

SPORT



SYNCHRONISED TRAINING: Bangladesh cricketers warm up for their practice session at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

Management unhappy with 1st ODI wicket

SPORTS REPORTER

Despite Bangladesh's emphatic 43-run win over New Zealand in the first ODI at Mirpur on Tuesday, Bangladesh's team management was reportedly unhappy with the wicket prepared for the first ODI.

Close sources stated that the management had expected a traditional slow and low wicket that would provide more support for Bangladesh's slower bowlers. Instead, the first ODI saw the ball pop up a number of times and seemed to have aided the pacers.

The management believed that the kind of wicket the first ODI was played on would have suited the visitors more and that if it was not for Rubel Hossain's spell, the hosts would have been in trouble. They also reportedly had a talk with the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium curator Gamini De Silva regarding the issue.

Following the rain break, New Zealand required 124 runs in 13 overs to win. They began well by scoring 38 runs off the first three overs. But then Rubel stole the game by taking five wickets, including a hat-trick.

It was also learnt that the management might break the winning combination and make a change in the top order. The change could well involve Anamul Haque, who has not been among the runs and he could be replaced by Shamsur Rahman. The support for pacers on the wicket also brought about talks of possible inclusion of allrounder Ziaur Rahman, but the management are likely to stick to their two-man pace attack.

CONFIDENT TIGERS look to seal series

BISHWAJIT ROY



Nasir Hossain launched some big shots while practising on the centre wicket of the Sher-e-

Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday; perhaps in an attempt to make sure that he can produce the goods and utilise the Powerplay overs for the Tigers in today's second day-night one-dayer against New Zealand in Mirpur.

There will not be any dearth of confidence when the Tigers hunt for a series win today with a match in hand after their emphatic 43-run victory in the first game, a performance that underscored their prowess at home.

Still there are some aspects they will look to improve upon like a healthy opening partnership, effective batting in the Powerplay overs and a strong final flourish with the bat so that they can seal the deal even if their opponents, who are

considered a good one-day unit, come hard to keep the series alive.

A different Bangladesh arrived on the scene with an increase in the number of performers in the side, which was why the loss of a player like Shakib Al Hasan was not even felt in the first game. Mushfiqur Rahim and Naeem Islam's batting after an early hiccup demonstrated the maturity of the team. Although Rubel Hossain finally stole the show from out of the blue, it was indeed a collective effort. Whether it is now the turn of Tamim Iqbal, Mominul Islam, Nasir -- who has not been at his vibrant best against the Kiwis so far -- or any other to put their hand up in the second match, the Tigers will need a concerted effort to continue their good showing in home conditions.

The resounding victory in the first game caused many to think of a repeat of the Tigers' 2010 heroics against the Kiwis but experienced campaigner Mashrafe Bin Mortaza had a different opinion and adopted a guarded approach while talking

about his team's chances of sealing the series today.

"We are in a strong position to win the series today, no doubt. But I don't think we played our best cricket in the first game. There are some areas in which we have to do much more so that we can win the match even if New Zealand play their best cricket. In no way can we become over-excited by the victory in the first match because this New Zealand team has the ability to come back," said Mashrafe, who made a good comeback to international cricket, although he went wicketless in the first game.

"Mushfiqur Rahim] and Naeem [Islam] batted brilliantly after the early losses but still we were at least 30 to 40 runs short. We had the opportunity to score more than 300, so we have to look at that. We have not had a good record of capitalising on the Powerplay, which we also showed in the first match and we could not slog in the end. We need more from the opening combination. These days you

can't defend a score like 260 on this kind of surface," added the Narail Express.

Mashrafe believed that the 'Rubel magic' will not happen everyday, so they have to bank on their full strength as a team. "I have never seen any Bangladesh bowler destroy the opposition batting lineup in one spell like Rubel did in the first game. This kind of bowling I have seen only from bowlers like Shoab Akhtar, Brett Lee and Waqar Younis. I think Rubel's magical spell gave us an easy win because the spinners were really struggling after the rain," opined the paceman.

Bangladesh should expect a professional New Zealand to come out all guns blazing. But as Mashrafe said there were things to improve upon even during the convincing win in the first ODI. While magic like Rubel's will likely not be repeated, the Tigers have shown in the past three years at home that they can beat all comers with a concerted effort, and that is what they will be looking for.

James sure of making a turnaround

SPORTS REPORTER

New Zealand allrounder James Neesham has said that the Kiwis are confident of winning the series despite starting the series on a losing note at Mirpur on Tuesday. Neesham, who had taken four wickets in the first match, stated that the visitors could beat Bangladesh in the second ODI at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium today if they played to their potential.

"It's a reality in professional sports. You are going to have times when you are under the pump, and you are going to lose the first game of a series. It's not really a mental hurdle to get yourself ready for the game. I think everyone's confident," said Neesham at the team hotel yesterday.

"As players we know that if we play to our potential and execute our plans we should definitely have the ability to equal the series and then look to win it," he added.

Neesham stated that New Zealand had played all the right cards in the first ODI until Rubel Hossain was introduced after the rain break.

"I think we had the blueprint right in the first game. Apart from that one over against Rubel we were looking good to chase them down. When Rubel got that hat-trick that pretty much changed the game, it was always going to be tough work from there," he said.

Many expected the wicket at Mirpur to turn and support Bangladesh's spinners. Neesham however felt that there was something in it for everyone.

"I thought Tim [Southee] bowled well with the new ball, but once it stopped swinging it was a good deck to bat on. It did not help the spinners as much; I think it was a bit two-paced, that was it. Overall it was a good wicket," said Neesham.

Neesham, who had career-best figures of four for 42 in the first ODI on Tuesday, praised New Zealand's pace attack and believed that they held the key in the next two matches.

"It was good to be a part of this four-man attack. Tim [Southee] bowled exceptionally well at the front and laid the foundation for me and Corey [Anderson]. At the death, the pitch was a bit poppy, so that's when I used the slower ball, something that I have in my armoury," he said.

Tigers focused on the present

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Despite the abundance of confidence ahead of the second ODI

against New Zealand today, it must be remembered that Bangladesh's ability to deliver that ultimate punch and finish off a series, especially if it's a three-match competition, is not great.

Take for instance, the last series against Zimbabwe. The Tigers, after having thrashed Zimbabwe with a 121-run win went on to lose the next two games.

In 2008 against New Zealand, the Tigers buoyed by Junaid Siddique's 85 won the first game before losing the remaining two. Apart from the three-match series against Zimbabwe in 2009, where Bangladesh lost the first game and then went on to win the series, the aforementioned trend has held sway.

However, no matter what the statistics state, having beaten the Kiwis for the fifth consecutive time now, the momentum is with the hosts and it is something that came through in vice-captain Mahmudullah Riyad's statements.

"They will definitely come hard at us. So we have to be strong in the second ODI, play positive and aggressive cricket to achieve our aim," said Riyad.

"We are taking it match by match, and we are not talking about a white-wash. They have got good new players in their side. We just want to win the series and that is mine and the team's ultimate aim," he added.

There are some niggles in the side -- Abdur Razzak, for instance, had a problem with his hamstring yesterday. The selectors might also opt to open with Shamsur Rahman, in place of Anamul Haque who has hit

a bad patch.

"When Naeem [Islam] and I were batting our aim was to reach 270 or 275, but I think the wicket was not that easy to bat on. Fortunately, Mushfiqur [Rahim] and Naeem batted beautifully. The pacers got good help and the spinners, not so much," said Riyad.

The other factor that will be playing on the hosts' minds will be the Powerplay issue that they have so often faced. In the five overs of the batting Powerplay, the Tigers scored 27 runs and lost two wickets -- the crucial ones of Mushfiqur and Nasir Hossain.

"We have not been able to execute our plans there, but hopefully we can in the second game," said Riyad.

While the 4-0 win back in 2010 did provide a peep into the potential of Bangladesh's cricketing strength at home, a series win today without Shakib Al Hasan, would not only strengthen that impression but also



Teammates lift little master Sachin Tendulkar on their shoulders after Mumbai won their Ranji Trophy match against Haryana at Chaudhary Bansi Lal Stadium in Lahl yesterday.

PHOTO: INTERNET

ASIAN ARCHERY C'SHIP Senior archers in last 16

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Archers Emdadul Haque Milon and Roman Sana Sujun moved into the pre-quarterfinals of the Individual Recurve Bow event in the 18th Asian Archery Championship after beating their respective rivals in Chinese Taipei yesterday.

Milon, who became 21st among 49 archers in the qualification, beat Saydiev of Kazakhstan in 6-2 sets while Sujun, who finished 36th in the qualification, beat Ko Cheng Wu of Chinese Taipei to move into the last 16. However, their teammate Durul Huda was eliminated from the first round after losing to Duangsung of Thailand.

In the women's event, Mathui Pru Marma beat Indonesia's Safitri, a gold medallist of the recently concluded 3rd Islamic Solidarity Games, 6-2 to set up a pre-quarterfinal match against Li Chien Wuing today.

In the 2014 Youth Olympic Games Continental Qualifying Test, Prennoy Murong advanced to the quarterfinals after becoming fifth among 18 archers in the qualification round while his teammate Hira Moni became 12th among 19 competitors in the qualification to play her next match against Iranian Farahmand.

BFF bows to clubs

SPORTS REPORTER



The Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) extended the deadline of the ongoing players' transfer window for a fourth time -- from October 31 to November 15 -- pushing

the start of season's curtain-raising tournament Federation Cup to the third week of November.

The decision was taken at a meeting of the professional football league committee yesterday after eight clubs including Mohammedan SC, Abahani, Sheikh Russel KC and Sheikh Jamal DC had appealed for an extension of the window a day earlier.

"We have extended the window to November 15 as we have taken the present political situation into consideration," said league committee chairman Abdus Salam Murshedy. "The way we have discussed with the club representatives, we are confident that the window will not be extended any further and I am sure that they (clubs) are not doing (requests) it from any ill motive"

"We will sit for the next meeting on November 16 and hold the draw of the federation cup the next day and I think we will be able to start the tournament by

November 20," said Murshedy.

BFF president Kazi Salahuddin himself attended the meeting and suggested that the clubs all football activities such as the players' transfer, the Federation Cup and the Bangladesh Premier League be performed after the completion of the parliamentary elections.

But those clubs, which were even ready to complete the registration formalities by today's deadline, disagreed to the proposal and told the meeting that they were not ready to suffer anymore as they have already invested huge amount of money with the training camps being conducted in full-swing.

It was decided that the premier league would be held after the completion of the federation cup, provided that the political situation becomes favourable.

To reduce the pressure of advance payment on the clubs, the league committee also decided to strictly follow the monthly-salary system to the players and endorse each agreement between the player and the club in presence of officials from the federation.

Meanwhile, Team BJMC are supposed to complete their players' registration formalities today while Feni Soccer Club and Muktiyoddha Sangsad are supposed to complete theirs by the start of the next week.

Tendulkar's winning exit

PTI, Lahl



Sachin Tendulkar's farewell game in domestic cricket ended in a manner befitting his iconic stature, as the retiring legend single-handedly guided Mumbai to a four-wicket win over Haryana in one of the most keenly followed match in the history of Ranji

Trophy, in Lahl on Wednesday. Requiring 39 more runs to win with four wickets in hand on the fourth and final day, Tendulkar went on to make a calculated 175-ball unbeaten 79, building his innings in the manner that has been the hallmark of his later years.

The stay in the middle also ensured Tendulkar warmed up for next month's Test series against the West Indies, which will culminate with the second and his landmark 200th Test in Mumbai, where he will bring the curtain down on his glorious 24-year tryst with international cricket.

After a series of shifts in momentum over the past three days, it was Mumbai who had the last laugh, thanks largely to the relentless perseverance showed by Tendulkar.