

Bangladesh a real threat to any team: Moody



AL MUSABBIR SADI from Colombo

In 11 previous meetings Bangladesh have never beaten Sri Lanka and the hosts, second in the ICC's ODI rankings, will be certain favourites when they meet a Tigers side without their most potent weapon in the first of the three-match series at the Sinhalese Sports Club (SSC) ground on Wednesday.

The wicket at the SSC is not slow unlike other venues in this part of the world and it often helps the pacers in the morning. That should concern Bangladesh captain Habibul Bashar if he is to field first as Mashrafe bin-Mortuza has been ruled out for the opening fixture atleast after complaining of back spasm.

While his teammates were busy training on Tuesday, Mashrafe was prescribed some light workout and apparently was feeling better as he managed to jog a few rounds.

"The pain is much less than it was on the day of the practice match," said Bangladesh's premier fast bowler who had to go off after completing just one over in Sunday's warm-up game against a Sri Lankan Board President's XI.

"If the improvement continues then I may get a match or two which would give me more confidence ahead of the Test series," he added.

Meanwhile, Mashrafe's unfortunate injury has opened the door for Syed Rasel. The left-arm pacer makes his debut in the same match in which irreplaceable wicketkeeper Khaled Mashud would be celebrating his 100th ODI appearance, the first Bangladeshi player to achieve that feat.

Rasel has been rewarded for some consistent performances at different levels and said that his target was to become a regular in the Tigers line up.

"I want establish myself in the team but I am not thinking that far. I want to concentrate on near future

TEAMS

BANGLADESH (from): Javed Omar, Aftab Ahmed, Mohammad Ashraful, Tushar Imran, Habibul Bashar, Shahriar Nafees, Khaled Mahmud, Mohammad Rafique, Khaled Mashud, Manjarul Islam, Tapash Baisya, Nazmul Hossain, Syed Rasel, Rajin Saleh.

SRI LANKA (from): Marvan Atapattu (capt), Sanath Jayasuriya, Kumar Sangakkara, Mahela Jayawardene, Russel Arnold, Tillakaratne Dilshan, Upul Chandana, Dilhara Lokuhettige, Chaminda Vaas, Farveez Maharoo, Muttiah Muralitharan.

which is tomorrow's match," said the lanky quick from Jessore.

Both teams trained at one of the oldest venues in Sri Lanka on Tuesday morning and the home side's new coach Tom Moody said he would have another look at the wicket it in the morning before picking the team.

Sri Lanka also had injury worries with ace batsman Sanath Jayasuriya and young seamer Farveez Maharoo.

"Sanath has a shoulder injury but he is comfortably fit for batting. But he may not take full part with the ball. He will only bowl if needed in the vital overs, otherwise, we will not risk him," said Moody.

"Maharoo suffered a hamstring injury during a trial match but he has come through the fitness test and will be 100 percent tomorrow," he added.

When asked, Moody dismissed any suggestions of his team not being motivated enough to perform against the No. 10 side in the world.

"We've got enough competition in the team to keep the intensity level up. We are also building long term and this is an important stage for us. Anyone coming into the matches with a foregone conclusion are going to be in for a shock. They (Bangladesh) have been playing w e



JUMPING FOR HUNDRED: Bangladesh wicketkeeper-batsman Khaled Mashud jumps during the Tigers' training session at the Sinhalese Sports Club ground on Tuesday. The Rajshahi stumper will make his 100th ODI appearance today.

100 behind the stumps



AL MUSABBIR SADI from Colombo

Sri Lanka holds a special place in Khaled Mashud's heart. It was there that the Bangladesh wicketkeeper-batsman scored his 1,000th one-day run during the Asia Cup in 2004. A year later he stands on the threshold of another personal milestone -- the first Bangladeshi cricketer to appear in 100 ODI matches.

Ironically, it will be at the Sinhalese Sports Club ground on Wednesday where the veteran Tiger would touch both the milestones. And to make the occasion memorable, his teammates will throw a party after the game.

"His playing 100 matches is encouraging for us," said Bangladesh skipper Habibul Bashar praising his long-time deputy on Tuesday.

"Nobody in the team deserves it better than Mashud does. We are excited and we will throw a party for him. We want to make the moment memorable for him because we are honoured to be beside him."

Since making his international debut against India in the Asia Cup in 1995, the pragmatic Rajshahi stumper has managed to hold on to his mantle as the country's number one through determination, hard work and sheer

mental strength. And over the years the 29-year-old has not only been doing the enduring work of standing behind the stumps but has also climbed the ladder as a dependable batsman.

On the eve of his 100th match, Mashud took a trip down the memory lane.

"I was very excited before my debut. Getting a chance in the national team was really something. This event is also important but as a senior member of the team, I have more responsibility now," said Mashud while comparing his first match and the rare 'century'.

"The match itself is not different. But it will have a special place."

"There will be a time when our players will play 200 and 300 matches. But I definitely feel proud being the first Bangladeshi to achieve this milestone. In my first five years, I have hardly played 20 matches. Now, we play 18-20 matches in a year. So, the new boys have more chances to reach this landmark.

"The coaches at club and national levels have always been helpful to me and I will remember their contribution.

Mashud, who is nine shy of taking 100 victims in ODIs, also

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BTV

Bangladesh vs Sri Lanka
First ODI
Live at 9:45 am

TEN Sports

Bangladesh vs Sri Lanka
First ODI
Live at 9:45 am

US Open

Men's 1st Round &
Women's 2nd Round
Live at 5:00 am & 9:00 pm

ESPN

New Zealand vs Zimbabwe
Fourth ODI
Live at 1:30 pm

STAR Sports

English Premier Football League
Aston Villa vs Blackburn Rovers
Taped Version at 9:30 am



Premier Football League

Mohammedan vs Muktiyoddha (5:00 pm)
Venue: Bangabandhu National Stadium

In Murali's cobweb



AL MUSABBIR SADI from Colombo

Having taken more than 900 international wickets, Muttiah Murali-tharan is hungry for more.

The Sri Lankan icon with the most unusual action for a finger spinner has however had to endure plenty of controversy on and off the field just like his great Australian rival Shane Warne.

But unlike Warne, the 33-year-old magician with ball has had to fight against the establishment that constantly called his action in question. Knives are always hanging over his head wherever the smiling assassin from Kandy goes deliver his bag of tricks including the 'Doosra'.

But Murali is a man who somehow keeps his cool even under the stringiest conditions during his 13-year career. His rivalry with Warne added a new dimension to the dying art of spin bowling, which has seen a seesaw battle for the right to become the highest Test wicket-taker.

While the Aussie leg-spinner has struck 600, Muralitharan is not far behind with 549 wickets from 93 Tests. And with Bangladesh now in Sri Lanka, he will be certainly licking his lips at the prospect closing the gap if not overtake Warne. But the wily offspinner is not concerned about records.

"I am not thinking about wickets

because we have to win as a team," Muralitharan told reporters at the Sinhalese Sports Club ground the day before the first one-day international between Sri Lanka and Bangladesh on Wednesday.

"It will come in the course of playing, it will happen automatically if I perform well. But I can't be selfish or say that I'll take seven or ten wickets because other people in the team will have to do well too.

"I have a lot of time, I'll play another four or five years and I have



MUTTIATH MURALITHARAN

been training hard. And I am not greedy of taking wickets and taking over (Warne). It happened last time and it will happen in future again," added Muralitharan who had once reached the peak of Test bowlers only for Warne to reclaim it afterwards.

Muralitharan is just as impressive

in the abridged version. He will start the three-match one-day series needing another 14 wickets to become the first Sri Lankan to reach the 400-mark.

With the landmark beckoning, he is also a contender for becoming the first ever player to take a thousand international wickets. But he always prefers to contribute to the team and never show any disrespect to the opposition.

"It is not easy, every game is difficult for us. So we won't take anything lightly in the series because Bangladesh are playing well. So, we have to do our best on the field. Our form is very good and we will try to win all the matches.

"We are second in the ICC one-day rankings and our target is to maintain that and the arrival of Tom (Moody) as coach will help us a lot. We've got a new coaching staff and they are trying hard to mould a good side for the next World Cup.

Muralitharan, who knows only a few players of the relatively young Bangladesh side, thought that the loss of the Tigers in a practice match here would not have an impact in the series.

"The opposition in Bangladesh's practice match were not weak. In Sri Lanka, we have 40-50 players who can come into the main team anytime. So it was a strong team they played against. I still think Bangladesh's improvement is going up rather than going down. They

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Crucial Mukti, MSC clash today

SPORTS REPORTER

Mohammedan Sporting Club will desperately try to put behind their poor showings in the second-leg and get back to winning ways when they take on Muktiyoddha Sangsad in a crucial match of the Premier Bank Premier Division Football League today.

The titans' clash kicks off at the Bangabandhu National Stadium at 5pm.

The Black and Whites are in a must win situation and anything else will pave way for Brothers Union to retain the most prestigious domestic title as both teams are equally on top with 35 points each.

Despite their disappointing performances in the second-leg so far, which forced Mohammedan to share the lead although they were enjoying a three-point first-leg advantage, coach Kazi Jasimuddin Josi was confident of beating the in-form Muktiyoddha who are in an upbeat mood after beating Brothers in the previous game.

"No doubt we have been playing badly in the second-leg, especially the loss against Abahani in the last game was a real shock for us. But I

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Lee's loving it



AFP, Nottingham

Australia fast bowler Brett Lee said his personal on-field battle with England all-rounder Andrew Flintoff had been one of the highlights of the "most exciting tour I've been on".

One of the abiding images of the Ashes encounter so far was when paceman Flintoff, who had poun-ded Lee with short-pitched deliveries, went up to console him after the Australian's gutsy 43 not out so nearly denied England the two-run win that levelled the series at 1-1.

The pair weren't giving an inch either in the fourth Test at Trent Bridge where Lee bowled Flintoff with a brilliant delivery here Sunday in the second innings for 26 but only after the Lancashire all-rounder's maiden Ashes hundred of 102 had created the platform for what was ultimately a tense three-wicket win.

"I've really enjoyed batting and bowling especially against a guy like Andrew Flintoff," Lee told reporters at Australia's hotel here Monday.

"We've always known he's a world-class player. I think he's surprised us the way he's batted. He's been so aggressive, so positive," added Lee who has taken 19 wickets in the series.

"A bloke who can hit massive sixes, play as a number three batsman would play, and then come out and bowl the way he has in the past four Test matches, is amazing.

"He's a supreme athlete, he's definitely one of a kind and it's great that England have found that. They probably could have found him after we left the shores of England and went back home but I can't give 'Freddie' enough raps, he's a quality player."

After Australia's convincing 239 run first Test win at Lord's the remainder of the series has produced a trio of thrilling finishes with England squeezing home at Edgbaston and Lee playing his part in a last-wicket stand in the third Test at Old Trafford that salvaged a draw.

And then came Trent Bridge where England almost failed to reach their target of 129 in the face of Shane Warne's four for 31 and Lee's three for 51.

"The last three matches have been the best three Test matches I have ever played in, the most amazing three finishes," Lee said.

England, who'd won their previous five Test campaigns heading into this Ashes contest have been well beaten in their last eight Ashes series.

"I always knew from ball one of the one-dayers we were up against a world-class side," said Lee.

"The last two Test matches we

haven't deserved to win."

Australia have been plagued by no-balls throughout this series, bowling 25 alone in England's first innings 477 at Trent Bridge and Lee said they'd struggled with the undulating nature of many English grounds.

"When you are playing on a ground that's got such a gradient when you are running in, it's a bit like bowling up a ramp. It's not something we've adjusted too as quickly as we could have."

Australia, who play a two-day game against Essex starting Saturday before the fifth Test begins at The Oval on September 8, didn't have the best of luck with umpiring decisions in Nottingham.

But Lee who saw his huge lbw shout Sunday against Matthew Hoggard rejected by veteran West Indies umpire Steve Bucknor said he sympathised with the officials.

"I asked Steve Bucknor 'was it missing?' and he said 'no he hit it. And I said 'but if he didn't hit it was it out? and he said 'yes'.

"But seeing the replay it hit his foot but was missing leg-stump so it wasn't out and wasn't meant to be out.

"It happens. He has got 0.3 of a second to make up his mind. They've got a very tough job. I'm not going to sit here and criticise any umpire."