



Bangladesh batting consultant Neil McKenzie (L) gives Mominul Haque batting tips for the upcoming Tests against Pakistan and Zimbabwe during training in Mirpur yesterday.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

# ‘Too many top-order batsmen’

SPORTS REPORTER



Bangladesh white-ball batting consultant Neil McKenzie was outspoken in pointing out the issues bugging the Tigers following back-to-back losses in the ongoing T20I series in Pakistan.

It was strange to begin with that Bangladesh had six openers in the squad, with five openers featuring in each match.

Most of these batters tend to take their time at the crease before looking to accelerate and that led to slow run-scoring after the Powerplay.

A middle-order batsman naturally approaches such phases differently. Even McKenzie said that there were too many batsmen who were only used to playing as openers or at number three.

“I think you have to look at the combination of who is playing. Russell [Domingo], as a new coach, is trying to look at some different combinations. I think at the moment we have too many batsmen that bat at one, two and three. If you look around the squad, they are quality players but they are all top-order batters,” McKenzie said.

In both matches, the likes of Soumya Sarkar, Afif Hossain and Liton Das came in at a time when the Powerplay was over and failed to adapt their game to the situation.

It is a different skill to bat at No. 4, 5 and 6. You are on nought and all of a sudden you are facing a quality spinner. It is a different mindset. You have to know your game, try to rotate the strike and then go with your boundary options.

**NEIL MCKENZIE**  
BANGLADESH BATTING CONSULTANT

“It is a different skill to bat at No. 4, 5 and 6. You are on nought and all of a sudden you are facing a quality spinner. It is a different mindset. You have to know your game, try to rotate the strike and then go with your boundary options,” McKenzie further explained.

What was perhaps most disappointing was that the T20 approach was painfully absent throughout the batting line-up. McKenzie said that the coaching staff had been talking about strategies to destabilise opponents but that was not reflected on the field.

“There’s lot of inexperience in the squad at the moment. We knew that was going to be the case before we got there, but still it is disappointing. I think we missed out on a good start the other day.

He also spoke about the players’ intent. “What’s been disappointing for me has been the intent. We have been working so hard in the last couple of years on rotation of strike, putting the bowler under pressure, where you are standing, making him bowl to where you want him to bowl, but I haven’t seen too much of those in the last T20s,” McKenzie reiterated.

There is a point to be made about the batsmen perhaps playing with fear, knowing that some bad scores can put them out of the side. McKenzie indicated that the players needed to understand that the T20 format now has very little room for fear.

“The intent, looking to be a little bit hungrier, really playing with that “no fear” that Russell and everybody tries to instill in the players. It is human nature. You have a few young guys and some guys who are getting back. There’s a lot of pressure on the guys to perform and stay in the side which is understandable, but hopefully they all understand that they are getting the backing from all the selectors and coach. They just have to go out there and play,” he concluded.

# Tigers seek life in dead rubber

SPORTS REPORTER



With Bangladesh already having lost the three-match T20I series 2-0 with a game in hand, the Tigers will be looking to bounce back and avoid a whitewash when they take on a spirited Pakistan in the third and final T20I at the Gaddafi Stadium in Lahore today.

The Tigers will return home tomorrow upon completion of what has been a disappointing series on many regards.

Bating was the glaring weak point for Bangladesh so far in the first two T20Is and the slow approach from the openers have raised a lot of questions. Bangladesh managed to post modest totals of 141 for five and 136 for six in the first two games, and took the game till the last over in the first match while being thumped by nine wickets and with 20 balls to spare in the second.

The lack of impetus at the start and in the death overs has been a feature -- the Tigers suffered from an overly conservative approach in the first six Powerplay overs, adding 35 without loss in the first match and 33 for two in the second game.

There have been question marks about Tamim Iqbal’s slow approach, despite the left-hander scoring 39 off 34 balls and a

53-ball 65 in the two games.

Pacer Shafiul Islam said Bangladesh committed some small errors in the first two games and that the Tigers would look to bounce back in the third and final T20I to end the series on a high.

“Obviously, we had the ability but at the same time we also had a very young team apart from Mahmudullah Riyad and Tamim Iqbal. Yes, we have come here after playing the BPL and maybe also had the chance to play well. We were 10-15 runs short in the first game while Babar Azam and Mohammad Hafeez played well in the second game. They played good cricket, which was the reason the result went in their favour. We had the chance to do well,” Shafiul told reporters yesterday.

Tigers’ head coach Russell Domingo informed that the team management will look to give opportunities to players who are yet to get a chance in the series. The likes of Nazmul Hossain Shanto and Rubel Hossain have not yet featured, and pacer Hasan Mahmud is expected to make his T20I debut today.

Domingo also informed that the youngsters also need to step up and prove their worth as the Bangladesh team management are eyeing to prepare for the upcoming T20 World Cup in October this year.



Bangladesh will hope that Liton Das, who failed to make an impact in the first two matches, finds his best form in the third and final T20I against Pakistan in Lahore today.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

# Zim series to be held amid Pak tour

SPORTS REPORTER



The Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) yesterday announced the schedule for the Zimbabwe’s tour of Bangladesh in mid-February. Zimbabwe will take part in a full series that is to take place between the phases of Bangladesh’s ongoing tour of Pakistan.

The Zimbabwe team will arrive in Dhaka on February 15, and following a two-day warm-up game on February 18 and 19 the visitors will take on Bangladesh in the lone Test, starting from February 22 at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur.

The three day-night ODI matches will be played at

## FIXTURES

Dates	Match	Venue
Feb 15	Zimbabwe arrive	
Feb 18-19	Two-day practice match in Dhaka	TBC
<b>Feb 22-26</b>	<b>Only Test</b>	<b>SBNCS, Mirpur</b>
March 1	First ODI (D/N)	ZACS, Chattogram
March 3	2nd ODI (D/N)	ZACS, Chattogram
March 6	Third ODI (D/N)	ZACS, Chattogram
March 9	First T20 International (D/N)	SBNCS, Mirpur
March 11	Second T20 International (D/N)	SBNCS, Mirpur
March 12	Zimbabwe depart	

Chittagong’s Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium on March 1, 3 and 6 respectively. Both teams will then travel back to Dhaka for the two-match T20I series, to be played on March 9 and 11.

Zimbabwe will be travelling to Bangladesh for the second time in six months. Zimbabwe had visited in September last year when they took part in a T20I tri-series involving Bangladesh and Afghanistan.

The Bangladesh T20I squad are currently in Pakistan for the ongoing T20I series and will return on Tuesday. Following an eight-day stay in Dhaka, the team will travel to Rawalpindi again for the second phase of the tour to play the first of two Tests from February 7 as part of the World Test Championship.

The last leg of the tour will see the Tigers take part in a lone ODI on April 3 in Karachi before playing the second and final Test from April 5. The Tigers will play Zimbabwe between the second and third phases of the Pakistan tour.



India opener Lokesh Rahul (L), who scored an unbeaten 57, shakes hands with New Zealand captain Kane Williamson following a seven-wicket victory in the second T20I at Eden Park in Auckland yesterday. India lead the five-match series 2-0.

PHOTO: AFP

# SA asked for record chase

AFP, Johannesburg



Joe Root made a half-century as England set South Africa a world record target of 466 to win the fourth and final Test at the Wanderers Stadium on Sunday.

The England captain scored 58 and played an anchor role before he was last man out as England were bowled out shortly before the close for 248.

Root decided not to enforce the follow despite England leading by 217 runs on the first innings. Fast bowler Mark Wood took five for 46 as South Africa were bowled out for 183 in their first innings.

Quinton de Kock (76) and Dwaine Pretorius (37) kept England in the field for most of the morning and probably made sure England would decide to bat again.

South Africa coach Mark Boucher said his team, trailing 2-1 in the series, faced a huge task to save the match with two days left.

“If you look at the amount of time left in the game we’ve still got to look at going for

a win,” he said. “It’s never been done before but we have to hold on to some positivity.”

Vernon Philander was out to the sixth ball of the day, reducing South Africa to 93 for seven, at which stage a follow-on seemed a strong possibility.

It was an unhappy day for Philander, who will be retiring from international cricket at the end of the match.

Apart from his early dismissal for four, he received a fine of 15 percent of his match fee for his ‘send-off’ of Jos Buttler on the second day and he then pulled up with a hamstring injury after bowling just nine balls in the second innings. He left the field immediately and was sent for a scan.

England all-rounder Sam Curran said: “The wicket will assist us, especially in terms of the carry, we know the edges will carry to the slips,” he said.

**SCORES IN BRIEF**

**ENGLAND:** First innings and 400 and 248 (Root 58, Curran 35; Hendricks 5-64)  
**SOUTH AFRICA:** First innings 183

# Fitness levels better before BCL

SPORTS REPORTER



The Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) are hurriedly preparing for the upcoming Bangladesh Cricket League, the country’s lone franchise-based first-class competition set to begin from January 31.

The players’ draft of the BCL will take place today.

However, only two teams will be run by franchises this season as Prime Bank had pulled out after the previous edition. Two of the four teams are now being managed by BCB. Almost 100 cricketers participated in the mandatory fitness test at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium yesterday. Unlike before last year’s National Cricket League, the cricketers fared better heading into the BCL.

“Most cricketers have done well and have crossed level 11, the benchmark that has been set by the selectors. With 13.4, Mominul Islam Jnr recorded the best score today [Sunday],” BCB trainer Iftekharul Islam told the media yesterday.

Among the seniors, former national captain Mohammad Ashraful recorded 11.11 but others like Tushar Imran, Adbur Razzak and Naem Islam could muster just 9.8, 10.1 and 10.5 respectively.

Anamul Haque Bijoy, Nadif Chowdhury, Marshal Ayub, were the some of the others who failed the test and will retake it later.

# Philander fined

AFP, Johannesburg

South African opening bowler Vernon Philander, who is playing in his final Test, has been fined 15% of his match fee after a send-off of England batsman Jos Buttler during the second day of the fourth Test at the Wanderers Stadium.

The International Cricket Council announced on Sunday that Philander had been found guilty of a level one offence for “using language, actions or gestures which disparage or which could provoke an aggressive reaction from a batter upon his/her dismissal in an international match.”

Buttler was fined 15 percent of his match fee after the second Test in Cape Town where he was caught on camera swearing at Philander.

# Yuvi, Wasim join Bushfire relief match

AGENCIES, Brisbane

India’s 2011 World Cup hero Yuvraj Singh and Pakistan fast bowling legend Wasim Akram are the first international players to confirm their availability for the Bushfire Cricket Bash fundraising match on February 8.

According to a www.cricknet.com.au report, besides Yuvraj and Akram, legendary Australian opening partnership of Justin Langer and Matthew Hayden is also set to be reunited after the burly Queenslander’s name was added to the squad list.



PHOTO: COLLECTED

Mohammad Iman’s unbeaten 100 off 66 balls gave Barisal Town School a massive 277-run victory over Barisal Govt Zila School in the Bangabandhu National School tournament at the Abdur Rab Serniabat Stadium in Barishal yesterday.