



Bangladesh batting consultant Neil McKenzie (C) imparts his wisdom to batsman Liton Das during training in Mirpur yesterday ahead of the lone Test against Zimbabwe starting today.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

I think if we are able to win this game everything will change. Everything means it's not that we lost in the past but we will be able to overcome from the bad patch. I think the bad patch will change a lot the way we have been training and everything will get more organised.

**MOMINUL HAQUE**  
BANGLADESH CAPTAIN

You always feel a little bit of pressure playing at home. Obviously with recent form they [Bangladesh] will be under even more pressure. But we have to concentrate on our process and our strength and not worry too much about the Bangladesh history in Test cricket.

**SEAN ERVINE**  
ZIMBABWE CAPTAIN

## Culture must change at the top

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh head coach Russell Domingo, when asked if the Tigers were desperate to win the lone Test against Zimbabwe in order to end the dismal run in Tests, urged that while a win is always the objective, the mentality and indeed the culture of Test cricket in the country needed to change before the team could compete against the big guns.

Essentially, he talked about a process that would lead to results instead of banking on short-term results that will merely maintain the status quo of the country's cricket.

For a long time, Bangladesh have grappled with the reality of poor Test performances away from home. Without confronting the question head on, the focus was on making up for bad results with wins at home. Home Test wins against England, Australia and West Indies laid further foundation for this way of thinking. Thus the dependence on spin prevailed, with the likes of Australia, England and West Indies more prone to succumb to turning pitches. It also gave rise to further woes with the batting lineup crumbling like a house of cards in away Tests, for instance in the Caribbean or more recently, closer to home in India, where the deck was built for pacers.

"For Bangladesh to improve in Tests, we can't play on raging turners all the time.

"[Spinning turfs] put the bowlers in a false sense of security and they think they are great bowlers. It is a tough thing for the team to come to grips with, but it is something that I am pretty strong about. We need to play on good wickets so that we can develop our game not just in Bangladesh but outside too," Domingo said, essentially putting the problem in bold letters.

He said that results will be important but it will only offer short-term relief. "Winning is of paramount importance but we do need to develop Test culture. We need to put a lot more attention on Test matches," he said.

That was not the be all and end all to the argument of what a change in Test culture entails. A change in the way one prepares and schedules matches is important, but real change that does not fall back on short-termism must offer more than just results and instead usher in concrete processes. Such a change must come from the top, at the board level, and be translated onto the field of play. That process has been missing for a long time. For instance, the whatever-goes line of thinking in team selection policy for every series shows the impotency of the ongoing decision-making structure. Citing the need for 'continuity', the BCB president and head coach had expressed wishes to play the same squad used in the first Test against Pakistan for the next two matches. Touting an intention to keep the same players for just three Tests as continuity reveals much about their understanding, or lack thereof, of long-term planning.

Questions too must be asked why there has not been a cultural change despite such failures in recent past.

BCB President Nazmul Hassan on Wednesday said that he would have to be informed of the decisions the coach and captain take before games, decisions such as the playing 11 and whether the team would bat or bowl first if they win the toss. His interference however, has not brought forth a clear process in the past and is unlikely to bring one at the present. One has to wonder when the last time was that the BCB held a discussion on improving or building Test culture, which is of utmost importance to compete in the most difficult format of the game.

A mindset to compete must come from the top, at board level, since players or coaches do not create a culture; it has to be developed and reinforced with structures and ideas. That is unlikely to happen if focus is merely on short-term impact and shorter versions of the game.

"For the development of the team, we need to have a bigger picture," Domingo said yesterday, but he would know that broad changes need to come from elsewhere, rather than just coach or captain.

## Chance to move on from spin reliance

MAZHAR UDDIN

Bangladesh head coach Russell Domingo is looking to move on from the team's over-reliance of spin at home and planning to transform the Tigers into a more consistent Test side even in testing conditions away from home.

The South African continued the culture of revealing the team formation ahead of the game much like he did before the Pakistan Tests. Domingo informed that Bangladesh will go with two seamers against Zimbabwe in the lone Test starting from today at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur.

Bangladesh did get some success with the tailormade pitches at home against England and Australia back in 2016 and 2017 respectively, and most recently the two-match Test series win against the West Indies last year, the second of which was played with no seamer.

However, the over-dependency on spin had an adverse impact as the Bangladesh seamers often seemed unprepared in

HEAD TO HEAD											
BANGLADESH					ZIMBABWE						
Head to Head in Bangladesh											
M	W	L	D	M	W	L	D	M	W	L	D
9	5	2	2	9	2	5	2				
Head to Head in all Tests											
M	W	L	D	M	W	L	D	M	W	L	D
16	6	7	3	16	7	6	3				
Last meeting in Tests: Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium, Dhaka, Nov 11, 2018. Bangladesh won by 218 runs.											

seaming conditions. The 45-year-old also urged for better pitches where pacers, batsmen and even spinners get the chance to showcase their skills and stressed on the need to have a clear idea of the bowlers' skill development.

There were times when Bangladesh seemed confused about their approach even at home, which was evident in the last home Test when Afghanistan thrashed the Tigers by 224 runs in September last year.

"For Bangladesh to improve in Test cricket, we can't play on raging turners all the time. Because then you will only pick one seamer and then you go to India, South Africa or Australia, you start wondering who are your three seamers or four seamers because they haven't played any cricket. It's a fine balance. We know that the strength of the team is to play on spinning wickets and particularly against teams like Australia, New Zealand or South Africa, you want your wickets to spin but we have also got to teach ourselves and learn how to play on good wickets so that the seamers are in the game and batsmen can bat to score big runs.

"If they play on tough wickets, half the batsmen will get big hundreds. It also puts the bowlers into a false sense of security because the wicket is spinning. They think they are good bowlers because the wicket is spinning and the seamers think they are bad because the wicket is not seaming," Domingo told reporters yesterday.

The South African also added that winning games will be of paramount importance for him against Zimbabwe,

although he has been critical of the lack of preparations that has hampered the Tigers performance in the recent times.

"Winning is of paramount importance. We do need to develop a Test culture. The way we go about our preparations and schedule Test matches. I am going into this Test as a coach more confident because we've been together for four to five days. I've never had Tests where we have flown into a place, practise a day and then play a Test match. The next schedule in Pakistan, we fly in, play a one-dayer, then practise and then play a Test match, so no serious Test team has scheduling like that and we've got to try and change that. It's a cultural thing and we need to put a lot more attention on Test matches," he said.

Things have not gone well for the Tigers in the longest format of the game as Bangladesh have lost their last six Tests, they five of those by innings margins. The upcoming lone Test against Zimbabwe will be crucial for Mominul Haque and his troops to not just snap the losing streak but also to adopt a new attitude in the longest format.

## 'Haven't been told to share team with BCB boss'

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh head coach Russell Domingo said yesterday that he has 'not been officially ordered' to share team strategies with Bangladesh Cricket Board President Nazmul Hassan. The BCB boss on Wednesday told the media that he had instructed the team management to inform him of the playing eleven and game strategies.

"I haven't been officially told that I need to tell anyone about the team. I am not under any impression that I need to do it, as yet. I am as passionate about the team as

the president. I am paid a salary to make decisions and do my work," Domingo told reporters.

The 45-year-old seems to be familiar with the cricketing culture of Bangladesh as he said that things are no different in South Africa.

"Guys, remember I come from South Africa. A lot of trouble goes on there. It is not like I am coming from England or Australia where it is easy, where you do what you want to. I come from South Africa. It is tough there as well. Selection is not easy. There are people with a lot of opinions and agendas. It is part of my job, and I have to deal with it. Make the most of it."



Zimbabwe skipper Sean Ervine inspects the pitch on the eve of the lone Test against Bangladesh starting from today in Mirpur.

PHOTO: STAR

### FIZZ NOT PLAYING TEST

The next five days he (Mustafizur) is going to be bowling every day... At the moment I can't see him playing Test cricket until he improves technically and gets the ball to swing and get it to come back in to the right hander.

### RUSSELL DOMINGO BANGLADESH COACH



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## 'Conditions not foreign to us'

SPORTS REPORTER

For any team, home matches are seen as comparatively easier fixtures than those played away on tour. However, it is also true that the pressure of delivering as favourites may also become a factor and work against the hosts.

And for Bangladesh, a side that has been abysmal in Tests in the recent past, the challenge at home may just get trickier. Zimbabwe captain Craig Ervine acknowledged that the Mominul Haque-led Bangladesh side will be under more pressure when the two sides meet during their lone Test of the tour at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur today.

"You always feel a little bit of pressure playing at home. Obviously with the recent form, they [Bangladesh] will be under even more pressure. But we have to concentrate on our process and our strength and not worry too much about Bangladesh's [recent] history in Test cricket," said Ervine during the pre-match press conference in Mirpur yesterday.

Bangladesh's last Test win came against West Indies, when the Tigers registered their biggest ever Test win by defeating the Caribbean side by an innings and 184 runs in Mirpur in November 2018. Since then, Bangladesh played six Tests -- five overseas and one in Chattogram -- and the Tigers lost all their away matches by innings margins while losing the Chattogram Test by 224 runs against rookies Afghanistan.

And after such a poor run in the longer version, even home matches may take a heavy toll on the Tigers. That was perhaps the reason Ervine also issued a warning to the Tigers, mentioning that Zimbabwe, who have toured the country a number of times in the past, will also be playing in known conditions and that might just spark up the contest.

"Bangladesh are having a poor run of form in Tests recently. But obviously they are stronger opponents in their own condition. But this condition is also a little familiar to us as we have toured here often in the past. So, it is not a foreign thing to us. It should be a very good contest," concluded Ervine.

## East face South in final today

SPORTS REPORTER

Table-toppers East Zone will battle it out for the Bangladesh Cricket League (BCL) title when they clash with Bangladesh Cricket Board-run South Zone in the final at the Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium in Chattogram today.

The eighth edition of the BCL was played in a single league format for the first time after being hurriedly organised by the BCB last month.

While the six league-stage games were four-day matches, the final will be a five-day match.

Bangladesh Under-19 opener Tanzid Hasan, who smashed a boundary-filled unbeaten ton for BCB XI against the Zimbabweans just a few days after returning from South Africa as one of the ICC Under-19 World Cup champions, has been included in the East Zone squad for the final. The champion left-hander has been in tremendous form and is expected to play his maiden first-class match today.

Tanzid was included as a replacement for Yasir Ali, who was named in the national squad for the lone Test against Zimbabwe in Mirpur, also starting from today. However, right-arm pacer Hasan Mahmud, who was included in the 16-member national Test squad, will be playing for East Zone.

Meanwhile, Bangladesh stalwart Mahmudullah Riyad, who was 'rested' by BCB from the Zimbabwe Test is expected to feature for South Zone.



The Bangladesh women team arrived in Perth yesterday afternoon after registering a thrilling five-run victory in their final warm-up match against their Pakistan counterparts at the Allan Border Field in Brisbane on February 20. The Salma Khatun-led side will face their Indian counterparts during the Tigresses tournament opener at the WACA Ground in Perth on February 24.

PHOTO: BCB