

Siddons targets India

SPORTS REPORTER

TE20 Bangladesh national cricket team have targeted beating India in their first match of the ICC World Twenty20s in England and are all set to depart amidst some modest but important concerns from coach Jamie Siddons.

Siddons's biggest worry is the lack of international exposure that the Tigers have had ahead of the tournament and he believes that it is a worrying factor as the players have not faced quality bowling attacks in the recent past.

"Definitely it's a cause for concern for us since we haven't faced world-class opponents for some time now. The boys have played plenty of domestic cricket here and in Chittagong, but they haven't faced good fast bowlers and the practice matches we have played are good but not really world-class," said Siddons.

Bangladesh team will fly out for London on May 23. Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) have scheduled a seven-day training camp at Wormsley, which includes

three unofficial practice matches against New Zealand on May 26, Netherlands on May 28 (Canterbury) and against Scotland on May 29.

Captain Mohammad Ashraful and vice-captain Mashrafe Bin Mortaza will join the squad in Wormsley a day after the team arrives in England as they would first travel from South Africa to Dhaka and then catch a flight to London on May 24.

Bangladesh's official practice matches are against Australia on June 1 and Sri Lanka on June 4 at Trent Bridge.

Bangladesh have been pitted in Group A along with defending champions India and ICC associate member Ireland in the second version of the ICC World Twenty20s which will begin on June 5. Ashraful's men face India on June 6 and Ireland on June 8 at Trent Bridge.

Siddons is happy with his schedule of practice matches but felt that it would have been better if the side were pitted against more quality bowling line-ups.

"I hope the five practice matches will help us recover all that we have missed but again, we are facing the likes of Scotland who also don't have fast bowlers to push us. So I hope we pick up the pace sooner so that we are ready for the challenge ahead," added the coach.

Siddons did not just point out India as an early kill but also explained that reaching the second round and living up to the Tiger's name of giant killers were equally important.

"Anyone can win in a Twenty20 game and anyone can get knocked over. But we are hoping to beat India in our first game and we are not too worried about our second game against Ireland. Realistically we want to get to the Super Eights and once we are there we want to be the giant killers that people think we are. But we don't want any games to be a fluke; I'd rather want them to be genuine victories for us. It's bit of a

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Bangladesh cricket coach Jamie Siddons (C) speaks at a press briefing at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium yesterday.



John Tait Robertson was the first manager in Chelsea's history from its inauguration in 1905 through to 1907.



Jose Mourinho

(Inter Milan coach)

"It was important to win, there wouldn't have been much point to our party if we hadn't won."

After winning the Serie A title on Sunday.



SET Max

Indian Premier League
Kolkata Knight Riders v
Rajasthan Royals
Live from 4:30pm
Chennai Super Kings v
Kings XI Punjab
Live from 8:30pm

ESPN

Sportscentre India
Sports News
Live at 8:30pm

TEN Sports

UEFA Cup Final
Werder Bremen v Shakhtar Donetsk
Live from 12:45am (Thursday)

Rain ruins 3rd one-day too

SPORTS REPORTER

The third one-day match of the Grameenphone Academy Cup between GP-BCB National Cricket Academy and Sri Lanka Cricket Development Squad was abandoned due to rain at the Syihet District Stadium yesterday.

The local side are leading the series 1-0 as the second match was also abandoned due to rain.

The fourth and fifth one-dayers will be held at the Sher-e-Bangla National Cricket Stadium, Mirpur on May 21 and 22 respectively.

Tigers end prep poorly

Cricket

SPORTS REPORTER

The Tigers ended their preparation at home poorly when they suffered a seven-wicket defeat at the hands of Maharashtra Cricket Association in the third and final practice match at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday ahead of their departure to play the ICC World Twenty20s in England.

The batting of Jamie Siddons's charges, who won the first Twenty20 game by 63 runs under the BCB XI banner, were found wanting in the final game against a mediocre attack as the local side were dismissed for only 117 in 19.1 overs after deciding to bat first.

BCB XI lost opener Mohammad Mithun in the very first over as the right-hander continued his bad form since joining the Tigers squad. His opening partner Tamim Iqbal started well but could manage only 21 runs in 14 balls with four boundaries.

At one stage the home side, who played the last match without Shakib Al Hasan, were stumbling at 40 for 6 but stand-in skipper Mushfiqur Rahim and Nayeem Islam saved their blushes by adding 60 runs for the seventh wicket.

Wicketkeeper-batsman Mushfiqur made 28-ball 39 and Nayeem added a 33-ball 27 but their effort was not good enough to put up a fighting total. MCA skipper Harshad Khadiwale played yet another stroke-filled knock, a 47-ball

62, that contained seven fours and a six, as Maharashtra reached the target of 118 by losing just three wickets.

Coach Jamie Siddons however seemed unperturbed with his side's poor finish at home. "I don't think we batted too badly. A lot of players made 25 of 20 balls. On this wicket it doesn't really matter who you play and obviously it's not a wicket for 180 runs. We lost a lot of wickets and could not recover. Our boys tried to score quickly and got out," defended Siddons.

"I am happy that all the batters are getting practice and every batsman have got runs here and there except for the two new ones," he added.

Mushfiqur admitted that they threw away their wickets against weak opponents but hoped that everything would be okay in England.

"It was difficult to defend this small total, especially when we played the match without Shakib and Razzak. We threw away our wickets but there is nothing to be worried as we have some practice matches in England before the start of the World Cup," he said.

SCORES IN BRIEF

BCB XI: 117 all out in 19.1 overs (Tamim 21, Mithun 0, Zunaed 10, Rokibul 1, Shamsur 1, Riyad 0, Mushfiqur 39, Nayeem 27, Shahadat 4, Rasel 7, Rubel 0 not out, extras 7; Samad 1-13, Srikant 4-22, Kiran 3-23, Aditya 1-15).

MAHARASHTRA: 118-3 in 17.5 overs (Harshad 62, Rohan 1, Ameys 31, Srikant 11 not out, Digamber 6 not out, extras 7; Rasel 1-24, Rubel 1-15, Shahadat 1-23)

Result: Maharashtra won by seven wickets.

Heartbreak for Abahani

SPORTS REPORTER

Abahani have been virtually forced out from the AFC President's Cup semifinals after Pakistan's WAPDA put the B. League champions behind on goal difference and qualified as the best runners-up among the three groups.

WAPDA came from behind to crush Taiwan Power Company 3-1 in Kathmandu to finish as Group A runners-up to brighten up their chances of booking a semifinal place as the best second-placed team yesterday.

The Pakistani team now has a goal difference of plus-two against Abahani's plus-one.

WAPDA however will have to wait for the outcome of Group C comprising of Dordoi Dynamo of Kyrgyzstan, Myanmar champions Kanbawza, Phnom Penh of Cambodia and Yeedzin of Bhutan that kicks off on June 10.

Defending champions Regar-Tad AZ finished Group A champions to join FC Ashgabat of Turkmenistan, the first team to qualify for the last four putting Abahani behind on goal difference from Group B.

Three group champions and the best runners-up among three groups will play in the semifinals.

Their T20 with media

MOHAMMAD ISAM



Given their reticence, it is uncommon for any of the national cricketers to speak with the reporters so when the entire national cricket team turned up to face the media yesterday, it yielded interesting results for both parties.

The occasion was the ICC World Twenty20 for which the Bangladesh team will take off for London on May 23, and a few of the team members are new to the national fold and absolutely raw when it comes to facing the media. Remarkably, even the more experienced ones find talking to the media troublesome but then there are a few who talk openly and eloquently enough to sound reasonable.

To the surprise of many, the introverted Shakib Al Hasan and Mushfiqur Rahim delighted the journalists with their wise replies. The two BKSP lads have come a long way from the days when they were said to be difficult with the media. "We have specific goals for the team like starting well and how to finish an innings but if we can't fulfil them, we will think differently," said the world's No. 1 ODI all-rounder. Mushfiqur was bold enough to suggest that he wasn't happy with the practice in Dhaka but reminded everyone that their first match opponents should remember the Tigers. "India are a big team and probably the favourites but for what happened in 2007 [World Cup in West Indies], they will keep us on mind," said the baby-faced wicketkeeper.

Among the new boys, Mohammad Mithun seemed confident enough but for Shamsur Rahman and Rubel Hossain, it was nothing short of an ordeal. The same goes for some of

the older boys in the group who bank on obvious lines even when pressed with a difficult question. They would merely mention their targets, an obvious question, and fend off the harder ones with some difficulty. "I will try to do well" is a favourite for this shy lot while some simply inform what they are, a batting or bowling all-rounder.

This sort is a nightmare for the journalists who always stay in the lookout for stories with unique angles. Yesterday it was all going downhill until Tamim Iqbal, Shahadat Hossain and to some extent Nayeem Islam came to the rescue.

"Look, if I bowl at the same pace Yusuf Pathan will send me out of the ground. But not me, he will dispatch my ball!" quipped the easy-going Shahadat who informed that he himself couldn't hit the ball a long way.

Tamim's little quip in third person could be taken as a slight sense of arrogance but it's quickly covered by his witty persona. "Nobody knew Tamim, but Tamim also didn't know Zaheer Khan and Ishant Sharma," jibed the left-hander when asked about the loss of his surprise factor.

But before the likes of Tamim, Shahadat, Shakib and Mushfiqur got to the dais, their teammate Nayeem Islam turned heads with his icy counter when asked about concerns with his strike-rate. Nayeem's outburst stunned many who know him as a quiet chap.

Coach Jamie Siddons however believed that some of the new boys find it difficult to cope with the pressures of media and officials when they play at home. "I think they are in some pressure when they play at home with the media around but look how Tamim (Iqbal) and Shakib (Al Hasan) have managed everything," said Siddons.



Mushfiqur Rahim (R) of BCB XI works the ball on the offside during the third and final Twenty20 match against Maharashtra Cricket Association at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.

Bangalore stay afloat

AFP, Johannesburg



Challengers Bangalore beat leaders Delhi Daredevils by seven wickets Tuesday to stay in the Indian Premier League title hunt.

The big South African batted throughout the 19-over Bangalore innings as they reached 135-3 in reply to 134-7 in 20 overs from Delhi, who are sure to finish first with one round of group fixtures left.

But below them the stage is set for a thrilling climax to the round-robin phase of the Twenty20 extravaganza on Wednesday and Thursday with five franchises chasing three semifinals places.

Chennai Super Kings have 15 points, Deccan Chargers, Bangalore and Kings XI Punjab 14 each and defending champions Rajasthan Royals 13 with double-headers to come in Durban and Centurion.

While many in the team dug-outs at the Wanderers used blankets to fend off the autumn chill, a good crowd turned up at one of the homes of South African cricket and were treated to a tense struggle until the final few overs.

Winning skipper and India legend Anil Kumble claimed he is not even checking the standings traffic-jam, but concentrating on masterminding another win when they face Deccan Thursday.

"I'm taking this tournament one game at a time and not looking at the table. All I'm thinking about is how to win the next match which would guarantee us a place in the semifinals."

Kallis said his role was critical: "In big games senior players must come through and I knew that someone had to stay at the crease for the innings. After a run of four losses, the hunger for success is back in the team."

Delhi captain Virender Sehwag offered no excuses after only their fourth loss in 13 outings: "Perhaps the boys were a little relaxed knowing that we were through, but there is nothing for us to worry about."

SCORES IN BRIEF

DELHI DAREDEVILS: 134 for 7 in 20 overs (Karthik 31, De Villiers 28, Gambhir 27, Nagar 20; Praveen 3-30, Kumble 2-24)

ROYAL CHALLENGERS BANGALORE: 135 for 3 in 19 overs (Kallis 58 not out, Dravid 38, Taylor 25; Nagar 2-20)

Result: Royal Challengers Bangalore won by 7 wickets.

Man-of-the-match: Jacques Kallis.



Royal Challengers Bangalore's Jacques Kallis (R) celebrates with a teammate after guiding his side home in their IPL Twenty20 match against Delhi Daredevils at the New Wanderers Stadium in Johannesburg yesterday.

Tushar fashions Biman triumph

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Biman rode on Tushar Imran's all-round performance to clinch the Public Utility & Services Cricket title with a six-wicket victory over Jahangirnagar University at the Dhanmondi Cricket Stadium yesterday.

The out-of-favour Tushar first grabbed three wickets for just 10 runs with his occasional off-spin and then struck a 39-ball 34 that contained five fours and a six to script the comfortable victory.

Put into bat first, Jahangirnagar University were bundled out for 111 runs in 38.3 overs. The only resistance came from opener Shafiqul Azam who

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Asif off to Italy

SPORTS REPORTER

Commonwealth Games gold medalist Asif Hossain was scheduled to leave for Italy last night to take part in the ISSF Shooting World Cup to be held in Milan from May 21.

After completing in the World Cup competition, Asif will fly to the German city of Wesbaden to receive high-profile training at the city's Olympic Training Centre for a month in a bid to earn a quota place in the 2012 London Olympics, said a statement of the National Shooting Federation.

The training will begin on May 24. Atikur Rahman will accompany Asif for one week in Germany as a trainer.

Asif won gold in the Commonwealth Games' 10m air rifle event in Manchester in 2002.

Ponting backs Symonds

Cricket

BBC ONLINE, undated

Captain Ricky Ponting says he would "not be surprised" if Andrew Symonds's Test exile ends when Australia's Ashes squad is revealed on Wednesday.

The all-rounder has endured a string of off-field and injury problems over the past year, fuelling talk the 33-year-old will be overlooked for the series.

But skipper Ponting believes he will be named in the squad, saying: "He's had his battles but he's a great guy."

Ponting also indicated Brett Lee and Stuart Clark were set for recalls.

The pace duo have missed the Australian summer because of ankle and elbow injuries respectively, but both are expected to play key roles as Australia attempt to retain the Ashes they won back in 2006.

And Symonds could return just five months after he was fined by Cricket Australia over a remark he made in a radio interview - the latest in a history of off-field disciplinary problems.

An exciting, fast-scoring batsman who can

bowl medium pace or spin, Symonds earned this assessment from Ponting: "I wouldn't be surprised if he's named."

"He's worked his way back into domestic cricket pretty well and played well for us over in Abu Dhabi and Dubai. There's no doubt about that and obviously the selectors are going to have some tough decisions to make in the coming hours."

Andrew Hilditch, David Boon and Merv Hughes will name what is likely to be a 16-man touring party seven weeks ahead of the first Ashes Test, which starts in Cardiff on 8 July.

But despite Ponting's confident assessment of Symonds, the controversial character faces stiff opposition from fellow Queensland all-rounder Shane Watson.

Marcus North and Andrew McDonald are also in the equation, and of that quartet only two are likely to be picked.

One man sure to feature is left-handed opener Phillip Hughes, who has been hugely impressive this season batting for Middlesex.

The 20-year-old scored 415 runs at an average of 69 in three Tests in South Africa before heading to England for a five-week stint with Middlesex, where he has already scored four more centuries.

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Strauss very happy

Cricket

AFP, Chester-le-Street

Andrew Strauss, the England captain, believes the "hunger" his new-look side have shown in two crushing Test victories over the West Indies augurs well for this year's Ashes.

England humbled their visitors from the Caribbean by an innings and 83 runs here at the Riverside on Monday.

That win followed a 10-wicket success at Lord's and meant they'd won both Tests in this two-match series by large margins.

At the Riverside, James Anderson - once a fringe player - led the way with a match return of nine wickets for 125 runs while opener Alastair Cook weighed in with a Test-best 160 in England's 569 for six declared.

Ravi Bopara, making an impressive bid to fill

England's problem position of No 3, scored hundreds at both Lord's and the Riverside - displays which won him the man-of-the-series award.

Meanwhile pace bowlers Stuart Broad and newcomer Graham Onions, as well as off-spinner Graeme Swann, gave England cause for optimism.

When the Ashes last took place in England four years ago, England won 2-1.

But the return series in Australia, in 2006/07, saw them thrashed 5-0.

Strauss, who played in both those campaigns, refused but was pleased with what his side had done so far this season.

"If you look at the way the guys are practising at the moment, there's a real hunger to improve - and we need to cultivate that and make sure it grows and grows," the opening batsman said.

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