

Nazmul injured, not seriously

SPORTS REPORTER from Ctg

Nazmul Hossain injured his right ankle during training at the Zohur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium here yesterday.

The 23-year-old pacesman fell in a heap while trying to deliver, what looked like, a slower ball to skipper Shakib Al Hasan in the nets.

Physio Mike Henry accompanied him off the ground and later confirmed that it was a minor injury.

Sammy feels more united

AFP, Mohali

West Indies captain Darren Sammy said Thursday the dramatic Dhaka stoning of their team bus, and the bitter war of words which followed, has strengthened the squad's World Cup bonds.

West Indies were attacked by angry Bangladesh fans after Sammy's side had bowled out the home team for just 58 on their way to a nine-wicket rout.

Team bosses then dismissed as "ridiculous" claims by International Cricket Council chief Haroon Lorgat that the incident had been minor and that just "a few pebbles" had been hurled at the bus as it left the stadium.

"The one good thing about West Indies as a team is that we have a lot of camaraderie. We always fight together. Now we are a long, long way from home so we are each other's family," said Sammy.

"The last few days there have been ups and downs but we have been stuck together as a team. We have been managing it quite well so far. We are here to play cricket and the higher administration is there to handle the distractions.

"It [the stoning] is behind us. It was quite an unfortunate thing to happen but we are over that and the guys are geared up to face Ireland tomorrow."

Friday's match could go a long way in helping the West Indies into the quarterfinals after winning two of their matches so far while going down in their opener by seven wickets to South Africa.

Johnston doubtful

AFP, Mohali

Ireland were sweating over the fitness of in-form seamer Trent Johnston ahead of their crunch World Cup clash against the West Indies on Friday.

Johnston, 36, took two early wickets during Sunday's five-wicket defeat to India in Bangalore before picking up a knee injury and taking no further part in the game.

The pacesman also grabbed two wickets in each of Ireland's first two games of the tournament.

Irish skipper William Porterfield said the team will take a final decision on the veteran fast bowler only on the morning of the match.

"He bowled a couple of overs in the nets today. He ran in hard, he is keen to play the game," Porterfield said on Thursday.

"We will assess his fitness again and take a call on him on the morning of the match."

The Australian-born Johnston, one of the most experienced members of the Ireland squad, has taken 52 wickets from 50 ODIs.

If Johnston is ruled unfit, it will be a big blow for Ireland who must beat West Indies if they are to stay in contention for a place in the quarterfinals.

"We are treating it as a must-win game," said Porterfield. "We know we have to win at least two of our remaining three games."

"But we've played good cricket to this point and we've done our homework on the West Indies so we're looking good going into the game."



PHOTO: ANURUP KANTI DAS
Dashing Bangladesh opener Tamim Iqbal (L) and wicketkeeper Mushfiqur Rahim must be aware of the fact that they will have to hit the ground running in today's crucial World Cup match against England.

Shakib's time is now

MOHAMMAD ISAM from Chittagong

How difficult it would be for Shakib Al Hasan today is quite clear to everyone who has been following the developments over the last week or so. After the loss against West Indies came the sharp retort to the former players and then emerged the disreputable photograph, a dispiriting impression clouding over the man in charge of leading the country's cricket team in the World Cup.

As a matter of fact, it will be Bangladesh taking on England in Chittagong with the team's future in this tournament at stake. Though it won't be a career-saving exercise for Shakib, the match certainly could add another feather in this 23-year-old's cap that of his ability to turn the corner and deliver in the middle of a personal crisis.

Many a player has done it in the past and if he needs inspiration, there are men like Sourav Ganguly, Mark Taylor or Brian Lara, all captains who fought back from adversity and all of whom are (curiously) left-handers like Shakib. Ganguly's debut hundred and stellar knocks in Brisbane (2003) and Johannesburg (2006) have all been backs-to-the-wall stuff while Taylor broke a 17-month ton-less streak with a century at Birmingham, saving his captaincy.

Lara, one of the greatest batsmen to have graced the game, was never the greatest of captains. The genius from Trinidad, in a bid to stir up his competitive spirit, often made sure the opposition riled him on or he found a reason to prove people wrong. After his team was bowled out for 51

against Australia in 1999, Lara hit back with 213 in the next Test match and made sure tongues were left wagging, and a legend was made.

There have been many such instances in cricket history where the player has fought through personal distress. Shakib has the substance to do the same, make a statement with bat and ball and ensure all the drama would be forgotten through his performance and a positive result for his team.

It is obvious that not a single question is raised about Shakib the cricketer. A fine all-rounder with a sound cricketing brain, his shrewd field-placings and bowling changes as well as his method of leading by example certainly puts him in a different league as far as captains go in this country.

But it is a different story as far as Shakib's attitude is concerned. It has been discussed in close quarters that Shakib has not shown the traits of an ideal Bangladesh captain, but that has been strictly off the field. His aggression has been misread, some say, but it is no secret that he has tip-toed past the line that separates good and poor public conduct.

A lot of stories have emerged over the last week, some true and some not so, but it just goes to show that when a cricketer is under tremendous pressure, it hardly ever dissipates.

Over the last few days, it has been interesting to observe Shakib, sensing his body language and looking for chinks in his make-up, something that is easier with the others. Shakib's usual detachment with the world around him has remained to a certain extent but yesterday, it seemed a lot of it poured out during two net sessions.

It is not always true that what a cricketer does in the nets is what he intends to do in the middle, but Shakib's approach seemed to be more of resentment than calmness. It would be a common mistake to call his dismissals and poor shots a result of his current mental state, but it also looked like he was itching to go out in the middle. It seemed that he just wanted to get the 30-minute stint at the nets over with and move on to the bigger battle in hand.

His appearance in the pre-match press conference and the subsequent statement (that it will be easier to motivate his boys given that all the pressure is on him) showed that he has resisted stubbornness and made sure the stakes are not too high (he had the option of skipping the pre-match meet). Shakib, all 23 years of him, has certainly made everyone

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ICC Cricket World Cup
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What about Kamran?

AFP, Pallekale

Pakistan captain Shahid Afridi said Thursday that blundering wicketkeeper Kamran Akmal will not be made a scapegoat and fans should expect a traditional World Cup rollercoaster ride.

The 29-year-old Akmal has endured a blitz of criticism after his calamitous performance against New Zealand where two horror blunders allowed Ross Taylor to escape on nought and eight before the batsman smashed an unbeaten 131.

New Zealand's 110-run win was Pakistan's first defeat in the tournament and prompted calls for Akmal's younger brother Umar to be handed the gloves for the remaining group games against Zimbabwe and Australia.

That would leave Kamran to play as a specialist batsman, even being promoted to open.

Umar, who kept wicket in three Twenty20 internationals and a one-dayer last year, was seen practising keeping in the team's net session on Thursday.

"Kamran has done a lot of hard work for this World Cup, but he has not lived up to that level, and we suffered a lot after he couldn't perform," said Afridi.

His lapses allowed New Zealand to post a challenging 302-7 in Tuesday's game, after mustering a whopping 100 runs off the last five overs, after struggling at 202-4 in 45 overs.

Afridi stressed that Pakistan, who face Zimbabwe on Monday, should not panic as they are still well-placed to reach the quarterfinals.

Pieter relishes Sachin scalp

AFP, New Delhi

Unheralded Dutch spinner Pieter Seelaar needed only a split second to nominate his top scalp after grabbing three wickets against mighty India -- naming superstar Sachin Tendulkar.

The 23-year-old took 3-53 in the Netherlands' defeat by the joint hosts, including openers Tendulkar and Virender Sehwag as well as big-hitting Yusuf Pathan.

"Usually you don't bowl to that calibre of player," he said, adding: "It gets the best out of you and I think it's a very good experience."

WEST INDIES v IRELAND: MOHALI

Nothing is for granted

AFP, Mohali



Grizzled veteran Ramnaresh Sarwan, who knows the difference between a new West Indies golden age and another false dawn, is refusing to ponder a World Cup quarterfinal spot just yet.

The 30-year-old, with 162 ODIs under his belt as well as more than 5,000 runs, believes the West Indies cannot take anything for granted despite being in touching distance of the last eight.

Victory over Ireland on Friday would virtually assure qualification but Sarwan is wary of the dangers posed by an Irish side who stunned England in a record-breaking run-chase earlier in the competition.

"Every game is a must-win game for us, we can't take anything for granted. The points table has gone back and forth. We have to go out there and enjoy. It is important for us to win this game," said Sarwan.

"Ireland showed what they are capable of in their game against England. We are going to go out there and play to the best of our ability. You surely can't take anybody for granted here."

"The way they played against England came as a surprise. But they deserved to win." The Caribbean side were well beaten by South Africa in their tournament opener but responded by thumping the Netherlands and demolishing co-hosts Bangladesh in Dhaka, bowling them out for just 58.

West Indies captain Darren Sammy said he was not getting carried away despite his side's awesome display against Bangladesh, in which fast bowler Kemar Roach took 3-19 to add to his 6-27 against the Netherlands.

Other bright spots in the tournament have been the bowling by giant spinner

Sulieman Benn and the potential shown by batsman Darren Bravo.

"We are taking it step by step," Sammy said. The West Indies have four points from three matches in Group B, the same as South Africa but trailing India (seven points) and England (five), with the top four sides from each group qualifying.

Sammy said the West Indies, who won the first two editions of the World Cup in 1975 and 1979 and also ruled Test cricket for two decades, were on the right track to regaining old glories.

"We are aware of the history and legacy the West Indies have," the captain said. "We have taken innovative steps to move forward. As a leader I want my team to improve. It is a process."

West Indies will come up against Irish spinner George Dockrell who is still on a high after dismissing Sachin Tendulkar in the team's last match.

Dockrell picked up tips on how to bowl in sub-continental conditions from former Indian Test player Murali Kartik, with whom he shared the dressing room with Somerset in England last season.

"I admire Murali Kartik as a spinner. I saw a bit of him last season in Somerset. He also has amazing control," Dockrell said.

On Friday's match, he added: "It is a big game for us. After the win over England there is a lot of confidence in the team that we can beat any side."

WEST INDIES v IRELAND

Matches: 3
West Indies win: 2
Ireland win: 0
No result/Tied: 1
First meeting: March 3, 2007, Port of Spain -- West Indies won by 8 wickets
Last meeting: April 15, 2010, Kingston -- West Indies won by 6 wickets



বেশি রান করবে কে? আইপিএস জিতবে কে?

বাংলাদেশ-ইংল্যান্ড ম্যাচে কে হবেন বাংলাদেশের সর্বোচ্চ রান স্কোরার? myips>space> বাংলাদেশের সর্বোচ্চ রান স্কোরারের নাম-পাঠিয়ে দিন 2777 নম্বরে।

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*সঠিক উত্তরদাতাদের মধ্য থেকে লটারির মাধ্যমে বিজয়ীদের নির্বাচন করা হবে।

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