

SPORT



Barely two days after stating the need to get some runs under his belt, Mahmudullah Riyad dazzled under the hot sun to score a hard-fought century at Mirpur in the final round of the Bangladesh Cricket League yesterday. PHOTO: STAR

Riyad back on track

SPORTS REPORTER



Mahmudullah Riyad, who vowed to utilise the final round of the Bangladesh Cricket League to the best possible extent, scored his seventh first-class century yesterday as he helped Walton Central Zone recover from a pitiable 62 for 4 in Mirpur yesterday.

Riyad's 113, on a rather bouncy Mirpur wicket, combined with Marshall Ayub's 87, led Central to 278 for 8 by stumps yesterday.

Central Zone began the game in the worst possible manner. Their openers, Abdul Majid and Rony Talukdar, who have been their pride and glory for much of this season, were removed for nought. After electing to bat, Central found themselves in a precarious 0 for 2 and their opponents, BCB North Zone sniffed an early exchange in innings.

To make matters worse, Rakibul Hasan was run out by Naem Islam in the seventh over and Mahmudul Hasan trapped Mehrab Hossain Jr

in front.

That's when Riyad and Marshall stepped up with a 148-run stand for the fifth wicket to lead Central's recovery. Forced to play at number six, an out-of-form Marshall gave Riyad good company at the crease as the pair eased out the pressure created due to the early wickets with some cautious batting. There were the odd boundaries during the stand, but it mostly motored along singles. Both batsmen faced more than 200 deliveries and spent quite some time in the middle.

While Riyad hit eleven fours and two sixes, Marshall drove eight fours. Riyad, who had earlier described the final round of the BCL as an 'opportunity for him to regain his form ahead of the India series', reached his century just before tea and seemed to be relieved.

His partner could have achieved the same mark; however, wickets were falling quickly at the other end following Riyad's departure. Under pressure, Marshall was trapped in front courtesy of a flighted delivery from Tajjil Islam.

The slow left-armer ended up dismissing Shuvagata Hom and

Mosharraf Hossain as well and finished the day with figures of 4 for 106.

In the top of the table clash in Chittagong, Abdur Razzak's Prime Bank South Zone finished the day on a strong 272 for 2. They rode on unbeaten half-centuries from Mithun Ali and Shahriar Nafees. While Imrul Kayes, who scored 56, missed out on an opportunity to score a big one, Mithun and Shahriar carried on with an unbeaten 161-run stand.

Mithun hammered 13 fours in his 88, while Shahriar scored 11 fours in his 79. They will want to continue their scoring and hope to put their opponents under pressure when play resumes today.

The winners of this match will win the championship. South currently lead the table with 35 points while Islami Bank East Zone have 32.

SCORES IN BRIEF

SOUTH ZONE: 272 for 2 (Mithun 88 not out, Shahriar 79 not out; Kamrul 1-45) v **EAST ZONE CENTRAL ZONE:** 278 for 8 (Mahmudullah 113, Marshall 87; Tajjil 4-106, Muktar 1-30) v **NORTH ZONE**

ASIAN MEN'S VOLLEYBALL Afghanistan, Nepal win

SPORTS REPORTER

Afghanistan and Nepal got off to winning starts in the BDDL Asian Senior Men's Central Zone Volleyball Championship at the Shaheed Suhrawardi Indoor Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.

Afghanistan recorded a 3-2 sets victory (25-22, 18-25, 13-25, 25-21, 15-13) over Uzbekistan in Pool A match while Nepal beat Kyrgyzstan in 3-1 sets (25-19, 22-25, 25-18, 26-24) in their Pool B match.

'India can be Pak home'

REUTERS, New Delhi

They may not share the best of relations, but Pakistan would like to play their home matches in India, Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) chief Shaharyar Khan said. Top Test nations have shunned Pakistan since the 2009 attack on Sri Lankan players in Lahore with the PCB instead playing the majority of their home matches in the United Arab Emirates.

The PCB have managed to coax Zimbabwe into touring Pakistan this month for a brief limited-overs series but accept others are unlikely to follow.

"We would like to make India our home. India will be more cost-effective," he said, adding Bangladesh and Sri Lanka have also offered to host home matches.

India cancelled bilateral cricket series with its neighbour after Pakistani militants killed 166 people in Mumbai in 2008 but hosted Pakistan in 2012-13 for limited-over series.

HP on comeback trail

SPORTS REPORTER



After a gap of eight years the Bangladesh Cricket Board is all set to launch the High Performance programme next month, albeit based on a slightly different mechanism compared to the last time.

The programme which operated from 2004 to 2007 found BCB the players who now hold the core of the national team. Although a number of attempts to revive the programme were made, they weren't successful.

BCB's new HP chief Mahbub Anam is sure that the newly-designed programme will drastically benefit the national team.

"It will be requirement-based HP programme unlike the previous term. Today we might be needing pace bowlers and tomorrow wicketkeepers. We will prioritise our needs

and act accordingly and work for the demand of the national team," said Anam.

The BCB has initially selected 22 players - nine batsmen, five wicketkeeping-batsmen, four spinners and four pace bowlers -- for the HP unit who will undergo various training sessions over four months. Apart from that, special camps may be organised for selected groups based on the need of the national team.

The 22 players will take part in a fitness test before moving to Bogra, where the members of the unit will play a total of six matches -- two T20s, two one-dayers and two two-dayers.

The matches, according to officials, will be held in order to judge the players' ability. It will give Paul Terry, the newly-appointed director of coaching, a better look at the players.

Various plans will be made following those matches and the players will be given their workloads accordingly.



Rohit Sharma (R) is ecstatic after leading Mumbai Indians to their second IPL title at the Eden Gardens in Kolkata yesterday.

PHOTO: CRICINFO

INA NUTSHELL

Pakistan missing Ajmal: Younis

INTERNET

Pakistan's coach Waqar Younis believes that the team is missing off-spinner Saeed Ajmal as they were playing international cricket on home soil after six years. After Pakistan's victory over Zimbabwe in the first T20I, Waqar said that they would not find another Ajmal in near future and the team was surely missing him.

Ajmal was not picked for the two T20 Internationals against Zimbabwe after struggling against Bangladesh with the new bowling action.

Hambantota stripped off AYG

INTERNET

The Olympic Council of Asia (OCA) are looking for new hosts for the 2017 Asian Youth Games (AYG) after stripping Sri Lanka of the event because of an ongoing row over autonomy that has plagued sports in the island nation. Hambantota had said they would spend 300 million dollars on the Games after being selected in 2012 following their failure to land the 2018 Commonwealth Games.

But the OCA, headed by influential sports power broker Sheikh Sheikh Ahmad Al-Fahad Al-Sabah of Kuwait, said they were left with no choice but to look elsewhere following its executive committee meeting in Tehran on Friday.

Clarke ready for Windies Tour

INTERNET

Australia skipper Michael Clarke said that he is fit and ready to play against West Indies, following the break the side had after the successful World Cup campaign. Clarke said that his body felt really good and was hopeful that all the hard work that he has been putting on keeping himself fit and healthy



would pay off.

The 34-year-old batsman, who took a 30-hour odd journey to West Indies, was right to be fearful of any further injury to his fragile body, given his dodgy back and hamstring. Clarke, who had earlier announced his retirement from the shorter format of the game, said that he had arrived fit and healthy.

Stalwarts converge at Kurmitola

SPORTS REPORTER



The stalwarts of golf from Asia and beyond have started to arrive in Dhaka for the Bashundhara Bangladesh Open, the first ever Asian Tour (AT) event to be hosted here, which starts on Wednesday.

The 300,000-dollar event to be held at the Kurmitola Golf Club will host a stellar field of 150-plus golfers including 31 golfers from host Bangladesh.

Among the doyens of Asian golf, Thaworn Wiratchant, an 18-time AT winner will be arriving today along with his compatriot and four-time winner Chapchai Nirat. Mardan Mamat, the Singaporean four-time winner who is red-hot form currently, has already arrived. Among others who are already here are David Gleeson of Australia and Rahil Gangjee of India. The foreign golfers will be staying at a number of city hotels including the Radisson Blue Hotel and the Dhaka Regency Hotel.

Despite the awe-inspiring list of foreign

golfers, many believe that there is a great chance of a Bangladeshi golfer winning this title since it will be held at the Kurmitola Golf Club, which they know like the back of their hands. Among the Bangladeshi golfers, Siddikur is undoubtedly in the forefront of contenders' list, having won numerous amateur and professional titles at this golf course to go with two AT titles, four PGTI titles and an ASEAN PGA Tour title.

"With the Bashundhara Bangladesh Open, other Bangladeshi golfers might have a chance to play their way into the Asian Tour and the Olympics as well. This new tournament opens up a lot of opportunities," Siddikur said in an interview with the Asian Tour website recently.

Among the other contenders from Bangladesh are Jamal Hossain Mollah and Shakhawat Hossain Sohel, both of whom have experience of participating in AT events, apart from Dulal Hossain, Jakiruzzaman and young Shajib Ali, who only recently won an amateur event here with a score of 18-under before turning pro.

Cook, Stokes lead Eng

AFP, London



Ben Stokes scored the fastest-ever Test hundred at Lord's, while England captain Alastair Cook weighed in with a less spectacular but equally valuable century of his own as the hosts fought back against New Zealand on Sunday. England were 429 for six in their second innings at stumps on the fourth day, a lead of 295 runs, despite having been outplayed for much of this match, the first of a two-Test series.

Cook was 153 not out -- his fourth and highest Test century at Lord's -- after Stokes had struck a truly thrilling hundred against the country of his birth in just 85 balls, including 15 fours and three sixes.

England were in trouble when they lost Ian Bell, caught behind off a Tim Southee outswinger, to Sunday's third ball without adding to their overnight score to be 74 for three.

But Cook, whose century saw him extend his England Test record to 27, shared partnerships of 158 and 132 with Joe Root (84)

and Stokes (101) respectively.

Root, out for 98 in the first innings, again missed out on a century but Stokes followed his first-innings 92 with his second Test century but first in England following the Durham all-rounder's 120 against Australia in Perth in 2013.

Earlier, left-handed opener Cook scored his second hundred in as many Tests after he ended a near two-year wait for a Test ton with 105 against the West Indies in Barbados earlier this month.

It was also his first ton on home soil since his 130 against New Zealand at Headingley in 2013 and saw the 30-year-old Cook extend his England record for Test centuries to 27.

However, Stokes, the Christchurch-born but England-raised son of former Kiwi rugby league international Ged Stokes, responded with two hooked sixes off successive Southee deliveries.

In Stokes's stand of 132 with Cook the skipper's share was just 21, but the opener was still unbeaten at stumps after more than eight-and-a-half hours at the crease.

Mumbai sing at Eden again

AGENCIES, Kolkata



Mumbai Indians' love affair with Eden Gardens continued as they clinched their second IPL title with a crushing 41-run win over Chennai Super Kings in a lop-sided final at Kolkata last night.

It was on this very ground Mumbai had lifted their first IPL in 2013, defeating the same rivals. Chennai have now lost four finals (2008, 2012, 2013, 2015) in six appearances.

Mumbai posted an imposing 202 for five with skipper Rohit Sharma (50) and Lendl Simmons (68) setting the tone, putting up 119 runs off just 67 balls for the second wicket after being invited in to bat.

The Mumbai captain, who has an ODI world record of 264 and also a debut Test hundred at the Eden Gardens, yet again exploded at his favourite venue, hitting six fours and two sixes for his 25-ball fifty.

Sharma drove Dwayne Bravo for a boundary to notch his fifty but only to be dismissed softly in the next ball hitting straight to Jadeja at long-on. Such agonising was the partnership for CSK that Dhoni and Co huddled soon after Sharma's dismissal and skipper opted part-timer Dwyane Smith to bowl the next over. Dhoni's magic worked straightway as Simmons followed suit after being bowled in Smith's first ball -- a slow yorker that he misjudged -- to make them 120/3 in 12.1 overs. The twin blow however proved to be too little too late as Rayudu and Pollard propelled to a winning total.

Hard-hitting West Indies batsman Kieron Pollard (36) provided the late flourish in the company with Ambati Rayudu (36 not out) in an innings the run-rate hardly dropped below in despite the early dismissal of Parthiv Patel.

Mumbai bowlers complimented the good work of the batsmen as they took the fizz out of the Chennai's chase with a disciplined effort.

They straitjacketed the Chennai batsmen, restricting them to 161 for eight as seasoned spinner Harbhajan Singh took key wickets of Dwayne Smith (57) and Suresh Raina (28) in two overs. Kiwi pace-man Mitchell McClenaghan took three wickets while Sri Lankan Lasith Malinga claimed two including the prized scalp of MS Dhoni.

Chasing the huge target, CSK opted to have it easy and concentrated on building a platform after losing Michael Hussey (4) early. Smith and Raina bided their time and looked to consolidate but it meant that they managed only 31 runs from the first six overs. The required run-rate kept on going up and shot past 13 at the midway mark.

Smith completed his half-century in 45 balls but only to be trapped LBW by Harbhajan in his penultimate over. Having made a grand comeback into the Bangladesh-bound Test side, Harbhajan completed his spell in style dismissing Raina.

SCORES IN BRIEF

MUMBAI INDIANS: 202 for 5 (Simmons 68, Rohit 50, Bravo 2-36)

CHENNAI SUPER KINGS: 161 for 8 (Smith 57, McClenaghan 3-25, Harbhajan 2-34)

Result: Mumbai won the final by 41 runs
Player-of-the-final: Rohit Sharma

Dramatic win for Pakistan

AFP, Lahore

Pakistan pulled off a sensational last over win by two wickets in the second Twenty20 international against Zimbabwe in Lahore on Sunday to take the two-match series 2-0.

With 12 needed off the last paceman Brian Vitori's last over number ten Bilawal Bhatti hit a six and four besides taking a double to help Pakistan overhaul a stiff 176-run target in 19.4 overs.

Opener Mukhtar Ahmed hit his second consecutive fifty during his 40-ball 62 to entertain another packed 27,000 holiday crowd.

The win added to Pakistan's joy as the series marked the return of international cricket in Pakistan since terrorists attack on the Sri Lankan team bus in Lahore in 2009.

Mukhtar, who made a quick 45-ball 83 in the first match, put on 44 by the fifth over with Ahmed Shehzad (18) and another 37 with debutant Nauman Anwer (18) before Pakistan lost four wickets in quick succession.

Mukhtar, dropped on 15 and 55, holed out at mid-on before Shoaib Malik, Shahid Afridi -- who both made seven each -- and Umar Akmal (30) fell to leave Pakistan needing 24 in the last 4.1 overs.

The 2-0 win keeps Pakistan's fifth place in the Twenty20 rankings intact while Zimbabwe remained as low as 12th.

Earlier, Sean Williams hit a rapid 32-ball 58 not out with seven boundaries and a six and opener Vusi Sibanda 46-ball 49 to help Zimbabwe to a solid 175-3 after winning the toss.

Both teams will now play three one-day internationals on May 26, 29 and 31.