

SPORT

TIGERS DOWN UNDER

Can he break the jinx?

NAIMUL KARIM

Time and again, the Tigers come up with a spinner who forces his way into the national team after a string of impressive performances in domestic cricket.

Shohag Gazi came into light after a six-wicket haul and a century in the same match during a four-dayer and eventually made the Test team in 2012. Elias Sunny, debuted in 2011 after an impressive display for Bangladesh A against South Africa.

They made fantastic starts to their international careers as well. Gazi's off-spinners scalped a six-wicket haul in his opening Test. Sunny did the same against the West Indies in 2011. The disappointing aspect though was the way their careers dwindled. Gazi's form took a hit barely a year after his debut, while Sunny's inability to sustain at the top level gave him the 'meant only for domestic leagues' tag.

And that's the reason why there was a hint of caution amidst the excitement when Taijul Islam recorded Bangladesh's best bowling figures in Test cricket last November, or even when he became the first ever cricketer to take a hat-trick on debut.

Test captain Mushfiqur Rahim had issued a warning of sorts: "Please don't make this young cricketer feel like he is a big player. It is our job to perform and he did that," he urged the media.

Mushfiqur's concern was understandable. The bowler's domestic record after all, followed, or perhaps even bettered, his predecessors. He had taken 37 wickets, the highest in the tournament, for North Zone in the last edition of the Bangladesh Cricket League in 2014. He had also taken a 10-



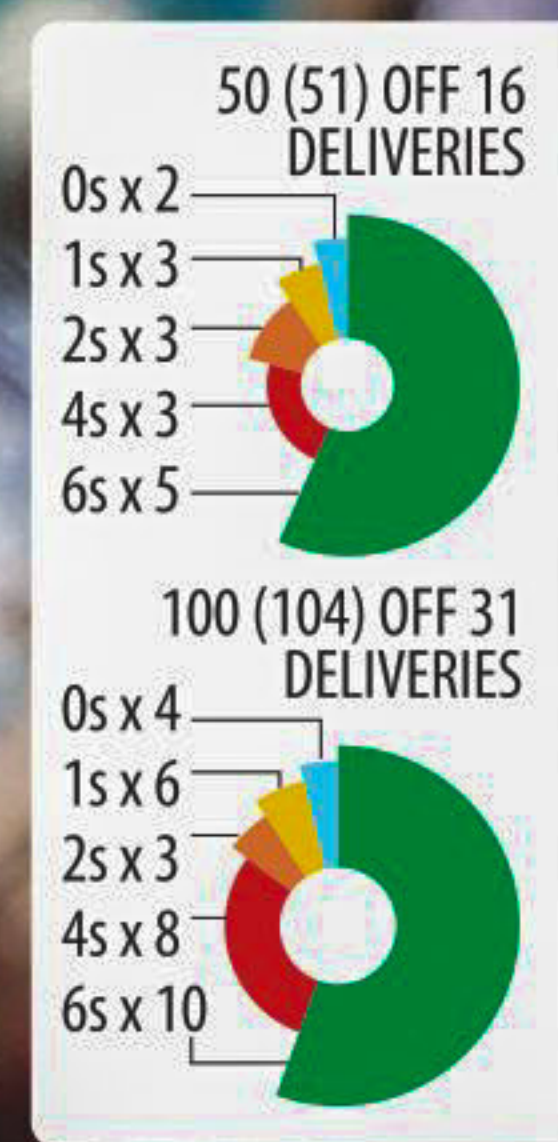
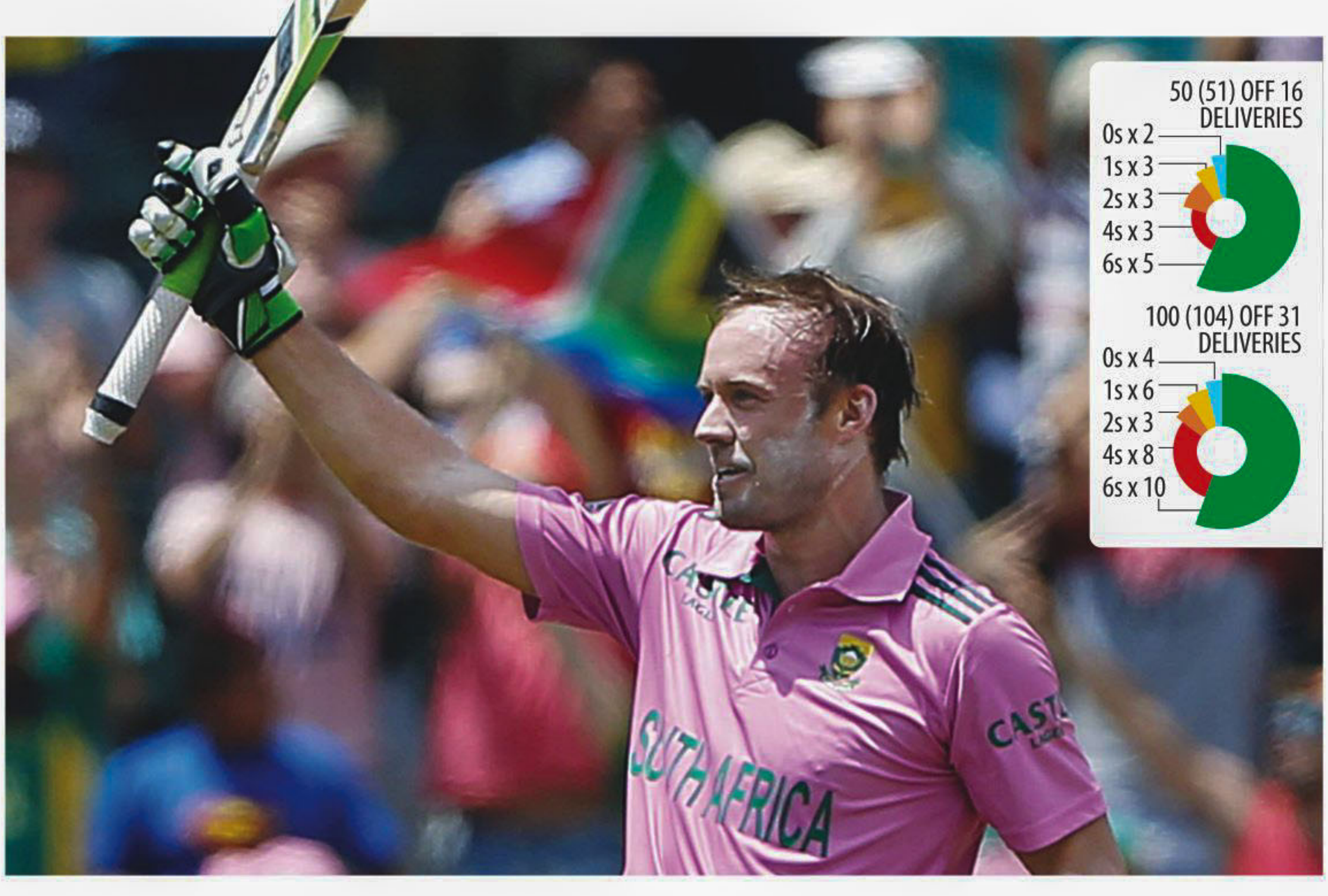
PICTURE WITHIN A PICTURE: Spinner Taijul Islam has his hat-trick moment framed. PHOTO: STAR

wicket haul in the National Cricket League the same year. That was followed by a hard-fought five-for on his Test debut in the West Indies.

His ability to use the bounce and get wickets compelled selectors to include him in the World Cup, where bouncy pitches are expected to dominate. Taijul has come a long way since his debut three months ago. However, history suggests that he has a long ricketty road ahead.

The left-armed exuded confidence during the pre-World Cup press conference. "I want to finish as one of the event's top ten wicket-takers."

It was an ambitious statement, but one that had been heard before. The question that remains is whether Taijul can overcome the uncanny sense of satisfaction that is supposed to have had led to the downfall of a number of young Tigers and break the jinx.



AB-solutely de Villiers

AFP, Johannesburg

AB de Villiers hit the fastest century in one-day international history as South Africa overwhelmed the West Indies in the second one-day international at the Wanderers in Johannesburg on Sunday.

De Villiers raced to his century off 31 balls - five balls fewer than the previous record - on the way to an astonishing 149 off 44 balls.

With opening batsmen Hashim Amla and Rilee Rossouw also hitting centuries in a South African record first wicket stand, South Africa piled up a massive 439 for two.

The West Indies were never likely to chase down a world record target but managed a respectable 291 for seven to give South Africa a 148-run win and a 2-0 lead in the five-match series.

De Villiers gave credit to Amla and Rossouw for building a foundation. He said he had planned to send in David Miller for the closing overs but was persuaded by coach Russell Domingo to go in himself.

"There was always going to be a lot of aggressive batting around Hash at the end," said De Villiers.

"It just came off for me. I did a lot of walks up and down in the change room thinking about how I should be playing.

"I got fired up in the change room, I sort of played my knock before I came out to bat. Aggression was probably the main thing for me, I just wanted to go from the word go."

FOUR FASTEST CENTURIANS IN ODIs

Batsman	Country	Balls	Opponents	Venue
AB de Villiers	South Africa	31	West Indies	Johannesburg
Corey Anderson	New Zealand	36	West Indies	Queenstown
Shahid Afridi	Pakistan	37	Sri Lanka	Nairobi
Mark Boucher	South Africa	44	Zimbabwe	Potchefstroom

FOUR FASTEST HALF-CENTURIANS IN ODIs

Batsman	Country	Balls	Opponents	Venue
AB de Villiers	South Africa	16	West Indies	Johannesburg
S Jayasuriya	Sri Lanka	17	Pakistan	Singapore
Simon O'Donnell	Australia	18	Sri Lanka	Sharjah
Shahid Afridi	Pakistan	18	Sri Lanka	Nairobi

HIGHEST TEAM TOTALS IN ODIs

Team	Score	Result	Opponents
Sri Lanka	443/9	won	Netherlands
South Africa	439/2	won	West Indies
South Africa	438/9	won	Australia
Australia	434/4	lost	South Africa
South Africa	418/5	won	Zimbabwe
India	418/5	won	West Indies

HIGHEST 6s IN AN ODI INNINGS

Batsman	Country	Score	6s	Opponents
Rohit Sharma	India	209	16	Australia
AB de Villiers	South Africa	149	16	West Indies
Shane Watson	Australia	185*	15	Bangladesh
Corey Anderson	New Zealand	131*	14	West Indies
Xavier Marshall	West Indies	157*	12	Canada

Amla (153 not out) and Rossouw (128) put on 247 for the first wicket - a record partnership for any wicket for South Africa.

Rossouw was dismissed off the third ball of the 39th over. De Villiers promoted himself to number three and struck the ball out of the middle of his bat from the first delivery he faced, which he thrashed for four past bowler Jerome Taylor.

He went to fifty off 16 balls, one fewer than Sanath Jayasuriya's previous record for the fastest half-century, for Sri Lanka against Pakistan in 1995/96, then powered his way past Corey Anderson's record for the fastest century.

He took five balls fewer than Anderson's hundred for New Zealand against the West Indies in 2013/14.

The South African captain's innings included 16 sixes, equalling the world record set by Rohit Sharma when he hit 209 for India against Australia in Bangalore in 2013/14.

He also hit nine fours in an innings which had a near-capacity crowd at the Wanderers 'bullring' roaring in approval.

South Africa went past their own previous highest total - the 438 for nine they scored in a record run chase against Australia on the same ground in 2005/06.

SCORES IN BRIEF

SOUTH AFRICA: 439 for 2 in 50 overs (Amla 153 not out, Rossouw 128, De Villiers 149; Taylor 1-95, Russell 1-78)

WEST INDIES: 291 for 7 in 50 overs (D Smith 64, Ramdin 57, Samuels 40, Carter 40; Morkel 2-43, Philander 2-69)

Result: South Africa won by 148 runs.

Player-of-the-match: AB de Villiers.

WHAT they say

"Not the worst entertainment from AB right now. Best in the world without a doubt."

Brendan Taylor
Zimbabwe batsman

"Have to say @ABdeVilliers17 is the definition of a Cricketing Genius... absolutely incredible... #31BallTon"

Michael Vaughan
Former England captain

"Happy new year @ABdeVilliers17 well played mate"

Shahid Afridi
Pakistan all-rounder

"AB de Villiers has scored 149 runs from 44 balls. That is as preposterous as his name. Remarkable performance!"

Gary Lineker
Former England footballer

"I demand a DNA test of AB DeVilliers...this game is only for humans. #superhuman #WhatAPlayer"

Aakash Chopra
Former India batsman

"If ab faced as many balls as Amla he'd be on 450ish"

Ben Laughlin
Australia fast bowler

"@ABdeVilliers17 thanks you for raising so much awareness on #PinkDay18Jan with the greatest innings ever played in a one day game ! Hats off"

Yuvraj Singh
India all-rounder

"@ABdeVilliers17 this guy is a freak. Unbelievable"

Kyle Jarvis
Zimbabwe fast bowler

"World record fastest ODI century - Congrats @ABdeVilliers17!"

Shaun Pollock
Former South Africa captain

HOCKEY WORLD LEAGUE BD trounce Mexico

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh got their Hockey World League (Round-2) campaign back on track by thumping Mexico 6-1 in their second match of Pool B in Singapore yesterday.

Having suffered a 1-5 goal defeat against Japan in their opening fixture on Saturday, Bangladesh produced a spirited fightback yesterday as they came from a goal down to beat the Central American side by a big margin.

Bangladesh conceded the opening goal in the 19th went into the second-quarter break with trailing, before they scored six goals in the next two quarters. Vice-captain Sarwar Hossain initiated the comeback, converting a penalty corner in the 32nd minute before Rasel Mahmud Jimmy gave Bangladesh the lead from open play five minutes later. Pushkor Khisha Mimo made it 3-1 in the 43rd minute before Jimmy, who

recently returned to the national fold after serving one year's suspension, doubled his tally a minute later. Sarwar then scored two more goals in the 50th and 60th minutes of the match to complete the rout. All the goals, except for the equaliser, came from open play.

Despite the win, the Bangladesh think-tank was far from satisfied. "We played well in all departments in the last two quarters, but overall we could have played better. I hope that the players will overcome the troubles they are having in the opening quarters during the match against Poland on Tuesday," said assistant manager Mamunur Rashid in his post-match reaction.

Poland lead the table with six points from two matches, followed by Japan and Bangladesh, who have three points each while Mexico are bottom of the table without a point from two matches.

Aussie Open from today

Big guns have different missions

AFP, Melbourne

Novak Djokovic and Roger Federer begin their quest for five Australian Open titles while Serena Williams is chasing her 19th Grand Slam crown in the year's first major starting Monday.

World number one Djokovic looms as the player to beat in the men's draw having won four of the last seven Australian editions, and he holds an affinity with the hardcourts in Melbourne.

While Djokovic has never lost a final in Melbourne, Federer will be again be the

sentimental favourite at 33 years old, pursuing his 18th major title having not won one since Wimbledon 2012.

Nadal suffered a shock defeat in his first match of the season in Doha to German qualifier Michael Berrer on the way to Australia.

Britain's Andy Murray has lost three finals in Melbourne and will have to get past Federer and Nadal to make his fourth.

World number one Williams is tied with Chris Evert and Martina Navratilova with 18 Grand Slams behind all-time leader Margaret Court (24) but hasn't won in Australia since 2010, something she is determined to fix.

A Starc victory

AFP, Melbourne

Paceman Mitchell Starc took 6-43 to help Australia to a four-wicket victory over India on Sunday, their second in succession in the one-day international tri-series, despite a brilliant Rohit Sharma century.

Sharma's 138 at the Melbourne Cricket Ground enabled India to post a competitive total of 267 for eight after winning the toss and electing to bat.

However, on a placid pitch it always appeared slightly less than required and Australian opener Aaron Finch countered Sharma's century with a match-winning knock of his own.

Finch made 96 as Australia rattled up 269 for six, winning with six balls to spare.

He received great support from the in-form Steve Smith (47). The pair put on 101 for the third wicket as the home side appeared to be coasting to victory.

However, Finch fell when a century beckoned, caught behind by Indian captain Mahendra Singh Dhoni in the bowling of Umesh Yadav, as the tourists made an unlikely late bid to snatch victory.

In an unexpectedly tense finish, Brad Haddin and James Faulkner got the Australians home with an unbroken 21-run stand.

Australian captain George Bailey, who faces a one-match suspension for slow over rates after his second breach in under 12 months, admitted he was disappointed the finish was so close.

"Would have been nice if we hadn't left it up to Faulkner," he said. "We dragged it back really well with the ball. We had the momentum when we came off the field."

In a blow to India, paceman Mohammed Shami was forced off the field with a leg problem after bowling the first ball of the 47th over.

Dhoni sought to stress the positives for his team, particularly the way they had responded when the game appeared lost. "That [attitude] will win us tournaments," he said.

India's innings was dogged by a poor start and a disappointing finish.

SCORES IN BRIEF

INDIA: 267 for 8 in 50 overs (Sharma 138, Raina 51, Dhoni 19, Ashwin 14 not out; Starc 6-43)

AUSTRALIA: 269 for 6 in 49 overs (Finch 96, Warner 24, Watson 41, Smith 47, Maxwell 20; Yadav 2-55)

Result: Australia won by four wickets.

Player-of-the-match: Mitchell Starc.

JUMMON LUSAI loses final battle

SPORTS REPORTER

Jummon Lusai was a man who had won many a battle during his illustrious hockey career. The full-back of the Bangladesh national hockey team of the 1980s had become such a powerful figure that he was drafted into the World XI for an exhibition match against the then world champions Pakistan in 1989.

Jummon was the first Bangladeshi player to score a hat-trick, during an Asia Cup match against Iran in 1989.

That glorious life came to an untimely end yesterday. Doctors at the Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University pronounced him dead at around 2:00pm yesterday as the life support system, which he was put on following a brain haemorrhage on Friday, could no more resuscitate the failing heart. Lusai was 59.

Many of his colleagues, admirers and well wishers rushed to the BSMMU on hearing the news. Everyone knew Jummon was battling against the odds -- his brain, lungs and liver had been affected severely -- yet everyone was hoping against hope that this battler would make a miraculous comeback.

"We were footballers and he (Jummon) was a hockey player. Yet, he was a hero in our eyes. We never thought he would leave us so soon," star footballer of the 80s, Ashrafuddin Ahmed Chunnun, recalled the late icon.



The fifth son of a Marma family of Sylhet, Jummon took to hockey watching his father Harenga Lusai play for the Bangladesh Police team. Coming from a sporting family where all the members were involved with one sport or the other, Jummon had surpassed all. He started his career with Police team in 1978 before starting a life-long relationship Abahani.

As a national player, Jummon had represented Bangladesh for close to a decade, and participated in two different Asia Cup and Asian Games campaigns. After hanging up his national jersey in 1989, Jummon continued to play for Abahani before finally ending his career in 1995. By then he had become an integral member of the Abahani family, extending the tie either as coach or part of the coaching staff. He loved the club so much that he lived permanently at the club tent while his own family migrated to Mizoram in India.

An unassuming man for life, Jummon received little in recognition for his service to the nation. Only lately that authorities felt the need to recognise Jummon's services. Jummon was selected to light the torch during the opening of the 8th Bangladesh Games in 2013. He was nominated for the national sports award in 2011, even though that award is being presented.