

Siddikur's fab finish in Hamburg

SPORTS REPORTER

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Bangladesh's premier golfer Siddikur Rahman made a fabulous finish to the Porsche European Open in Hamburg yesterday, ending the two-million-euro event tied for third as England's Jordan Smith took the title, beating last year's champion Alexander Levy of France in play-off.

The 32-year-old Bangladeshi golfer signed off on a great week of golf with a flawless 68, aggregating 11-under-par (277) as Smith took the title at 13-under-par (275). Levy settled for second place while Johan Edfors of Sweden took a share of the third position alongside Siddikur.

This is the second-best finish in the European Tour for Bangladesh's two-time Asian Tour winner, who had gone agonisingly close to breaking his European duck in Mauritius last year, only to blow his chances over the last two holes to eventually finish second.

"It was a really great day. I didn't expect this today, but I'm very fortunate; my hitting was good. My putting was really, really good on all four days. So I'm really happy," Siddikur told Europeantour.com at the end of day's play.

The 32-year-old golfer was in a sticky situation with a wayward tee-shot and second shot on the par-5 18th hole. But a great fourth shot and a superlative putt made sure he ended the day bogey-free. Siddikur said he was not too worried and that he kept cheering himself up. "I kept talking to myself no problem, I need just one good shot or one good putt. The putt was really memorable, it was wonderful."

The Bangladeshi golfer started the fourth round at the Green Eagle Golf Course in 10th position, five shots off the pace, as he returned a card of 73 following two excellent opening rounds (70, 66). The ground he lost in the third



Bangladesh's premier golfer Siddikur Rahman had a flawless final day in Hamburg yesterday and finished with a flourish to tie for third place in the Porsche European Open.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

round, Siddikur made up early in the fourth round as he raced to joint lead with three birdies on the front nine followed by another on the twelfth hole. Both Levy and Smith dropped bogeys as it into a three-horse race at the top.

On many a previous occasion, Siddikur had buckled under expectations of being at the top of the leaderboard in such a big event. But he seemed to have finally bucked that trend as he brought to

the fore all his experience yesterday. He didn't drop a single shot over the 18 holes -- one of only three players to go bogey-free in the final round. But then again, the ace golfer failed to take the fight to the wire as he went for pars in the remaining six holes, leaving the battle firmly between Jordan and Levy.

A top-three finish in this prestigious event will give a big boost to the career of Siddikur, who had been struggling with

a recurring back pain and a slight lack of form of late. This will also hand him a hefty paycheque, likely to be around 112,600 euros, while lifting his world rankings, which is 394 at the moment.

The 2010 Brunei Open and 2013 Hero Indian Open champion is expected to take part in an Asian Tour event in India later this week before participating in the Fiji International Open and three European Tour events on the trot in August.

BCB to sign Stuart for short term

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The Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) is set to hire former Australia leg-spinner Stuart MacGill. And if the 47-year-old joins he will be the second high-profile player after legendary West Indian pace bowler Courtney Walsh in the Tiger's backroom staff.

This was disclosed by the BCB president Nazmul Hasan after the board meeting at its headquarters in Mirpur yesterday. However, the BCB said that a deal is yet to be finalised with their 'preferred' choice. He said that it would be a short-term contract, 'probably a three-month contract which is expected to start from August and run till Bangladesh's away series against South Africa in September-October'.

The board president also said that they were actually looking for short-team options in an attempt to develop long-term deals.

"Short-term contracts will help us assess the performance of the coach. It also helps the concerned coach to get an idea about us," said Nazmul Hasan, adding that it was not easy to get a long-term coach.

He however said that they want Sri Lankan pace bowler Champa Ramanyake for the HP team for the long-term.

"We have decided to give him a long-term contract. But it's up to him to decide. We are expecting a deal in a week," he added.

The board has recently hired Australian Mark O'Neill as a batting consultant for one month.

"He is good and during his short stint we expect him to work with the lower-order of our batting which has not been doing well," said the board president.

Regarding the recent court ruling, which ruled that any amendment made to the BCB constitution by anyone other than the board is illegal; Hasan said that it paved the way for the next BCB elections.

"We have decided to hold the EGM and the AGM in September. But that will be subject to the availability of the full verdict of the court," he said.

Hasan said that the board has decided to extend the contract of the national panel for one year. But he also added that there might be a shuffle with 'one selector from the junior selection panel replacing a selector in the three-man senior selection committee headed by Minhazul Abedin'.



STUART MACGILL

'Australia will get us back into rhythm'

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Ace Bangladesh all-rounder Shakib Al Hasan remained hopeful that Australia would tour the country for the scheduled two-match Test series in August-September, stressing the importance of that tour for the Tigers' busy upcoming schedule.

"I hope that Australia come because we had a nice gap and now our season will start. Before going to South Africa the Australia series is very important. If they don't come, then going to South Africa and playing after such a gap will be very difficult," the left-hander told reporters while leaving the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium yesterday.

"It's not that Australia coming here will make that tour easier but we will get back into our rhythm and set up the atmosphere. I hope they will come and it will be an enjoyable series," he continued, adding that he hoped

Bangladesh could do even better than the years before 2017.

The 30-year-old is scheduled to play in the Caribbean Premier League (CPL) for the Jamaica Tallawahs and he said that he would leave as soon as he receives his passport, which is being processed. Speaking about the tournament, Shakib said that it was much easier to find a playing spot in the eleven there as opposed to the Indian Premier League (IPL).

"In the IPL every team has 10 overseas players so the competition for those four overseas player slots in the team is very tough. Sometimes you can do well but not get a chance in the next game. But in the CPL and Pakistan Super League the team is more or less fixed.

"So in these leagues I know I will play but in the IPL there is an uncertainty. I don't feel any other difference because the atmosphere everywhere is very nice. And there are quality players in all leagues."

The T20 captain added that the conversations about the Tigers were now very different to those in the past, with people asking what has led to their incredible rise in the international circuit.

"Now the conversations are very different. People ask about different players and how we have done so well as a team and improved so much. They ask a lot of questions and we regularly talk about Bangladesh cricket. And we can also talk like that because now we feel like we are players from a big team," a beaming Shakib said.

He went on to say that he had always enjoyed cricket whether it was at home or in any other league, but conceded that the Caribbean had a different vibe.

"The atmosphere is different to all other tournaments so I enjoy it a lot. The places are very beautiful and nobody takes it too seriously. Of course it's serious on the field but off it everyone likes to be relaxed," he concluded.



Premier Bangladesh all-rounder Shakib Al Hasan is having fun with his teammate at the indoor practice facility of the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR



Inspirational Bangladesh captain Mashrafe Bin Mortaza (L) receives the 'Sera Bangali' award from Jhulan Goswami, a member of the India women's team, during an award ceremony at a posh Kolkata hotel on Saturday. Kolkata's leading Bengali daily, Anadabazar, introduced the award and Mashrafe is the third Bangladeshi cricketer to receive it after Habibul Bashar and Shakib Al Hasan.

We need to go to Bangladesh: Clarke

CRICKINFO



Australia's cricketers "would be silly" to turn down Cricket Australia's proposal for arbitration in their ongoing pay dispute, former captain Michael Clarke has said on Sunday.

CA had suggested the option last Thursday, with a guarantee of rollover contracts, to ensure the tours to Bangladesh, in August, and India, in September and October, go through unaffected. But the Australian Cricketers' Association was wary of the idea because it could result in "significant" delays to the resolution of the pay dispute. ACA chief executive Alistair Nicholson said he would prefer to continue negotiations with the board, but will have a final answer on arbitration "by next week".

Clarke, though, felt it important that the players capitalise on a chance to actually spend some time in the middle. "As a (former) player, I'm saying if a deal's not done by Monday afternoon allow it go to arbitration because we need this finalised," he told

Channel Nine. "I believe this is definitely going to arbitration, and I think the ACA would be silly to say no to it. The players can't say no. The players have got to say yes because they've got to play."

In the nine months spent deciding on a new Memorandum of Understanding between CA and ACA, one tour has already fallen by the wayside - Australia A's to South Africa - leaving some of the nation's best players with little to no practice ahead of what is expected to be a tough visit to the subcontinent. Bangladesh beat England in Dhaka last year, taking all 10 wickets in a session and similar spinner-friendly conditions might await Steven Smith's men.

Clarke felt it imperative that the players face such challenges if they are to be ready to win back the Ashes in November-December. "This team cannot afford to miss one game of cricket if we want to beat England in the Ashes," he said. "We need to go to Bangladesh, we need to go to India for the ODIs, and then we need to play our best cricket to beat England in Australia, which I believe we will if we've played some cricket together as a team."



Stokes burst leaves Proteas reeling

REUTERS, London

England ripped apart South Africa's top order in Sunday's final session at the Oval to bear down on a victory that would put them 2-1 up with one to play in the four-test series.

Two wickets from successive balls in Ben Stokes' third over removed Quinton de Kock (5) and Faf du Plessis (0) and ended faint South Africa hopes of mounting a rearguard action in pursuit of their nominal target of 492.

Although Stokes failed to record what would have been the first-ever test hat-trick at the Oval, the damage was done. Du Plessis' wicket, lbw without playing a shot to a first-ball inswinger, was a particular blow, with South Africa needing their captain to survive at least into Monday.

The tourists limped to the close on 117-4, still 375 short of their target with a day's play remaining.

The battling Dean Elgar was unbeaten on 72 as England turned to Moeen Ali to secure another breakthrough.

No one else provided much resistance. Before Stokes struck, Stuart Broad removed opener Heino Kuhn for 11 and Toby Roland-Jones dismissed Hashim Amla for five.

England have a further 98 overs available on Monday to complete the victory and vindicate Root's decision to delay his declaration to apply maximum pressure to South Africa.

SCORES IN BRIEF

ENGLAND: First innings 353

SOUTH AFRICA: First innings 175

ENGLAND: Second innings 313 for 8 dec (Jennings 48, Westley 59, Root 50, Stokes 31, Bairstow 63, Roland-Jones 32 not out; Morris 2-70, Maharaj 3-50)

SOUTH AFRICA: Second innings 117 for 4 (Elgar not out 72, Bavuma not out 16; Roland-Jones 1-20; Stokes 2-29)