

# SPORT

## A coming of age

AL-AMIN from Cardiff

Is the five-wicket thriller against New Zealand at Cardiff Bangladesh's biggest win in their ODI history? Their victory against Australia at the same venue by the same margin 12 years ago was very special. The Tigers' 15-run win against England in the 2015 World Cup was not only fascinating but also served a purpose - they made it to the quarterfinals. They knocked India out of the 2007 World Cup with yet another stunning five-wicket win at Port of Spain and they beat holders Pakistan in their first World Cup appearance in 1999. For the last two years they have won a lot of games at home against the big teams, which include Pakistan, India, South Africa and England.

But Friday's victory in Cardiff against the Black Caps in extraordinary circumstances and with higher stakes on the cards was by far the best win in Bangladesh's one-day history.

Bangladesh have never been in a situation in an ICC flagship event where they were in the limelight as far as title race was concerned. It was the biggest stage for Bangladesh to show the world what they were capable of.

But after they were reduced to 33-4 chasing 265, a few reporters, including one Indian journalist, started filing their reports of a comfortable Kiwi victory. However, by the time Shakib Al Hasan and Mahmudullah Riyad put on 100 in that magnificent 224-run fifth wicket stand that turned the game on its head, one of the journalists sitting beside this reporter said in annoyance: "I've already filed half of my report and I might have to change the whole story if this partnership goes on."

"I'm lucky that I have not started my

report," retorted a South African reporter, who however was a bit disturbed at the prospect of a full game. "I'm afraid I'm going to miss the 7pm train."

The South African missed the train but what a wonderful game of cricket he was part of. Two magnificent centuries under pressure in a partnership nobody, not even the most loyal Tigers fans, could have seen coming.

"I was a good athlete. I played cricket long time ago. But this is the best day of my life. I will write something. This is extraordinary," said an emotionally-choked Rouf Chowdhury, who is in his 80s and was coming down the lift on a wheel-chair with son after the game.

Interestingly in the mix of the celebrating Bangladesh fans in the walkway inside the stadium, former Bangladesh cricketer and one of the architects of taking the game to a higher level in the country, Syed Ashraf Haque, was walking alone.

He greeted this reporter with a big smile on his face and said: "What a wonderful victory it is. This is called coming of age. The way Shakib and Mahmudullah played was magnificent." Asked if he was optimistic of a win when Bangladesh were 4-33, he said: "To be honest I was not but when they were building the partnership I thought we had hope. I'm really proud of what we have done today."

The Bangladesh fans were running up and down that walkway. Some were waving the national flag and others were not sure how express themselves.

A Bangladeshi fan in that mix was taking selfie when his colleague said it was about time to go home. The man, in his 40s, said: "Forget about home. I want to stay here as long as possible. I want to enjoy every bit of it."

It was truly a day to relish.



After a jittery start, England batsman Ben Stokes put Bangladesh hearts at ease with a superb century to knock Australia out of the Champions Trophy and send Bangladesh to the semifinals yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP



## 'Another sign of a good team'

SPORTS REPORTER

"No doubt Friday's win was special, but the reality is that we are now good enough to win such game," Habibur Bashar, who led the Tigers to a historic five-wicket victory against then-invincible Australia at Sophia Gardens in Cardiff twelve years back, expressed his feelings thusly over the Tigers' five-wicket win against New Zealand in their last Group A match of the ICC Champions Trophy in Cardiff.

"When we beat Australia in 2005 it was an upset, but this win against New Zealand was not an upset; rather I think our collapse against Australia was an upset. It's just another sign of a good team. I hope you understand what mean about the status of the Bangladesh team by saying this," continued the former skipper.

"There is nothing to prove for Bangladesh and I don't like this type of talk anymore. The truth is that Bangladesh are a very good team and can only go forward," he added.

Bashar however branded Friday's victory special, saying: "Just think, the team was under pressure, two batsmen [Shakib Al Hasan and Mahmudullah Riyad] were under pressure and they overcame all adversities. After a long break Shakib batted like the old Shakib. And Riyad... simply great touch of a great batsman."



India captain Virat Kohli believes his side will thrive under the pressure when they take on South Africa in a must-win Champions Trophy encounter today.

PHOTO: REUTERS

## All eyes on Birmingham

SPORTS REPORTER from Cardiff



The Park Plaza Hotel was abuzz with Bangladeshi reporters yesterday, a day after the Tigers' famous five-wicket win over New Zealand at the Sophia Gardens.

The inquisitive reporters were waiting for someone to come out from the 20th-century imposing structure so they could give something to their readers (audience). Skipper Mashrafe Bin Mortaza came out briefly after the morning team meeting to spend some time with them. The only thing he said was that they were following yesterday's England-Australia game at The Oval. It was a game that would settle the second semifinalist from Group A and Bangladesh could be that team if England beat Australia.

He said that they were watching the game together in that team meeting room where the ICC has provided them with a TV that carried the pay channel Sky Sport. Although every player has a television in their rooms, no pay channel is available. That is the case in every hotel, even a five-star one. However, everyone kept abreast of the score through the internet.

"Australia scored 277 and I think it's a gettable total," said coach Chandika Hathurusingha while heading for lunch. He was frequently checking the wi-fi and his cell phone was working properly so that he could update himself with the score.

"It was a brilliant partnership. I think this was the best I have seen," the coach quipped when his

remarked while walking along the road.

He said Shakib was 'spot on' when he said after the game that this win will give them the confidence to beat any team in any situation.

Asked if he was happy with what his charges have done in the tournament so far, the coach said: "Yes, except for the Australia game."

He however was not interested in going into further details.

"This is the month of Ramadan. They are fasting and there was no party last night," the coach said when asked if there was any party on Friday night. Even when Hathurusingha was headed off to a restaurant he wanted to make sure that it had Sky Sports.

Meanwhile, the sight of Mosaddek Hossain just outside the hotel lobby attracted the press corps. The young right-hander, who played an important hand in Bangladesh's victory with a little gem of a three-over spell that got him three wickets and more importantly contained the Kiwis to a below-par total, said that it was a crucial game in his career.

"Mashrafe Bhai told me to bowl a few overs just to contain the runs. This is a situation I have bowled in before and I'm lucky that I got three wickets," said Mosaddek, who took three for 13 at the crucial stage of the New Zealand innings.



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## One titan will fall today

Proteas meet India in virtual quarterfinal

AFP, Birmingham

India captain Virat Kohli says India will thrive under pressure in their make or break Champions Trophy clash with South Africa on Sunday, while his South African counterpart AB de Villiers vowed to end his barren run in the nick of time as the teams prepare for a must-win showdown with India.

After slumping to a shock defeat against Sri Lanka on Thursday, holders India must win their final Group B fixture at The Oval to avoid an embarrassing exit. India came into the tournament as favourites to lift the silverware, but failure to build on their opening match thrashing of Pakistan has put their title defence in jeopardy.

Although he is well aware of the criticism that would come with elimination at the group stage, India captain Kohli is remaining upbeat and he called on his players to embrace the high-stakes nature of their showdown.

"It's become very exciting. Every game is effectively a quarter-final now," Kohli said. "In our group especially, all teams are on two points, and you have to win your next game to go through, which is an exciting position to be in for all teams. It's a great scenario where you literally have two



matches now which are going to be even more competitive cricket. So we are pretty clear about the whole situation. It certainly opened up the whole table for sure."

South Africa also come into the final fixture on the back of a defeat, against Pakistan on Wednesday, but Kohli warned his team not to underestimate the Proteas.

"We are against a very high quality side and we have to go out there and play good cricket," he said. "So there's no room for complacency in a tournament like this, and we as a team certainly don't feel that. Even if we had four points on the board right now, we still would have gone out there to try to beat South Africa, and that's exactly the mindset we are going to take into the next game."

De Villiers' first golden duck in his

long and successful ODI career came during South Africa's shock loss to Pakistan and the 33-year-old has managed just four runs in the tournament, but the right-hander, who declared himself fully fit after recent hamstring problems, is convinced he will get back on track against India.

"Look, I'm still in good form. Still hitting the ball well, as always," De Villiers told a press conference on Saturday. "It's just a matter of going out and doing it. There's nothing I can say here that's going to change anything except for that I still believe I can and hopefully I'll prove that tomorrow. But I'm very excited with this opportunity for the team and for myself on the big stage to go and just enjoy what we do best. "We're very excited about tomorrow and I also feel really excited about the opportunities."

### ENG-AUS SCOREBOARD

AUSTRALIA	R/B	4s/6s
Warner c Buttler b Wood	21/25	4/0
Finch c Morgan b Stokes	68/64	8/0
Smith c Plunkett b Wood	56/77	5/0
Henriques c Plunkett		
b Rashid	17/19	3/0
Head not out	71/64	5/2
Maxwell c Roy b Wood	20/31	2/0
Wade c & b Rashid	2/3	0/0
Starc c Root b Rashid	0/3	0/0
Cummins c & b Rashid	4/7	0/0
Zampa b Wood	0/3	0/0
Hazlewood not out	1/5	0/0
Extras: (lb-8, w-8, nb-1)	17	
Total: (For 9 wickets in 50 overs)	277	
Fall of wickets: 1-40, 2-136, 3-161, 4-181, 5-239, 6-245, 7-245, 8-253, 9-254		

BOWLER	O	M	R	W
Ball	9	1	61	0
Wood	10	1	33	4
Plunkett	8	0	49	0
Stokes	8	0	61	1
Rashid	10	1	41	4
Ali	5	0	24	0

ENGLAND	R/B	4s/6s
Roy lbw b Starc	4/2	1/0
Hales c Finch b Hazlewood	0/4	0/0
Root c Wade b Hazlewood	15/14	2/0
Morgan run out	87/81	8/5
Stokes not out	102/109	13/2
Buttler not out	29/32	3/1
Extras: (lb-2, w-1)	3	
Total: (for 4 wickets in 40.2 overs)	240	
Fall of wickets: 1-4, 2-6, 3-35, 4-194		



Everyone saw what Mahmudullah Riyad (L) contributed with the bat, but everyone was curious to know why he had seemingly spoken to his bat after completing his century against New Zealand. Yesterday he revealed why, saying that the bat was signed by his six-year-old son, who insisted that he play with it.

PHOTO: REUTERS

## Rashid destroys Windies

AFP, Gros-Islet



Rashid Khan destroyed the West Indies batting line-up with outstanding figures of seven for 18 to bowl Afghanistan to a stunning 63-run victory in the opening fixture of a three-match One-Day International series at the Darren Sammy Stadium in St Lucia on Friday.

After opener Javed Ahmadi's 81 provided

the foundation for the visitors' total of 212 for six batting first, the leg-spinner tore through an inept batting line-up to claim the fourth-best bowling figures ever in an ODI, routing the Caribbean side for 149 off 44.4 overs to take a 1-0 lead in the series ahead of the second match at the same venue on Sunday.

Surprisingly brought on as the sixth bowler by captain Asghar Stanikzai with the West Indies at 68 for two after 22 overs, Afghanistan's premier bowler had an instant, devastating impact.