

Whatmore looking for contributions from all

Cricket

AL-AMIN from London

The biggest strength of Bangladesh coach Dav Whatmore is his ability to handle his friends and foes alike. He is also a kind of character who takes adversity in his stride. And just one day before Bangladesh's biggest challenge against a vaunted England side, the 50-year-old looked as positive as ever.

"If you are expecting Bangladesh to go and win the chances of that happening given the results over four-and-a-half-years is pretty slim. But that's not to say we can't really show good progressive cricket. So, what I'm saying it's not fair to judge with a win or loss," said Whatmore ahead of the first Test starting at Lord's on Thursday.

"I can understand that a lot of interest has occurred with this tour. But the facts are that England are ranked second and Bangladesh tenth. So

there is a big gulf of difference between the two sides and you will have to accept that."

"I know their attack is such that their four pacers will be coming at us all the time like planes landing at Heathrow, Gatwick or JFK every five minutes."

But Whatmore was not interested about what England are capable of doing against his inexperienced side. Rather, he wanted to focus on the small contributions from his boys.

"Well, if we are bowling I expect my bowlers to give their opponents a hard time. And if we are batting I want the openers take the shine off the hard new ball."

"In order for us to do well there are certain good things that need to happen over first day, second day, third day and fourth day. So, the batsmen need to bat wicketless sessions and make sure they do not loose wickets before or after breaks."

"We need to have a minimum of at least three 80-run partnerships."

He said the Tigers had a mixed bag

in three warm-up matches.

"If you say every batsman made runs over those three games, that had not occurred. The bowlers also did not hit the deck and bowl properly either. I think game one and three were okay but we had a bit of dip in the second one against Sussex. But if you are reviewing the whole lot I think it was good. We cannot always have every practice match perfect in our build up for a Test."

Asked whether it was a bit scary for him to see 20 wickets falling just over a day against Sussex, the Bangladesh coach replied in the negative.

"That sometimes happens in a shorter length of time than a greater length. But it's not scary for me because if you look at performances at county cricket over here sides have been bowled out for 130 or 140 and these things can happen but you never know when it is going to happen."

He also said that he was not worried about his non-performing top-order.

"It is good to have some runs before coming back in international duties but that does not guarantee anything."

But Whatmore was not so happy with the performances of his two left-arm spinners.

"The spinners had a hard time gripping the ball and controlling it that they usually enjoy on the sub-continent. But I think they should quickly adjust to the conditions than the medium-pacers."

Whatmore, who last came at Lord's with the Sri Lankan team, said that the wicket here in May-June has no devil in it.

"At the moment it appears lightish green but I think they will cut it a bit more. Generally speaking, this time of the year the wicket looks pretty flat here."



PHOTO: BANGLACRICKET.COM

EAT WELL, SLEEP WELL, TRAIN WELL! (L) Bangladesh wicketkeeper Khaled Mashud (L) talks to teenage prodigy Mushfiqur Rahim at the reception thrown by the Mayor of London on Tuesday. (R) Former England captain Nasser Hussain charms the audience with his speech.

A reception to remember

Cricket

ASIF SALEH, Banglacricket.com

The setting was beautiful overlooking Tower Bridge.

The Mayor of London arranged a lovely reception for the cricketers and British Bangladeshi guests at the City Hall. My mission was two fold. I wanted to capture as many photos as possible for banglacricket.com as well as to adorn the recently bought cricket jersey of the Bangladesh team with autographs of all our players.

It was pretty difficult to leave my dignity behind and walk around like a star-struck teenager with a T shirt asking the players for their signature. Also it didn't help that I was middle aged and all these players are mostly in their teens or early twenties. However, I got this mission

accomplished within the first 20 minutes.

While I was getting the signatures, the actual ceremony began and speaker after speaker spoke. There was the Mayor, of course, with his right hand man Murad Qureshi, who spoke about London's bid for the Olympics in 2012. Then there was the Bangladeshi High Commissioner to the UK, the British High Commissioner to Bangladesh, the MCC President, the BCB President and the Chief Executive of the ECB. All of them piled away on the usual formalities.

But the best of the speeches was left for last and that was of former England captain Nasser Hussain.

He spoke about how often he was on the other side and was bored to death listening to these speeches and now it was his turn to take revenge. Looking at the Bangladesh cricketers at that point, it did seem like they wanted to be

dent and said he was ready for the action. However, his body language said the opposite. Then there was Ashraful chirping away with everyone who was there. He was undoubtedly the most confident of the lot and was amazingly tiny and still managing to look like a schoolboy.

There was Sumon (Habibul Bashar) and his ever present smile. He was very polite and mentioned that he was counting on our support at Lord's. There was Aftab, the only bearded player of the team. He looked very nervous. I don't know whether it was my recollection of the Shibir brothers of Dhaka University or if it was his nervousness, something put me off trying to have a chat with him.

Mashrafee was bored out of his mind and was looking at a Bangla newspaper listlessly. Javed Omar

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Giles out, Batty in

Cricket

AFP, London

Ashley Giles' hip injury saw him omitted from the England team to play Bangladesh in the first Test at Lord's starting here Thursday.

The left-arm spinner's place was taken Wednesday by off-spinner Gareth Batty.

England omitted Robert Key from their top four and recalled Ian Bell for his second Test after the Warwickshire batsmen made 70 on his England debut last year against the West Indies in the fourth Test at The Oval.

Bell, 23, who has scored over 500 first-class runs already this season, is the only England batsmen to have scored a domestic first-class hundred this season. He was set to bat at number four

with Vaughan promoted to first-wicket down.

Uncapped Gloucestershire seamer Jonathan Lewis was the other player left out from the original squad with all-rounder Andrew Flintoff cleared to bowl after ankle surgery.

"Ashley won't be playing tomorrow," Vaughan told reporters at Lord's here Wednesday. "He just needs a little bit more rest but may be available for the second Test (at Durham's Riverside Ground on June 3).

"But it gives an opportunity for Gareth to show the nation what he can do. He's a fine prospect as well. He played against Bangladesh (in Bangladesh in 2003-04) so he knows a bit about them," said Vaughan of the 27-year-old slow bowler who has so far played five Tests.

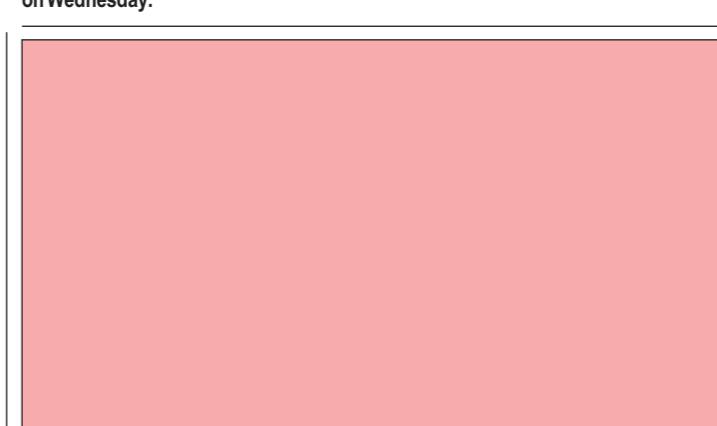
England are expected to beat Bangladesh in double quick time and Vaughan admitted: "It's a potential banana skin. But what's important is that we play with the same intensity. We've had a successful 12 months (losing just one out of their last 15 Tests)."

Asked if there was any danger of

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WHAT ARE WE AIMING FOR ACTULLAY? Coach Duncan Fletcher (R) and England skipper Michael Vaughan discussing something during a training session at Lord's on Wednesday.



Shahadat to get the English dancing

Cricket

THE GUARDIAN, London

When Shahadat Hossain was told that his cricketing hero Steve Harmison suffers from homesickness on tour, his face lit up with relief. "I didn't know that," he said, "but I am happy to hear it."

While Harmison satisfied media bloodlust on Tuesday by agreeably proclaiming that England would show Bangladesh "no mercy", his young adversary was merely concentrating on keeping body and soul together.

Homesickness can be lost in translation but his honest appraisal of his first senior tour survived a translation from Bengali into Hindi

"I miss the social structure that I have in Bangladesh," he said. "Without my family and friends around me, I feel quite lonely. Sometimes I feel that I want to get back to Bangladesh as soon as possible. It can be hard to manage without the warmth of my family and friends, and the people in Bangladesh."

Anybody who has travelled in south Asia will appreciate the culture shock faced by Shahadat and this young Bangladeshi team.

Bangladesh, in spite of its poverty, is part of the fact that it is ranked as the most corrupt nation in the world, possesses a natural warmth; at its best, it is a gentle land of kindred spirits.

In England, Shahadat must contend with an elaborate and distrustful society where warmth is not readily given. And then he is thrown the ball, a debutant for statistically the worst Test team in the world, and asked to bowl out England.

But, for Shahadat, it is not just the contest that awaits, it is the honour.

Asked to imagine a Test debut at Lord's, his eyes flew to the heavens in an innocent display of pleasure.

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