

# SPORT



NEW ERA BEGINS HERE

The Export Leader



## Sunny way of doing things

NAIMUL KARIM

A late entrant into the national squad, 28-year-old Arafat Sunny has a unique hobby. He loves to keep pigeons as pets. In fact, there was a time when he looked after nearly a hundred pigeons at his terrace and even trained a few of them for inter-city travel.

It's a pastime that definitely needs patience and in a way that's one virtue that has helped him the most to make the national side after being in the domestic circuit for more than a decade.

And when he was drafted, last year, he was called in as a replacement for the injured Abdur Razzak in the Sri Lanka series. Many considered the change to be a temporary one.

However, 14 months on and Sunny has gradually earned himself a crucial role in this team. The journey wasn't by any means an easy task.

After all, he was asked to replace Bangladesh's highest ODI wicket-taker and that meant earning his teammates respect. In addition, he would have to do that by bowling in the powerplays a la Razzak.

Sunny's performance has stood out in the on-going series thus far. The brilliantly disguised arm-ball he delivered to bowl Mohammad Hafeez has so far been the highlight of his series.

"I really don't know how I bowled that delivery... that just happened," a wide-eyed Sunny told reporters at the team hotel yesterday.

Like his statement, Sunny's mantra remains simple. "I have been playing domestic cricket for more than a decade now and there's plenty of experience and all that. But honestly speaking I play every game as though it's my first."

"A year ago I didn't even think of making the national team... let alone make the World Cup squad and the series after. I am still not sure if I will make the next series," said the slow left-arm.

"I don't think too much about who I have replaced in the team. If I tell myself that I have to play well to stay in the team then that adds pressure. To me it's all a game-by-game thing," he added.

He entered the team at a time when the Tigers were going through a losing spree. From the disappointing Sri Lanka series to the embarrassment in the Asia Cup last year, he had seen it all. And as a result, Sunny can clearly decipher the difference in mood of the camp at the moment.

"The win against England changed everything really. The confidence that we all got from there, was amazing. In both the ODIs we just wanted to stick to our plan and do well as a team, it didn't matter whether we won or lost, we just wanted to play good cricket and that's what made the difference," explained Sunny.



Having completed a historic series victory against Pakistan on the previous night, the Tigers enjoyed the freedom of moving around the city. (Above) Soumya Sarkar takes a lift as Taskin Ahmed is driven home from the team hotel by his father while a busy-like Shakib Al Hasan (far right) gets into his car. Meanwhile, (right) Rony Talukdar gets to experience the Valentino Rossi in Sabbir Rahman as they ride in front of the hotel.

PHOTOS: FIROZ AHMED



## Pakistan in trouble, admits Waqar

AGENCIES, Karachi

As Bangladesh clinched a historic one-day series win over Pakistan on Sunday, head coach Waqar Younis had to give in to the criticism from all quarters. He admitted that the team was in 'trouble'.

"I accept what the critics say, Pakistan cricket is facing problems," Waqar said in an interview to the local media.

"Pakistan need to change the way it plays cricket. Our cricketing style is very defensive and it will take us time to get free from this mindset," he added.

The defensive playing style is not

the only worry for Pakistan though. The national team is currently facing a 'fitness crisis' of sorts. Pacemen Sohail Khan, Ehsan Adil, leg-spinner Yasir Shah and middle-order batsman Sohaib Maqsood were ruled out due to injuries for the series against Bangladesh.

"Our team's biggest problem is fitness and we will not compromise in ensuring that each and every player is match fit," he said.

Waqar rejected the idea of looking back at the 'tried and tested' lot following the historic series defeat against Bangladesh. "There is no need to look back," he said, adding: "We have to move forward with younger players."

Pakistani greats on Monday

slammed the team's first-ever series loss to Bangladesh, with former captain Javed Miandad terming it the "lowest point" in his country's cricketing history.

"Losing to Bangladesh is the lowest point but if we do not take big measures our cricket will decline further," batting legend Miandad told AFP.

Miandad, who last year resigned from the post of director general of the Pakistan Cricket Board praised Bangladesh.

"Bangladesh is not the same Bangladesh they used to be and I think they can now upset any team because they are getting better and better with each day," he said.

"I did a little bit of coaching in



Bangladesh and told them of some basics, like they were weak on short pitch deliveries, and praise to them that they adhered to the basics and now their game is

improving day by day," he added, referring to his 2002 coaching stint with the Tigers.

Wicketkeeping great Wasim Bari deplored a lack of planning ahead of the series.

"There is no strategy in the Pakistan team, no planning and that is why they were exposed," Bari told AFP, the former chairman of selectors added.

"Bangladesh have kept their World Cup momentum very well while we have gone down."

Pakistan are scheduled to play the third and final one-day international against Bangladesh on Wednesday at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur. This will be followed by a T20I and two Tests.

## PM wants 70k capacity venue

HASAN JAHID TUSHER

At a weekly cabinet meeting yesterday Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina directed the sports ministry to set up an international standard cricket stadium at Purbachal with a capacity of at least 70,000.

According to several ministers, the PM said that there was available land in the area and that the government can allocate it for constructing a new stadium.

Sheikh Hasina, who was present at Mirpur during Bangladesh's historic series win over Pakistan on Sunday, said that the current capacity of the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium was not enough. The stadium can currently accommodate up to 24,000 spectators.

According to a minister, who preferred anonymity, the PM also directed the sports ministry to upgrade the Mirpur stadium for football once the new cricket stadium is built.

If the new directives are implemented as per the plan, then there is every chance that Mirpur will no longer be the home of Bangladesh cricket.

The PM also emphasised the need for improvement of sports infrastructure in order to develop the sector across the country and to enhance the quality of players.

A senior minister told The Daily Star that five types of projects would be implemented with regards to this issue. Galleries would be constructed at school-level playgrounds on availability of space, the minister added.

Accordingly the stadiums would either be constructed or upgraded at district and upazila levels as the prime minister wants many more professional players from villages and rural areas.

"The prime minister wants to take sports forward and further develop the sector as per international standards," added the minister.



Now-retired from Tests and one-dayers, Shahid Afridi arrived in Dhaka yesterday, along with Ahmed Shehzad and Sohail Tanvir, to be part of Pakistan's lone Twenty20 International fixture against Bangladesh on April 24.

PHOTO: STAR

## Afridi in town

SPORTS REPORTER

Pakistan T20I captain Shahid Afridi praised the Tigers as an improved team.

"Bangladesh is playing well... their bowling especially has been good," Afridi told reporters after arriving in Dhaka yesterday. He will lead Pakistan in the lone T20 international against the impressive Tigers at Mirpur this Friday.

Afridi also observed that the new-look Pakistan ODI team would require some time before hitting form.

"This is a young team. Please give them some time," remarked the all-rounder who retired from the ODI after the World Cup.

Pakistan are definitely missing the absence of some of their experienced batsmen in the current series, especially a big-hitting Afridi who took a number of games away from the Tigers including the Asia Cup final three years ago.

## Five opt for training

SPORTS REPORTER

While most of Bangladesh's national cricketers preferred spending time with their families the day after securing the historic series win yesterday, five of them though decided to attend the optional training session in the afternoon.

The session was attended by Soumya Sarkar, Nasir Hossain, Mominul Haque, Abul Hasan and Rony Talukdar. While the session at Mirpur was mainly organised to keep the players who didn't play the second ODI in their groove, Soumya and Nasir though decided to join in.

Young Soumya has been finding life slightly difficult as an opener. Generally a free-flowing player who loves to use his feet, the left-hander got out in a manner that was quite unlike him. He swung his bat at a back-of-a-length delivery with his legs stuck

at the crease. The result was inevitable; an edge to the keeper.

Among all the positives that have churned out for the Tigers in the last few days, Soumya's batting may be one area of concern for the hosts.

The other batsman who hasn't managed to hit form as yet is Mahmudullah Riyad. While he was by far Bangladesh's best batsman in the World Cup, he failed to click in the first two ODIs. The concern isn't merely the fact that Riyad got out, but it was the way that the top-order batsman ended both his innings.

In the first ODI he had gone down the track to heave one in a bid to release pressure. The slower delivery though got him bowled.

The second ODI witnessed a similar happening. He attempted an unnecessary sweep off Saeed Ajmal only for the ball to hit the timber.

## Waugh dead against KP

AAP, London



Former Australia captain Steve Waugh has urged England to move on from Kevin Pietersen, believing the controversial batsman no longer merits a place in the side and brings too much baggage as well.

South Africa-born Pietersen has not played for his adopted nation in over a year after being sacked following the fallout of the woeful Ashes whitewash.

The 34-year-old has repeatedly expressed a desire to return to the international set-up, though, and is turning out for Surrey this season in a bid to prove his commitment to England and his first county innings since June 2013 ended after making just 19 off 28 balls against Glamorgan on Sunday.

While Pietersen's Test record of 8,181 runs at 47.28 with 23 centuries makes him

one of England's greatest-ever batsmen, Waugh does not think he deserves a place in the current eleven.

"England have got to make a clean break and look forward to the future," Waugh was quoted in the Daily Mirror. "Sometimes you have to have short-term pain to get the long-term gain."

"I don't think he's a great player right now. Setting aside all the other things, I don't think his form warranted a spot in the England side. He may have been a great player but I wouldn't class him as one now."

Waugh, who captained the Australian Test team from 1999 to 2004, also believes Pietersen's past off-field dramas -- including last year's hugely outspoken autobiography -- in the last couple of years must be taken into account.

Waugh added: "First, he has to be one of the best six batsmen in the country, which he's not."

## IN A NUTSHELL

### Tragic!

AFP, New Delhi

A promising young Indian cricketer died on Monday after an on-field collision with a teammate during a club match in the eastern city of Kolkata, his coach said. Ankit Keshri, 20, was rushed to hospital with a head injury following the incident on Friday, but suffered a heart attack late on Sunday and died a few hours later, the coach said.

Keshri, who had played for the Bengal under-19 side last year, came on as a substitute fielder when he crashed into the teammate as both players attempted to take a high catch.

### Lancastrian's 350 off 138

AFP, London

A 21-year-old English batsman on Lancashire's books made history on Sunday by scoring 350 in a club match. Liam Livingstone's stunning innings was the centrepiece of Nantwich's mammoth 579 for seven in just 45 overs during their National Club Championship clash at home to fellow north-west side Caldley. Livingstone's runs came from just 138 balls, including 34 fours and 27 sixes.

His knock is believed to be the highest recorded individual score in any form of one-day match, surpassing the 334 not out by the then 15-year-old Indian schoolboy Nikhilesh Surendran in 2008.

### Pollard tapes his mouth

AGENCIES, Bangalore

In what can be termed as a pretty bizarre incident, Mumbai Indians all-rounder Kieron Pollard, on Sunday, put on a piece of tape on his mouth after the umpires rapped him for his on-field altercation with fellow West Indian and Royal Challengers Bangalore batsman Chris Gayle.



During their IPL match at the Chinnaswamy, Pollard had an argument with Gayle. That forced the on-field umpires, Richard Illingworth of England and India's Vineet Kulkarni, to intervene and warn the big West Indian.

A miffed Pollard then went on to the team dugout and pasted the tape on his mouth to show his displeasure over the on-field officials' action.