



Bangladesh's ex-cricketers (L) came together to reprise former glories and have a bit of fun in the Independence Day match to mark the country's 47th anniversary of independence at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday, while Bangladesh batsman Mushfiquir Rahim (R) flew the flag for the current generation.

PHOTOS:
FIROZ AHMED

Old boys back to school

SPORTS REPORTER



The Bangladesh Cricket Board organises two exhibition matches annually, one on Victory Day and the other on Independence Day, with the slogan always being 'Cricket Reunites'. Yesterday, as the nation celebrated its 47th Independence Day, was no exception when former cricketers battled against each other in a

T20 Game at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur.

For various reasons, the former national teammates took different paths in life after calling time on their careers but wait eagerly for opportunities like yesterday's game to meet and share light moments with former teammates and their families.

However, cricket remained the centre of all focus despite it being just an exhibition match, and the intensity and urge to do well was clearly evident in everyone involved.

Former Bangladesh captain Khaled Mahmud was in an aggressive mood when he came out to bat and saw his friend and former fast bowler Mizanur Rahman Babul with ball in hand.

"I will hit you for a six wherever you bowl!" Mahmud teased Mizanur. Mahmud struck a short, slow-medium delivery from Mizanur for a six towards deep mid-wicket and then began laughing at the bowler while another former captain and national teammate from the late 90s -- Akram Khan -- shouted from the boundary line to Mahmud, saying: "Don't spare him Sujon... Smack him all over the park!"

However, Akram also felt some pressure in the game. Just before he went out to bat, he said "I am under tremendous pressure" while pointing to his wife, who had come to watch him perform and hence, he had to do well. These are just glimpses of the nostalgia and bonhomie that characterises such events. Other former players such as Faruque Ahmed, Minhajul Abedin and Habibul Bashir also took part and lent their unique charisma.

Akram's Red team went on to win the game comfortably by six wickets, chasing the target of 167 runs set by Jahangir Alam's Bangladesh Green team. Mahmud showed his all-round skill by picking up three wickets with the ball, which was followed by an unbeaten 18-ball 28.

Even current players eagerly watched the battle of the formers, with Shakib Al Hasan, Mashrafe Bin Mortaza and Mushfiquir Rahim looking down from the stands.



Abahani pacer Mashrafe Bin Mortaza was at the Mirpur gym yesterday to get ready for today's Super League game against Sheikh Jamal but Shakib Al Hasan (L), with no domestic matches to train for, was keeping his fitness levels up for next month's Indian Premier League.

PHOTO: STAR

Kiwis crush England

AFP, Auckland



New Zealand pulled off a dramatic win by an innings and 49 runs over England in Auckland on Monday, wrapping up the rain-affected first Test.

As fortunes fluctuated on the final day in scenes reminiscent of the cliffhanger finish the last time the two sides met on Eden Park, five years ago, Ben Stokes lined himself up to be the hero England so desperately needed.

But with his dismissal for 66 on the stroke of dinner in the day-night Test, New

Zealand went into the final session with the task of mopping up the last three wickets.

Five days after all seemed lost for England when they were rolled for a paltry 58 in their first innings, New Zealand settled the outcome with the tourists all out for 320.

SCORES IN BRIEF

ENGLAND: First innings 58

NEW ZEALAND: First innings 427 for 8.

ENGLAND: Second innings 320 all out (Stoneman 55, Root 51, Stokes 66, Woakes 52; Boult 3-67, Wagner 3-77, Astle 3-39)

Result: New Zealand won by innings and 49 runs.

According to former captain and Bangladesh team manager Khaled Mahmud, ball tampering has been a regular feature from Pakistani players whenever they came to play in the Dhaka leagues.

"We have always played fair cricket and to be honest we don't have any specialist for this [ball tampering]. Many Pakistani players used to come to Bangladesh to play in the leagues and it [ball tampering] used to happen quite often and there were many complaints. If you go through history you will see that a bowler gave away 40 runs from his first five overs but later went on to pick five wickets for just five runs.

"That's because the ball started to reverse

BALL-TAMPERING SCANDAL

CA promises answers by tomorrow

REUTERS, Sydney



Cricket Australia are hoping to share the results of their investigation into the ball-tampering scandal within a couple of days as they look to take control of a story that has plunged the country into turmoil.

Steve Smith stood down from his post as captain and was banned for one Test match by the International Cricket Council (ICC) on Sunday after admitting conspiring to tamper with the ball during the third test against South Africa in Cape Town.

The incident has been met with astonishment in Australia, with the protagonists -- Smith, his vice-captain David Warner and opening batsman Cameron Bancroft -- lambasted in the media under headlines almost universally trumpeting the word "Shame".

Cricket Australia (CA) chief executive James Sutherland said he would be heading over to South Africa later on Monday to join integrity chief Iain Roy, who is conducting the investigation.

"I am travelling to Johannesburg this evening and will arrive Tuesday morning local time to meet Iain to understand the findings of the investigation to that point, and to determine recommended outcomes," Sutherland said in a statement.

"We know Australians want answers and we will keep you updated on our findings and next steps, as a matter of urgency."

Cricket Australia Chairman David Peever said the body expected to be able to "fully update the Australian public on the findings" on Wednesday morning Australia time.

Smith, Cricket Australia said earlier on Monday, would remain in South Africa until the investigation was concluded even though he would be unable to play in the fourth test in Johannesburg later this week.

The story continued to dominate the major newspapers in Australia and abroad with Australia's belief of playing the sport

'hard but fair' in complete tatters.

Smith, widely accepted as the world's best batsman of the current generation, has been reduced to a villain, with former Australian cricketers deeming his return to lead the team as untenable.

"Steve Smith's time as Australia's captain is surely up," former fast bowler and possible future Australia coach Jason Gillespie wrote for Guardian Australia.

"It is impossible to envisage a scenario where he stays in the job. This is a train wreck.



Australia captain Steve Smith was on the front pages of major newspapers all over the country yesterday after his admission of ball-tampering during the third Test against South Africa.

PHOTO: AFP

It's part of the game: Mahmud

SPORTS REPORTER



Two days after the incident, the ball-tampering scandal involving the Australian cricket team in South Africa was still the centre of all discussions surrounding cricket yesterday. On Saturday, Australia youngster Cameron Bancroft was caught on camera using a sticky tape on the ball on the third day of the third Test, and later the same day captain Steve Smith confessed that it was a concerted ploy initiated by the leadership group.

Thousands of miles away from Cape Town, at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday, the Independence Day exhibition cricket match took place with former Bangladesh players playing against each other, and there too ball-tampering was the buzzword amid all the fun and joyous moments.

According to former captain and Bangladesh team manager Khaled Mahmud, ball tampering has been a regular feature from Pakistani players whenever they came to play in the Dhaka leagues.

"We have always played fair cricket and to be honest we don't have any specialist for this [ball tampering]. Many Pakistani players used to come to Bangladesh to play in the leagues and it [ball tampering] used to happen quite often and there were many complaints. If you go through history you will see that a bowler gave away 40 runs from his first five overs but later went on to pick five wickets for just five runs.

"That's because the ball started to reverse

and it happened whenever the Pakistani players were here. We accepted, thinking that they knew the art but what happened this time [in South Africa] is truly disappointing. Why would such a big team do this? If the minnows or we [Bangladesh] had done it I don't know what would happen. But I have never seen any Bangladeshi player doing this," Mahmud told reporters yesterday.

When asked whether ball tampering exists in the Dhaka Premier League (DPL), Mahmud said that although it is difficult to do it in the DPL due to there being fewer foreign players allowed in the playing eleven nowadays but he did not deny its existence in the Bangladesh Premier League T20 league.

"Whoever does this, they do it very tactfully and we might not be able to catch it but that's not fair. However, many legendary cricketers have done it in the past so it has become a part of cricket these days," he added.

On the other hand another former captain and national selector Habibul Bashir informed that there have been a few issues of ball tampering in the first-class league in the past.

"Our boys are not habituated to this. There was a time when we used to see such things during the first-class leagues but that was nothing significant -- they used petroleum jelly or Vaseline to shine one part of the ball," Bashir said.

Tigers fast bowler Taskin Ahmed also chimed in. "It's against the spirit of the game and we don't expect anything like this from a side like Australia and the youngsters should stay away from such things."

"This was pre-planned cheating. It may have been implemented by a junior player in Cameron Bancroft but it came with the backing and knowledge of 'the leadership group', a core of senior guys in the Australian set-up."

The Times of India, the cricketing superpower's best selling English daily, called the Australia side "Repeat Offenders", listing six other controversial incidents they have been involved in the past.

The news of the stepping down of Smith and Warner from their leadership roles was the top story for the daily and prominently placed on the front pages of most newspapers in India on Monday.

In more trouble for the game Down Under, Australia's major cricket sponsors, including Qantas Airways, breakfast cereal maker Sanitarium and brewer Lion, have said they were assessing their relationship with Cricket Australia.

It could not have come at a worse time for the governing body as CA are at the climax of talks about a five-year broadcast rights deal with Australian television networks.

Independent media analyst Peter Cox said the ball-tampering scandal could prove disastrous for cricket's reputation and negotiating clout in Australia.

"It could not have possibly come at a worse time," Cox told Reuters in a phone interview. "The individual incident will eventually blow over but they will lose a segment of the viewing market because of this."

IT'S NOT CRICKET



When I woke up this morning a couple of things really stood in my mind -- this can never happen again. I think that has to be Cricket Australia's focus, this can never, ever happen again in this great game of cricket.

-Former Australia captain Michael Clarke

The public has struggled to love a side that wins ugly, but success and nationalism and tradition have patched the frayed fabric. A conspiracy to cheat, however, has ripped the cloth and major repairs will be needed.

-Peter Lalor, cricket correspondent for The Australian

No other game is so self-conscious in revering noble defeat, nor in insisting how it is played is more important than the result. Cheating in order to win at any price 'just isn't cricket'.

-Catherine McGregor, author of 'An Indian Summer of Cricket'.

Ball-tampering has always been part of the game, so we should be careful not to get too holier-than-thou. But what makes the Australians' behaviour in Cape Town different from other instances, I believe, is the premeditated nature of the crime. Steve Smith and his 'leadership group' sat down at lunch on the third day of the Test and decided that the team's youngest player, Cameron Bancroft, would do the dirty work.

-Former England captain Nasser Hussain

It's very, very difficult to go to a former cricketer and get him to be totally outraged about ball-tampering because it would quickly make people hypocrites. There was a time there where we were all trying to work out how the heck you do this.

-Former New Zealand opener Mark Richardson

It has gone on since the year dot. If the condition of the ball is changed, you get a five-run penalty and change the ball. That hardly sends the message that this is a heinous crime.

-Former England captain Michael Atherton