Bangladesh eye series triumph after maiden Australia win

Bangladesh's fans erupted after their side's win

DHAKA, AUG 30 /--/ Home captain Mushfiqur Rahim warned Australia that an increasingly confident Bangladesh would be going all out for what would be a sensational series triumph after securing a maiden Test victory over the tourists on Wednesday.

The 20-run victory at Shere Bangla National Stadium came five months after Bangladesh secured their first Test win over Sri Lanka and a month before the first anniversary of their maiden triumph over England in the longest form of the game.

Mushfiqur said the first innings partnership of 155 between Man-of-the-Match Shakib Al Hasan and opener Tamim Iqbal had been crucial to the victory with the former also taking 5-85 with his spin-bowling to help wrap up the win on Wednesday.

"Obviously a great feeling, beating Australia. A great effort by the boys, especially Shakib and Tamim were outstanding," Mushfiqur said at the post-match presentation. "If you look at our home performance, it has been pretty consistent. Against England (last year) also, we were very close in the first Test and beat them in the second test. That's the belief we have. "I think the spinners did a great job. I thought Taijul (Islam), Miraj (Mehidy Hasan) and Shakib bowled really well in both the innings (but) I think Tamim-Shakib partnership in the first innings set up the game for us." Mushfiqur said the lower order woes that prevented Bangladesh from driving home their first-innings advantage showed there was plenty of room for improvement. "The lower order is working hard and if you see at the last few series, they are much better now," he said. "In this Test, the wicket was pretty tough to bat on, that has to be said, because the top order also found it difficult to bat.

"The boys showed character. All the credit goes to the bowlers, and fielders. They did miss some (catches) but it can happen. Hopefully we'll come harder at them in the next test and hopefully we'll seal the series." Australia did well to make the contest so close after starting the second innings needing 265 to win on a deteriorating pitch. David Warner top-scored with a brilliant 112 but captain Steve Smith said they ultimately paid the price for a poor performance in the first innings, when they made 217. "It was a great Test match, credit to Bangladesh the way they played," he said.

"In the first innings the partnership between Tamim and Shakib really set the game up for them and then I thought we really fought back well after that. "We probably let ourselves down in the first innings with the bat, probably should have made a few more there. It was pretty difficult batting here in the second innings and I thought we did pretty well to get 240 in the end. "It's set it up for a really good series." Chittagong hosts the second and final Test from Monday.

Ashwin takes three on County debut, wants to play all 4 games

WORCESTER, AUG 30 /--/ Ravichandran Ashwin, who started his maiden county stint for Worcestershire on a decent note taking 3/94 and scoring 36 against Gloucestershire, wants to play all the four games even though he might get called up for the limited overs series against Australia. With the selectors wanting Ashwin to play a major role in next year's five-Test series against England, the BCCI is likely to allow the Tamil Nadu off-spinner to miss the upcoming limited-over series against Australia. "I could be called to play in the Australia series," Ashwin told ESPNCricinfo.

In that case, Ashwin will get to play only one more match against Nottinghamshire at Trent Bridge.

"But I have indicated to Bumpy (Steve Rhodes, the Worcestershire direct of cricket) that I will be available for all four games. As of now, there are no communication channels (with BCCI) open but they will be shortly, so I will probably get a clearer idea after the Sri Lanka series," he said. For Ashwin, the next year's England series is certainly in consideration but not the sole reason for this stint. "It's not just about next year. It's always been a dream to play county cricket. I grew up watching it on TV in India and it has always meant a lot. Spinners have come before and told me it is a must-do experience. I was being rested from the (limited overs) series (against Sri Lanka), so I thought I might as well come here to get experience," he said. However, he is sure that this stint will help him a lot during the 2018 series. "But yes, next year is in the back of my mind and in the back of the mind of the team management back home. With the pace with which the international cricket calendar is set-up, you don't have a long time to prepare. "That might even cost you a Test match. So these experiences can be banked upon and, if you can learn faster -- which I pride myself upon -- the results can come a bit faster," Ashwin said.

PV Sindhu, coach Gopichand call on Tel CM

HYDERABAD, AUG 30 /--/ Ace shuttler P V Sindhu, who won silver medal in the recent World Championship, and Chief National Coach P Gopichand today met Telangana Chief Minister K Chandrasekhar Rao.

Rao, who congratulated Sindhu, said she put up a competitive performance in the world event though she narrowly lost gold medal, a release from his office said. Rao wished her good luck next time, it said. Sindhu won silver medal after losing to Japan's Nozomi Okuhara in the finals of the World Championship held at Glasgow. (PTI)

Steve O'Keefe replaces injured Hazlewood for second Test against Bangladesh

SYDNEY, AUG 30 /--/ Australia have called up spinner Steve O`Keefe to replace injured quick Josh Hazlewood for the second and final test against Bangladesh. Hazlewood will return home for rehabilitation at the end of the opening test and miss the second match in Chittagong as well as the limited overs tour of India which follows. Fast bowler Kane Richardson will replace Hazlewood in India but the presence of like-for-like replacement Jackson Bird in the test squad in Bangladesh means a recall for O`Keefe. The left-arm finger spinner was considered unfortunate to miss out on the trip to Bangladesh after taking 19 wickets at an average of 23.26, including 12 in the first test at Pune, on the test tour of India earlier this year. O`Keefe, 32, was fined A$20,000 ($15,838) for "highly inappropriate behaviour" towards a female cricketer while drunk at an award ceremony in April, however, and failed to get a national contract. Fears that his misbehaviour, a second indiscretion involving alcohol in 18 months, might have brought an end to his international career were apparently misplaced, however. "With Jackson Bird in the squad we are comfortable with our fast-bowling options for the second test and have elected to add an additional spinner given the conditions we are likely to face in Chittagong," Australia`s head selector Trevor Hohns said in a statement on Wednesday. Hazlewood`s contribution to the Bangladesh tour may not be over yet, despite the left side strain that team physiotherapist David Beakley said would require "several weeks of rehabilitation". Australia go into day four of the test at Shere Bangla National Stadium needing 156 more runs to win with eight wickets in hand and Hazlewood will bat if necessary. The loss of the hardiest of Australia`s pace bowlers just a few months before they host England in an Ashes series around the New Year is a blow, however. While Pat Cummins, James Pattinson and Mitchell Starc have been frequent visitors to the treatment room, Hazlewood has been his country`s most reliable fast bowler since making his test debut in late 2014. The Ashes series begins in Brisbane on Nov. 23.

Sharjeel gets five-year ban in spot-fixing case

KARACHI, AUG 30 /--/ Test batsman Sharjeel Khan was on Wednesday handed a five-year ban by the anti-corruption tribunal of the PCB for his role in a spot-fixing scandal during the Pakistan Super League (PSL) in February this year. Sharjeel was banned for breaching five clauses of the anti-corruption code of the PCB. A short order released by the tribunal said that Sharjeel would serve the five-year ban in two phases with two-and-a- half years being a suspended sentence to be served under observation of the PCB. The ban is effective from February 10 this year when he was first suspended and sent back from Dubai on spot-fixing charges along with another Pakistan player Khalid Latif. The punishment imposed by the tribunal, headed by a former Lahore High Court judge Justice Asghar Haider means that Sharjeel, 28, can revive his career after two years. "We are okay with the decision and like I had said, the PCB was unable to produce sufficient evidence to convince the tribunal that my client did did indeed do spot-fixing," his lawyer, Shaighan Ejaz told the media. Sharjeel, who has played in one Test, 25 One-dayers and 25 T20 matches was hailed as a "Warner" for Pakistan by former head coach, Waqar Younis who said he was very disappointed after learning about Sharjeel's PSL fixing issue.

The tribunal's decision is as a setback for the PCB which had repeatedly claimed to have sufficient evidence against Sharjeel and Khalid Latif in the case. The PCB had even asked the tribunal for a life ban on the two players. The tribunal will give a verdict on Latif's case next month after first starting its hearings into the PSL fixing cases in April this year. The PCB claims that Sharjeel and Khalid met with bookmakers in Dubai and the former accepted a spot-fixing offer and played two dot balls as per a deal with the bookmaker. Sharjeel has denied playing the dot balls as part of a spot fixing deal and his lawyer produced expert witnesses -- former Test batsmen Dean Jones, Muhammad Yousuf and Sadiq Muhammad -- to confirm Sharjeel played the balls on merit in the first match of the PSL this year. Sharjeel is not the first Pakistani to be banned in a corruption case as before him former Pakistan Test captain Salim Malik was given a life ban for match-fixing by the Justice Malik Qayyum inquiry commission in 2000 but a lower court later overturned the ban. In early 2011, another Pakistan captain, Salman Butt and pacers, Muhammad Aamir and Muhammad Asif were given minimum five-year bans by an ICC anti-corruption tribunal for spot- fixing during the series in England in 2010. All three completed their bans and are now back playing competitive cricket with Aamir making a comeback for the Pakistan team as well. In 2012-13, Pakistan Test -spinner, Danish Kaneria was banned for life any an anti-corruption tribunal of the England and Wales Cricket Board for fixing in English county cricket while playing for Essex. Other players have also been fined for not cooperating with the Justice Qayyum inquiry. (PTI)

UAE beat Saudi Arabia to boost World Cup hopes

AL-AIN (United Arab Emirates), Aug 30 /--/ The UAE maintained their hopes of qualifying for the 2018 World Cup in Russia with a shock 2-1 victory at home against regional giants Saudi Arabia on Tuesday. It was only the fourth win in nine matches for the Emiratis, who took their tally to 13 points from nine matches to be placed fourth in Group B in the final round of Asian qualifying. Japan top the standings with 17 points with Saudi Arabia and Australia on 16 each, meaning all the top four teams in the group are in with a chance of clinching the two automatic spots for next year's finals. The UAE's victory on Tuesday in Al-Ain was all the more remarkable because they bounced back within a minute after being a goal down to stun the powerful Saudis. The hosts had conceded a penalty when Mohamed Fawzi fouled Nawal al-Abid in the penalty area and Al-Abid himself slotted the ball home with a left-footed shot to put the Saudis ahead in the 20th minute. But barely had the Saudi celebrations died down when the home side struck for the equalizer. A Tariq Ahmed cross found Ali Mabkhout and the UAE star made no mistake with a right-footed shot from the centre of the box into the bottom corner.

Suarez, Messi likely to go head-to-head as Argentina face Uruguay in WC qualifiers

MONTEVIDEO, AUG 30 /--/ Luis Suarez could yet line up against Barcelona teammate Lionel Messi on Thursday as South America's battle for 2018 World Cup places resumes with Argentina's trip to Uruguay the pick of the fixtures.

With leaders Brazil already locking up their place at next year's tournament, attention turns to the tussle for the three remaining automatic berths on offer in the marathon 10- team qualifying tournament. Colombia are second in the standings on 24 points while Uruguay and Chile occupy the other two automatic spots on 23 points.

It means that fifth-placed Argentina have little margin for error as they head to Montevideo's Estadio Centenario for the latest instalment of their historic rivalry with the Uruguayans. Argentina have splutered their way through the qualifiers so far, notching only six wins in 14 games, but have shown signs of life under new coach Jorge Sampaoli. Sampaoli, who mastermind Chile's victory at the 2015 Copa America, took control of the 'Albiceleste' in May, and began his reign with a morale-boosting 1-0 win over Brazil in a friendly in June. A 6-0 romp over lowly Singapore provided a further clue that Sampaoli, who favours an aggressive, attacking style, may already have begun to have an influence. Sampaoli served notice of his determination to invigorate Argentina's ranks by axing striker Gonzalo Higuain in favour of Inter Milan's Mauro Icardi. Icardi is expected to start at the apex of a front three with Messi and Juventus prodigy Paulo Dybala lurking just behind. Argentina's path to Russia has been complicated by the Court of Arbitration for Sport ruling on Tuesday that confirmed a sanction against Bolivia for fielding an ineligible player in their September 2016 0-0 draw with Chile. FIFA later converted that result to a 3-0 win for Chile, a ruling that means Sampaoli's former team now have a one- point advantage over the fifth-placed Argentines. "Now we have to play catch-up to get to the World Cup," Sampaoli said Tuesday. Uruguay meanwhile are sweating on the fitness of Barcelona star Suarez. The 30-year-old talisman was initially ruled out of the fixture through injury but has travelled back to his homeland to train with the team. Veteran coach Oscar Tabarez hinted Suarez may yet make a dramatic return on Thursday, declining to rule out the striker.

"He has shown signs of recovery that have rather surprised us," Tabarez said. If Suarez fails to win his fitness battle, Uruguay will once again turn to in-form Paris Saint-Germain striker Edinson Cavani, who is the top scorer in the qualifying competition with nine goals. "It is a very, very difficult match... We will see who has the most guts for it," said Tabarez. Elsewhere on Thursday, second-placed Colombia will aim to edge closer to qualification with an away victory over already-eliminated Venezuela. Fourth-placed Chile meanwhile host Paraguay in Santiago as they aim to remain ahead of Argentina in the qualifying positions. Brazil will have the luxury of being able to treat their game against Ecuador in Porto Alegre as a training exercise after securing qualification in their last outing, a 3-0 win over Paraguay in March -- their eighth consecutive victory.

Fist of Bidhuri: Gaurav 'hooks' self doubts to win World medal

HAMBURG, AUG 30 /--/ Confidence bruised by near-misses and a nagging back injury -- this is what Gaurav Bidhuri carried into the World Boxing Championships here before his career got a new lease of life by the lone medal he assured for India.

The 24-year-old was not even meant to be in the team till the second half of July which is when fortune smiled on him and he was handed a wildcard entry by the Asian Boxing Confederation (ASBC).

"When I got to know that I have got a wildcard entry, I went around confirming it with every coach, I kept asking 'is this right?' I asked each one of them. I asked everyone and only after each one of them said that I have made it, I finally eased up a bit," the relief was palpable as Gaurav spoke to PTI during an interview after the bout. The Delhi-boxer has never been among the most talked about in Indian circuit and has been prone to making quarterfinal exits in almost every tournament he was picked for. The most recent of these quarterfinal exits happened in the Asian Championships in Tashkent earlier this year, where he twice missed the chance to qualify directly for the world showpiece.

"I have nearly always lost in the quarterfinal stage of every tournament that I have competed in. Here also, once I reached quarters, I was having these negative thoughts that 'may be again the same thing will happen, I will lose, that I am not good enough'. But then another part of me was also telling me to break this jinx," he spoke about how he sparred with creeping self doubts. Asked how he steeled up for competing despite his seemingly volatile mind, Gaurav conceded it wasn't easy to shake off negativity. "It is the toughest part of being an athlete, to control the mind. I was having all kinds of thoughts. All of them were not negative but then not every thought was positive too. There was a lot of noise in my mind, something which only I could hear," smiled the youngster. And now, Gaurav might become the first Indian boxer to win a medal better than bronze at the prestigious championships should he go on to win his semi-final on Thursday. "I have been battling a lot injuries but did not care about them. I have had severe back problems for the last seven-eight months but I did not care about that and have been training relentlessly and finally I have won a medal," Gaurav said. Gaurav will fight his bantamweight (56kg) semifinal bout against American Duke Ragan tomorrow. By advancing to the last-four stage, he joined Vijender Singh (2009), Vikas Krishan (2011) and Shiva Thapa (2015) in a select band of Indian boxers to have finished on the podium at the biennial mega-event. Tomorrow, he wants to go a step ahead of Vijender, Vikas and Shiva and make the final to ensure that India finishes with a medal better than bronze. He said it would also help him get closure for all the near misses of the past, which also includes a quarterfinal exit from an Olympic qualifying event last year. This, despite the fact that he had been in good form coming into the tournament. He had won a gold medal at an invitational tournament in Czech Republic in July but was still a long way off from being even considered a top medal contender here. However, his prequarterfinal win over Ukraine's Mykola Butsenko, a two-time European Championships' silver-medallist and 2013 world championship bronze-winner, brought him into focus. He is ready to fight pain as he would like to add a different colour to his medal. "I am suffering actually. I can't sit for too long and can't even sleep for too long. I have trouble walking as well but it's all worth it now," the Delhi lad said.

Mission impossible? Nadal wants New Yorkers to be quiet

NEW YORK, AUG 30 /--/ Rafael Nadal has conquered the French Open 10 times and battled career-threatening knee and wrist injuries, but his greatest challenge awaits him -- telling rowdy New Yorkers to be quiet. The world number one and two-time US Open champion took his first-round record at the season's concluding Grand Slam to 13-0 on Tuesday with a 7-6 (8/6) 6-2 6-2 win over Serbia's Dusan Lajovic. But with torrential rain lashing the Flushing Meadows site, the roof on the showpiece Arthur Ashe stadium was shut tight, creating a giant echo-chamber for the boisterous crowd of 24,000 beneath. "Being honest, it (the noise) is a little bit too much," said the 31-year-old Spaniard, whose Grand Slam collection of 15 titles includes the 2010 and 2013 US Open crowns. "The energy and support of the crowd is massive. I enjoy it and I have unforgettable memories from this tournament and this court, because the energy is different from in other places. "But at the same time, under the roof, it's too much noise. I was not able to hear the ball when hitting. "I understand it's a show, but under the roof we need to be a little bit more strict about the noise. All the noise stays inside, and this is difficult." Nadal's complaints echoed similar concerns made by Andy Murray last year when the huge 150 million roof over the world's biggest tennis stadium was rolled into action for the first time. Murray, the 2012 champion, claimed that when the rain was bouncing off the outside of the roof, it was impossible to hear line calls inside. Even the umpire in that match appealed to spectators to cut the volume, a desperate and often futile appeal during the tournament's famed night sessions when the alcohol-fueled atmosphere is not for the meek. Nadal said the noise on Tuesday meant that he was unable to hear the ball and that his opponent couldn't hear him when he asked for a service game to be delayed. Meanwhile, Nadal said he was equally flummoxed by Murray's decision to withdraw from the US Open last Saturday -- after the draw had been made. Murray was suffering from a hip injury and his decision to pull out of the event, where he would have been second seed, came too late to affect Nadal's half of the draw which he shares with old rival Roger Federer.

Book relives tours of Indian cricket teams since 1886

NEW DELHI, AUG 30 /--/ A new book takes an in-depth look at the role of cricket in colonial and post-colonial Indian life, and the relationship among those who patronise, promote, play and view the sport by analysing every Indian cricket tour since 1886. In "Eleven Gods and a Billion Indians: The On and Off the Field Story of Cricket in India and Beyond", Boria Majumdar takes the reader backstage to when India played its first test in 1932, and bringing the story forward to the more contemporary IPL - to provide a complex and nuanced understanding of the evolution and maturity of the game. "Eleven Gods and a Billion Indians" unravels the story of a nation now considered the financial nerve centre of world cricket, said publishers Simon & Schuster India about the book which will hit stores in June 2018. "Many will argue that the Virat Kohli-Anil Kumble saga was very different from the Sourav-Chappell rift or Sourav- Buchanan clash. They are both right and wrong. Right because the Kohli-Kumble spat never played out in public in the manner of the previous two flashpoints," said Majumdar. "But, then, why am I writing about this most recent captain-coach battle in the same breath as Sourav-Chappell? Did it actually become that bad in the matter of just twelve months? The answer is an overwhelming 'yes'," he added. The book also goes behind the scenes of cases like Monkeygate, the suspension of Lalit Modi, spot fixing, and the phase of judicial intervention. Besides reportage and analysis, it also carries player reminiscences, personal interviews, photographs and letters never known or discussed so far in Indian sporting discourse. The book also seeks to answer questions like: Has internal bickering impacted the on-field performance of the Indian cricket team? Did some of our icons fail the country and the sport by trying to conceal important facts during the spot fixing investigation? And does it matter to the ordinary fan who heads the BCCI as long as there is transparency and accountability in the system? Simon & Schuster India said it will be releasing "Eleven Gods and a Billion Indians" globally - first, in the cricket-playing regions of the world, such as the Indian subcontinent, the UK, and Australia, and subsequently, in the US and Canada. (PTI)