

SPORT

AT LONG LAST Youth Games kick off today

SPORTS REPORTER



The Youth Games is something that defines a nation's passion for sport. It is not an event where one counts how many medals are won or lost but how many youths are involved in showcasing their talent across the country and in as many sporting disciplines as possible.

The primary objective of the Youth Games is to create a sporting vibe at a particular time that almost every youth in the country longs for. We have had this kind of festivity in a different way in the country in the past when annual sports of schools after exams compensated the very essence of this sort of games.

Unfortunately it has never been framed in a systematic way by the National Olympic Committee, the apex body of a country for promoting sport. However, belatedly though, the Bangladesh Olympic Association is finally fulfilling that long due commitment.



PHOTO: STAR

Bangladesh Olympic Association's (BOA) secretary general Syed Shahed Reza (R) speaks at a press conference at the BOA auditorium to appraise the Youth Games, which begin across the country today.

The stage is set. The inaugural Bangladesh Youth Games gets underway today across all 64 districts in an attempt to create enthusiasm among participants and organisers alike.

The Youth Games, where 17-year-old athletes are eligible to take part, is the first tournament of its kind in the history of Bangladesh sports. The organisers are optimistic of holding the event regularly in between the Bangladesh Games, an event for professional athletes that takes place once in every four years.

The nation-wide competition was formed with the aim of inspiring young athletes to take more interest in sports, hunt

talented individuals and build them up for youth teams and also create more organisers to facilitate sports at grass-root levels.

Approximately 48,118 participants from some 500 upazailas of the 64 districts are expected to compete in 21 disciplines across three phases - district, divisional and national - during the four-month long tournament.

Ahead of the games, torch rallies were held yesterday at each of the 64 districts sports headquarters. The district level competition will begin today with their upazila teams participating.

"Every necessary steps have already been taken to make the games a success," said Bangladesh Olympic Association (BOA) secretary general Syed Shahed Reza at an official press conference at the BOA Bhabon yesterday.

"We hope this initiative will create a sporting environment at district level and we also expect that talented players and organisers will come out through this, the first-ever Youth Games, the largest in terms of participation in the history of Bangladesh sports," Reza said.

Though the Youth Games was initially supposed to be held at the upazila level, it will now start at district level where athletes from each upazila under a district will compete amongst themselves from where the winners will represent their district at the divisional phase. The respective divisional winners will then go on to compete at the national phase.

"Though we can't hold the games at upazila level due to a few limitations, we believe the Games have already created an enthusiasm among the athletes and organisers as we are still getting requests from different district sports associations for entries of their athletes," said BOA vice-president and media committee chairman Bashir Ahmed, adding that Lalmonirhat basically has no infrastructure for sports but are involved in the Games.

Steering Committee member secretary Ashikur Rahman Miku informed that each district will host at least five disciplines which will include three team events such as football, volleyball, basketball, kabaddi, volleyball or handball.

To inspire budding athletes, the BOA also nominated 20 former and current star players from different disciplines as goodwill ambassadors who will travel to different venues and support the athletes. Reza also informed that they have an estimated budget of Tk 15 crore to complete the tournament and that the money will be raised through sponsors.



Australia speedster Mitchell Starc produced a delivery for the ages to comprehensively beat England's set batsman James Vince and take the hosts closer to an Ashes-regaining win on the fourth day of the third Test in Perth yesterday,

PHOTO: REUTERS

'The ball of the century'

AGENCIES, Perth



A ball of genius, or a handy jag out of a crack. Whichever way you saw it, symbolism was heaped on Mitchell Starc's dismissal of James Vince with a delivery that seemed to speak of the gulf between the two sides. Ashes historians love these images as much as batsmen hate them.

If the reality was marginally less miraculous than the immediate visual thrill from Starc changing the direction of a ball that was scooting down leg side but instead splattered Vince's stumps, it showed Australia to be capable of game-changing feats that are beyond England's reach. You could list a few such disparities, starting with Steve Smith's batting compared to Joe Root's. Australia's captain has struck 426 runs and is averaging 142. Root has made 176 at 29.37.

"If I face that another 20, 30 times, I think it'll get me out every time," said Vince after the cricket world went giddy over Starc's ball to remove the England No 3, who had batted stylishly for 55. "So give him some credit there, sweep it under the carpet and move on. They're a bit easier to take than the ones where you feel

you're at fault yourself."

The Starc wonder ball, which prompted that master of deception, Wasim Akram, to exclaim: "That's called a JAFFA! What a delivery -- you reminded me of my bowling days and I enjoyed it to the hilt! You made left-armers proud!"

Even allowing for the crack, nobody in the WACA commentariat was withholding any praise from Starc for a ball that angled in from a wide left-arm delivery, then deviated 42cms from where a computer projection predicted it to go.

The new direction was the middle of Vince's stumps, and when the bails flew off the batsman ignored Starc's finger-pointing and gloating to carry on staring at the pitch as if looking for a contact lens.

It was the "ball of the Ashes and the summer" according to Test legend Shane Warne.

In 1993 at Old Trafford, Warne bamboozled England veteran Mike Gatting with a ball that drifted, pitched outside leg stump, spun sharply and clipped the top of the right-hander's off stump.

The delivery to dismiss Gatting has gone down in the history books as "The Ball of the Century" but Starc has made a strong case for the ball of the 21st century.

"Not much James Vince could have done about that," Warne said on Wide World of Sports commentary. "He might have just tried to hit it a fraction square. But that's an absolute peach from the big left-arm quick, Mitchell Starc."

Shortly after Warne posted a replay of the Starc delivery on Instagram with a caption that read: "Ball of the #Ashes and the summer. Starc is on fire here in the west!"

Former England captain Michael Vaughan also called it the "ball of the 21st century".

Former England off-spinner Graeme Swann, meanwhile, took exception to some people not willing to elevate Starc's delivery to that level because it pitched on a crack. "People who are saying it is an exaggeration do not know the game of cricket. Left-arm round at 90 miles an hour, seaming more than a guy can spin the ball -- that is the best ball I've ever seen live in Test cricket," Swann said in a video package for ESPNcricinfo. "People saying it's not because it landed on a crack... Shane Warne's ball of the century landed in a foothole. Get some perspective; that ball is getting Sachin Tendulkar out 1,000 times out of 1,000. It's getting Donald Bradman out 1,000 times out of 1,000. Steve Smith... 1,000 out of 1,000. It is unplayable. End of."

Shakib makes final, Tamim eliminated

STAR SPORT DESK

Bangladesh's star all-rounder Shakib Al Hasan had no impact on the game, but his side Kerala Kings became the first team to reach the final of the T10 Cricket League by defeating Maratha Arabians by five wickets in the first semifinal at the Sharjah Cricket Stadium yesterday.

But there was disappointment in the second semifinal for another Tiger as Tamim Iqbal's Pakhtoons were knocked out after suffering a nine-wicket defeat to the Punjabi Legends.

Tamim and Shakib have had contrasting showing in the tournament so far, and it may seem a little cruel that the left-hander who was doing better was the one to miss out.

Shakib scored just seven runs from four innings in his introduction to the game's newest format and it came to a head yesterday as Shakib, coming in at number five with four to win off eight deliveries, was run out without even facing a delivery.

He wasn't given a single over either, after failing to take a wicket in the tournament.

On the other hand Tamim had been enjoying himself out in the middle. He scored 81 runs in three games, including an unbeaten 56-run knock to power Pakhtoons home against the Bengal Tigers in the second match.

However, his performance yesterday left a lot to be desired. The southpaw picked up 17 from nine balls with two fours and a six before cutting a wide ball straight to the man at cover.

'Fewer people, no problem'

SPORTS REPORTER



When the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) announces the preliminary squad for the home series against Sri Lanka or the final squads for the series that also features a tri-nation one-day tournament, there is expected to be less people involved in the selection.

Minhajul Abedin is currently heading the three-member selection committee without a third member, who is still to be named after the removal of Sajjad Ahmed. And with the board yet to find a replacement for the Tigers' coach after the resignation of Chandika Hathurusinga, the otherwise long and complex selection panel has currently turned into a three-man show (including cricket operation's chairman Akram Khan).

There might be a fourth member in the panel provided that BCB director Khaled Mahmud, who has previously worked as manager of the national team, joins in the capacity of national team director for the upcoming home series. However, the BCB is yet to make this position official.

The selectors are going to name a 30-member

preliminary squad for the upcoming home series after the last round of the 19th National Cricket League which ends on December 23.

The preliminary squad will be named for the tri-nation ODI series comprising of Zimbabwe and Sri Lanka followed by a two-match Test and two T20I series against the Lankans.

"The selectors normally select the squad as we now have Nannu bhui (Minhajul Abedin) and me in the committee so we are doing our job as we used to do before. There is no difference when it comes to the selection process after the resignation of Hathurusingha," Habibul told the Daily Star yesterday when asked if less people meant fewer headaches for selectors.

Meanwhile, it was learnt that wicketkeeper-batsman Mohammad Mithun is all set to make a comeback in the ODI side after his consistent performance in the recently concluded Bangladesh Premier League (BPL), where he scored 329 runs in 15 games.

The 27-year-old will provide an option for the opening slot where Soumya Sarkar and Imrul Kayes have been struggling in recent times. There are a few other names in the likes of pacer Abu Jayed and Abu Hider, who bowled brilliantly in the BPL, for the tri-nation.

Aus close to cracking the code

AFP, Perth



Australia were confident rain would not deny them the Ashes despite play being abandoned early on the fourth day of the third Test against England in Perth on Sunday.

The home side lead the five-Test series 2-0 and a win in the last-ever Ashes Test to be played at the WACA Ground would see them regain the urn, and at stumps on the fourth day they could smell victory despite the showers sweeping across Perth and predicted to continue into the final day's play.

Trailing by 259 runs in the first innings after Australia declared at 662 for nine, England were 132 for four when stumps was called early after a rain-interrupted final session, with Dawid Malan on 28 and Jonny Bairstow on 14, still behind by 127 runs.

Australian pacemen Josh Hazlewood, who claimed the wickets of opener Alastair Cook and Mark Stoneman said the home side didn't expect rain to stand in their way.

"We've looked at it (weather forecast) a little bit," he said. "I think there is just

some rain tomorrow morning, hopefully that doesn't hang around too long and we can get the best part of two sessions in to take these next six wickets."

The last man out on the fourth day was James Vince for a neat 55, bowled when a Mitchell Starc ball jagged off a crack and crashed into his stumps.

Hazlewood said the crack would be part of the Australian attack's game plan on the last day.

"I'd like five or six more (to hit the crack) tomorrow," he said.

"You only need a couple to straighten off it and you are in the game."

"It's a pretty simple method, there is not much more out there to aim at than that crack."

Vince said the English believed they could save the game regardless of the weather.

"I think we try and put the rain to the back of our minds," he said.

"We've got to have belief that we can save the series and get over the line tomorrow."

The tourists' second innings got off to a dismal start when opener Stoneman was caught behind from the bowling of Hazlewood for just

three in the second over.

Captain Joe Root was the third man out, to spinner Nathan Lyon's first ball of the innings, caught at first slip by his Australian counterpart Steve Smith for 14 off the glove of wicketkeeper Tim Paine.

Earlier Australia scored their highest Ashes total at home and fifth-highest against England.

Although Smith added just 10 to his overnight total before being dismissed for 239, his innings was the cornerstone of the massive total.

Smith was adjudged leg before wicket on review after James Anderson's confident shout was turned down by on-field umpire Chris Gaffaney.

The review ended a chanceless 399-ball epic innings which included 30 fours and one six.

SCORES IN BRIEF

ENGLAND: First innings 403

AUSTRALIA: First innings 662 for 9 decl (Bancroft 25, Warner 22, Khawaja 50, Smith 239, Marsh 28, Marsh 181, Paine 49 not out, Cummins 41; Anderson 4-116, Overton 2-110)

ENGLAND: Second innings 132 for 4 (Vince 55, Malan 28 not out; Hazlewood 2-23)

India seal series in style

AFP, Visakhapatnam



Opener Shikhar Dhawan's blazing century and a decisive spell by their wrist spinners powered India to a series-clinching eight-wicket win over Sri Lanka in the third one-day international on Sunday.

Chasing 216 for victory, India rode on a 135-run partnership between Dhawan (100 not out) and Shreyas Iyer (65) to romp home in 32.1 overs in Visakhapatnam.

Dhawan completed his 12th ODI hundred in 85 balls, his knock laced

with 13 fours and two sixes, before taking India to their eighth consecutive ODI series victory since June 2016.

But it was Kuldeep Yadav and Yuzvendra Chahal who set up the comprehensive victory after taking three wickets each to help restrict the visitors to 215 all out in 44.5 overs.

The hosts lost skipper Rohit Sharma early after he was bowled by off-spinner Akila Dananjaya for seven but it was only a minor blemish in an otherwise comfortable chase.

Iyer, who registered his second successive half-century in just his third ODI, combined with Dhawan to take the attack to the opposition bowlers.

Earlier Sri Lanka had got off to a strong start with opener Upul Tharanga making a 82-ball 95 after the visitors were invited to bat first.

SCORES IN BRIEF

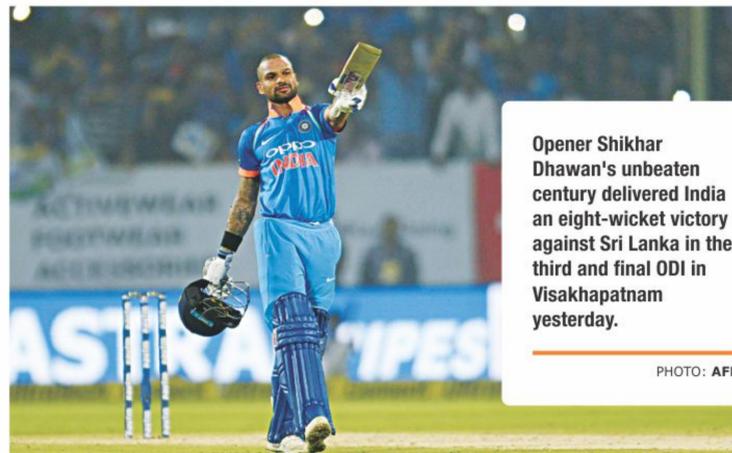
SRI LANKA: 215 all out in 44.5 overs (Tharanga 95, Samrawickrama 42, Mathews 17, Gunaratne 17; Pandya 2-49, Yadav 3-42, Chahal 3-46)

INDIA: 219 for 2 in 32.1 overs (Dhawan 100 not out, Iyer 65, Karthik 26 not out; Dananjaya 1-53, Perera 1-25)

Result: India won by 8 wickets and clinched the three-match series 2-1.

Player-of-the-match: Kuldeep Yadav.

Player-of-the-series: Shikhar Dhawan.



Opener Shikhar Dhawan's unbeaten century delivered India an eight-wicket victory against Sri Lanka in the third and final ODI in Visakhapatnam yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP