

What to WATCH

CHANNEL 9 & BTWORLD

Bangabandhu Gold Cup

Bangladesh v Thailand

Second Semifinal

Live from 5:00pm

DRY'S EVENT

Bangabandhu Gold Cup

Bangladesh v Thailand

Second Semifinal

Venue: Bangabandhu

National Stadium

Time: 5:00pm



# Defeats don't make Mash too worried

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh captain Mashrafe Bin Mortaza was not completely disappointed after consecutive defeats in two unofficial practice matches against Australia XI at the Allan Border Field in Brisbane.

"We should not have lost the matches. True we didn't play the matches with our best combination, but we still have the best 15 players in the side. Actually we wanted to see many things and that is why we gave all the players an opportunity. I am not completely disappointed with the defeats," Mashrafe told The Daily Star Sport over phone after his side's six-wicket defeat in the second match yesterday.

Mashrafe was rested for the match along with injured pacer Taskin Ahmed but the Narail Express confirmed that he was okay. "As I worked hard in training for the past few days and played the first practice match, the team management and I felt that it would be better for me to take a rest. I have no injury problems at all," informed Mashrafe.

Bangladesh's batting was not up to the mark in two matches and they failed to put up a fighting total on the board, which resulted in the Australia XI cruising to easy wins in both games. The Bangladesh ODI skipper however was not too worried with

the batting wobble and said that he was concentrating on the positives. "Surely our batsmen missed the opportunity but I don't think our batting is a big concern. You see Shakib [Al Hasan] and Mushy [Mushfiquir Rahim] were not at their best and we missed Tamim [Iqbal]. So I believe it will be a different story when we play the next games," hoped Mashrafe.

To give an idea about how they looked at the practice matches, he said that he was out of action, while Shakib did not bowl a single over in yesterday's match.

"Some players like Soumya [Sarker] looked really good. I am looking forward to the two official practice matches. I have confidence in my boys," continued Mashrafe.

Bangladesh will leave Brisbane tomorrow for Sydney where they will play their two official practice matches against Pakistan on February 9 followed by a match against Ireland on February 12 at Blacktown ISP. After the last practice match, Mashrafe, along with team manager Khaled Mahmud, will fly to Melbourne to attend the opening ceremony of the World Cup.

Regarding Taskin's injury, Mahmud said: "During practice Taskin received minor injuries in his hand and leg and that's why we didn't take any risk. He already had an X-ray and the report suggested everything was okay with him," informed Mahmud.

BD-AUS XI SCOREBOARD									
BANGLADESH					AUSTRALIA XI				
Soumya c Pierson b Van Der Gugten	R	B	4S	6S	Clarke	2	0	6	0
Anamul run out	15	15	0	0	Heazlett	1	0	9	0
Mominul c Bosisto b Gregory	2	9	0	0					
Mahmudullah c Pierson b Conway	13	27	2	0					
Shakib c Clarke b Turner	36	62	2	0					
Mushfiquir c McDermott b Turner	2	4	0	0					
Sabbir c Willis b Conway	8	17	0	0					
Nasir c Bosisto b Turner	33	30	2	2					
Arafat c Pierson b Turner	52	56	7	0					
Rubel c b Van Der Gugten	14	36	0	0					
Tajjul not out	1	3	0	0					
Extras: (lb-3, w-11, nb-3)	0	3	0	0					
Total: (All out in 43.1 overs)	17								
	193								
Fall of wickets: 1-6, 2-23, 3-40, 4-43, 5-57, 6-121, 7-121, 8-181, 9-193.									
Bowler					Bowler				
Moody	O	M	R	W	Al-Amin	O	M	R	W
Van Der Gugten	9	0	45	0	Rubel	4	0	27	0
Gregory	6.1	0	26	2	Soumya	7	0	23	1
Turner	4.1	0	9	1	Sabbir	7	0	21	1
Conway	10	1	30	4	Mahmudullah	6	1	14	1
Muirhead	7	0	23	2	Arafat	6	0	21	0
	3.5	0	42	0	Tajjul	2	0	19	0

## Rahat in for Junaid

AFP, Lahore

Pakistan on Thursday gave rookie left-arm fast bowler Rahat Ali a surprise cricket World Cup call-up, to replace the injured Junaid Khan.

The 26-year-old Ali has played just one one-day international, in 2012, and was not considered for any of the 10 one-dayers Pakistan played in the build-up to the World Cup, which starts on February 14.

The Pakistan Cricket Board said Ali was chosen as a replacement for injured Junaid -- despite the fact he was not even in the 30-strong preliminary squad announced last month.

Pakistan picked seamer Bilawal Bhatti for the two one-day internationals against New Zealand in the hope he could fill in for Junaid.

But New Zealand's batsmen hammered Bhatti in the second ODI on Tuesday, pasting him for 93 in 10 overs. That disappointing performance forced the selectors and team management to bring Ali in to the 15-man squad.

## Clarke takes first steps

AFP, Sydney



Michael Clarke bowled, fielded and then batted with increasing fluency at Allan Border Field on Thursday to take a major step towards being passed fit to captain Australia in their second World Cup match against Bangladesh on February 21 at the Gabba.

Playing against those same Bangladesh opponents for a Cricket Australia Invitational XI, Clarke showed a fuller range of movement than some had expected, even bowling two overs of left-arm spin after the visitors batted first.

Clarke said he was satisfied with his progress, though admitted he was still some way away from reaching the fitness level required for the full intensity of a World Cup match.

"I've been bowling for the last three weeks in the nets, so the skipper needed a couple of overs so he asked if I was happy to bowl and I was certainly happy to," Clarke said. "In my opinion I think there's probably still a gap between where I am now and playing an ODI for Australia, but the fortunate thing is I have plenty of time to close that gap."

Down in Melbourne, Clarke's fellow World Cup squad member Aaron Finch was enthused by the prospect of the captain's return.

"Michael's been a quality performer for a long time in all formats of the game. To have someone as skilled as him with the bat, but also his tactical nous will be important as well," Finch said. "I don't think it makes much difference to the players, we've played under them all. Michael has done an unbelievable job for a long time, so has George in one-day cricket, and Steve is just starting out in his captaincy career."

## BIG BOYS NEED BIG BATS

West Indies' batsman Chris Gayle expressed disagreement with the ICC's proposed crackdown on bat sizes saying, "A big boy needs a big bat. People keep saying it has become a batsman's game, but bowlers are becoming more skilful too." Former Australian pacer Brett Lee also spoke in support players who use bats with thick edges, saying, "I think that if players like Gayle and Warner are strong enough to lift a bat that heavy, at that speed, then good for them, it makes the game a hell of a lot more exciting."

-- AGENCIES



## EXPECTATIONS DOWN UNDER

# 'Won't single out anyone'

SPORTS REPORTER

Defeat in the first two unofficial practice matches in Brisbane provided some food for thought regarding Bangladesh's chances in the ICC World Cup. But Bangladesh's first Test captain Naimur Rahman was not ready to put too much emphasis on the outcome of the matches, he rather urged everybody to be practical in their expectations. "Nobody likes to lose matches and wins always boost the confidence of a team. But in reality team management always tries to give everybody a chance in the practice matches and experiment as much as possible to explore the options," opined Naimur.

Though many have pointed fingers towards Bangladesh's batting, Naimur looked on the bright side. "True the conditions in Australia and New Zealand are totally different from our home, but if you see our batsmen, then you find that most of them are stroke-makers and I think it's the perfect platform for them to capitalise on their ability," he observed.

"New Zealand conditions are really tough but in Australia, if our batmen can settle down, then it's very much possible for them to play shots because the even bounce will help them to play

to their strength," he continued.

The former national skipper-turned-director of the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) however expected a lot from the team in terms of fielding. "If you consider the average age of our team you should be hopeful about our fielding. The fielding should be top class in this tournament and only a fit



NAIMUR RAHMAN

team can do it. I am looking forward to our team's fielding in this tournament," said Naimur, adding that the Tigers' preparations were not at all bad ahead of the big event.

When it comes to his expectation, the former all-rounder said he wishes that two Associate members (Afghani-

stan and Scotland) would not cause any upset against the Tigers.

"We should go match by match and I think it would be unwise to put any pressure on the team by setting any goal. The first match against Afghanistan is very important for us and I believe the team will enjoy the tournament most if they can win the first match," said Naimur.

"We lost some matches against the Associate nations last year, so we have to be careful and play our best cricket to avoid any upset. I will not mind if we lose matches against big teams while playing good cricket. But I have the belief that if we can play our best cricket then one or two wins against big opponents are not unlikely," he added.

There has been a lot of talk surrounding Shakib Al Hasan, Tamim Iqbal and Mushfiquir Rahim as many believe that they are now matured enough to show their real character to the world. Naimur however was against the idea of singling out any player. "We all know about the abilities of players like Shakib, Tamim and Mushfiquir. I am not interested to single out any player. It is also an opportunity for the upcoming players to bask in the spotlight," he said.



## WORLD CUP COCKTAIL

The World Cup promises to feature plenty of big-hitting and dramatic bowling but will there be verbal fireworks too? Not if the International Cricket Council can help it.

"The amount of sledging (verbal abuse) and disrespect shown by players to each other was bad," ICC chief executive David Richardson said, adding that match referees would come down hard on sledging at the World Cup.

Many of the best remembered 'sledges' have been relatively amusing.

For example, England fast bowler Greg Thomas once told West Indies great Vivian Richards "it's red, round and weighs about five ounces in case you were wondering" after beating the outside edge only for the 'Master Blaster', having smacked the next ball out of the ground, to reply: "You know what it looks like, you go fetch it".

Another brilliant example of sledging was when Gavaskar, normally an opener, had decided to bat at number four, but Malcolm Marshall dismissed Anshuman Gaekwad and Dilip Vengsarkar for ducks, setting the stage for Gavaskar to walk in at 0-2. Richards then said to Gavaskar: "Man, it don't matter where you come in to bat, the score is still zero."

### SA warned: 'don't be losers'

South African Sports Minister Fikile Mbalula has warned its cricket team of failure in the forthcoming World Cup, forbid-

ding them from becoming "a bunch of losers".

The comments came during the team's send-off for Australia Wednesday. They received a rousing farewell from their fans but the buoyant mood was dampened by Mbalula's deflating comments.

"We don't want you in the World Cup to add numbers and just become a bunch of losers," Mbalula was quoted.

"You are not going to be playing with robots, you are playing with people. You are the special ones. You are the chosen ones. It does not mean you are irreplaceable but all of you are capable of doing the duty for us."

## Sri Lanka get \$1M WC incentive

Sri Lanka's government Thursday announced a million dollar bonus to the national cricket team if they win this month's cricket World Cup being played in New Zealand and Australia.

"We have decided to offer this money to be shared among the team as an incentive for them to bring the World Cup," government spokesman Rajitha Senaratne told reporters.

Sri Lanka won the World Cup in 1996 and members of the 1996 squad were rewarded with duty free cars, free houses and land in addition to huge cash awards that poured in from private companies.

## Real edge Sevilla

AFP, Madrid



Real Madrid moved four points clear at the top of La Liga as goals from James Rodriguez and Jese handed them a 2-1 win over Sevilla on Wednesday.

However, the European champions will be without Sergio Ramos and Rodriguez for Saturday's crucial Madrid derby away to La Liga champions Atletico as they both limped off in the first-half.

Marcelo will definitely miss out at the Vicente Calderon after picking up his fifth booking of the season in the second-half.

Substitute Iago Aspas pulled a goal back for Sevilla late on, but defeat means their lead over Valencia in fourth remains at just a point.

Madrid were still missing the suspended Cristiano Ronaldo as he completed a two-game ban and Sevilla will rue not taking a number of chances to take advantage in the first period.

Vitolo shot straight at Iker Casillas when clean through as Madrid nearly conceded inside two minutes for the fourth time in five games.

Ramos then left the field holding his left hamstring to be replaced by Nacho.

The hosts went in front with their first serious attack as Rodriguez timed his run to perfection to head Marcelo's cross past the helpless Beto.

Vicente Iborra should have equalised moments later when he hit the post after rounding Casillas.

The game was then interrupted by two more injuries as Rodriguez suffered an injury to his right foot, whilst Sevilla goalkeeper Beto had to be carried from the field on a stretcher after an ugly collision with Karim Benzema.

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