



Mushy set to return for Zimbabwe Test

SPORTS REPORTER



Mushfigur Rahim is all set to make a comeback to the national team in the upcoming lone Test against Zimbabwe, scheduled to begin from February 22, with selectors expected to announce the team today.

There were rumours that Mushfiqur would not be considered for the Zimbabwe series if he did not change his mind about touring Pakistan because the Bangladesh team management wanted to have continuity in the side instead of tinkering with the

However, chief selector Minhajul Abedin said yesterday that there was no reason to not include the wicketkeeper-batsman.

"We spoke to Mushfiqur today [Saturday] and he is all set to return to the Test side for the upcoming Test series against Zimbabwe. We are going to submit the Test team tomorrow and the squad will most likely be announced tomorrow [Sunday]," Minhajul told The Daily Star yesterday.

It was learned that the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) had asked Mushfigur to reconsider his decision to tour Pakistan after he became the only one to pull out from the tour due to personal reasons.

However, it is still unconfirmed whether Mushfiqur will change his mind and tour Pakistan for the third and final phase of the tour. On the last leg of the tour in April, Bangladesh will play one ODI and the second and final Test in Karachi.

There have also been discussions about another experienced cricketer, Mahmudullah Riyad, and his poor form in the longest version of the game which has seen him score just one fifty in his last ten innings. It was learned that the team management had asked the 34-year-old to focus on the limited-

Less than a week after returning home after lifting the ICC U-19 World Cup trophy in South Africa, Bangladesh Under-19 skipper Akbar Ali, along with five teammates, will represent the BCB XI during a twoday practice match against the visiting Zimbabwe team. Mahmudul Hasan, Tanzid Hasan, Shoriful Islam, Shahadat Hosssain and Parvez Hossain will join Akbar in the practice game, scheduled to start on February 18 at BKSP.

overs format and it will be interesting to see whether the selectors including him in the team.

Pacer Taskin Ahmed is also likely to make a comeback to the Test side as pacer Al Amin Hossain is suffering from injury. The selectors may also consider Mustafizur Rahman and young seamer Hasan Mahmud for the Test against Zimbabwe at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur.

Bangladesh will be desperate to return to winning ways after continuous disappointments in the game's longest format.

Mominul Haque and his troops have lost all five Test matches in 2019 and that trend continued into 2020, which began with yet another innings and 44-run thrashing in Rawalpindi last week.



With Bangladesh being plagued by batting troubles in recent times, Tamim Iqbal (L) called upon his mentor Mohammad Salahuddin (2nd from R) to rectify his batting woes in preparation for the upcoming Zimbabwe series. Test captain Mominul Haque (2nd from L) was also seen listening in.



The Zimbabwe national team landed in Dhaka yesterday to prepare for their one-off Test against the hosts from February 22. They are scheduled to have a two-day practice match against a BCB XI from Tuesday.

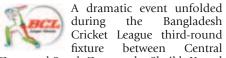


We are well prepared. It's good to be back in Bangladesh, a place we call our second home. So, it's always nice to be back. We know the conditions. We got two good Test matches that went five days in Sri Lanka. We took lots of positives from that so hopefully we can carry on.

BRENDAN TAYLOR ZIMBABWE WICKETKEEPER-BATSMAN

South declare while 121 runs behind

SPORTS REPORTER



during the Bangladesh Cricket League third-round fixture between Central Zone and South Zone at the Sheikh Kamal International Cricket Stadium Academy Ground in Cox's Bazar yesterday.

On the second day of the final round, the BCB-operated South declared their first innings on 114 for four after 28.2 overs while still being 121 runs behind Central's first innings score!

Eyebrows were raised and questions were asked after such a bizarre decision from South Zone skipper Abdur Razzak, but the bonus point system was the only factor that influenced it.

South wanted to deprive Central from getting the 0.5 bonus points which they would receive if they were able to scalp five wickets inside the first 100 overs. So, after losing four wickets inside just 29 overs,

to their tally in this game, which takes their points to 17.89.

And now, even if Central -- who are third with 9.5 points -- manage to win this game, they would have a total of 17.5, still behind South. According to the bylaws, such events in a match are not illegal or, in fact, anything new, but it still invites a lot of questions because it is said to be hampering the spirit of cricket -- a sport said to be the gentlemen's game.

However, the trick from South might backfire and cost them the game as an unbeaten 189-ball 122 from Najmul Hossain Shanto helped Central finish the day on 209 for six, giving them a 330-run lead with four wickets in hand.

Moreover, the BCL bylaws also states that a team will receive a bonus point for winning back-to-back games. So Central, who won their previous encounter against North Zone, may end up with 18.50 points. And if East Zone win the other ongoing

How do the Tigresses stack up?

The Bangladesh women's cricket team were named in Group A for the upcoming ICC Women's T20 World Cup against hosts Australia, India, New Zealand and Sri Lanka. The tournament is scheduled to begin from February 21 and while teams are already practicing and playing warm up matches ahead of the big event, Cricket Australia (CA) has made some off-field preparations too. The board made profiles on the teams that the hosts will face in the group stages and here is how they analysed the Salma Khatun-led side:

2018 result: Fifth in Group A

Best finish: Group stage The big question: How will Bangladesh fare in their first ever game against hosts and world No.1 side Australia? It's an interesting sidenote that the teams have never met before, having been placed in separate groups at each of the past three tournaments. Salma Khatun's side has come a long way in the past couple of years, however, defeating India twice in that period

Player to watch: Wicketkeeper-batsman Nigar Sultana is only 22 years old but she is already her country's second most prolific scorer in T20Is, with 744 runs to her name. She scored a half-century against Pakistan last November and an unbeaten 29 against Sri Lanka earlier this year, while in December she struck her maiden international century -- albeit against a Maldives team playing its first international tournament, but it would nonetheless have been a confidence-boosting display.

The X-Factor: Left-arm spinner Nahida Akter starred for Bangladesh at the T20 World Cup qualifiers last year, taking 10 wickets at 6.6 to help her team secure their place at the main event. She is just 19 years old but has been playing international cricket for more than four years, having made her debut in September 2015. In 38

matches she's collected 49 wickets at 12.1, with the handy economy rate of 4.77. Don't be surprised if: Bangladesh prove a stumbling block for one of the higherranked teams. Sri Lanka seem the obvious opponent given their poor run of form and Bangladesh will be desperate to prove themselves at this level given their improvement across the past few years. They have not registered a win at their past two tournaments, so this is a chance to break their drought.



THE OVERALL NUMBERS

Team record: Matches: 71 | Won: 27 | Lost: 44 | Tied: 0 | NR: 0

Highest total: 152 for seven v Pakistan, Lahore

Pakistan, Cox's Bazar 2018 *against a team competing in this World Cup **FIXTURES**

Lowest total (completed innings): 30 v

February 24 v India, WACA Ground, 10pm AEDT February 27 v Australia, Manuka Oval, 7pm AEDT February 29 v New Zealand, Junction Oval, 11am

March 2 v Sri Lanka, Junction Oval, 11am AEDT



The 2018 Asia Cup triumph in Malaysia is definitely a special one for us and we are carrying a lot of confidence from this success. Now we are a fairly experienced side and it's our fourth World Cup. Australia and New Zealand are new opponents for us but we watched them on

television. We are preparing well . . . we have very good bowling and fielding units and the conditions are also good here. We have the ability to restrict our opponents below 120, which we have shown earlier.

> **JAHANARA ALAM** BANGLADESH ALL-ROUNDER



We have been practising together for so long. We are going to face new opponents. We came here with a goal this time because we didn't play well in the last World Cup. We have very good pace bowlers and we know we are going to get sporting wickets. Weather is not in our hands but we are prepared to face any challenge. We are not nervous as we are prepared well and have appeared a good unit.

> **NIGAR SULTANA BANGLADESH WICKETKEEPER**



YASIR... 134 not out

Razzak declared South's innings while still

miles off Central's first-innings total. The two top teams after the completion of the third round will square off for the ultimate glory and hence teams are doing everything in their hands to seal one of the two spots.

Even before the start of this round, South had amassed a total of 16.39 points and were top of the table. The Razzak-led side have already added 1.5 bonus points

HIGHLIGHTS

South Zone sparked controversy on the second day of the final round when the Abdur Razzak-led side declared on 114 for four, still 121 runs behind Central Zone's first-innings total.

Two unbeaten tons were smashed yesterday. Nazmul Hossain Shanto scored a 189-ball 122, helping Central Zone take the upper hand against South Zone. Meanwhile, it was Yasir Ali's 271ball 134 that helped East Zone's cause against North Zone.

North Zone's left-arm spinner Sunzamul Islam bagged a fifer against East Zone.



NAZMUL... 122 not out

game against North Zone, then the final will be played between East and Central. With two more days to go, South might just end up ruing yesterday's questionable declaration.

Meanwhile, at the main ground of the same venue, it was just another regular day for North Zone and East Zone.

The two games did have one thing in common as this game also saw an unbeaten century. That was made by East's Yasir Ali, who smashed an unbeaten 271-ball 134, laced with 13 boundaries and two sixes.

East Zone skipper Imrul Kayes, who missed the first two rounds due to a hamstring injury, also scored a 153-ball 76 as East Zone managed 261 for seven at the close after starting the day on three for two. For North Zone, Sunzamul Islam shone the brightest with the ball, finishing with figures of five for 92.

SCORES IN BRIEF

SOUTH V CENTRAL CENTRAL ZONE: 235 and 209 for six (Nazmul 122 not out Raqibul 39; Nasum

SOUTH ZONE: 114 for four decl (Nurul 48 not out; Ifran 2-42) **NORTH V EAST**

NORTH ZONE: 272 all out **EAST ZONE:** 261 for seven (Yasir 134 not out, Imrul 76; Sunzamul 5-92)