thought they were excellent. Kithuruwan especially, coming in almost on the morning of the game for Prasanna, and to be able to do what he did shows a special talent," said Sangakkara.

Despite the thrashing win in the first Test, the 36-year-old refused to take it easy and believed that the pressure would still be on.

"We're pretty much used to Bangladesh putting up a pretty good fight usually. They pushed us in the Test series at home, and we walked away with a one-all in the one-day

series. We won't expect anything less than that from them here. So the earlier game was easier than we thought it would be, but we expect it to be different here," he added.

A former wicketkeeper-captain himself, there was a time when Sangakkara did exactly what Mushfiqur Rahim is doing for Bangladesh right now. Mushfiqur's performance behind the stumps in the first Test led many to question if the captain was getting overwhelmed by the multiple responsibilities. Sangakkara felt that only Mushfiqur himself could answer the crucial question.

"We bat in different positions. He bats at 6, and I've always batted at 3. I used to keep and bat no. 3, so after you've kept for a long time and you walk in at 3 – especially if an opener gets out pretty early – that was one of the reasons I was asked to give up keeping.

"That's a question for the Bangladeshi selectors and Mushfiqur to answer for himself. It really depends on what you enjoy and how you do it. If you're batting at 6, I don't think the fatigue factor comes into it too much. You can put your legs up and take a break. It's really what's good for the side at the end," said Sangakkara.

Asked if the visitors had chances of getting complacent in the second Test following the thumping win, he said, "Whether we are complacent or not can only be seen when we start playing. Complacency is not something we think about or pay much attention to."

## Delight for Dhaka sides

SPORTS REPORTER



Dhaka Division and Dhaka Metro emerged victorious at the end of the first round of National Cricket League yesterday. Dhaka beat Rangpur by ten wickets at the Shaheed Kamruzzaman Stadium in Rajshahi, while Dhaka Metro thumped Chittagong by 127 runs at the Shaheed Chandu Stadium in Bogra. At the Sheikh Abu Naser Stadium, hosts Khulna and Barisal settled for a draw.

Dhaka's enormous first innings score of 616 for 7 was enough to hold Rangpur as the latter were bundled out twice, once for 315 and then for 309. Dhaka just required nine runs to win and did so in the first over. Dhaka's Mohammad Sharif for his seven wickets and 78 runs was adjudged the player of the match.

In Bogra, chasing a target of 315, Chittagong crumbled for just 188 in their second innings and succumbed to a thrashing defeat. Shahid was adjudged the player of the match for his ten-wicket haul.

In Khulna, chasing a target of 219 on the last day, the home side were restricted to 122 for 5 as the match went on to a draw.

**KHULNA:** 357 and 114 all out in 51.1 overs (Taposh Ghosh 41; Kamrul 4-31)

**BARISAL:** 252 and 122 for 5 (Iftekhar Nayeem 39; Dollar Mahmud 2-13)

**Result:** Match drawn

**DHAKA:** 616 for 7 dec. and 9 for no loss

**RANGPUR:** 315 and 309 all out (Ariful Haque 98, Tanvir 95; Mohd Sharif 4-76)

**Result:** Dhaka won by ten wickets

**DHAKA METRO:** 221 and 289

**CHITTAGONG:** 195 and 188 all out (Nafees Iqbal 68, Faisal Hossain 49; Saykat Ali 5-31, Shohid 4-46)

**Result:** Dhaka Metro won by 127 runs.

## Ready to make amends

NAIMUL KARIM from Chittagong

Almost every aspect of Bangladesh's training yesterday, at the Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium in Chittagong, represented the hosts' desperate effort for a turnaround in the series.

From Mushfiqur Rahim grasping on to the induced-edges during catching practice and the likes of Imrul Kayes and Shamsur Rahman getting to bat ahead of Marshall Ayub at the nets, to breaking into a team huddle after every session, the hosts' did everything they could to ensure a fresh start ahead of the second Test tomorrow.

According to ace-allrounder Shakib Al Hassan, the mood at the camp was a lot better than the day after the drubbing inns defeat in Dhaka.

"The day after the first Test got over, everyone was down and felt sad, but at the moment everyone is fine and focussed for the next match," said Shakib before the start of the camp.

"Matches can go bad, these things happen, but coming back is very important. We have come back from situations like these before, so we have that experience. We have to improve in all the aspects, the fielding especially is very important," said the all-rounder.

Shakib's extra emphasis on fielding was understandable. The hosts had given away plenty of opportunities on the field at crucial intervals in the first Test.

"If you notice, the batsmen who scored big runs, such as Mahela [Jayawardene], all of them were given a chance, either through a stumping or a drop-catch. Even apart from Mahela, the

other centurion got four to five lives.

"Had we grasped those opportunities they would have scored around 500 and there's plenty of difference between 500 and 700. When it became 700, we knew that we had no other option but to bat for two days and that was difficult," said Shakib.

The surprising aspect was that Mushfiqur was the prime culprit on the field, dropping at least four chances, including that of centurions Jayawardene and Kaushal Silva. When asked if the captain required any words of encouragement from the senior players in the side, Shakib merely brushed the concern aside.

"Everyone is a professional, yes sometimes players need to be encouraged but I don't think that's the case for him (Mushfiqur). Mushfiqur's keeping has improved a lot more than before. He himself said that he does not remember the last time he had kept that way, so it can happen in a game. A batsman can be out for a duck, a bowler can give away more than a 100 runs, that day is long over," said Shakib.

There's no doubt that this Bangladesh side has the ability to fight back from weary situations. At Galle last year, they overcame a massive 570 against Sri Lanka by scoring 638 in the first innings. They also came back from a horrendous performance in the first Test to level the series against Zimbabwe in April last year.

The odds of levelling this series, on a flat deck at the ZACS, seem a lot more difficult. However, even before thinking of a win, their immediate aim will be to get their batting in order, an aspect which looked far from being set in the first Test.

## Negre assures new turf at Bhasani

SPORTS REPORTER

Leandro Negre, the president of International Hockey Federation (FIH), left Bangladesh in the early hours of Monday after a three-day visit and after assuring that the proposed astro-turf at the Maulana Bhasani Stadium is close to reality, as he had held fruitful discussions with the state minister for youth and sports Biren Shikder MP and president of Bangladesh Hockey Federation Air Marshal Enamul Bari.

"I had two issues for coming here, one was to inaugurate the school hockey tournament and the other was to talk about the development of hockey in Bangladesh, especially about the turf at the national stadium. I can say that the turf is close to reality as I had fruitful discussions with all the parties. I will be back in September to inaugurate the new turf as well as the World

Hockey League and a MoU will be signed with the BHF in the meantime," said Negre at a press conference at the Bangladesh Olympic Association yesterday.

The turf will cost around 300,000 dollars and International Olympic Committee will bear half the cost while FIH will bear one quarter and the rest will be provided from Bangladesh.

The FIH president also made a pledge about providing a 40-square-feet sand-filled turf free of cost at one of the schools in Dhaka, although the name of the school was not mentioned. The turf will be provided by the Sports Technology International, a sports pitch manufacturing company whose managing director Stephen Niven inspected some of the feasible locations.

Negre also informed that they have discussed about the floodlights at the hockey stadium with an American company, but the details of it are yet to be finalised.

## Millien returns Set to play today

SPORTS REPORTER



Pascal Millien is set to make his debut in the Bangladesh Premier League when holders Sheikh Russel KC take on four-time champions Abahani at the Bangabandhu National Stadium today.

Millien, who left Dhaka on January 20, four days after his initial arrival without notifying his club on following disagreement over his payment terms, returned on Saturday night and had a warm-up session with the team at the BUET ground yesterday.

Having dropped 10 points in seven matches, Sheikh Russel are desperately looking to bounce back in the title race and the inclusion of the Haitian attacking midfielder will definitely sharpen their attacking line-up.

Coach Maruf Haque informed that Millien would replace Moroccan striker Youness Roux, who is nursing an injury while Mithun Chowdhury will also be sidelined due to injury.

## Usha, Abahani face off

SPORTS REPORTER

Title contenders Usha KC and Abahani will lock horns in the final match of the first leg of Green Delta Insurance Premier Division Hockey League at the Maulana Bhasani National Hockey Stadium today with an eye on securing full points entering into the Super League stage.

Both the giants will go into the crucial game on the back of five straight wins, which they managed with only local players, but now they are ready to field their Pakistani recruits for this crucial fixture.

Abahani flew in four Pakistan national team members Kashif Ali, Amir Shezad, Mohammad Towsif and Hasim Khan while Club Cup champions Usha too signed up four Pakistani national players -- Shafkat Rasul, Imran Butt, Syed Kashif and Newaz Ashfaq -- and all of them are set to play today.

## তুমি জাগলেই জাগবে বাংলাদেশ

আর দেশকে জানলেই জাগবে তুমি।

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