

SPORT

T20 for Nepal quake victims

SPORTS REPORTER

A disciplined bowling performance from World XI helped them beat Nepal by 37 runs in a friendly T20 match played in Malaysia to raise funds for the earthquake victims in Nepal yesterday.

Sri Lanka legend Sanath Jayasuriya and former Bangladesh captain Aminul Islam were amongst the players who played for World XI.

Also present in the side from Bangladesh were slow left-armed Abdur Razzak and off-spinner Shohag Gazi.

Batting first, World XI were bundled out for 135. 25-year-old Marcus Stoinis from Australia top-scored with 48.

Razzak smashed two sixes in his seven-ball 16.

In reply, Nepal were bundled out for just 98.

Razzak took two wickets, while Gazi took one. India's Suresh Navaratnam was the highest wicket-taker with figures of 3 for 27.

The coin used for the toss in the match was the same coin that was used for the Nepal versus Hong Kong game in the World Twenty20 and was later auctioned. The coin was donated by the Bangladesh Cricket Supporters'

'Sanga Lanka's best ever'

PTI, New Delhi

Former Sri Lanka captain Mahela Jayawardene has paid a fitting tribute to the retiring Kumar Sangakkara, describing him as the "greatest batsman" to have emerged from the island nation since their entry into international cricket.

Sangakkara, who has 12,000 plus Test runs and 14,000 plus runs in ODIs, will retire from international cricket after playing the first two Tests against India in the three-match series starting Wednesday.

"Let me put it straight.

Kumar Sangakkara is the best batsman that Sri Lanka has ever produced. Aravinda De Silva will always be a sentimental favourite for most of the Sri Lankans including me but numbers alone make Kumar a phenomenal achiever. More than 60 international centuries (38 in Tests and 25 ODIs). Look at those staggering numbers," former captain Jayawardene said about his long-time teammate, adding that the left-hander is only among a few who attained greatness in every aspect, whether on the field or off it.

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Bangladesh national cricketer Sabbir Rahman (R) walks back to his mark during a net session at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium yesterday. The Tigers might be on a break, but the High Performance Unit is sweating it out in Mirpur. PHOTO: STAR

Competition drives pacers

SPORTS REPORTER

In terms of pace bowling, 2015 has been a revelation for Bangladesh. The statistics speak volumes for them.

The pacers have taken more wickets than the slower bowlers in ODIs this year, a rarity when it comes to the Tigers. Bangladesh's quicks have scalped 67 wickets in 15 matches, while their spinners took 41.

Almost all of Bangladesh's pacers have had their moments. Taskin Ahmed flew high in the World Cup and was the side's leading wicket-taker. Rubel Hossain took 18 wickets this year, posting his best performance since 2011. Mashrafe Bin Mortaza, aside from having a marvelous influence on the team, bagged 17 wickets.

And to top it all, there was Mustafizur Rahman, who left even the most optimistic supporters on the edge of their seats. The left-

armed, apart from being a revelation in the ODIs, marked his territory in Tests as well against South Africa.

His partner Mohammad Shahid, who had bowled six consecutive maidens against the Proteas, deserves special mention.

The pace attack today, save for Rubel and Mashrafe, seems to be dominated by the newbies. Their performance has compelled the selectors and the team management to shift their concentration from the tried and tested this year.

Robiul Islam, who once led

Bangladesh's pace attack hasn't played a Test since the West Indies tour in September last year. Shaiful Islam, who was seemingly the selectors' only hope prior to the India Test, was eventually ignored. Al-Amin Hossain witnessed a similar fate.

Today, these pacers find themselves facing an uphill task to reclaim a position that had been dominated by them for quite some time.

But the likes of Robiul and Al-Amin don't mind the current scenario. The competition, accord-

ing to them, would only make them stronger.

"A player's motivation increases when there's more competition. That's the moment when a player thinks of working twice as hard on his variations and coming up with something that will help him in international cricket," said Robiul, who is currently a member of a group called Players of National Interest (PONI), meant for those who are in contention for the national line-up.

Robiul, who has been facing various fitness issues, got injured during training last week and is currently working on a new action. He hopes that the upcoming domestic tournaments can change his fate again.

Al-Amin echoed his senior partner's sentiments. "Having played for the national team for a while, it does feel bad when you are out. But I am trying to make the most of this feeling and work harder on my processes," said the lanky pacer.



AL-AMIN HOSSAIN



ROBIUL ISLAM

Lehman cops it over EPL tweet

AFP, Nottingham

Australia coach Darren Lehmann got more than he bargained for when he posted a tweet asking for help in getting tickets to watch an English Premier League football match.

England's innings and 78-run win over Australia in the fourth Ashes Test at Trent Bridge, which gave them an unbeatable 3-1 lead in the five-match series, was completed before lunch on Saturday's third day of a scheduled five.

Lehmann decided he wanted to use the 'free' Sunday to take in a match between Stoke City and Liverpool on the opening weekend of the new Premier League season.

"Would like to go to Stoke v Liverpool with a couple of people anyone help? @stokecity or @LFC can you please retweet," he wrote on Twitter.

But, almost inevitably, Lehmann's request in helping source tickets for the match at the Britannia Stadium was met by suggestions his time would be better spent reviewing Australia's latest loss, rather than watching football.

Twitter user Anthony Dutton responded by posting: "Aren't you playing tomorrow (Sunday)...ooops sorry."

Meanwhile Dave Kinsella said: "You should be reviewing how you lost the #Ashes2015 to one of the worst English side in history."

And with England all-rounder Ben Stokes having taken six wickets in Australia's second innings in Nottingham, it was no surprise when Matt Laing tweeted: "Maybe better off analyzing Ben Stokes not Stoke City."

One Twitter user even went as far to suggest that a Stoke side renowned for grafting endeavour in defence had lessons to teach an Australia side heavily criticised for batting too loosely in English conditions.

"Probably not the best timing to be sending out a tweet like that, maybe take the team with u to learn their defensive game," tweeted Brent McGrath.

An unamused Lehmann responded to the jibes by tweeting: "Thanks so much for the abuse, was asking a question that people might help. Don't bother now! Thanks again people for being so abusive."

But Stoke themselves suggested Sunday they might be able to assist Lehmann, with a post on their Twitter feed saying: "Hi Darren, can you follow us please. We may have some good news for you."

Meanwhile, Cricket Australia chief executive James Sutherland on Sunday said that Lehmann is safe in his

India off to a flyer

SPORTS REPORTER

Defending champions India got off to a flying start in the SAFF U-16 Championship in Sylhet with a 5-0 drubbing of Sri Lanka in the opening fixture yesterday.

The youth brigade of the Blue Tigers dominated the encounter at the Sylhet District Stadium from the word go and, despite hitting the woodwork a number of times, came out with the massive victory in this Group A fixture.

Saurabh Meher, who scored a

hattrick, opened the scoring the 31st minute, but his side had to go to the breather with slender lead, thanks to a combination of a couple of good saves from Sri Lanka keeper Lakshan Yapa and the woodwork. However, Sri Lanka conceded an own goal in the 48th minute before Saurabh made it 3-0 in the next minute. Mohammad Shahjahan added another in the 66th minute before Saurabh completed his hattrick eight minutes later.

India coach Beethan Singh was delighted with the result and credited his players for executing his

gameplan efficiently.

"We are happy to have started the campaign with a big win, which was a result of execution of the game plan. Our football federation gives a lot of emphasis on football academies, which is why the basics of the game are enrooted in these youngsters," said Singh.

In today's match, Nepal, the runners-up of the previous edition, will take on Maldives in the first match of Group B at the same venue. Hosts Bangladesh will play their first game against Sri Lanka tomorrow.



Saurabh Meher (C) is the toast of his teammates after the India youngster opened the scoring against Sri Lanka in the opening fixture of the SAFF U-16 Championship at the Sylhet District Stadium yesterday. PHOTO: BFF

'We're on the right path'

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh have managed to draw four out of the five Tests that they have played this year. While the result sheet does depict progress, in actuality though, the gains that the Tigers have made in the game's longer version still remain a bit unclear.

And the reason behind that is that three out of the four drawn Tests were affected by rain.

While the Tigers put in an incredible comeback in the first Test against Pakistan, they were saved by the rains against India. While they did mesmerize their fans by putting up a brilliant show in the first Test against South Africa, the fact remains that the series witnessed just four days of cricket due to the inclement weather.

And that is a point that ace-allrounder Shakib Al Hasan focused yesterday when asked to assess Bangladesh's Test performance this year.

"I think we are on the right path as of now. Yes, it's true that there is a difference between the results in the one-dayers and the Tests. But I think had it not rained, we could have understood how much we have actually progressed in Tests after doing so well in the ODIs," said Shakib while speaking at a programme organised by Lenovo.

"We feel that we have improved but it's the result that catches everyone's eye. We have been playing good one-day cricket for a long time, but everyone noticed us only when we started producing the results. So hopefully, when we play our next Test, we can do well and make everyone notice us," he added.



Shakib Al Hasan speaks to the media during a ceremony yesterday through which he announced his restaurant's partnership with Lenovo. PHOTO: STAR

Asked about the upcoming challenge against Australia, Shakib indicated that the Tigers are currently in a good frame of mind.

"The way we see our cricket right now... we constantly try to improve ourselves and think of ways of how we can give our best rather than thinking too much about the strengths and weaknesses of our opponents.

"Yes, we do plan for them, but we are more focused on our strengths. If we can continue improving the way we have, I am sure we will be able to fight," said Shakib.

We just finished a good series. But now we have to train hard and start from the beginning," he added.

The left-hander also had special words reserved for Australia captain Michael Clarke who will be retiring after the Ashes series later this month.

"He will go down as one of the best Australian batsmen. His record speaks for him. He is a great cricketer and a great leader. Cricket will miss him," said Shakib.

Worker powers NZ to T20 triumph

AFP, Harare

George Worker hit an aggressive half-century on his New Zealand debut as Zimbabwe were severely outclassed in Sunday's one-off Twenty20 international at Harare Sports Club.

The left-handed Worker smashed 62 from just 38 balls as New Zealand posted 198 for five, equalling the highest score in a T20 international in Zimbabwe, before the hosts limped to 118 for eight to lose by 80 runs.

With their top three all posting quick runs after they lost the toss and were asked to bat, New Zealand were dominant from start to finish in an entirely one-sided match, giving them the perfect send-off as they head to South Africa for two Twenty20 internationals and three one-day internationals.

Worker came in at No. 3 after Williamson had ensured a brisk start, and added 49 with opener Martin Gupthill in 33 balls, before putting on another 49 with Luke Ronchi for the fourth wicket at an even quicker rate.

SCORES IN BRIEF

NEW ZEALAND: 198 for 5 in 20 overs (Gupthill 33, Williamson 20, Worker 62, Ronchi 29, Munro 23 not out; Williams 3-28)

ZIMBABWE: 118 for 8 in 20 overs (Ervine 42, Williams 16, Chakabva 13; Milne 2-10, McClenaghan 2-33)

Result: New Zealand won by 80 runs. Player-of-the-match: George Worker.