



Bangladesh captain Habibul Bashar (R) in conversation with his deputy Mohammad Ashraful during a press conference at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium yesterday.

Time to prove

Century appearance for Ashraful

BISHWAJIT ROY



The much-talented Bangladesh-India series starts today in Mirpur with one team basking in the warm afterglow of success and another

skipping however was not ready to be bogged down by the last

moment uncertainty, rather he gave the impression that their main strengths lie in their together-

ness as well. So it is a worry for us if he cannot make the final eleven

tomorrow because of injury. But

our backup players are also capa-

ble and this is one of the reasons of

our recent success. We actually

play as an unit," said a confident

Bashar.

It would be suffice to say that it

will be an altogether different

battle when a joyful Habibul

Bashar enters into the ground in

the morning for the toss with his

wounded counterpart Rahul

Dravid; the conditions and atmo-

sphere poles apart from Port-

Spain, where the sides last met.

There is hardly any doubt that

the Indians will try to get revenge

for their five-wicket mauling

against the Tigers in the World Cup

in their first chance but there is also

exists an equal opportunity for the

home team to prove that their

March 17 success in Trinidad was

not just a flash in the pan.

For Mashrafee the challenge has

taken a new dimension, as one of

main weapons -- Mashrafe Bin

Mortaza, the hero of the World Cup

success, looks set to miss the first

game because of back injury.

The bold-faced Bangladesh

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This feeling was also evident in

the team during the practice ses-

sion yesterday. Their spirits

seemed hardly dented by the last

moment injury of Mashrafe, who

tears apart the formidable India

batting line-up in the World Cup

with a four-wicket burst.

The 34-year old skipper also

dismissed the idea that the Tigers

were under pressure after their

World Cup success.

"We are aware that the expecta-

tions will be much higher this time.

We are preparing ourselves

according to that. I would love this

pressure because the people are

thinking that we are capable of

beating India. We do not set any

particular target before this series.

We want to play our natural game

and enjoy that. But definitely I

would love to win the series," said

Bashar.

The most successful Tigers

skipper was also not ready to think

about how his opponents were

taking the series after their disas-

trous World Cup, seeming more

interested to draw emphasis on

their own brand of cricket.

"It is really up to them how they

take this series. We are not con-

cerned about that. We want to play

our own brand of cricket. The most

important thing for us is what we

want to do," he opined.

The focus will not only be on

what Bashar can do a captain in

the series but how well he performs as

a batsman. The right-hander has

come under scanner following his

poor showing in the showpiece

event.

"The team always comes first to

me. But at the same time I am

aware that I did not perform well in

the World Cup. So I would love to

get back amongst the runs in this

series. In that case the team will

also be benefited," he responded

adding that he has every chance to

bat at number three in the series.

One man however can make his

captain most happy in his special

day and it is none other than ace

batman Mohammad Ashraful

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