

'I am not shocked'

Shakib remains buoyant

Cricket
BISHWAJIT ROY

Shakib Al Hasan was surprised but not entirely shocked by the board's decision to strip him of the captaincy.

Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) fired Shakib and his deputy Tamim Iqbal following the team's debacle in the recent tour of Zimbabwe where the Tigers lost both one-off Test and five-match one-day series.

"I am surprised by the recent decision but I am not shocked. I can take things easy which is my strength. The board definitely took this decision for betterment of the game, so I must accept it," said Shakib in his immediate reaction over telephone.

It was hard to believe that the man had lost the captaincy after the way he was talking to this reporter. The 24-year all-rounder sounded jovial all through the conversation.

"As a captain I must take the responsibility for the poor showing in Zimbabwe. But still I believe that we had lack of preparation and that was one of the main reasons behind the debacle," admitted Shakib.

When asked whether he was ready to accept all the blame for the debacle, Shakib said: "I don't want to say anything more but you people are here to find out if anything was there for the debacle. You see in our country everywhere we make someone scapegoat for any

failure because we don't want to dig deep to find out the real problem and there is no exception. This is our system. We always try to solve problems casually."

Most of the board directors came down heavily on

Shakib and Tamim for their failure as leaders while they were discussing on the reports of the touring team management but the victims didn't get the opportunity to defend themselves.

Team operations manager Tanjeeb Ahsan Saad is also removed from his post.

Surprisingly Enayet Hossain Siraj, BCB's director and chairman of the cricket operations committee who could have raised his voice

in defense of all the issues including his committee's failure to handle the matter properly, ducked the all-important meeting. Some of his colleagues got surprised by the absence of Siraj and vice-president Ahmed Sajjadul Alam in this crucial meeting and they believe things could have been different if these two important members hadn't ducked deliberately.

Shakib was however little bothered with the fact that he didn't get the opportunity to defend himself.

"Better ask them (whether it could have been better if they got the opportunity to defend themselves) but I'm little bothered with this because I don't expect something like that.

"True I have a vision with the team especially when I have still two series in my hand as a captain but now I will be able to fully concentrate on my own game," explained Shakib.

He also dismissed the allegation that they have attitude problem and misunderstanding with the other teammates.

"One can say lot of things from the outside. But I know myself. I am not arrogant and don't do anything intentionally to hurt anybody. Okay it's better not to talk more regarding this issue," he defended.

Definitely it was a biggest shock for Shakib in his so far successful international career but the young man was as optimistic as he could be with the team and his personal career.

A TIMELINE SINCE SHAKIB BECAME CAPTAIN

- June 9, 2009:** After Mashrafe Bin Mortaza injures his knee during the first Test against West Indies, Shakib takes over and Bangladesh win by 95 runs.
- August 2, 2009:** The world's No 1 all-rounder helps complete the Test and ODI series victory over West Indies.
- December 21, 2009:** Shakib bowls a terrible last spell for Abahani as they lose to Mohammedan in the Dhaka Premier League. Abahani officials including BCB chief AHM Mustafa Kamal is furious with the player.
- January 22, 2010:** Shakib counters the BCB president on player commitment (in front of the media) during a prize-giving function at a local hotel.
- March 2, 2010:** After Mashrafe's comeback against England is flat, Shakib is less than impressed. Having received an icy reception from the management, Mashrafe walks out of the team hotel.
- In the interim:** Shakib is asked to captain on a series-by-series basis till the Asia Cup in mid-2010 but the Magura lad is less than happy with the arrangement.
- July 8, 2010:** Mashrafe returns as captain for the England ODIs.
- October 5, 2010:** Mashrafe again gets injured during a match, this time against New Zealand, and Shakib takes over.
- October 17, 2010:** Shakib is brilliant with bat, ball and captaincy as he leads Bangladesh to an astounding 4-0 series win over New Zealand.
- November 28, 2010:** Shakib is 'imposed' the captaincy after he refuses to take over against on a series-by-series basis.
- December 1, 2010:** Bangladesh is beaten by Zimbabwe and Shakib expresses his displeasure with the team selection.
- December 31, 2010:** Shakib is made captain for the year 2011. Tamim is his deputy.
- January 8, 2011:** Shakib is bought by famed IPL side Kolkata Knight Rider for \$425,000.
- January 15, 2011:** As Mohammedan captain, Shakib taunts Abahani. But the next day, his team lose by ten wickets.
- March 6, 2011:** After Bangladesh were humiliated by West Indies in the World Cup, Shakib declares "war" on former cricketers.
- March 11, 2011:** Bangladesh beat England by a whisker and Shakib cries at the culmination of a terrible week.
- March 20, 2011:** Bangladesh bow out of the World Cup with another disastrous performance against South Africa.
- April 9, 2011:** Shakib's go-slow approach against Australia during a crucial stage surprises everyone, including his opposite number Michael Clarke.
- April 15, 2011:** Shakib loses his World No 1 all-rounder spot after two years.
- July 18, 2011:** Shakib unhappy over team selection for Zimbabwe. His 2-day leave after arriving from England and not meeting new coach triggers BCB to finally give him a letter of warning.
- August 21, 2011:** Bangladesh end up losing a Test and the one-day series against Zimbabwe.
- September 5, 2011:** BCB sacks Shakib as captain, bringing his attitude into question.



Pakistan players celebrate the fall of Zimbabwe last wicket on the fifth day of the one-off Test at Queens Sports Club in Bulawayo yesterday.

Pakistan's easy win

Cricket
AFP, Bulawayo

Pakistan beat Zimbabwe by seven wickets at Queens Sports Club here on Monday, getting the winning runs with seven wickets in hand a few minutes before lunch on Day Five.

They were left needing 88 runs for victory after bundling the home team out for 141 runs in their second innings, although they did lose three wickets in the process.

Having been put into bat by Pakistan captain Misbahul Haq, Zimbabwe reached 412 all out in their first innings before the tourists replied with 466 all out to establish a first-innings lead of 54.

There was not much in it at that stage but Zimbabwe's second effort collapsed to 135-8 at the close of the fourth day, leaving the Pakistanis with the prospect of a routine mop-up operation.

Misbah said afterwards: "Maybe I was mistaken asking Zimbabwe to bat first. The wicket had green patches. But the bowlers stuck to the task well."

Man of the match was Pakistan's Mohammad Hafeez, who scored 119 and took four wickets for 31.

With one more wicket he would have recorded a 'viper' in cricket terms -- a century plus five wickets in an innings -- but he did not get a bowl in the final session.

Zimbabwe's opening innings score of 412 looked likely to secure at least a draw, which was their prime target in terms of their need to gain respectability in top cricket circles after being readmitted to Tests after a gap of six years.

And if they had not dropped seven Pakistan wickets in their first innings, plus a fumbled run-out opportunity, the tourists' response might have been much lower than 466.

SCORES IN BRIEF

ZIMBABWE: First innings 412
PAKISTAN: First innings 466
ZIMBABWE: Second innings 141 (Mawoyo 12, Taibu 58, Jarvis 24 not out; Cheema 4-24, Ajmal 2-52, Hafeez 4-31)
PAKISTAN: Second innings 88 for 3 (Hafeez 38, Azhar 22, Younis 14; Price 2-35)
Result: Pakistan won by seven wickets.
Man-of-the-match: Mohammad Hafeez.

Rafa stands up after collapse

AFP, New York

Defending champion Rafael Nadal shocked the US Open on Sunday when he collapsed with cramps during a bizarre news conference while Andy Murray stayed on course for a semifinal clash against the Spaniard.

Nadal, 25, was talking to journalists two hours after his third round win over close friend David Nalbandian, when he grimaced in pain, screwed up his eyes and slumped in the back of his chair, feeling his right leg.

The world number two, a winner of 10 Grand Slam titles, slipped to the floor behind the table where he had been sitting, and out of view of the media, while tournament medical staff were summoned.

Scores of reporters and camera crews were ushered out of the interview room deep inside the Arthur Ashe Stadium, but the drama was still relayed into the nearby media centre by the internal television feed.

The conference room lights were switched off before the top of Nadal's right leg was suddenly silhouetted above the desk as the physios got to work.

After 15 minutes of treatment, Nadal was back on his feet, insisting that the problem was merely cramping.

"It was just cramping in the right leg, in the front and in the back. It was very painful, that's all," said Nadal, who resumed his news conference standing instead of sitting.

A smiling Nadal said the incident will not affect his preparations for his fourth round match against Luxembourg's Gilles Muller, scheduled for

Tuesday. "I will train normally on Monday. It was just a normal cramp that could have happened anywhere, but it's just bad luck that it happened in the press room. Anywhere else, nobody would have noticed."

During his 7-6 (7/5), 6-1, 7-5 win over Nalbandian, played out over 2hr 39mins in heavy, 84 degree-heat (29 degrees centigrade), Nadal also needed treatment on his blistered right foot.

Muller, who reached the last 16 by beating Russia's Igor Kunitsyn 6-1, 6-4, 6-4, famously defeated Nadal at Wimbledon in 2005 before the Spaniard got his All England Club revenge this year.

British fourth seed Andy Murray, the 2008 runner-up, took his career record against Spanish left-hander Feliciano Lopez to six wins in six meetings thanks to an impressive 6-1, 6-4, 6-2 victory.

Grand arena

FROM PAGE 19
World Cup as a brand ambassador of a multi-national company and played for sheer fun with some football mortals at this ground, the packed audience cheered in a way as if they were watching the magician in action for France against Italy in the final.

There might have been a tinge of disappointment for the fans for not enjoying the real thing from a champion gladiator then.

But on Tuesday at this very ground their dream is destined to be fulfilled when 24-year-old Messi, who is at his prime, strides out with all his grace and guile to prove a point -- that he is not only the best in the world with a Barcelona shirt but also with his beloved Argentina No 10 jersey.

Sit tight and watch the best from the BNS --- a live action of Magical, Exciting, Sublime, Sensational and Incredible from 7:00pm.

Sachin ruled out of series

Second ODI against England today

Cricket
CRICINFO, London

Sachin Tendulkar has been ruled out of the remainder of India's tour of England, and is likely to miss Mumbai Indians' Champions League campaign as well, after a visit to a specialist in London confirmed that he will require four to six weeks of rest to recover from an inflamed big toe on his right foot.

The injury, which was caused by the aggravation of a former fracture, flared up on the eve of the first ODI at Chester-le-Street, and means that Tendulkar's quest for that elusive 100th international hundred, which has been hanging over him all tour, will not now be resumed until England's tour of India in October, at the earliest.

The BCCI have decided that no replacement will be required at this late stage of the tour, seeing as Manoj Tiwary and Ravindra Jadeja are already linking up with the squad, after Rohit Sharma broke his finger in the Chester-le-Street ODI.

The news brings to an end a frustrating tour for Tendulkar, in which he showed glimpses of form during India's 4-0 whitewash in the Test series without ever recapturing the presence at the crease he had displayed during India's victorious World Cup campaign. He made 273 runs in the series at 34.12, with a highest score of 91 in the second innings at The Oval.

India have been rocked by a series of injuries on this tour of England, beginning with Zaheer Khan's hamstring pull on the first day of the Lord's Test. Following his withdrawal from the series, the BCCI said he not only suffered from a recurring hamstring problem, but also required surgery on his right ankle. Yuvraj Singh fractured a finger on his left hand, while Harbhajan Singh strained his stomach muscle during India's crushing defeat in the second Test at Trent Bridge, ruling them out of the rest of the tour.

Opener Virender Sehwag, it was understood, had not completely recovered from the shoulder surgery he underwent immediately after the IPL in May.

Journo from

FROM PAGE 18
Then it was back again to Avellaneda during the official press conference where the coach replied to the queries of the Argentine journalists in Spanish.

However, it wasn't one-way traffic as far as the information flow was concerned, as the Buenos Aires made sure he extracted as much information as possible about the country, its footballing culture and the frenzy about Messi.

Avellaneda, one of ten or so journalists who have flown from Buenos Aires to cover the double friendly of the Albiceleste in their South Asian journey, conceded that it was a surprise to find so much fan following here of the Argentine team.

"Messi, Messi"

FROM PAGE 16
So enamoured were all with the two-time world-player-of-the-year that all and sundry rushed towards him screaming and waving leaving Real Madrid star Angel di Maria with a bemused look of amusement.

The players went into their rooms to freshen up but were soon down for an early lunch at 12:30 pm. And while coach Sabella made a quick stop for the required pre-match press conference, he too soon retired to his room for some rest.

If that was supposed to be a queue for the excitement to die down, most were very mistaken. A couple of hundred spectators still trudged around, tip-toeing across security and using every trick

in the book to find a way beyond the security perimeter. It was a long wait and the players only left their rooms at 6:20 pm to attend the hour and a half long training session at the Bangabandhu Stadium. But for many, all those hours of waiting was a small price to pay for a view in the flesh of the best player in the world.

Days like this don't come along very often and as a certain Mirza Ahmad so eloquently put it minutes after catching a glimpse of his idol: "This is the best day of my life." Hyperbole perhaps, but there is little doubt that a sportsman of this magnitude has never graced Dhaka before. Zinedine Zidane was here, but the French maestro was on a business mission and although

his brief fifteen minute interlude at the Bangabandhu Stadium will not soon be forgotten by those who were present that day, Messi against Nigeria today undeniably has higher stock value.

As a country, Bangladesh has been enamoured by the South American nation since the days of the legendary Maradona. Perhaps it was due to his vanquishing of the English, perhaps it was due to his vocally leftist views, perhaps it was just the way he played the game. But there is no doubt that this is a love affair that has been long and unbending. Today against Nigeria, it will finally be consummated. The least we could do is be there for it.

Revenge not the word

FROM PAGE 19
also relatively light, with the team concentrating mostly on set pieces and passing drills.

Nigeria, who only played against Madagascar on Sunday night, also mainly focused on recovery drills and their coach Samson Siasia admitted that it would be a challenge to beat Argentina.

"Messi is the best player in the world," he said adding that he was happy with the conditions of the ground.

"The turf is absolutely fine and the weather is exactly like

SNIPPETS

FROM PAGE 18
MINOR DETAINED
A minor was reportedly detained by police yesterday for allegedly breaking into the BFF president's office and creating havoc while demanding a free pass to Argentina's practice session. The boy failed to present a valid ID card despite claiming that he was a student of a school in the capital. It could not be confirmed whether the boy was released later.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

- ACROSS** 33 Needle feature
1 Keep talking
4 Laryngitis symptom
8 Pop flavor
12 Also
13 Earthen pot
14 Elliptical
15 Rhyming tribute
16 Cherished
17 Singer
18 Country singer dubbed "The Thin Man From the West Plains"
21 Picnic invader
22 Press for payment
23 Legislate
26 Thither
27 Two, in Tijuana
30 Stray
31 Fenway squad
32 Wall Street optimist
- DOWN** 20 Pistol
1 On
2 Old foggy
3 Active one
4 Mouse or hamster
5 Caution
6 Cabbage salad
7 Seeming
8 Punctuation to fans
9 Micro-wave, e.g.
10 Nathan of Broadway
11 Winged
19 Bulletin board item
20 Pistol
23 Ram's fan?
24 Aye canceler
25 Hearty quaff
26 Second person
27 Payable
28 On in contradiction
29 Stallone, to fans
31 Catnaps
32 Kin of
35 Priestly magician
36 Perjury
37 Tea treat
38 Prom venues, often
39 Source
40 City in India
41 Protuberance
42 Be inclined
43 Mideast leader
44 July birthstone
- Solution time: 27 mins.**
- V I M O P S B E L L E
E D O O R T E A S E L
N A T H O O V E R D A M
O H O S T R I P
M O R N E Y E E A S E
I S M W E B C A M
S C E N E A B E T S
L O G J A M S U E
Y O G A E E E D I N E
A S T R O N I M
P O L I T I C I A N D E B
E D I T H E P T I C E
R E E D Y L E T A E R

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	
12			13				14				
15			16				17				
18			19				20				
			21				22				
23	24	25				26			27	28	29
30					31				32		
33					34				35		
					36				37		
38	39	40				41			42	43	44
45						46			47		
48						49			50		
51						52			53		

CRYPTOQUIP

J G O E F T O E G H Q Z P R ' K G B E C P E
N O E F Q P E E P O R R X R J Z P L
N E P O D Y J Q T, D B H R L S Y P E P Q O C P
Y J C K P R G N O H R K P E C B Q ?

Yesterday's Cryptoquip: COMEDY FLICK IN WHICH SOMEBODY SLOWLY COOKS HORSE RIDERS' SEATS IN FAT: "BRAISING SADDLES."
Today's Cryptoquip Clue: G equals F