

Mashrafe on the comeback trail

Cricket

BISHWAJIT ROY

The just concluded National Cricket League T20s was a perfect comeback tournament for country's leading paceman Mashrafe Bin Mortaza. It was not only because the "Narail Express" became man-of-the-tournament for his striking all-round showing of ten wickets and 93 runs, rather he got back the much needed self-confidence ahead of the ICC World Twenty20 to start from April 30 in West Indies.

"It was a good tournament for me because I got back my confidence by playing this T20 tournament. I played one one-day game against England after recovering from injury but in this tournament I played six games without any trouble," said a rejuvenated Mashrafe while talking to the Daily Star Sport yesterday.

"It takes time to get back full rhythm in my bowling but still I am happy with the way I bowled in the tournament and I also enjoyed my batting there. My action has changed a little bit after the injury but the most satisfying fact is that I was getting

back my in-swingers," he added.

The 26-year old right-arm paceman, who has so far played 36 Tests and 104 one-day internationals, was now looking forward to regain aggression in his bowling. "I am now fully concentrating on my fitness and how I can regain my aggression in my bowling because without that it's impossible to prove myself again as a wicket-taking bowler. I believe in performance and hope I can prove myself again as a performer," said a confident Mashrafe, who had a bitter comeback to international cricket after a long injury as he was dropped after playing only one ODI against England.

Mashrafe is well aware about the gulf of difference between domestic and international matches and that's why he wants to take time to revive his Test career.

"Definitely now I'm seriously thinking about Test cricket and I am confident that I can revive my Test career also but I want to take time. I requested captain Shakib (Al Hasan) and the selectors not to consider me for the Test series in England. Right at the moment I want to play only one-day and T20 matches," said Mashrafe.

"I am fit enough to bowl at least 15 overs if I want to play



"I believe in performance and hope I can prove myself again as a performer."

-Mashrafe Bin Mortaza



A FUTURE OLYMPIC PROSPECT! Bangladesh has never won anything in platform diving in any international meet. But the concerned authorities can be excited seeing this playfully brilliant kid, who has just embarked on a 30-foot dive from the top of the sluice-gate of Islambagh embankment on the River Buriganga yesterday.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

Late runs frustrate Academy

SPORTS REPORTER

A stubborn ninth wicket partnership set the GP-BCB National Cricket Academy back on the opening day of their first four-day game against South Africa National Academy at the Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium in Chittagong yesterday.

Keshav Maharaj and skipper Wiann Van Zyl added 119 runs after the visitors' eighth wicket fell for 248 to eventually take their score to a challenging 371 all out in their first innings. The hosts were 23 for one when they batted late in the day.

Van Zyl blasted five sixes and eight boundaries in his 74-ball 84 while Maharaj added 47 off 53 balls. Earlier, off-spinner Mahmudul Hasan

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Tendulkar hopeful for final

CRICINFO, undated



Sachin Tendulkar, the Mumbai Indians captain, has injured a finger on his right hand during the semifinal against Royal Challengers Bangalore, making him uncertain for the final on Sunday.

Tendulkar, who was bleeding after attempting a low slip catch, rushed back to the dressing room and had five stitches.

Despite the injury, Tendulkar hoped to feature in the final. "My right hand is not too great. Split my webbing and got five stitches. But hopefully I will recover for the final," he said.

Tendulkar sustained the injury in the fourth over of

Royal Challengers Bangalore's chase, when Rahul Dravid edged Zaheer Khan. Replays indicated a part of the ball had touched the ground as Tendulkar clasped it, and the batsman was ruled not out. Tendulkar was injured in the process, bleeding from his right hand, and immediately made his way to the pavilion for some medical attention.

Zaheer, who led Mumbai in the field, said his team will take a call on his participation in the final in two days. "We are little bit worried but we will take a couple of days to decide (on his availability for the final)," Zaheer said. "Every team he has played for has relied on him. It was unfortunate he got out early today and got injured. But we have reached the final and all the credit goes to him. I hope he plays in the finals. We all expect him to play. We just have to remain patient."

Tendulkar's was not the only injury worry for Mumbai Indians. Man-of-the-match Kieron Pollard injured his knee while batting, but came back to bowl an exceptional spell to pick three wickets. He was confident of being ready in time for the big game.

"After running the first two runs, I twinged my knee. But it feels good now, and hopefully I should be fit for the final," Pollard said.



PHOTO: INTERNET

Mumbai Indians skipper Sachin Tendulkar takes a look at his injured right hand during the Indian Premier League first semifinal against Royal Challengers Bangalore in Mumbai on Wednesday.

Good news for Tamim

SPORTS REPORTER

There was good news for Bangladesh opener Tamim Iqbal as the left-hander is recovering fast to be fit for the ICC World Twenty20 to be held in West Indies from April 30.

"I had a check up today. Still there is a crack in the left-hand but what the doctors told me was that they found an improvement. Generally there is two-weeks to recover from this kind of injury but as per their suggestion I am hopeful about playing the first game," said Tamim yesterday.

National team physiotherapist Michael Henry also said: "We are hopeful that he will be available from the first game after the way he is improving."

Bangladesh has been drafted in a group along with two giants Pakistan and Australia. Bangladesh will play their first game against Pakistan on May 1 and the second and

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ESPN

Sportscentre India Sports News Live at 8:30pm

TEN Sports & SuperSport3

Bundesliga Bochum v Stuttgart Live from 12:45am (Saturday)

A vital cog missing

Cricket

MOHAMMAD ISAM

Cricket, at the highest level, is no longer just about bat and ball. Starting from a computer analyst to a spin bowling coach, a cricket team's needs have changed considerably from the days when a player himself was considered the best coach. Now with the advent of professionalism at both the international and domestic level, it would be quite the task to tell a cricketer to coach the team as well.

Nowadays an international cricket team travels with enough management staffs that provide essential support to the cricketers, who already have to deal with the pressure of playing at the highest level.

But even with that much pressure around, the international cricketer has to deal with off-field issues that has the potential to make or break their careers.

And when you have a group of talented players taking part in an event like the T20 World Championship, you would not want them to think about performing out in the centre and not worry about facing the media.

It is a known fact that Bangladeshi cricketers have a tough time interacting with the foreign media, getting their views across and making sure that they understand what they are being asked.

Most of the players, admittedly from humble backgrounds, do not feel comfortable speaking in English and while this could be a trivial matter to some, it turns out to be a national embarrassment every time they face the camera. But hardly these cricketers are to blame. They spent half their lives playing the game and when they end up at the top level, they seek the help of professionals to guide them through a press conference or an interview after they have done well.

In these instances, the players feel comfortable in the company of a media manager who translates for them as well as make sure they get

the best treatment in the newspapers.

The role of the media manager is to make sure the cricket team is presented to the world media in a proper light but more than that, he has to make sure the players do not get misinterpreted.

This is vital when these cricketers are playing in a big tournament or touring a country like England where there is a heavy presence of the media.

Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) is part of world cricket's growth and as one of the Test playing nations, they have tried to follow the bigger nations every step of the way.

But they have the tendency to fall back on ancient times every now and then.

The board decision on Tuesday to drop the media manager from the T20 World Championship in the West Indies and the two-Test series in England is stunningly inexplicable and that too at the expense of an observer.

A foreign trip, for some board members, is considered an accomplishment especially when paid for by the cricket board.

But as it stands now, BCB has surrendered to their bad habit of giving pleasure trips to their members at the price of a professional who would help the functioning of the cricket team.

In this day and age, does the cricket board need this controversy? It reminds those days of the 1990s when there were rat races between the board members to win a convenient trip at better price.

The cricket board needs enough professionalism to run itself but when that goes missing in its administrative side, the board must provide the best for its million-dollar baby -- its cricket team.

It's hard enough tackling the fastest bowlers and the best batsmen. The cricketers must be given enough room to think about their game rather than worry about what they told the press and what would be written about them.

It is high time the board takes pride in the cricketers and staff and its the right time to show how much they have gone ahead, especially with a World Cup coming here in less than a year's time.

LOCAL SNIPPETS

SPORTS REPORTER

Rangers Club thrashed Old DOHS Club 44-9 in the Premier Bank First Division Basketball League at the Dhanmondi Basketball Gymnasium yesterday.

Rangers dominated the first half 28-3 with Mamun and Sami caging 20 and 10 points respectively.

Europa Youth Club defeated The Greys Club 62-50 after leading the first half 36-27 while Josephite Club defeated Flame Boys 40-38 after taking a comfortable 28-16 lead in the first half.

SYLHET CHESS

FM Minhazuddin Ahmed emerged champion in the Saad Open Chess tournament in Sylhet. Minhaz earned 6.5 points from seven matches.

Zahirul Islam became runner-up through tiebreaker as Mahtabuddin Ahmed Robin and Sharif Hossain also secured six points each. Mahtab and Robin finished third and fourth respectively.

Sylhet Chess Association in collaboration with Bangladesh Chess Federation had organised the seven-round Swiss League meet with the participation of 70 players from Dhaka, Sylhet and Rajshahi.

SYLHET FOOTBALL

Our Correspondent: Ward#24 defeated Ward#17 of Sylhet City Corporation yesterday in a tie-breaker in the first Mayor Cup football tournament in the Sylhet stadium.

Ward#24 moved to the semifinal with the win.

The keenly-contested match remained goalless in the 90 minutes. Even it remained the same during the 30-minute additional time.

Ward#24 then scored a 6-5 win in the penalty shootout.

MANIKGANJ CRICKET

Our Correspondent: Garpara Association moved into the second round with a 29-run win over Jagir Union Nabin Sangha in the Khan Real Estate Second Division Cricket League at the Government Boys' High School in Manikganj.

Batting first, Garpara Association made 197-7 in the 25 overs with Monir making 58 off 46 balls while Hafiz added 27.

Nazmul picked up four two wickets for Jagir Union Nabin Sangha.

In reply, Jagir Union were all out for 164 runs in 23.5 overs with 56 runs coming from extras.

Monir picked up four wickets while Sumon and Pantha took two wickets each for the winners.

In another match, Tiger Sporting Club defeated defeated New Star by five wickets.

DRU SPORTS

Dhaka Reporters' Unity (DRU) Sports Festival got underway yesterday at the Dhaka Reporters Unity premises with a chess competition.

The members of the DRU will also participate in the games of carom, table tennis, badminton, swimming, shooting, archery, mini marathon and bridge in the carnival.

State minister for youth and sports Ahad Ali Sarker inaugurated the festival while DRU president Shamim Ahmed, its secretary Pathik Saha, BCB director Dewan Shafiqul Arefin Tutul, CEO of sponsor the Blazer BD, Kazi Razib Ahmed Chapal and DRU sports secretary Kamruzzaman Hiru were among others present.

Meanwhile, Blazer BD will provide Tk one lakh out of estimated budget of Tk 1.5 lakh.

Bollinger bowls Chennai to final

CRICINFO, Mumbai



Chennai Super Kings, boosted by a determined display from their bowlers led by Doug Bollinger, put an end to Deccan Chargers' run of five consecutive wins to qualify for the IPL final for the second time.

Chennai will now take on Mumbai in Sunday's mouthwatering final.

They overcame a poor start, aided by a measured partnership from MS Dhoni and S Badrinath, and a late surge from S Anirudha, to post a competitive 142 in tricky conditions.

Badrinath's 37 was the highest individual score in the low-scoring second semifinal at the DY Patil Sports Academy in Mumbai. Dhoni scored 32-ball 30 and Anirudha provided the late fireworks with a 15-ball 24.

But the day belonged to Bollinger, who crippled Deccan in their chase, with some intelligent bowling. The New South Wales left-arm paceman finished with 4-13 in his four overs as Deccan were bowled out for 104.

Deccan, given their successful run, would have backed themselves to overhaul Chennai's score fairly comfortably. But their star batsmen Adam Gilchrist and Herschelle Gibbs departed cheaply. Only Andrew played with some purpose before being out for 23 off 22 balls.

SCORES IN BRIEF

CHENNAI SUPER KINGS: 142 for 7 (Badrinath 37, Dhoni 30, Anirudha 24; Harris 3-29)

DECCAN CHARGERS: 104 all out in 19.2 overs (Symonds 23; Bollinger 4-13, Jakati 2-44)

Result: Deccan Chargers won by 38 runs.

Man-of-the-match: Bollinger

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