

# SPORT



Bangladesh's Test specialists, including left-hander Mominul Haque (L), joined the team camp at the Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium in Chittagong yesterday as the Tigers gear up for their two-match Test series against England.

PHOTO: ANURUP KANTI DAS

## Soumya up for the fight

NAIMUL KARIM from Chittagong



A young cricketer comes to the surface, plays a series of phenomenal knocks, is the talk of the town and the love of the media and the nation, but all of a sudden fades away after a rather short period of time.

It is a story that you have heard a number of times. And it is the story that Bangladesh opener Soumya Sarkar will hope to avoid. After a fabulous year in international cricket -- when he fared well in the toughest of conditions in Australia and New Zealand and bludgeoned teams like Pakistan, India and South Africa at home -- the 23-year-old has taken his first blow. He is no longer the first-choice opener in ODIs for Bangladesh and the reason behind that is a combination of his dismal performances in both domestic and international cricket and Imrul Kayes's rise.

Despite the nervy period that his career is enduring, the left-hander managed to break into a smile every now and then while addressing media in Chittagong yesterday. He indicated that while he knew he was in trouble, he was up for the fight.

"Being in the national team is a challenge. I went through a bad patch and Imrul [Kayes] bhai did well. So, from now on every match will be a challenge. The other openers are doing well too. I have to fight for myself. I tell myself everyday that I will have to do more than my best at the moment, or else I will lose to myself. This is how I hope to get myself ready," said Soumya.

When asked what he thought his main problem was, he said: "I just haven't been able to score. I don't know what my problem is honestly. I have tried to get out of this patch. I guess everyone goes through this kind of a phase.

"The ones who can come out of it the fastest will succeed. It's a good thing that I am going through this phase at the start of my career. If I can battle and rise above this then I will learn a lot and it will be really good for me."

"I am talking to many people. I am trying everything. Let's see which road leads me to success. Many a time, many good advices don't work. And then there are times when one small piece of advice does the job," he added with a smile.

It is not as though opportunities have stopped coming for the left-hander. He has been included in the squads for both practice matches against England. Although the first day was abandoned yesterday due to a wet outfield at the MA Aziz Stadium, he might feature in the second, today.

He will also be captaining the BCB XI team in the second two-day match that begins from tomorrow. A good knock in either of these games could very well help him straighten his path out once again.

Soumya describes it best: "I will try to start afresh. I will try to perform the way I had during my peak in the first year."

While the BCB XI trained later in the evening, the Bangladesh national team trained at the Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium in the morning.

Aside from the players who played in the three-match ODI series, the likes of Mominul Haque, Mehedi Hasan Miraz, Al-Amin Hossain and Taijul Islam were also present during that session.

The hosts are expected to announce the Test squad after the two practice matches and judging by the practice session, it will not be a shock if they spring a few surprises.

## Batty's pudding awaits tasting

SPORTS REPORTER from Chittagong

When Gareth Batty was included in England's squad for the Bangladesh tour, there were many eyebrows raised. After all, this was a 39-year-old off-spinner making his return to Test cricket after more than a decade.

When Batty made his Test debut in Dhaka in 2003, he played against the likes of Khaled Mahmud, Javed Omar and Habibul Bashar, all of whom have either retired or gone on to occupy important positions in the team management.

If selected in the Test eleven in this series, he will be facing a more developed and completely changed Bangladeshi outfit.

While there has been a sense of excitement with regards to Batty's

return among English fans, Batty himself seemed very calm and collected. He refused to predict his future and did not really see this move as a life-changing one. He just wanted to take things one step at a time.

"I am not the sort of person to make sweeping statements. I just go with what's ahead of me. I think I am a better bowler than [I was in] 2005. The proof will be in the pudding if I get a go. But on a daily basis for the last few years, I have certainly known what I need to do and how to go about my business," Batty told reporters at the Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium in Chittagong yesterday.

When the 39-year-old Surrey captain was asked if it was going to be difficult for him to adjust to the young England outfit, he said: There are a few

boys in Surrey who are even younger than them [England members]. They look at the wrinkle and say that he is the old sort. But when I am playing it's all the same.

"It's a nice opportunity near the end of a career and you can say, hang on a second, you can progress right at the end of your career as well!"

Batty, who recently had a child, admitted that his life is going through a good phase at the moment. And he hopes he can better that by churning in some good turners during the Bangladesh series.

"I think it's a great challenge. Sometimes in England spin is not that prevalent, so I think it's a really good thing for English spinners to put a marker down and say, we can do it both at home and away," said Batty, who has played three out of his seven Tests against Bangladesh.

## Tahir, Proteas penalised

REUTERS, Cape Town

Spinner Imran Tahir has been fined 30 per cent of his match fee for his heated exchange with Australia batsman David Warner, while South Africa were penalised for maintaining a slow over-rate in Wednesday's fifth ODI against Australia in Cape Town.

Captain Faf du Plessis was docked 20 per cent of his match fee and the rest of the team 10 percent after South Africa fell one over short of their target.



The groundstaff at the MA Aziz Stadium in Chittagong tried their best to ensure that play would go on yesterday, but in the end the first day of the first two-day practice match was abandoned.

PHOTO: STAR

## Eva unbeaten champion

SPORTS REPORTER

Women's FIDE Master Nazrana Khan Eva became the undefeated champion of Saif Global Sports 36th National Women's Chess Championship after drawing her 11th and final round board against Aahelee Sarker at the Bangladesh Chess Federation hall room yesterday.

Nazrana, who has been participating regularly in the national championship since 1996, won only her second national championship title, with 9.5 points, after having won her



39-year-old Gareth Batty has been included in the England Test side for the first time in more than a decade and he is hoping that his actions will speak louder than words once the Test series begins.

PHOTO: STAR

## Azhar 302\* puts Pak on top

AFP, Dubai



Opener Azhar Ali smashed a maiden triple hundred to put Pakistan firmly in control against the West Indies in the first day-night Test in Dubai on Friday.

Ali's epic unbeaten 302 guided Pakistan to 579-3 declared before the West Indies closed the second day on 69-1, still needing another 311 to avoid the follow-on with opener Kraigg Brathwaite (32) and Darren Bravo, on 14 not out, fighting at the crease.

They lost Leon Johnson leg-before in leg-spinner Yasir Shah's second over for 15 but negotiated the pace-cum-spin attack well for 22 overs.

It was Ali who stole the limelight in this second ever day-night Test with a career-best score that was spread over 645 minutes of dominating batting, albeit on a flat Dubai stadium pitch.

It is only the third Test triple century against the West Indies, after Andy Sandham of England and late Pakistan great Hanif Mohammad, making Pakistan's 400th Test, and his own 50th, a memorable occasion.

In all Ali smashed 23 boundaries and two sixes and put on 215 for the

opening wicket with Sami Aslam (90), 147 for the second with Asad Shafiq (67) and 165 with Babar Azam (69) for the third.

Ali drove part-timer Jermaine Blackwood to the cover boundary to complete his triple century off 469 balls, pumped the air in jubilation and then did Pakistan's new style of salute and push-up celebrations.

Misbah, unbeaten on 29, signalled the declaration in an attempt to forge ahead in the three-match series.

Ali became the fourth Pakistan batsman behind Hanif (337 vs West Indies in 1958), Inzamam-ul-Haq (329 vs New Zealand in 2002) and Younis Khan (313 vs Sri Lanka in 2009) to hit a triple hundred.

When on 278 Ali completed 4,000 Test runs, becoming the tenth Pakistani to reach the milestone in the five-day format.

Ali's knock as well as Pakistan's big total justified the decision to refine the seam on the pink ball used for this match after players complained of difficulties picking it up in the first-ever day-night Test between Australia and New Zealand at Adelaide last year.

A switch to a black seam, instead of the white and green one used at Adelaide,

seemingly aided the batsmen considerably, with leg-spinner Devendra Bishoo (2-125) returning the best figures for a struggling West Indian attack.

Earlier, Ali was given another lifeline when Blackwood dropped a regulation catch off spinner Roston Chase in the slips with the Pakistani opener on 190.

Resuming at 279-1, Pakistan lost one wicket in the first session when Shafiq gave a return catch to Bishoo.

Ali continued from where he left off after resuming on 146, reaching his 150 with a single and then hitting a six and a boundary off Chase to send Pakistan past 350.

Soon after Ali reached his double century with a boundary off paceman Shannon Gabriel, his second after scoring 226 against Bangladesh in Dhaka last year.

This three-match series will continue in Abu Dhabi (October 21-25) and Sharjah (October 30-November 3).

SCORES IN BRIEF

PAKISTAN: First Innings 579 for 3 declared (Azhar 302 not out, Sami 90, Babar 69; Bishoo 2-125, Chase 1-109)

WEST INDIES: First Innings 69 for 1 (Brathwaite 32 not out; Yasir 1-13)



maiden title back in 2000. "It's not that I'm inconsistent, you have seen that I've given up hopes despite going so close to the title before because sometimes you need luck, which did not favour me. To be honest, I am in good form and this is an outcome of consistency even though initially I didn't expect to win the championship," said Nazrana, who was awarded Tk 25,000 in cash as a title prize.

WFM Sharmin Sultana retained her runner-up spot with nine points while 18-time national champion WIM Rani Hamid finishing third with 8.5 points. Aahelee, a student of BUET, took fourth position with seven points.

## Morgan to captain in India: Farbrace

AFP, Chittagong



Eoin Morgan will return as captain of England's limited overs side in India next year despite skipping the ongoing tour of Bangladesh, according to assistant coach Paul Farbrace.

Some commentators have queried whether Morgan should resume captaincy after he and opener Alex Hales decided not to travel to Bangladesh for a scheduled tour.

In Morgan's absence, Jos Buttler led the ODI side to an impressive 2-1 victory in a contest which ended on Wednesday -- making England the first side to win a 50-over series in Bangladesh in seven attempts.

Despite winning plaudits for his captaincy, Buttler has insisted he is only keeping the seat warm for Morgan who has presided over a sharp improvement in England's limited overs cricket in the last 18 months.

Farbrace said Morgan is "100 percent" sure to return to the role next January when England are due to play a series of ODI and T20 matches against India.

"He will definitely be captain in India," Farbrace told reporters on Thursday. "There can't be any way around it. He deserves it."

Farbrace expressed sympathy for Morgan, saying he would have found it a bitter-sweet experience to watch the ODI triumph which preceded a Test series in which England will be captained by Alistair Cook.

"The sad part is that his team is continually improving, and he has definitely been the leader and allowed so many guys to play that way," he said. "I'm sure he has watched and I'm sure he'll have been really proud of the way they played. But he will definitely come back in for the next series."

Farbrace said Buttler had emerged with great credit from the series.

"Morgs is the leader, but it's been great that Jos has had the experience," he said.

"He's a guy who comes across as a quiet fella, to lead in tough circumstances he's done a great job. "On and off the field, we have seen he has more to him than others thought. He doesn't say a great deal, but when he does, people listen."

England will now play two Test matches in Bangladesh, with the first Test starting in Chittagong on October 20.

After Bangladesh, they will embark on a five-Test tour of India before returning in the new year for the limited overs matches.



Pakistan opener Azhar Ali celebrates after reaching triple hundred on the second day of the first day-night Test against the West Indies at the Dubai International Cricket Stadium on Friday.

PHOTO: AFP

## Siddikur up to seventh

SPORTS REPORTER

Siddikur Rahman moved up to joint seventh position in the Venetian Macao Open after a four-under-par (67) in the second round on Friday. Starting the day at 16th position, the 31-year-old golfer traded six birdies for two bogeys for an aggregate score of six-under-par (136) after two days of good work.

The two-time Asian Tour winner is just two shots behind five players who jointly hold the lead at eight-under-par (134). Among them is Scott Vincent of Zimbabwe, who carded a sparkling 64 yesterday to grab the lead from overnight 29th position.