# Don't Miss

## 'Continuity' only with a familiar recipe

SPORTS REPORTER





The recipe for the selection policy from the national selection committee over the past few years is not a

mystery. Almost every series, the selection panel led by Minhajul Abedin and Habibul Bashar have been repeating a familiar pattern.

There will be at least three or four changes to the previous squad regardless of circumstances, including a few players making a comeback after being dropped not too long ago.

Of course, there will be at least one fresh face in the side who will be rated as a player with huge potential by the selectors, at least for the time being.

However, the explanations from the selectors after announcing every squad ahead of each series more or less remains the same, but the reasons provided for making the changes to the previous team vanishes by the next series.



We think Hasan Mahmud and Yasir Ali have tremendous potential and they are very much part of our future plans. Yasir is from our high-performance squad, and he has done well in the BCL recently. We want to develop upon his potential.

> MINHAJUL ABEDIN CHIEF SELECTOR

Once again, the selectors continued in their pattern as the Bangladesh Cricket Board yesterday announced a 16-member squad for the lone Test against Zimbabwe, scheduled to begin from February 22. The squad will be trimmed to 13 ahead of the game.

This time the selectors made four changes to the team that toured Pakistan, with Mahmudullah Riyad, Soumya Sarkar, Rubel Hossain and Al Amin Hossain being dropped from the team.

There were two comebacks in the form of pacers Mustafizur Rahman and Taskin Ahmed while Mushfiqur Rahim returns after opting out of the Test in Rawalpindi. Offspinner Mehedi Hasan Miraz also returned after recovering from a finger injury.

To make the selection seem more dynamic, the selectors named two uncapped players: batsman Yasir Ali -- who was part of the ODI side that travelled to Ireland for the tri-series last year, but did not feature in any games -- and pacer Hasan Mahmud.

Rubel was included after three years in the squad for the Rawalpindi Test and selectors had opined at the time that they were happy with the pacer's recent performances and wanted to see him afresh considering his experience.

But less than two weeks after Rubel's wayward performance against Pakistan saw him concede 113 runs for three wickets, he was dropped for the upcoming Test against Zimbabwe.

However, chief selector Minhajul offered a completely different explanation



(L-R) Newcomers Yasir Ali and Hasan Mahmud were included in the Test squad.

PHOTO: MOHAMMAD ALI JINNAT

about why they dropped the 'experienced' campaigner whom they wanted to see afresh after just one game, saying: "It was not a change [dropping Rubel from the squad]. We picked Rubel as a back-up. As Al Amin Hossain got injured, Rubel played the first Test against Pakistan."

That also raises questions about Al Amin, who according to Minhajul was not fully fit for the Pakistan tour and needed Rubel as a back-up. So, why was a half-fit bowler was included in the side to begin with?

The selectors rectified that by dropping Al Amin for the lone Test against Zimbabwe, but they dropped his back-up, Rubel, too!

Mahmudullah's exclusion from the Test squad has been a major topic of conversation as the experienced cricketer has been going through a lean patch in the longest format of the game.

There were rumours even before the squad was announced that the team management had asked Mahmudullah to focus on white-ball cricket. It was learned that the board even wanted him to retire from Tests considering his batting approach, which continued to be questionable in the first Test against Pakistan.

Expectedly, he was dropped for the Zimbabwe Test. According to Minhajul, however, Mahmudullah was not dropped for his poor performances but, in fact, given a rest. During this period of 'rest', Mahmudullah will feature in the next round of the BCL.

Mustafizur was dropped from the previous Test side mainly due to a poor run of form, with Minhajul saying the leftarm pacer's performances in Test cricket were not up to the mark. That stance also changed dramatically within two weeks.

This time Minhajul said they were considering Mustafizur for red-ball cricket because the left-arm seamer made a brilliant comeback in the ongoing BCL. Mustafizur picked up six wickets in the second-round game of the BCL after going wicketless in the first round.

The justification behind including Taskin Ahmed, who last played a Test almost three years ago, was similar to what the selectors said when they included Rubel: they wanted someone who could bowl fast in Test cricket.

The latest buzzword among selectors and the team management is "continuity" but with the squad being chopped and changed without delivering a clear message to the players about why the were included or excluded, that will be hard to come by.

## **SQUAD**

Mominul Haque (Capt), Tamim Igbal, Saif Hassan, Najmul Hossain Shanto, Mushfiqur Rahim, Mohammad Mithun, Liton Das, Taijul Islam, Abu Jayed, Nayeem Hasan, Ebadat Hossain, Taskin Ahmed, Mehedi Hasan Miraz, Mustafizur Rahman, Hasan Mahmud, Yasir Ali.



Pacer Taskin Ahmed is gearing up for yet another comeback following a gap of almost three years. Taskin was taken onboard as a 'speedster' after being named in the squad for the lone Test against Zimbabwe. PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

## **CHANGES IN BANGLADESH TEST SQUAD (LAST FIVE SERIES)**

Against New Zealand (February-March 2019) In: Tamim Iqbal (back from injury), Abu Jayed Chowdhury, Taskin Ahmed (got injured later) Fresh inclusion: Ebadot Hossain

Out: Imrul Kayes, Ariful Haque, Shakib Al Hasan (injury), Soumya Sarkar (included later)

**Against Afghanistan (September 2019)** In: Shakib Al Hasan (back from injury), Taskin Ahmed (back from injury), Mosaddek Hossain Out: Mustafizur Rahman, Syed Khaled Ahmed, Tamim Iqbal (made himself unavailable)

Against India (November 2019) In: Imrul Kayes, Mustafizur Rahman, Al-Amin

Fresh inclusion: Saif Hassan

Taskin Ahmed

**Against Pakistan (February 2020)** In: Rubel Hossain, Soumya Sarkar, Tamim Iqbal,

Nazmul Hossain Shanto Out: Mustafizur Rahman, Imrul Kayes (injury), Shadman Islam (injury), Mosaddek Hossain (injury), Mehedi Hasan Miraz (injury), Mushfiqur Rahim (made himself unavailable)

Against Zimbabwe (February 2020)

In: Mushfiqur Rahim, Mustafizur Rahman, Taskin Ahmed, Mehidy Hasan Miraz (back from injury) Fresh inclusion: Hasan Mahmud, Yasir Ali Chowdhury

Out: Mahmudullah Riyad, Rubel Hossain, Al-Amin Hossain (injury), Soumya Sarkar (made himself Out: Shakib Al Hasan (banned), Soumya Sarkar, unavailable)

Zimbabwe players taking a break during their training session at the BCB Academy ground yesterday. The visitors will play one Test, three ODIs and a two-match T20I series against Bangladesh.

## We've come here to win: Ervine

SPORTS REPORTER



Bangladesh's recent failings in the Test format bolster visiting Zimbabwe with new

hope ahead of their lone Test against the hosts and Zimbabwe captain Craig Ervine stated that they have come here to win but reiterated that he would like his side to be focused on their own strengths instead of Bangladesh's form.

The 15-member Zimbabwe squad trained at the BCB Academy ground in Mirpur yesterday and Ervine relished getting back into the mix after their twomatch series against Sri Lanka at home.

"We have obviously come here to win. We had a good series against Sri Lanka so it has given us some momentum after having a long break prior to that series. We're familiar with the conditions here as we've travelled here quite often," Ervine told reporters yesterday.

"Putting their [Bangladesh's] results aside, we just have to concentrate on what we need to do. We have got a few new guys

in the team, just need to make sure they get comfortable and we need to get into our training, get our processes going and make sure we are not caught on the backfoot come the first day of the Test match." Bangladesh are going through a poor

run of form, having lost their last six Tests on the trot with five of them ending in innings defeats.

Zimbabwe returned to playing Tests with the series against Sri Lanka, following a gap of over a year. They pushed the Lankans on home turf and drew the second Test at Harare after losing the first Test by 10 wickets. The last time they played in Bangladesh, they drew the Test series 1-1.

Ervine said that spin would play a big part in the upcoming Test and wanted to prepare for the Tigers' spin threat. "Our mission is to win. We haven't got too many Test matches for the rest of the year. Every Test match for us is vitally important."

While the tourists will be missing Kyle Jarvis and Sean Williams, Ervine said the "opportunity is for the other guys to step up. It's another challenge to accept and take

### Klaasen powers **SA** to 222

AFP, Centurion

Heinrich Klaasen hit 66 off 33 balls as South Africa posted an imposing 222 for six in the third and final Twenty20 international against England at SuperSport Park on Sunday.

Klaasen, 28, took full advantage of his first appearance in a home international this season, hitting four sixes and four fours just as it had seemed South Africa were faltering after a blistering start between Temba Bavuma and Quinton de Kock.

Bavuma (49) and De Kock (35) raced to 84 for the first wicket before both were out in quick succession. De Kock fell to Ben Stokes in the eighth over and Bavuma was bowled by leg-spinner Adil Rashid three balls later.

Stokes and Rashid bowled well in tandem until Klaasen got into his stride with some powerful strokes.

Stokes (two for 35) and Tom Curran (two for 33) were England's best bowlers against a sustained assault by the hosts.

The tourists conceded nine wides as the bowlers were put under pressure on a high-scoring ground.

**SCORES IN BRIEF SOUTH AFRICA:** 222 for 6 in 20 overs (Bavuma 49, De Kock 35, Klaasen 66, D. Miller 35 not out; Curran 2-33, Stokes 2-35) **ENGLAND:** Eoin Morgan (capt), Jason Roy, Jos Buttler, Jonny Bairstow, Dawid Malan, Ben Stokes,

Mark Wood. **Umpires:** Adrian Holdstock (RSA), Allahudien Palekar

Moeen Ali, Tom Curran,

Adil Rashid, Chris Jordan,

## Nazmul's double ton: real deal or false dawn?

SPORTS REPORTER



If there is anything to carry on from a domestic competition before a demanding

international commitment, then Nazmul Hossain Shanto will be in the best possible state of mind as the Central Zone batsman hit a maiden first-class double ton against South Zone on the third day of the thirdround Bangladesh Cricket League fixture in Cox's Bazar yesterday.

The unbeaten 253-run knock can provide the left-hander with enough confidence to amend the mistakes that saw him fail to convert good starts into big knocks in both innings against Pakistan in the recently-concluded Rawalpindi Test if he ultimately plays the one-off Test against Zimbabwe in Mirpur starting from February 22.

But there are hardly any guarantees that domestic performances can be reflected in international cricket, with Tamim Iqbal's failure in the Rawalpindi Test after going there on the back of a triple hundred in the

**SCORES IN BRIEF** 

**CENTRAL ZONE**: First innings 235 and

second innings 385 for 8 declared (Nazmul

253 not out, Rakibul 39, Zabid 36; Shafiul

**SOUTH ZONE**: First innings 114 for 4

declared and second innings 159 for 4

(Anamul 83, Fazle 25, Shamsur 44 not out;

**NORTH ZONE**: First innings 272 and sec-

ond innings 145 for 5 (Junaid 36, Naeem

35, Mushfiqur 23 not out, Mahidul 22 not

**EAST ZONE**: First innings 331 all out

Sunzamul 7-115, Sanjit 3-75)

(Yasir 165, Imrul 76, Afif 26, Nayeem 31;

**CENTRAL V SOUTH** 

2-48, Nasum 4-85)

Mehedi 2-55)

**NORTH V EAST** 

out; Nayeem 2-58)

The final of the 8th Bangladesh Cricket League (BCL) will be a five-day match and will start from February 22 at the Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium in Chattogram.

same competition still fresh in many minds.

Nazmul's brilliant effort at the Sheikh Kamal International Cricket Stadium Academy Ground saw him smash 25 fours and nine sixes during a 310-ball innings and put Central in a commanding position.

Central declared their second innings for 385 for eight after Nazmul converted his overnight hundred into a double to set a daunting 507-run winning target for South, who had courted controversy on the second day by declaring their first innings on 114 for four while still being 121 runs

behind Central's first innings score.

South finished the day on 159 for four, requiring 348 more runs on the final day to win. Mustafizur provided the early breakthrough by dismissing Shahriar Nafees and spinner Mehedi Hasan Miraz jolted the middle order by taking the wickets of Fazle Mahmud and Irfan Sukkur. Anamul Haque top scored with 83 off 119 balls featuring five fours and seven sixes before falling to victim of Shuvagata Hom's spin.

Meanwhile, at the main ground of the same venue, North Zone managed an 86-run lead against East Zone after scoring 145 for five in their second innings. Spinner Nayeem Hasan's two wickets of Junaed Siddiqui (36) and Naeem Islam (35) and a run out from Mohammad Ashraful that sent Ariful Hague back to the pavilion for nine put North in a spot of bother. But inform Mushfiqur Rahim steadied the ship and remained not out on 23.

Earlier, Yasir Ali added 31 runs to his overnight score of 134 and Nayeem added an 82-ball 31 as East ended on 331 in their first innings after resuming the day on 261 for seven.



NAZMUL HOSSAIN SHANTO --- 253 not out