

# SPORT

## A decade of the effortless grinder

BISHWAJIT ROY

There aren't many aspects of the game that the Tigers fans would want to recall when Bangladesh made their Test debut at Lord's ten years ago on May 26, except for the fact that that match gave birth to a player, who eventually went on to redefine Bangladesh's batting and set a new standard with his work ethic.

He may have scored just 19 runs in that innings but he stayed at the crease for an hour and 25 minutes and looked like the only batsman who possessed the technique to handle England's lethal pacers in alien conditions.

Ten years on and he is the most sought after batsman in the country.

The way Mushfiqur Rahim now executes his slog sweeps with near perfection and the manner in which he backs away from the wicket to launch the ball over covers, terrorizing opponents, are perhaps two of the most enjoyable scenes for Bangladesh's cricket fans today.

To many the sound of his willow seems like music to the ears. The little man does it so effortlessly that many believe that it all comes to him naturally; that he was merely born to play those shots.

The truth, of course, is a lot differ-

ent. Ask Mushfiqur's close associates and they will tell you how the little man sweated out almost every second of his ten-year-old career.

"One day he (Mushfiqur) got out three times within eight balls while playing a shot against me and left-arm spinner Rifatul Islam, as there was considerable turn on the surface.

"Frustrated, he went back to his seat. He came back after a while and played that shot for nearly one-and-a-half hours, till he felt that he had perfected it. That's the kind of player he is," recalled off-spinner Rakibul Islam Shohag, who has been bowling to Mushfiqur in the nets since 2009.

Shohag's tale is just one of those many stories that reflect Mushfiqur's discipline.

He goes on to share a more recent anecdote that took place prior to the first ODI against Pakistan.

"After the team's scheduled practice session he threw a challenge to me. He said that since my action was like Saeed Ajmal's, he would give me Tk 5000 if I could take his wicket.

"I bowled to him for an hour, in vain. It's always difficult to get rid of him when he is so committed. It wasn't a surprise that he scored a century the next day," Shohag asserted.

"For the last four years I have seen him practicing with two spinners and two pace bowlers even in the off season. He is a perfectionist. Today when I see him playing the slog-sweep



Hard work, dedication and honesty are the qualities that took Mushfiqur to his current position.

with near perfection, I recall the countless number of hours he spent batting in the nets against me," smirked Shohag, who played for Indira Road this season in the First Division cricket league.

Mushfiqur's rise to the top reinstates the theory that mere talent isn't enough to go all the way.

"In his group, there were more

talented students. For instance, there was Shamsur Rahman... and a couple of others. Hard-work, dedication and honesty are the qualities that took Mushfiqur to his current position," said Matur Rahman, Mushfiqur's mentor during the batsman's time at the BKSP.

"I have never seen such an attentive player in practice. I don't know, but

maybe it comes to him by birth. His concentration resembled a devotee practicing his prayers. Everybody practiced for the same amount of time but Mushfiqur was clearly the hungriest of the lot.

"There was a time when his sweep-shot induced plenty of catches at slip and square leg. But today he is a master of this shot and this is not a miracle, it's

just his dedication," added Rahman.

To provide an idea as to how deeply involved Mushfiqur is with the game Rahman goes back to 2005 when Mushfiqur first toured England. "I was talking to him over the phone and he was in tears just because he struggled there initially.

"He is disciplined and his work ethics are exemplary that is true... but what's even more amazing is his human nature. He has already established himself as a star cricketer in the country but he still respects me like he did when he was in school and shares all his thoughts with me," a proud Rahman exclaims.

Bangladesh's former fielding coach Mohammad Salahuddin, who has worked with the player since 2007, shared a similar sentiment.

"When others practice for an hour, he does it for two. I haven't seen any other player as industrious as him," Salahuddin said.

A wild-card inclusion for Bangladesh's maiden tour of England, a surprise entrant in Bangladesh's World Cup squad in 2007, his hard-work and talent has been keeping him ahead of his peers and his seniors from a very early age.

There have been other players in the past who have rocketed their way to the big league as quickly as him.

The only difference though is that Mushfiqur grinded it out during those tough times and aimed big. Unlike the

### Nat'l Kabaddi C'ship returns

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The National Kabaddi Championship gets underway from Saturday, after a three-year gap, as sponsors Meizan Fortified Palm Olefin decided to renew their relationship with the Bangladesh Kabaddi Federation (BKF).

Meizan had a three-year agreement worth Tk 1.8 crore with BKF but they retreated two years into the agreement in 2011 following some disagreements with the BKF officials.

"We don't want to recall the past incidents and we want to start with kabaddi federation afresh and help them organise the domestic events as well as international tournaments," said the company's marketing manager Faisal Mahmud at a press conference yesterday.

In the national championship, a total 31 districts, split into seven zones, will play in the preliminarily round and each zonal champions will advance to the second round and later four semifinalists will qualify for the eight-team final round.

Remaining four teams of the final round will be decided through games between seven services teams.

### Bayliss becomes Eng coach

REUTERS, London

Trevor Bayliss has become the first Australian to be appointed head coach of the England national team after being handed the post on Tuesday.

The 52-year-old succeeds Peter Moores, who was sacked earlier this month following England's dismal performance at this year's World Cup and a 1-1 draw in a Test series in West Indies.

Bayliss's first major task will be to guide England during the five-match Ashes series against his native Australia.

"Trevor has an outstanding record as coach, has global experience and is very highly regarded in the game," the England and Wales Cricket Board's (ECB) director of cricket Andrew Strauss said in a statement.

## Hosts eliminated

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Hosts Bangladesh were eliminated from the DBBL Asian Senior Men's Central Zone Volleyball Championship after losing their last pool match against Nepal in 2-3 sets at the Shaheed Suhrawardi Indoor Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.

Bangladesh took to the court needing a win to qualify for the semifinals and got off to a flying start winning the first set by 25-15 points, but they faced stiff resistance from Nepal to concede a 21-25 point defeat in the second set.

The hosts found back their rhythm in the third set and took it by 25-23 points before throwing it away in the fourth set, losing by 16-25 points. In the fifth and deciding set, Bangladesh, playing without their best player and captain Saeed Al Jabir, who picked up a hamstring injury during the fourth set, could not produce any resistance

and suffered a 11-15 defeat to lose out on a place for the semifinals.

"Bangladesh played well but lost because of no international inexperience. I think this group of boys have good future if they are given international exposure and long term training," said legendary volleyball player Yad Ali.

"We were determined to do something for the nation and the players played bravely despite having lack of preparation," said Nepal coach Kapil Kishor Shrestha, who thanked Bangladesh Volleyball Federation for providing support to Nepal.

Earlier, Turkmenistan defeated Uzbekistan in 3-2 sets (25-11, 25-15, 17-25, 17-25 and 15-11) to emerge Pool A champions while consecutive defeats for Uzbekistan meant Afghanistan finished Pool A runners-up. Maldives beat Kyrgyzstan in 3-2 sets to become Pool B champions.

Nepal will take on Turkmenistan and Maldives will play against Afghanistan in

### West Bengal handball teams arrive

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The West Bengal men's and women's handball teams arrived here last night to play an eight-match friendly series with selected teams of Bangladesh, four each in Dhaka and Chittagong.

The touring men's team will play against Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) on Wednesday at the Shaheed Captain M Mansur Ali National Handball Stadium while the women's team will meet Bangladesh Ansar and VDP team on the same day.

## Anamul on top

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The third day of the final round of the ongoing Bangladesh Cricket League saw a number of national players hitting form. Anamul Haque pushed his way to the top of the run-scorers list after scoring his third half-century in the competition.

While he scored 70, Soumya Sarkar also got back amongst the runs, remaining unbeaten on 75 for South Zone at the stumps yesterday in Chittagong. After Shohag Gazi and Al-Amin Hossain scalped a total of seven wickets for South Zone, their opponents and title challengers East Zone were bundled out for just 247.

The first innings lead has almost ensured the title for South Zone, who will now focus on drawing the game on the last day.

In the day's other game at Mirpur, Central Zone were bundled out for just 200 and set North Zone a target of 203. Mahmudul Hasan took four wickets while Muktar Ali took two to run through Central's batting order. In reply, North Zone stumbled to 11 for 2 at the end of the day.

### SCORES IN BRIEF

**SOUTH ZONE:** 385 and 231 for 4 (Soumya 75 not out, Anamul 70; Abu 2-48, Abul 1-14) v **EAST ZONE:** 247 all out in 83.3 overs (Shadman 87, Abul 50; Shohag 4-62, Al-Amin 3-45) **CENTRAL ZONE:** 289 and 200 all out in 83.1 overs (Mehrab 50 not out; Mahmudul 4-53, Muktar 2-36, Tajjul 2-73) v **NORTH ZONE:** 287 and 11 for 2 (Tajjul 8; Shahid 1-3, Shuvagata 1-8)

## IN A NUTSHELL

### Pietersen mocks ECB

AGENCIES, New Delhi

He might not be a part of the current England squad, but that didn't keep Kevin Pietersen away from following the action of the first Test match played between the Poms and New Zealand at Lord's.

Kevin Pietersen hailed the performance of Ben Stokes, who was the hero in England's convincing win against the Kiwis.

The mercurial batsman took to Twitter to praise Stokes' maiden Test century after he missed out on achieving the feat in the first innings by eight runs.

"Not surprised by Stoke's 100. A star was born in Perth, poor management faded that star. Hopefully better management lights it again," tweeted Pietersen.

### Dhoni's wife reveals ink

AGENCIES, Kolkata

Always ready to smile for the cameras, Sakshi Dhoni was not too obliging this Sunday when Chennai Super Kings lost the 2015 IPL final to Mumbai Indians at the Eden Gardens. Chennai captain MS Dhoni's wife turned away from the cameras - possibly as Chennai were losing - but in the process, revealed a tattoo of her husband's name.



On Sunday, Sakshi and her daughter were cheering for CSK but Sakshi eventually was avoiding the shutterbugs. As she covered her face, she inadvertently revealed a tattoo which read Mahi - Dhoni's nickname - in Hindi.

Several high-profile celebrity couples around the world have previously inked themselves in an expression of love and commitment.

### Pakistan take 1-0 lead

APP, Lahore

Shoaib Malik hit his first century in six years to help Pakistan outpace Zimbabwe in the first day-night international by 41 runs in Lahore on Tuesday, taking a 1-0 lead in the three-match series.

Malik, playing his first one-dayer after two years, notched up a 76-ball 112 with 12 fours and two sixes to steer Pakistan to 375-3 -- their highest against Zimbabwe -- before restricting the tourists to 334-5 in 50 overs at Gaddafi Stadium.

Zimbabwe tried their valiant best with skipper Elton Chigumbura hitting a rapid 95-ball 117 but the mounting asking rate proved too much in the end.

Chigumbura added 124 for the third wicket with Hamilton Masakadza (73) and another 74 for the fourth with Sean Williams (36).

Chigumbura was bowled in the 45th over by paceman Wahab Riaz who was the best Pakistan bowler with 3-47.

### SCORES IN BRIEF

**PAKISTAN:** 375 for 3 in 50 overs (Hafeez 86, Azhar 79, Malik 112, Sohail 89 not out; Utseya 2-63) **ZIMBABWE:** 334 for 5 in 50 overs (Raza 36, Masakadza 73, Chigumbura 117, Williams 36; Riaz 3-47) **Result:** Pakistan won by 41 runs.

**Player-of-the-match:** Shoaib Malik.

## Ancelotti out, Rafa next in line?

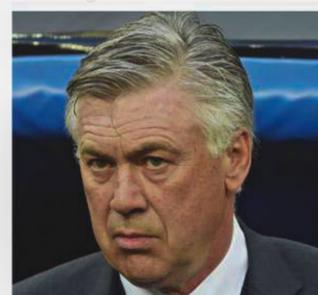
STAR SPORT DESK



One year and one day since capturing the coveted La Decima for Real Madrid, Carlo Ancelotti was sacked by the board. Much like his predecessors, a season without a title -- in some cases even with a title -- and your time at Madrid ends.

This has been Real President Florentino Perez's stance for the past twelve years, a period where he has been responsible for the sacking of nine coaches, and Ancelotti is just the latest victim in a list of high-profile names.

Second in La Liga and reaching the semifinals of the Champions League -- a campaign that included a 22-win streak -- is considered a success for most teams. Coupled with a 75% win rate, 16 losses throughout his tenure and the backing of the dressing room, the decision seems ludicrous.



Ancelotti was even called a 'soft touch' after Real's form waned in 2015, but he responded with his usual eloquence saying, "This soft touch has won three Champions Leagues." Was his fault not being able to create history by being the first manager to retain the Champions League? Or was it that a man whose autobiography is titled 'I prefer the Cup', failed to win the domestic league? If Perez is to be

believed, then neither is the reason for his unceremonious exit.

"What did Ancelotti do wrong? I don't know," Perez said.

"The demands here at Real Madrid are very high. The affection that the players and the fans have for Carlo is the same as the affection I myself have for him," said Perez.

But his words belie his policy of 'win or go home' in a set-up he designs with spectacular faces up-front.

And after firing Ancelotti, he has spotted his next man for the hottest of the hot seats.

Perez confirmed yesterday a Spaniard would be instated and is set to name him next week.

Benitez is the most likely to take over, knowing that an axe is being sharpened every time he makes a blunder. But that is nothing new to a Real Madrid manager. No manager's reputation is tarnished when they are sacked by Real, only Perez's is.

## Top seeds ease through

AFP, Paris



Novak Djokovic and Rafael Nadal eased closer to a French Open quarterfinal showdown Tuesday while two-time champion Serena Williams blitzed her way into the second round.

But there were opening defeats for women's tour poster girl Eugenie Bouchard, the sixth seed, as well as men's 10th-seeded Grigor Dimitrov.

Top seed Djokovic, bidding to win a first French Open and become just the eighth man to complete the career Grand Slam, defeated experienced Jarkko Nieminen 6-2, 7-5, 6-2.

Nadal opened his bid for a 10th title with a 6-3, 6-3, 6-4 win over world number 296 Quentin Halys.

Women's top seed and world number one Serena Williams won 6-2, 6-3 in just 59 minutes against Czech qualifier Andrea Hlavackova.

Canadian sixth seed Bouchard, a semi-finalist in 2014, crashed out at the hands of France's Kristina Mladenovic.

Bouchard went down 6-4, 6-4 to the world number 44, her eighth defeat in her last nine matches.

Mladenovic, 22, goes on to face Danka Kovinic of Montenegro.

Also going out was Bulgarian 10th seed Dimitrov who suffered his second successive first-round exit in Paris, losing 7-6 (9/7), 6-2, 6-3 to Jack Sock

of the United States.

Wimbledon champion and fourth seed Petra Kvitova needed two and a half hours to see off New Zealand's world number 80 Marina Erakovic 6-4, 3-6, 6-4, getting broken six times and committing 47 unforced errors.

The 25-year-old goes on to face Silvia Soler-Espinosa of Spain.

Spain's David Ferrer won his 300th claycourt match when he swept past Slovakia's Lukas Lacko, 6-1, 6-3, 6-1.

Croatia's Marin Cilic, the ninth-seeded US Open champion, defeated Robin Haase of the Netherlands 6-2, 6-4, 6-2.

Svetlana Kuznetsova, the 2009 champion, beat Dutchwoman Kiki Bertens 6-1, 4-6, 6-2 and will next face 2010 winner Francesca Schiavone of Italy.