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Big occasion for Tigers, Khulna

BISHWAJIT ROY from Khulna



Bangladesh captain Mushfiqur Rahim said it would be a huge occasion for the people of the south-western city of Khulna when Bangladesh take on the West Indies in the second and final Test at the Sheikh Abu Naser Stadium today.

The match starts at 9:30am.

This region of the country has produced so many successful players for the nation but for the first time they are going to host a Test match; so understandably there has been a lot of excitement in every nook and corner about the match. And obviously the onus is now on Mushfiqur's men to respond to the big moment.

In other way, it's however also a big moment for the Tigers themselves as the expectation is higher after the way they fought in the first Test in Mirpur. It's their time to prove that they are consistent enough in the longer-version format and try to improve their batting in the second innings for what they suffered a 77-run defeat in the first Test.

"It is a huge moment for Khulna. We hope to start off well here," said Mushfiqur.

Though not too many matches have been played here, the general consensus is that the pitch will

behave more or less like Dhaka, a batting friendly track, and the West Indies once again will try to dominate Bangladesh batsmen with raw pace and an array of shot balls to take the series 2-0. So, everybody will be looking forward to see how the Bangladesh batsmen react in this match and Mushfiqur was well aware of the fact.

"There are not many players in the world who play the short ball very well, but at the same time batsmen work hard to overcome this problem. We do the same. Riyad bhai [Mahmudullah Riyad] played very well in the first Test, and the guts he showed was what we needed. Watching that, we were inspired. They won't be bowling bouncers all the time, but we have to make sure we see off the tough period safely," Mushfiqur said when asked about the chances of West Indies coming up with the same plan what they did in the second innings of the first Test.

"I didn't play here in the NCL [National Cricket League], but we talked to players who've played here. It is a good wicket, helps batsmen, and from the third or fourth day, it

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TAMIM IQBAL

Sammy wants 2-0

SPORTS REPORTER from Khulna

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Darren Sammy loves a laugh whenever he gets the chance and the smile seemingly painted on his face makes the West Indies skipper look like the happiest man in the world. Yesterday was no exception, when the Caribbean captain was found in his usual happy mood on the eve of the second and final Test against a spirited Bangladesh.

And why not? His side came back hard against the Tigers in the final two sessions of the first Test in Mirpur to take a 1-0 lead with a 77-run victory. Sammy & Co might appear a little relaxed but the visiting captain made it clear that they have only one target, which is to win the series by a 2-0 margin.

"We had optional practice yesterday (Monday), but most of the guys are a little relaxed and well rested. We are here to do better than we did in the last game. Last year we drew the first Test, this year we won it. We have one more Test to go and we'll do everything to win this Test match. We want to win the series 2-0," said Sammy when asked during a pre-match press conference at the Sheikh Abu Naser Stadium whether his side was relaxed after the hard-fought victory in the first game. That all their players were fit and raring to go must have also contributed to the overall relaxed mood in the camp.

"The goal is to win. We left the Caribbean with the goal of winning both Tests here. We are in an excellent position to do that in Khulna," he responded to a question about their target in the match.

But once again, Sammy showed lot of respect to his opponents, who had a lot of positives despite defeat in the first game which saw a neck-and-neck fight before the Tigers were found wanting against the pace and short bowling on the challenging fifth day wicket.

"We have a lot of respect for Bangladesh. I expect the same in Khulna. I expect them to come hard, but if we stick to our line and lengths, we believe we could get 20 wickets," said a confident Sammy, who also found the wicket similar to the Dhaka one where the batsmen enjoyed batting on a placid track.

The question was raised whether the Tigers' performance in the first Test has reduced the gap between the two teams. The West Indies skipper however was diplomatic about it.

"In cricket you see the No 1 ranked team get defeated by the No.4 ranked team. It is about how you go out and play on the pitch and how patient, consistent and disciplined you are in your approach. On a last day pitch chasing 250-plus is a difficult task. I think it is all in the experience for both teams. We have been in similar situations so its good that we are developing," he explained.



The famous Shibbari intersection of Khulna sports a colourful look on the eve of first-ever Test match in the city which starts at the Sheikh Abu Naser Stadium today.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

Khulna ready and eager

SPORTS REPORTER from Khulna

SAHARA CUP 2012 logo

Everybody wants to be a part of history when the Sheikh Abu Naser Stadium becomes the seventh Test venue in Bangladesh. A full house is expected when Bangladesh take on West Indies in the second and final Test today as tickets for the first two days have been sold out.

The cricket-crazy fans in the south-western corner of the country last witnessed an international cricket match in November 2006 when the Tigers played against Zimbabwe at the same venue. The Sheikh Abu Naser Stadium is one of the five purpose-built cricket grounds established in the run-up to the 2004 Under-19 World Cup, and has been used infrequently for first-class matches.

But the obsession with cricket has been unwavering in Khulna, the proof of which lies in the number of top-class cricketers produced from this region over the years. The world's number one ODI all-rounder Shakib Al Hasan (Magura) and Rubel Hossain (Bagerhat) are two players in the current team who are from the Khulna Division.

The hosting of this Test match and the subsequent one-dayers over the next two weeks will only encourage the kids in the region to play cricket, and the enthusiasm is palpable as one walks around town. The main streets have been lit up with decorative lighting and crowds have lined up around the stadium as well as the team hotel trying to catch a glimpse of their favourite players.

And there's good news for these fans who have been craving international cricket in this region. The Met Office has said that chances of rain disrupting the historic match are minimal despite a cloudy afternoon which raised some concern. But rain will stay away, leaving an almost perfect setting for Khulna to host its first Test match.

Booters win a draw in KL



Football

SPORTS REPORTER

The Bangladesh national football team showed tremendous resilience as they bounced back from their 5-0 drubbing against Thailand to register a creditable 1-1 draw against Malaysia at the Bukit Jalil National Stadium yesterday.

Striker Zahid Hasan Emily scored an 83rd minute equaliser from the penalty spot after his strike partner Mithun Chowdhury was brought down inside the box. Bangladesh were trailing 1-0 at the time thanks to a 22nd minute strike from Malaysian midfielder Mohammad Khyril Muhyemeen. Bangladesh were playing with ten men after midfielder Pranotosh Kumar was given the marching orders for a second bookable offence in the 78th minute. However, Emily kept his composure and coolly converted the spot-kick to draw level and send a few hundred Bangladeshi fans at the iconic Bukit Jalil Stadium to raptures. There were some nervy moments towards the end for Bangladesh, but goalkeeper Mamun Khan, playing in this match

instead of Mostakur Rahman, held firm at the goal to deny the hosts a win.

This was the seventh meeting between the two sides with Bangladesh beating their Malaysian opponents only once, losing the other five. The last meeting between the two sides was a 1-0 loss for Bangladesh in Jeddah back in 1997.

Manager Satyajit Das Rupu said his team's brave attitude was what earned them the draw. "We fought for 90 minutes and did not lose hope for



Enthusiastic Bangladeshi fans cheer their team on during the International Friendly against Malaysia at the Bukit Jalil National Stadium in Kuala Lumpur yesterday.

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Tamim playing

SPORTS REPORTER from Khulna

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The fear that Tamim Iqbal might not play the second and final Test against the West Indies has been quashed yesterday as the Bangladesh team management declared the left-handed opener fit for the match.

The Test match starts at the Sheikh Abu Naser Stadium here today.

Tamim sustained a tendon injury during the first Test in his left elbow and as he was nursing the injury, Khulna batsman Anamul Haque has been called up as back-up for him. Anamul already joined the squad yesterday morning.

Tamim, who played a stroke-filled 72 in the first innings of the first Test, looked fine while batting in the nets during a practice session yesterday and soon after he completed batting, the team management declared him fit.

"Tamim felt fine while batting and we also feel he has recovered sufficiently from the muscle tendon injury to play tomorrow," informed team physio Vibhav Singh yesterday.

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a single moment. We played against their full-strength side and fought back after conceding an early goal," said Rupu.

The Malaysia coach Datuk Rajgopal said that Bangladesh played good football during an entertaining match.

The home team were quick out of the blocks, creating a couple of good chances before they took the lead when Muhyemeen rose high, beating his markers Sujan and Mamun, to

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