

'A growing belief'

SPORTS REPORTER



With three draws, one win and four defeats in his eight Tests in charge, coach Shane Jurgensen has so far been witness to the more positive side of Bangladesh's Test cricket. As a relatively successful coach, he was pleased with the performance in the just-concluded Test series against New Zealand, while looking forward to further improvements.

Of all the moments in the series, the Australian was particularly impressed by the third-wicket partnership between Mominul Haque and Tamim Iqbal in the second Test.

"Was I worried? [At 55 for 2] I think you always worry because the situation could go either way. In the last 12 months, there's been a growing belief in the team that yeah, we might have been in some trouble but we can get out of it and that's what we showed in the second Test," said Jurgensen.

"As a coach you can't say much to them, all you can do is keep the atmosphere in the dressing room positive. When they were in the groove, I remember telling them that they have two more hours to go and they just nodded. Tamim was our rock at the top and Mominul's innings was fantastic," he added.

While the batting did impress in the Tests, the bowlers were not as effective as expected. Mushfiquir Rahim at the post-match conference had spoken of the need for the pacers to be able to swing the ball better in order to get the early advantage. Jurgensen stated the need for proper wickets in domestic cricket. "The guys don't get the opportunity as a fast bowler to practise executing a really good outswinger, and that's an area we need to improve definitely," said Jurgensen.

"We need to have more wickets that are quick, offer a bit of bounce, that offer something for everyone. You are getting more of those in world cricket. It sorts out the men from the boys, and it would be great to have these kinds of wickets here," he added.

Much was expected of pacer Robiul Islam after his stellar performance in Zimbabwe, but he did not have much impact on the series. The bowler suffered from a quad injury weeks before the series and missed the second Test due to fitness issues.

"Robiul was not 100 per cent fit in terms of preparation. We had a horrible preparation for him. Because of the rain, we could not get a bearing on how fit he actually was," said Jurgensen.

"So we decided on picking Al Amin [Hossain], who I thought bowled very well. When he found out that he was not in the ODI series, he was disappointed and that's a good sign, because he has hunger. He is definitely a player of the future," added Jurgensen.

The coach was also pleased with newcomer Marshall Ayub's performance and stated that he had the 'perfect temperament' to bat at number three. "He looked comfortable batting at three. He had pressure in his first game, but that's natural. I think he should have absolutely no problems for the Sri Lanka series," said Jurgensen.

With the last Test of the year over for Bangladesh, Jurgensen hopes that more opportunities come by next year in the Test arena. "It's too early to criticise players like [Anamul Haque] Bijoy or Tamim for not scoring centuries. We barely played six Tests this year and for them to develop we need to give them more time," he said.



Barcelona's Brazilian star Neymar (C) is mobbed by teammates after he has scored the crucial opening goal in his *El Clasico* debut against Real Madrid at the Nou Camp yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

Neymar shines in Barca win

AGENCIES, *Barcelona*



Neymar stole the show from the likes of Lionel Messi, Cristiano Ronaldo and Gareth Bale when the Brazilian's strike set Barcelona on the way to a 2-1 win over Real Madrid in Saturday's 'Clasico' at the Nou Camp.

In a La Liga match watched by millions around the world, Barca landed a blow in the title race when Neymar scored a clinical goal in the 19th minute before substitute Alexis Sanchez netted with a brilliant chip 11 minutes from time in the 167th league meeting between the bitter rivals.

Jese came off the bench to pull a goal back in the first minute of added time but it was little more

than a consolation for Real, who were outplayed for long periods and slip six points behind the champions with 10 matches played.

Neymar opened the scoring when he collected the ball from Andres Iniesta on the left of the penalty area and cut inside on to his right foot, with his low shot taking a slight deflection off Real fullback Dani Carvajal before zipping past goalkeeper Diego Lopez into the far corner of the net.

Real battled hard in the second half and Karim Benzema, who replaced Real's ineffective world record signing Bale on the hour, smashed a shot against the bar before Alexis scored with an exquisite chip over Lopez from just outside the area.

Unbeaten Barca's victory, their ninth in the league this season, puts them on 28 points ahead of

third-placed Real at the top of the standings.

Second-placed Atletico Madrid are four points behind Barca ahead of their game at home to Real Betis on Sunday.

Bale's inclusion was not the only surprise amongst Ancelotti's starting line up as Sergio Ramos was also moved into an unfamiliar central midfield role.

The Welshman had Madrid's first effort on goal with a left-footed strike that sailed well over, but it was Barca who settled quicker as Real struggled to come to terms with Neymar's pace and trickery.

It was no surprise that it was the Brazilian who put Barca in front when he collected Andres Iniesta's pass inside the area and sneaked his shot from a narrow angle inside the far post with the aid of a slight deflection off Dani Carvajal.

The presence of Cesc Fabregas in the Barca side had forced Messi into an unusual position on the right side.

However, the Argentine should have doubled the lead two minutes later when he was released through on goal only to uncharacteristically slide the ball wide on his trusted left foot.

Bale then saw another wild effort from distance fly well over, but Madrid did finally create a clear opening two minutes before the break when Cristiano Ronaldo showed Dani Alves a clear pair of heels down the left and Sami Khedira's effort on the slide was brilliantly kept out by Victor Valdes.

Bale's miserable first-half was rounded off in stoppage time when he saw a yellow card for a high challenge on Gerard Pique.

BCB requests hartal respite

SPORTS REPORTER

The Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) requested the 18-party opposition alliance to keep cricket free from the 60-hour shutdown.

"We have sent a letter to the BNP secretary general requesting him to keep the ongoing cricket series between Bangladesh and New Zealand and the series between visiting Madhya Pradesh Cricket Association Under-16s and Bangladesh Cricket Board Under-16s free of disruption by the hartal," said BCB's acting CEO Nizamuddin Chowdhury.

He said that they have also made similar requests about the match schedule and ticket sales launching programme for next year's ICC World Twenty20,

which takes place today at the Ruposhi Bangla Hotel. Meanwhile, the Dhaka Premier League will not resume today due to the 60-hour hartal called by the opposition alliance.

The Cricket Committee of Dhaka Metropolis (CCDM) will announce a revised itinerary for the matches of rounds 8-11 in due course.

The league was stopped after the seventh-round matches on October 8 for the Eid and Puja break.

Siddikur continues good work

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Siddikur Rahman shot a three-under-par (69) to lift himself from 51st to 32nd position after the third round of the CIMB Classic yesterday. The 29-year old golfer carded four birdies and a bogey at the Kuala Lumpur Golf and Country Club yesterday to take his tally to two-under-par (214), still ten strokes adrift of joint leaders Chris Stroud and Ryan Moore of USA.

This event has seen a consistent improvement from Siddikur, who started with a 75 in the first round followed by a 70 in the second and a 69 in the third. If the Madaripur man can follow the good work in the last round today, he can hope to end close to the top ten and earn big bucks from the 7-million-dollar event co-sanctioned by the Asian Tour and PGA Tour.

Hockey transfers deferred

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The inter-club players transfer for the upcoming Premier League Hockey Tournament has been deferred indefinitely from the October 29-31 schedule after the officials of the participating clubs conveyed their unwillingness to attend the league committee meeting scheduled for today citing political circumstances, informed the Bangladesh Hockey Federation (BHF) general secretary Khaza Rahmatullah yesterday. Rahmatullah informed that they will decide on the new date of transfers when they sit for the meeting on November 2, and the new date of transfers will be within one week of the meeting.

"As the club officials informed us that they would not be able to attend tomorrow's (October 27) meeting, we decided to call off the meeting and defer the transfers indefinitely," said Rahmatullah when contacted yesterday. "The new date will be announced from the meeting and we will try to hold the three-day transfers starting from a holiday which will be convenient for clubs in this uncertain political situation," added Rahmatullah.

Strong SA square series

AFP, *Dubai*



South Africa kept their seven-year unbeaten away record intact with an innings and 92-run win over Pakistan in the second and final Test in Dubai on Saturday, squaring the two-match series 1-1.

It was a thorough and professional comeback by the world number one Test team after going down in last week's first Test by seven wickets, but the Proteas out-batted and out-bowled

Pakistan at Dubai Stadium.

The win was completed with a day and 9.5 overs to spare when Pakistan were bowled out for 326 in their second innings after they conceded a big 418-run lead in the first innings.

But Pakistan did not go down without a fight as Asad Shafiq (130) notched his fourth Test hundred and, along with skipper Misbahul Haq (88), frustrated the South Africans during a 197-run stand for the fifth wicket.

Leg-spinner Imran Tahir finished with 3-98 and took a total of eight wickets in the

match, while part-time right-arm offbreak bowler Jean-Paul Duminy took Shafiq's wicket on the way to career best figures of 3-67.

Pakistan were left to rue their low score of 99 in the first innings which never allowed them to add to their only series win over South Africa in 2003.

SCOREBOARD

PAKISTAN: First innings 99 (Babar 25; Tahir 5-32, Steyn 3-38)

SOUTH AFRICA: First innings 517 (Smith 234, de Villiers 164; Ajmal 6-151, Irfan 3-102)

PAKISTAN: Second innings (overnight 132-4)

0 Masood lbw b Steyn
0 Manzoor c Kallis b Philander
19 Azhar lbw b Duminy

Younis b Tahir 36
Misbah c Kallis b Elgar 88
Shafiq st de Villiers b Duminy 130
Adnan lbw b Tahir 5
Ajmal lbw b Tahir 9
Irfan b Duminy 14
Junaid not out 2
Babar retired hurt 0
Extras: (b-10, lb-15, nb-2, w-1, pen-5) 23
Total: (All out in 135.1 overs) 326
Fall of wickets: 1-0, 2-2, 3-48, 4-70, 5-267, 6-278, 7-301, 8-323, 9-326

Bowler	O	M	R	W
Steyn	22	9	48	1
Philander	19	7	34	1
Morkel	22	7	47	0
Tahir	42	14	98	3
Kallis	7	3	9	0
Duminy	21.1	3	67	3
Elgar	2	0	3	1

Result: South Africa won by an innings and 92 runs and 2-match series drawn 1-1.

Player-of-the-match: Graeme Smith.

Fed Cup from Nov 4

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The Federation Cup will kick off on November 4 with 12 participating clubs in the curtain-raising tournament of the 2013-2014 football season, it was confirmed after a meeting of the Professional Football League Committee (PFLC) of the Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) yesterday. The 10 clubs of the Bangladesh Premier League, along with Bangladesh Championship League club Rahmatganj MFS and one among BKSP or Bangladesh Police, will be split into four groups. Two top teams from each group will qualify for the quarterfinals before the semifinals and final takes place, informed PFLC chairman Abdus Salam Murshedi after the meeting.

"The tournament will start on November 4, but at the moment we cannot confirm the schedule of the tournament, which will

depend on the political situation of the country," Murshedi told reporters. "If Bangladesh Police decide to participate in the tournament, a play-off between them and BKSP will take place to decide the 12th team. The matches will take place at Bangabandhu National Stadium and Bishreshtha Mostafa Kamal Stadium in Kamalapur."

However, none of the 10 teams of the premier league have started their registration formalities yet, with only four days remaining for the closure of the inter-club transfer window for the local players. But Murshedi assured that the transfers will be completed within time.

"All the teams have decided which players to take; only the formalities are left to be completed. The issue of the five accused players will not be an issue at the moment, as the players' status committee thinks the documents and vouchers provided by one club (Mohamedan SC) is not enough to take any action against any player," said Murshedi.

Fifth ODI called off

PTI, *Cuttack*

The fifth ODI between India and Australia was officially called off without a ball bowled after a formal inspection by the umpires on Saturday.

Orissa had given up hopes on Friday only and announced the dates of ticket refunds as there was no let up from rain for five days because of a low pressure formation in the Andhra-Telangana region.

Umpires Nigel Llong, S Ravi and C Shamsuddin inspected the ground at 11am, but with the outfield still soggy and damp patches at several places, the duo officially abandoned the match.

Southee wants 2010 ghosts laid to rest

SPORTS REPORTER



New Zealand fast bowler Tim Southee has said that the visitors will look to avenge their 4-0 ODI series defeat at the hands of the Tigers in October 2010, the last time the Kiwis toured the country.

Speaking to reporters, Southee, who missed out on the Test series due to an injury said, "The guys who are here and were there four years ago will want to put that right. We have to concentrate on building as a one-day team. We are going in the right direction and improving, and want to keep doing that."

The fast bowler however stated that the Kiwis had prepared a lot better for the series this time and expects his side to perform well. "There have been a number of players who played in the sub-continent [India and Sri Lanka] with the New Zealand A team so they know the conditions," he said.

At the same time, Southee also expects Bangladesh to be a tougher outfit in the ODIs than the Tests.

"Bangladeshis have improved a lot in one-day cricket in the last three years and they are very good in their own conditions. We are aware of that and we have prepared well leading into the series," he added.

Southee, who is expected to lead his side's pace attack, hopes to return to the ODI series on a winning note. "I have been out of the game for a while now and just want to get back out there and play some cricket. The first thing I aim to do is win the series," said Southee.

New Zealand have made eight changes to their Test Side for the ODI series. The likes of Nathan McCullum and Kyle Mills, survivors of the 2010 series, have joined the side.

On another note, New Zealand have also brought a change to the one-day side that will be touring Sri Lanka next month. Skipper Brendon McCullum and Ross Taylor have been scrapped from the side on the grounds that the players needed more 'red-ball practice' ahead of their home series against West Indies.



TIM SOUTHEE