

Tigers' time to seal perfect year

SPORTS REPORTER



The final T20I at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur today will draw the curtain on a series that Bangladesh, expectedly so, dominated with ease. It will also bring an end to what was arguably Bangladesh's best ever year in international cricket, before leading the cricketers to the third season of the Bangladesh Premier League.

The Tigers have overcome several barriers this year and if they can win the final match of the tour today they will have achieved another first: a 2-0 T20I series win over a full-member nation.

It may sound a bit odd, but the fact remains that Bangladesh have never beaten a full-member twice in a T20I series. The only time they won more than a single match in a T20I series was back in 2012 when they beat Ireland 3-0.

A win today will also provide them with their second T20I series victory this year, following the 1-0 win over Pakistan in April.

However, as witnessed in the last match, the task isn't going to be easy. Bangladesh's batsmen struggled to chase Zimbabwe's below-par score on Friday with almost every batsman focusing entirely on smacking boundaries. Skipper Mashrafe Bin Mortaza later admitted that his batsmen didn't bat

according to the plan and that they were 'rushing themselves'.

With the Asia Cup and the ICC World Twenty20 looming, the hosts will hope that they can get their batting act together as soon as possible. While the bowlers did put up a decent show, they were under fire for a brief period when Malcolm Waller was at the crease.

As far as changes are concerned, the hosts may look to bring in Arafat Sunny in place of Jubair Hossain. While the young leg-spinner scalped two wickets in his first game, he was extremely nervous in his first over and had given away 17 runs. It's unlikely for the team management to make any other changes to the side.

The Zimbabweans on the contrary will hope that their batting clicks. They had lost three wickets within the first four overs in the last game and couldn't rebuild from there. What is perhaps worrisome for the visitors is that they kind of made it easy for the Bangladeshi bowlers to pick up their scalps.

All that the hosts did was bowl a good line and length and the visitors, attempting extravagant hits, ended up failing. As the visitors take to the Mirpur field for one last time, they will hope that they can end this tour on a high. They don't have to look too far for inspiration. All they need to do is have a look at Waller's 68-run knock, an innings which included some of the cleanest hits against Bangladesh's spinners.



CAPTAIN COOL: Bangladesh skipper Mashrafe Bin Mortaza is on his way out of the team hotel to enjoy a day away from cricket. Both the Bangladeshi and Zimbabwean cricketers didn't have any training scheduled yesterday and enjoyed a day-off ahead of the final T20I in Mirpur.

PHOTO: STAR

Youths clinch series

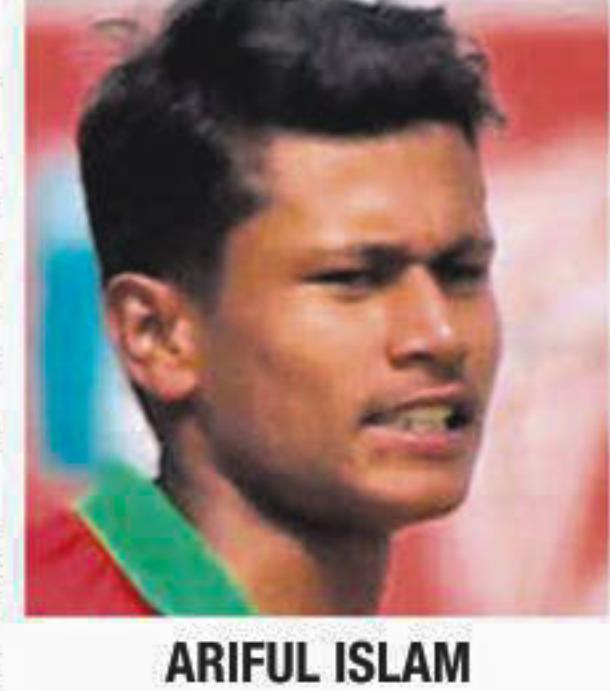
SPORTS REPORTER

Akin to the display put up by their seniors, Bangladesh under-19 team completed a series-win over their Zimbabwean counterparts in Chittagong yesterday after winning the third ODI of their four-match series by seven wickets.

Batting first, the visitors were bundled out for just 84 in 40.5 overs. Each of Bangladesh's six bowlers got wickets with Ariful Islam leading the charts with figures of 4 for 18 in 9.5 overs. Fellow spinner Sanjat Saha supported him well, finishing on 2 for 14.

Opener Jeremy Ives was the top-scorer for the Zimbabweans, posting a 43-ball 22.

After the exchange, the hosts reached home in just 15.5 overs. While Bangladesh did lose a few wickets early on they



ARIFUL ISLAM

managed to coast through eventually and take the series. Wicketkeeper-batsman Zakir Hossain top-scored for the home side with 27. After he got out, Nazmul Hossain Shanto took the reigns and ensured that there were no further hiccups with an unbeaten on a 20-ball 21.

The fourth and final ODI will take place in the port city tomorrow. The series is a part of the preparatory phase for the under-19 World Cup, which is scheduled to take place in Bangladesh next year.

SCORES IN BRIEF

ZIMBABWE UNDER-19S: 84 all out in 40.5 over (Ives 22, Mashinge 17, Murray 12; Halim 1-23, Mehedi 1-6, Sarkar 1-12, Saleh 1-10, Ariful 4-18, Saha 2-14)

BANGLADESH UNDER-19S: 85 for three in 15.5 overs (Hassan 17, Ghosh 12, Zakir 27, Shanto 21 not out; Matigmu 1-21, Mavuta 1-26)

Jessore crowned champions

SPORTS REPORTER

A 63-ball 83 from Hasanuzzaman and a 5-wicket haul from Masum Billah helped Jessore win their first National Cricket Championship title yesterday, beating Sylhet by 4 wickets in the final of the 35th edition of the competition at the Pabna District Stadium.

Batting first, Sylhet posted 238. In reply, Jessore reached their target in 46.2 overs with four wickets remaining.

De Villiers 85; Proteas 214

AFP, Bangalore



India's spin twins Ravichandran Ashwin and Ravindra Jadeja shared eight wickets as South Africa crumbled for 214 on the opening day of the second Test in Bangalore on Saturday.

AB de Villiers marked his 100th Test with a stroke-filled 85 to bolster the score after Indian captain Virat Kohli won the toss and elected to field at the Chinnaswamy stadium.

Opener Dean Elgar's 38 was the next highest score as the top-ranked Proteas once again floundered against the spinners on a pitch that held no demons.

India replied with 80 for no loss by stumps with Murali Vijay unbeaten on 28 and Shikhar Dhawan finding form with 45 not out.

Off-spinner Ashwin wreaked havoc with South Africa's top order by claiming three of the first five wickets. Ashwin finished with four for 70 to build on his eight-wicket match haul in the first Test.

Left-arm Jadeja, who also took eight scalps in Mohali, returned with four for 50, including the important wicket of de Villiers off the last ball before tea.

De Villiers hit 11 boundaries and a six, before wicket-keeper Wriddhiman Saha dived in front of the stumps to pick up a low catch.

SCORES IN BRIEF

SOUTH AFRICA: First innings 214 all out in 59 overs (Elgar 38, de Villiers 85, Morkel 22; Ashwin 4-70, Jadeja 4-50, Aaron 1-51)

INDIA: First innings 80 for no loss in 22 overs (Vijay 28, Dhawan 45; Rabada 0-17, Tahir 0-9)

JUNIOR ASIA CUP Narrow loss for hockey team

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh under-21 hockey team started the 8th Junior Asia Cup campaign with a 3-1 defeat against Pakistan at the Wisma Belia Hockey Stadium in Kuantan, Malaysia yesterday.

The charges of Mahbub Harun, who have been placed in Pool B alongside Pakistan, Oman and South Korea, conceded the lead in the 29th minute when Ali Mubashar struck for Pakistan. However, Bangladesh went to the break level after Sabbir Hossain equalised in the 32nd minute.

But Mohammed Billal struck four minutes after the restart before Riaz Rana wrapped it up with a third in the final minute of the game.

The under-21 team, which had 25 training sessions before leaving for Malaysia, features nine players from the senior team. The coach, before their departure, said his target would be to avoid finishing bottom in the eight-team competition, which will see top-four sides clinch berths in the Junior World Cup.

Bangladesh will take on Oman in their second game today.

SIDDIKUR on top

SPORTS REPORTER

Siddikur Rahman grabbed a share of the lead at the end of the third round of the inaugural World Classic Championship in Singapore yesterday.

The two-time Asian Tour winner, who started the day at sixth position on even-par (142), exchanged five birdies for three bogeys at the Laguna National Golf and Country Club to take the lead at two-under (211) alongside Nicholas Fung of Malaysia. The 30-year-old golfer in

fact took a two-shot lead at one position and held on to the lead until the 15th hole. However, a bogey on the 16th truncated his lead to one shot before Fung birdied the final hole to get back on level terms.

Siddikur was nevertheless happy with breaking the par barrier for the first time, and after coming close to lifting his third Asian Tour title in India last week, has

another chance at glory at the 750,000-dollar event.

"Honestly, I really enjoyed my round today. I gave myself very good chances out there. I managed to grab those chances and came back with a low score. I am really happy with how I played today," Siddikur told Asiantour.com.

"This is not an easy course. You have to be patient. It will be the same tomorrow. We are all tired and I think the player who has the strongest stamina and a good mental game will have the chance to win tomorrow," added Siddikur.

Juric, Rogic out of BD fixture

SPORTS REPORTER

Tomi Juric and Tom Rogic have been ruled out of Australia's World Cup qualifier against Bangladesh in Dhaka due to injuries, team officials said Saturday.

Striker Juric and midfielder Rogic sustained the injuries in Thursday's 3-0 win over Kyrgyzstan in Canberra.

Juric was replaced with a groin injury while Celtic-based Rogic had some quad soreness with coach Ange Postecoglou deciding to allow the pair to return to their clubs.

Postecoglou said he will not replace the pair for Tuesday's qualifier with Bangladesh, who currently sit at the bottom of Group B. Australia are one point behind group leaders Jordan.

The Socceroos will arrive in Dhaka at 6:00pm on Monday, after spending two days in Singapore, and will be based at the Westin Hotel in Gulshan, according to a Bangladesh Football Federation spokesman.

Williamson leads Kiwi fightback

AFP, Perth

In-form batsman Kane Williamson carried New Zealand hopes with another fighting half-century at stumps on the second day of the second Test at the WACA Ground on Saturday.

After Australia had declared their first innings at 559 for nine, New Zealand were 140 for two in reply. Williamson was unbeaten on 70, with Ross Taylor on 26 not out, the pair having added 53 runs but the Kiwis still trailing by 419 runs with eight wickets in hand.

Martin Guptill was trapped leg before wicket by pacer Mitchell Starc for just one when the score was six.

One significant setback for Australia was a hamstring injury suffered by first innings centurion Usman Khawaja.

SCORES IN BRIEF

AUSTRALIA: First innings 559 for nine in 133 overs dec (Warner 253, Khawaja 121, Voges 41; Craig 3-123, Bracewell 2-81)

NEW ZEALAND: 140 for two in 42 overs (Latham 36, Williamson 70 not out, Taylor 26 not out; Lyon 1-24, Starc 1-17)

A recognition draped in gratitude

SPORTS REPORTER

If you are someone who wants to be updated with current world events, then your Saturday morning started with two very bad news – Friday night's terror attack in Paris which left at least 128 people dead and the provisional ban on athletics giants Russia by the IAAF.

The Paris attack is a rude reminder of how volatile and unsafe the world is increasingly becoming with every passing day. The IAAF ban on Russian athletics federation is a testimony of how deeply the evil of doping in sports is rooted.

Confounded with the two seriously damaging issues, firstly as a peace-loving human being and secondly as a sports lover, it was perhaps the wisest move for you to seek refuge in something that might eventually allow you to regain your positive energy.

And one of those places you should have been was certainly the



The 86 sports organisers, who were accorded a felicitation by the Bangladesh Sports Press Association at the National Sports Council Auditorium yesterday, pose for a group photograph during the programme.

NSC Auditorium, where the Bangladesh Sports Press Association (BSPA) accorded a reception to as many as 86 organisers, who are now above 65 and have served the country's sports in different capacities for 25 or more years.

It was not like any other traditional and cliché receptions, where we often have a chief guest and a deputy to make it academic and to some extent very boring. It was recognition in its truest sense and at times inflicting when an octogenarian organiser, who served as the first secretary of NSC, choked with emotion while making a brief speech.

They were presented with scarves and crests, a very ordinary gift in terms of price. But they will definitely keep those mementos for as long as they live as gestures of genuine respect. The list is big, but still missed some more selfless organisers. However, the

effort, the first of its kind, of the BSPA deserves plaudits in a sporting culture where we are very miser in recognising an individual achiever and even when we recognise, it is often judged by the individual's political affiliation.

There were so many selfless organisers and as they stood together for photos during the final part of the programme, the history of Bangladesh's sports was projected in one frame. They are the building blocks of what our sporting institutions are now.

Ironically, they were under the roof of the NSC, the custodian of country's sports, which has hardly tried to bring all those selfless souls together to be the true centre of sporting excellence.

As the unique event was coming to a close, Zobera Rahman Linu, the most magnificent table tennis player the country has ever produced, made