

# ‘Mentality is our main strength’

SPORTS REPORTER



Sikandar Raza said yesterday that their impressive performance in the home Tests against Sri Lanka has provided much confidence ahead of the one-off Test against Bangladesh starting tomorrow in Mirpur.

“We lost the first Test against Sri Lanka, which we could easily have drawn. The second Test was a lot closer than the result showed. We have taken a lot of confidence from there. We are playing our third Test in a very short span, but over the years Zimbabwe have always played well in Bangladesh,” said Raza, who was adjudged player-of-the-match in their last Test against Sri Lanka in Harare.

“Over the years, the way we apply ourselves, it is nice and fresh to see the way the boys have come again with a strong mentality. The mentality of the boys is our main strength. We always had a strong mentality. We are ready for the challenge,” he added.

Raza also recalled their success in Sylhet against the Tigers.

“Bangladesh spinners have a very good record against us but I think with the experience we have of coming to Bangladesh, we learned something and tried to improve our game, and you can say that their spinners have taken lot of wickets, but we have started to score some runs against them. The Test match in Sylhet was a prime example of that, where we won that game.”



**Sikandar Raza's focused stance indicates that the all-rounder is all set to replicate his performance from Zimbabwe's recent home series against Sri Lanka when they face Bangladesh in the lone Test in Mirpur from tomorrow.**

PHOTO: STAR



**Tamim Iqbal (L) and Liton Das were all smiles during Bangladesh's practice session at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday. The Tigers would hope that their willows also smile when Bangladesh take on Zimbabwe in the lone Test starting from tomorrow in Mirpur.**

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

## Tigers up against what they lack

SPORTS REPORTER



On paper, Zimbabwe are far off from matching the experience, strength and quality possessed by Bangladesh, their opponents in the lone Test starting from tomorrow at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur.

And maybe when there is a series against Zimbabwe, the side lingering at the bottom in every format, even a ninth-ranked Test side like Bangladesh may opt to take a lenient approach.

After all, Zimbabwe went more than a year without playing Test. The side that had their ICC membership suspended in July 2019 following government interference in the running of the board had played a Test against Bangladesh in November 2018 and since then have played just two more Tests, during their tour of Sri Lanka last month.

Even in 2018, it was only after a shocking but deserving 151-run thumping by Zimbabwe in Sylhet that the Mahmudullah Riyad-led Bangladesh were able to salvage a draw in the two-Test series with a 218-run

win in Mirpur in the following game.

That Zimbabwe side went through some major changes and add to the fact that they have been away from the longest version, considered the toughest format of all, for over a year, one might think that their Test skills have become rusty.

But Zimbabwe reminded that they did not forget how to play Tests on their tour of Sri Lanka. Although they lost the first Test in Harare by 10 wickets, for the majority of the second and final Test, it was Zimbabwe who dictated terms before a magnificent unbeaten ton from Kusal Mendis on the fifth day salvaged a draw for the Islanders.

Skipper Sean Williams' century, all-rounder Sikandar Raza recording his best figures and the second-best bowling figures by a Zimbabwean of seven for 113 in a Test innings and the contributions with the bat from Raza and Brendan Taylor had almost sealed a win for the visitors.

Such inspiring performances from Raza, Williams and Taylor even after returning to the toughest form of cricket following a considerable gap prove that the one thing that the Zimbabwe still possess is their fighting

spirit.

During the time Zimbabwe spent in Test exile,

Bangladesh played a total of five Tests and lost by an innings margin in four of them, the other being a 224-run thumping by Test rookies Afghanistan at home. The Tigers stretched their list of Test defeats to six when they lost to Pakistan, again by an innings margin, in Rawalpindi earlier this month.

Bangladesh might have had plenty of resources and opportunities compared to Zimbabwe during this period but the one thing that was missing from the struggling Bangladesh side was the very thing that Zimbabwe displayed during their Sri Lanka tour -- fighting spirit.

Bangladesh have looked wayward and the urgency to win a game was always missing from the Tigers' squad during the bleak period.

It would be very foolish of the Mominul Haque-led side to think that they can get back to winning ways by simply playing regular cricket against Zimbabwe and even Bangladesh Cricket Board President Nazmul Hassan acknowledged the tough challenge that awaits the Tigers.

# A worthy realisation for Saif

SPORTS REPORTER



Saif Hasan's childhood dream came true when he opened the innings with star Bangladesh opener Tamim Iqbal in the first ICC World Test Championship match against Pakistan in Rawalpindi earlier this month. Now, the right-hander's aim was to build a long opening partnership with the seasoned campaigner, but he is well aware that he still has a long way to go to realise his second dream. It was not a dream debut for the young man against Pakistan but his scores of 0 and 16 taught him some good lessons.

“I was aware that Test cricket would not be easy but so far I did everything [possible] to reach this point. When I say not easy, I mean that international cricket is not like the game that I have been playing in the domestic circuit. We have to be mentally prepared and must prolong the innings if we get the chance,” said Saif yesterday.

While talking to reporters at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur, Saif said that the team has been working on making a fresh start against Zimbabwe in the one-off Test.

“We sat together after the last Test defeat against Pakistan. Everyone is trying and planning on making a fresh start.”



**Bangladesh opener Saif Hasan was seen honing his football skills at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.**

PHOTO: STAR

# Tigresses win a thriller

ICC



Khadija Tul Kubra and Jahanara Alam inspired Bangladesh to a morale-boosting five-run victory over Pakistan in the final ICC Women's T20 World Cup 2020 warm-up fixture at Allan Border Field in Brisbane yesterday.

Bangladesh, who chose to bat in Brisbane, couldn't find freedom but Murshida Khatun made 43 to lift her side to 111-8 from 20 overs.

Pakistan couldn't stitch together any meaningful partnerships in reply with Javeria Khan's 41 the lone hand.

Bangladesh's top order were decimated in the second over as Shamima Sultana (3) mistimed a sweep to be caught behind off Anam Amin and a mix-up led to the run-out of Sanjida Islam (0).

Promising keeper-batter Nigar Sultana Joty couldn't make an early impression when Murshida's straight drive was deflected onto her stumps by Aiman Anwer, run out backing up for 13.

Murshida, set to make her T20 World Cup debut this month, heaved back-to-back boundaries and found her most reliable partner in Fargana Hoque.

Fargana's 21 saw the pair club together for 52 before Murshida was run out by Diana Baig in the 14th over.



**Pacer Jahanara Alam (L) and spinner Khadija Tul Kubra celebrate the Tigresses' five-run victory over Pakistan in their final ICC Women's T20 World Cup 2020 warm-up fixture in Brisbane yesterday.**

PHOTO: ICC

Pakistan kept things tight late on and the momentum swung their way when Aiman Anwer took two wickets in two balls in the final over.

Bangladesh skipper Salma Khatun and attack leader Rumana led an early assault as Pakistan succumbed to 23 for three after three overs.

The dangerous Bismah nicked off while driving, as did opener Ayesha Naseem on one of her first appearances for her country.

The experienced duo of Javeria and Nida Dar offered temporary respite with a partnership of 27, the opener pulling to the boundary in the fifth over and Dar clearing long-on with a six in the seventh.

Javeria kept fighting the tide and turning over strike but Nida could only find mid-wicket on 14 and when Iram Javed departed cheaply it was 59 for five.

Javeria, who has featured in every edition of the Women's T20 World Cup, peeled off successive fours in the 15th over to give her side hope but was sensationally caught on the long-on fence by Fargana Hoque, the crucial moment that settled the match.

From there, it was all Bangladesh and three wickets in her final two overs saw Jahanara seal the victory in emphatic fashion.

Pakistan top-scorer Javeria Khan said: “We're a bit disappointed. We made mistakes at crucial times. It was a good practice, but not the result we wanted.”

SCORES IN BRIEF

**Bangladesh:** 111 for 8 in 20 overs (Murshida Khatun 43, Fargana Hoque 21; Aiman Anwer 2-12)

**Pakistan:** 106 all out in 19.4 overs (Javeria Khan 41; Jahanara Alam 4-22, Khadija Tul Kubra 3-11)

**Result:** Bangladesh won by five runs.

# Women's T20 World Cup kicks off today

*Hosts Australia to face India in opener*

AFP, Sydney



Defending champions Australia suffered a blow on the eve of the Women's Twenty20 World Cup Thursday with young pace spearhead Tayla Vlaeminck ruled out of the tournament with a foot injury.

The fast bowler, 21, reported pain in her foot this week and scans revealed a stress fracture just a day ahead of Australia facing India in the opening game of the 10-team event.

Head coach Matthew Mott said the squad was disappointed to lose one of the quickest bowlers in the game, as the hosts bid to win a fifth World Cup title.

Off-spinner Molly Strano was drafted in as her replacement.

Skipper Meg Lanning admitted the team was “pretty devastated” to lose

Vlaeminck and they may have to rethink their approach.

“There's no one quite the same as Tay so we will have to slightly tweak how we are going to go about it,” she said. “But generally our plans are pretty flexible anyway, so we don't feel like it's going to be too much of a disadvantage.”

“The important thing is getting used to what the conditions are doing and what the Indian batters are doing and being able to adjust from there.”

Indian skipper Harmanpreet Kaur said her side was ready to exploit any Australian weaknesses in the opener at the Sydney Showground.

“We are a side that can put pressure on any team, we just look to stay in the right mindset and play in the way we can because that is our biggest strength,” she said.

The World Cup will culminate in the final at Melbourne on March 8.



**Sajjad Hossain's unbeaten 261 off 115 balls, studded with 29 fours and 15 sixes, powered Chattogram Sunshine Grammar School to a massive 422-run victory over Chattogram Collegiate School at the Chattogram Women's Cricket Ground yesterday in the Bangabandhu National School Cricket tournament, presented by Prime Bank. Sunshine scored 489 for seven.**

PHOTO: COLLECTED

This win will give us a lot of confidence as we look to make a strong start to the tournament. We were happy with our batting performance but we struggled in the last five overs, our run-rate was not very good, so that's something we'll look to work on and we didn't bowl our yorkers well either at the death. This match was a great opportunity for us to reset and rethink ahead of the World Cup.

**SALMA KHATUN**  
BANGLADESH CAPTAIN