

Shakib glad to be back on top

SPORTS REPORTER



There has not been a lot going along with Shakib Al Hasan's way lately. The suspended all-rounder has had to bear the agony of training separately from his national teammates. He also missed out on achieving a unique feat of winning both the Indian Premier League and the Caribbean Premier League -- his team Barbados Tridents lifted the trophy earlier this week -- in the same year.

Amidst all the gloom, however, the left-hander found a hint of solace yesterday when he regained the number one spot in the ICC Test all-rounders rankings. He regained the spot five months after losing it to India's Ravichandran Ashwin. Ashwin slipped to



number two due to his poor performance against England. The left-hander expressed his delight through a tweet yesterday. "Another reason for me to keep smiling, that's for getting the number 1 position back in the Test all-rounder ranking! Keep praying for me!" he tweeted yesterday evening.

The left-hander is currently serving a suspension on disciplinary grounds. As per the current state of the suspension he cannot play international and domestic cricket until January 7 and will not be issued No-Objection Certificates for foreign leagues until December 31, 2015.

However, BCB president Nazmul Hassan Papon has said that the board was likely to reduce the duration of Shakib's punishment later this month.

4 picked for WI Tests

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The national selectors have picked four players to join the team in the West Indies for the two-match Test series.

According to sources close to the selection panel, left-arm spinner Taijul Islam is the fresh inclusion alongside Shuvagoto Hom -- who has so far played four ODIs since making his international debut in August 2011 -- and pacers Robiul Islam and Shafiu Islam.

The 22-year old Taijul, who is considered a good young prospect for the longer version and who recently visited the Caribbean with the Bangladesh A team, is likely to fly for the West Indies on August 24 so that he can be available for the only T20I on August 27. The rest will fly out on August 27.

The selectors are yet undecided about who will return home after the limited-overs series but if they stick to their initial plans, it is all but confirmed that Mashrafe Bin Mortaza, Taskin Ahmed and Abdur Razzak will return along with Mohammad Mithun.

The Tigers will play a three-day practice match from August 30 at St. Kitts before the two-match Test series to be held at St. Vincent (September 5-9) and St. Lucia (September 13-17).

TIGERS' Caribbean threats

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The lead-up to the last series that Bangladesh played against the West Indies, at home in 2012, was dominated with questions regarding the Tigers' strategy to deal with the likes of Chris Gayle and Sunil Narine.

Now any team travelling to the Caribbean will no doubt have to keep in mind the damage that the latter's more celebrated players can cause, but when it comes to the Tigers, statistics show that it has generally been the more underrated players who have spoiled Bangladesh's party.

Take for instance pacer Kemar Roach's record against the Tigers. With 24 wickets at an average of 17.79 he is the highest West Indian wicket-taker against Bangladesh. That he is yet to play an ODI this year, and has been chosen for the upcoming series, shows that the hosts are counting on a Roach rampage.

Their former captain Darren Sammy is the next highest with 15 wickets in the bag. Spinner Sunil Narine has not had the best of years so far -- he has taken six wickets in six games at an average of 40.16. While Narine was not as effective

against Bangladesh back in 2012, it may well be a different story at Grenada and St Kitts where spinners have dominated. Narine is the highest wicket-taker at St Kitts, where the teams will play the third ODI and the lone T20I.

Of all players however, the visitors will have to keep a weary eye on captain Dwayne Bravo, who has been the side's highest run-getter and wicket-taker this year. He has scored 374 runs at an average of 93.50, the second highest among all players who have played at least six matches this year. He also leads the wickets column for his side with 12 wickets in seven games.

The other batsman who poses a threat is the young Lendl Simmons. With 216 runs this year he is the second highest run-scorer for his side. In addition to that he has a healthy average of 56 against the Tigers. Simmons also seems to be in sublime touch -- with 446 runs at an average of 49.55 he was the highest run-scorer in the recently concluded Caribbean Premier League.

Series wins for the West Indies have not been a common feature lately. The last time they won a series either home or away -- aside from their wins against Zimbabwe and Ireland at home in 2013 -- was in July 2012 when they beat New Zealand 4-1.

Cricketers hit form

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The Bangladesh team management were delighted with their thumping 95-run win over Grenada at Progress Park on Friday. The foundation of the win was set up by Tamim Iqbal's 86-ball 91 and Mahmudullah Riyad's 61-ball 78 that helped the Tigers to 322.

In reply, the hosts were restricted to 215 for nine with Mashrafe Bin Mortaza picking three wickets.

Team manager Habibur Bashar described the win as an extremely satisfying one.

"There was bounce on the wicket and I thought our boys handled it quite well. We wanted to bat first and we got that opportunity. The wicket initially was a little two-paced and Tamim Iqbal had to adjust to that," said Bashar.

"Once he got used to the conditions he started batting freely. It was good to see him hit form. Mahmudullah also played well. Kayes was a bit unfortunate. The ball had stopped a bit before it went to him. But on the whole we are satisfied with the batting," he added.

Although Bashar admitted that the Grenadian national team was not very strong, he was content with the way his bowlers bowled. Apart from Mashrafe's scalps Al-Amin Hossain and Abdur Razzak took two each, while Taskin Ahmed took one.

"The batsmen tried to attack us a lot and I thought our pacers contained them well. Shohag bowled a good line and Razzak too bowled decently after a long time. So far it's looking good," said Bashar.

"The players have played so well that we are actually in a bit of a selection dilemma for the first game," Bashar claimed.

While the team for the first ODI on August 20 is yet to be finalised, by the looks of the team that played the practice game, Mominul Haque and Rubel Hossain are likely to be left out. The only question that remains is whether the Tigers are going to play three pacers or stick to their traditional two-pacer attack. If they decide to go in with three pacers, either Razzak or Gazi will have to make way.

Speaking on the importance of the win, Bashar added, "The fact is that this was Grenada's best team and there was plenty of publicity for this game before the match. So they were taking it very seriously and it was good to win against them."

SCORES IN BRIEF

BANGLADESH: 322 for 6 (Tamim 91, Mahmudullah 78; Thomas 2-54)

GRENADEA: 227 for 9 (George 62; Mashrafe 3-44, Razzak 2-35)

Result: Bangladesh won by 95 runs.

Lanka sweep series 2-0

AFP, Colombo



An emotional Mahela Jayawardene ended his glittering 17-year Test career on a high Monday as Sri Lanka won the second and final Test against Pakistan by 105 runs to sweep the series 2-0.

The tourists, who resumed their second innings at 127-7 chasing a target of 271, were shot out for 165 before lunch on the fifth day.

Last man Junaid Khan was unable to bat due to injury as Pakistan lost their final wickets on the last morning.

Left-arm spinner Rangana Herath, who claimed nine wickets in the first innings, was once again the chief destroyer with five for 57 in the second.

SCOREBOARD				
SRI LANKA: First innings 320 (Tharanga 92, Silva 41; Junaid 5-87, Riaz 3-88)				
PAKISTAN: First innings 332 (Shehzad 58, Sarfraz 103; Herath 9-127)				
SRI LANKA: Second innings 282 (Tharanga 45, Sangakkara 59, Jayawardene 54, Mathews 43 not out; Riaz 3-76, Ajmal 3-89)				
PAKISTAN: Second innings (overnight 127-7)				
Manzoor c Dickwella b Prasad	10			
Shehzad lbw b Prasad	8			
Azhar c Jayawardene b Herath	10			
Younis lbw b Herath	8			
Misbah c Jayawardene b Herath	32			
Shafiq st Dickwella b Herath	3			
Sarfraz c Sangakkara b Welegedara	55			
Rehman lbw b Perera	5			
Riaz c Silva b Herath	17			
Ajmal not out	3			
Junaid did not bat -- absent injured				
Extras: (b-4, lb-7, nb-3)	14			
Total: (All out in 52.1 overs)	165			
Fall of wickets: 1-17, 2-21, 3-31 (All), 4-39, 5-50, 6-105, 7-122, 8-151, 9-165				
Bowler	O	M	R	W
Welegedara	9	4	22	1
Prasad	8	0	29	2
Herath	22.1	2	57	5
Perera	13	1	46	1
Result: Sri Lanka won by 105 runs and sweep series 2-0.				



Retiring Sri Lanka batsman Mahela Jayawardene holds his daughter Sansana as his wife Christina Sirisena looks on during the post-match ceremony at the Sinhalese Sports Club ground in Colombo yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

On a high Jayawardene goes out

AFP, Colombo



Mahela Jayawardene Monday said a "gut feeling" prompted him to quit Test cricket as he turned his attention to one last World Cup campaign after near-misses in 2007 and 2011.

"Players come and go, but the game continues," the 37-year-old said, after ending a 17-year Test career in which he became one of the great batsmen of modern times.

Jayawardene was hoisted onto his teammates' shoulders and warmly congratulated by Sri Lanka's President Mahinda Rajapakse, who was among the 4,000 home fans who turned up to bid goodbye, after ending his Test career at Colombo's Sinhalese Sports Club stadium.

"I don't know what to say, but I promise I won't cry," Jayawardene said at the presentation ceremony as firecrackers went off in the stands.

"I love you all. Thank you so much for the support all these years. I still have a little bit left and I promise I'll give it my all for the World Cup. Thanks also to my teammates. It's been great

to play for Sri Lanka for so many years. I have always worn this cap with pride and passion."

The elegant right-hander is one of only five batsmen to score more than 11,000 runs in both Test and one-day cricket -- the others being Sachin Tendulkar, Ricky Ponting, Jacques Kallis and teammate Kumar Sangakkara.

It was a fitting place for his farewell after he shared in a record 624 Test partnership with

MAHELA IN TESTS										
M	Inns	NO	R	HS	Avg	100	50	4s	6s	Ct
149	252	15	11814	374	49.84	34	50	1387	61	205

Sangakkara there in 2006 and amassed 2,921 Test runs at the venue -- the most by any batsman at a single ground.

Jayawardene, who retired from Twenty20 Internationals after Sri Lanka became world champions in April, said he would concentrate on one-day matches until next year's World Cup.

"I am not sure I will be selected for the World Cup, but I will focus on one-day cricket," said Jayawardene ahead of the one-day series against

Pakistan starting this week.

The batsman added that he felt he had quit at the right time despite still showing good form with the bat.

"I took the decision to retire after a lot of serious thought," he said. "I was fortunate to have played for 17 years so it was not an easy decision to make."

"But I think the time was right to go. It was a gut feeling and I have always gone by my gut feelings in the past."

Jayawardene finished with 11,814 runs in 149 Tests with 34 centuries, but his average dropped from 50.02 to 49.84 after making four and 54 in his final Test against Pakistan.

Jayawardene said retiring one Test short of his 150th appearance did not matter to him. He also said he was not interested in becoming a coach.

"To be a coach, one needs a lot of commitment and I don't think I have the patience for that... But I will continue to guide young players because they are the future of the game in the country," he said.

One of the sharpest fielders close to the wicket, Jayawardene's 205 Test catches are second only to Indian Rahul Dravid's tally of 210 by a fielder other than a wicketkeeper.

A debacle 'Made in India'

AGENCIES, undated



India's inept cricket during the five-Test series against England, which ended with an innings-and-244 run annihilation at The Oval on Sunday, has caused the country's cricketing fraternity to come down on the team and management like a ton of bricks.

"Spineless India blown away," read the Hindustan Times daily's front-page headline about their 3-1 loss.

"If Indian fans had thought nothing could be worse than the 0-4 Test series rout they suffered in England in 2011, they were in for a surprise on Sunday."

There was also a clamouring to see the end of the regime of captain Mahendra Singh Dhoni and coach Duncan Fletcher.

"What was Fletcher doing after we won the Lord's Test on a difficult pitch? This is where he lacked imagination in keeping the lead. Yes, I think Fletcher

has to go," said former captain Ajit Wadekar.

Regarding Dhoni, Wadekar said, "He changed his technique and batted well. But why he did not change his tactics as captain foxes me. I will retain Dhoni as captain for Tests as I don't see anyone who can take over at the moment. (Virat) Kohli should be allowed to regain his confidence in a few home rubbers and then made captain for Tests."

Former batting great Gundappa Viswanath felt Dhoni often hopes for a miracle. "I'm not happy with his keeping and captaincy; he always expects a miracle. Miracles cannot happen all the time. It happens once in a blue moon," Viswanath told PTI.

Ex-spinner Erapalli Prassana said, "I am categorically saying that Fletcher's contribution to the team was a big zero."

Former middle-order batsman Chandu Borde criticised the technique of the current lot. "I am surprised these youngsters did not change their technique which a player like (Alastair) Cook did after England's defeat at Lord's by standing a few feet outside the crease to counter Bhuvaneshwar

Kumar's swing bowling."

Ashok Malhotra felt Dhoni's shelf life as Test captain has expired. "He doesn't have a Plan A, B or C in place. He's very close-minded as far as Test cricket is concerned. We should have looked beyond him (Fletcher) after we lost eight consecutive matches overseas to England and Australia. He's so technically savvy; he should have improved the likes of Virat Kohli, Shikhar Dhawan, Cheteshwar Pujara and Gautam Gambhir. But he did not do much."

Elsewhere, The Times of India went a step further by demanding that the country's "pampered and highly paid" cricketers give up their substantial pay packets.

But perhaps the most interesting comment came from an Indian politician. "The first people to take (prime minister) Modi's speech seriously is the Indian cricket team. Their runs will now only be Made in India," tweeted veteran politician Digvijaya Singh, referring to prime minister Narendra Modi's recent call to strengthen the country's manufacturing sector.

Alastair in Alice-land

AFP, London

Alastair Cook said support from his wife, Alice, had persuaded him to stay on as England captain after leading the side to a come-from-behind Test series win over India.

After last month's 95-run defeat by India in the second Test at Lord's, a result that meant England had gone 10 Tests without a win, Cook faced calls from several former England captains to stand down as skipper.

But the determined opening batsman insisted he would not quit, despite presiding over a 5-0 Ashes loss in Australia and a 1-0 defeat in a two-Test campaign at home to Sri Lanka immediately prior to the India series.

It was a decision vindicated by England ultimately defeating India 3-1 in a five-Test series, a win completed with a crushing innings and 244-run victory at The Oval on Sunday.

"It was the support I had from my wife," said Cook, when asked what had persuaded him against resigning as England captain.

"You can bare your soul to Alice and she's very good at getting you back on the straight and narrow," the Essex left-hander added.

England suffered a nail-biting match and series loss to Sri Lanka, with just two balls to spare, in the second Test at Headingley after surrendering a strong hand on the fourth day.

India fined for slow going

AFP, London

India have been fined for a slow over-rate during their heavy defeat by England in the fifth Test at The Oval, the International Cricket Council (ICC) announced on Monday.

India have been punished because they were three overs short of their target at the close of play on Sunday when time allowances were taken into consideration. They accepted the ruling without appeal.

In accordance with the ICC's rules, India captain Mahendra Singh Dhoni was fined 60 per cent of his match fee, with the other 10 players losing 30 per cent of their fees.

Dhoni will be suspended for one match if his side commit a similar offence in the next 12 months.

India's loss by an innings and 244 runs gave England a 3-1 victory in the five-match series.