



Bangladesh opener Anamul Haque lets out a huge roar after reaching his hundred during the first One Day International against the West Indies at the Grenada National Cricket Stadium in St. George's on Wednesday. Anamul's 109 helped Bangladesh post a challenging score of 217 for nine in 50 overs.

No slow left-arm after a decade

SPORTS REPORTER



There's no doubt that slow left-arm bowling is Bangladesh's forte. Right from the days of Enamul Haque and Mohammad Rafique to that of Abdur Razzak and Shakib Al Hasan, slow left-armers have always dominated Bangladesh's bowling attack.

However, the exclusion of Abdur Razzak in Bangladesh's playing eleven against the West Indies in Grenada yesterday has broken a long tradition for the Tigers in international cricket.

With Razzak excluded and ace-all-rounder Shakib Al Hasan not touring, Bangladesh's bowling attack did not feature a slow left-arm bowler.

The previous occasion that happened was eleven years ago, on February 26, 2003, during the ODI World Cup in South Africa. While Mohammad Rafique was included in the team, he injured himself while batting in the first innings and as a result could not bowl.

Excluding yesterday's ODI, Bangladesh have played 286 ODIs so far and slow left-armers have featured in 275 of those.

Other such instances include Bangladesh's tour of South Africa in October 2002. In that tour, Bangladesh played three ODIs without any left-arm spinners. Bangladesh's first five ODIs -- from 1986 to 1988 -- also did not feature any slow left-arm.

Razzak could consider himself a bit unlucky not to be included in yesterday's match since conditions at the National Stadium in Grenada were ideal for his turners.

Will the defeat compel the think-tank to act differently in the next ODI on Friday?

YOUTH OLYMPIC GAMES
Hockey team's campaign ends in misery

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh five-a-side hockey team finished their 2nd Summer Youth Olympic Games campaign with fourth consecutive defeat as they went down 3-4 defeat to South Africa in their last pool match at Nanjing YOG Sports Park Hockey Field in China yesterday.

Bangladesh, who had lost 1-9 against Spain, 2-5 against Australia and 1-4 against Canada, produced a tie at 3-3 at one stage against South Africa before conceding the decisive goal in the last moment of the third and final quarter.

Naimuddin, Fazle Hossain Rabbi and Deen Islam struck one goal apiece for Bangladesh.

WI, Gibson part ways

AFP, St. John's

The West Indies parted ways with coach Ottis Gibson on Tuesday, just a day ahead of a home one-day series against Bangladesh.

The West Indies Cricket Board (WICB) said the two sides "mutually agreed to terminate their association" with team manager Richie Richardson stepping in as interim coach.

No reason was given for the departure of Gibson, who had been in charge since 2010 and led the West Indies to the World Twenty20 title in 2012.

However, West Indies are currently eighth in the Test rankings, the lowest among the established nations, eighth in the one-day rankings and seventh in the Twenty20 rankings.

The Bangladesh series comes as the West Indies build up to the one-day World Cup early next year. Ex-captain Clive Lloyd was named head of a new-look selection panel earlier this month.

"On behalf of the Board and West Indies cricket as a whole we express our gratitude to Ottis for his work," WICB chief executive officer Michael Muirhead said in a statement.

The WICB thanked Gibson for his "unwavering commitment and professionalism" in his role as head coach, a position he occupied for four years and for which he had signed a contract extension only last year that would have taken him to 2016.

Tigers lose despite Anamul ton

NAIMUL KARIM

If the Tigers were worried about their ODI record this year before yesterday's game then their level of anxiety would have doubled after the match. This is the second time this year that Bangladesh have lost after having come so close to victory. After 15 overs of the second innings, with the hosts struggling at 34 for 5, Bangladesh would have thought that the game was done and dusted.

Surely a repeat of the disaster that took place in Mirpur earlier this February -- where the Tigers had reduced Sri Lanka to 67 for 8 and went on to lose the game -- could not have been on the cards again.

However, an outstanding century stand between Denesh Ramdin and Kieron Pollard for the sixth wicket, which saw them hammer 145 runs in 21.5 overs,

turned the match in a jiffy and led the West Indies to a tense three-wicket win over the visitors with more than ten overs remaining.

Anamul Haque's gritty century had earlier helped Bangladesh post 217 for nine after being put in to bat.

With the average score at the National Stadium hovering around the 260s, the hosts would not have had much to worry about.

But a brilliant opening spell from Mashrafe Bin Mortaza and Shohag Gazi -- giving away only ten runs for one wicket in the first six overs -- put the pressure right back on the hosts.

Runs became hard to come and the pressure started to build on the hosts as they lost three wickets in the space of three overs.

Darren Bravo edged one to the keeper in the tenth, Kirk Edwards attempted an audacious sweep

shot against Mahmudullah Riyad only to get bowled in the next over and then Al-Amin Hossain came back to remove in-form Lendl Simmons with another

outswinger. An over later Dwayne Bravo, West Indies' highest run-scorer this year, lazily pulled one to deep mid-wicket and the hosts found themselves in a precarious

position at 34 for 5.

However, that's where Bangladesh's domination began to recede.

Ramdin and Pollard, both in-form, fine hitters of the ball, launched a brilliant counter-attack. It began with Pollard smacking Al-Amin straight back down the ground right before drinks break in the 16th over.

That was followed by Taskin Ahmed getting smacked for 20 runs in three overs. The pacer did manage to clock the fastest ball of the game -- 145.6 km/hr -- but struggled with his line. Ramdin joined in the party in the 19th over by launching Mahmudullah for a six over long-off.

Pollard ended up hammering 89 off 70 balls while Ramdin was bowled by Gazi after scoring a 76-ball 74.

The runs continued to pile on and by the end of the 30th over they needed just 81 more runs to

win. A target they achieved despite losing both Pollard and Ramdin towards the end.

Anamul's third ODI century was the only bright spot in Bangladesh's batting. On a slow track, the opener was the only Bangladesh batsman to judge the nature of the wicket and milk the runs while the majority of the top order threw their wickets away trying to increase the run-rate.

After getting a few streaky boundaries down the third-man in the initial stages, Anamul dabbled Chris Gayle for a single to reach his 50 off 74 balls in the 28th over. Seven of his 12 boundaries came in the last eight overs of the game. He reached his century in the 49th over with a thumping drive on the off side off Ravi Rampaul. Anamul smacked West Indies' premier pacer for two more boundaries before getting trapped in front off Dwayne Bravo in the last ball of the innings.

No option other than MS!

REUTERS, Mumbai

Beleaguered India skipper Mahendra Singh Dhoni appears set to retain his Test captaincy role -- if he has the desire to continue -- due to a sheer lack of alternative options to take on the job after yet another calamitous overseas tour.

India's propensity for foreign failures was exposed in 2011 when the side lost eight consecutive Tests with back-to-back 4-0 thrashings in England and Australia.

If fans in the world's second-most populous nation, where cricket is treated like a religion, thought that period was the lowest point possible, they were in for a rude awakening when India landed in England for a recent five-Test series.

Dhoni's garden appeared very rosy indeed when his unfancied side claimed their first overseas win in three years with a comprehensive second Test victory at Lord's but the joy and relief proved to be nothing more than a decorative flower.

They capitulated meekly against a resurgent England in the next three matches, the final nail hammered into their coffin at The Oval when they lost by an innings and 244 runs and in less than three days to slump to a 3-1 series defeat.

While coach Duncan Fletcher saw his role reduced after the disastrous Test segment of the tour with the Indian board moving quickly to appoint Ravi Shastri as director of cricket, there was barely a murmur on Dhoni's fate.

In the 20 Test matches Dhoni has led India outside the country since their 2011 50-over World Cup triumph on home soil, the team has emerged victorious on just two occasions while the defeats column has moved rapidly on to an embarrassing 13.

It was not always doom and gloom for the hard-hitting wicketkeeper-batsman from the eastern Indian state of Jharkhand,

who enjoyed a meteoric rise in popularity after his one-day international debut in 2004 and first Test cap a year later.

As a rookie captain of India's Twenty20 side in 2007, he guided his men to victory in the inaugural World Cup in South Africa and was handed the reins of the Test team later that year after Rahul Dravid stepped down.

His dashing performances made him a poster boy of Indian cricket, probably second only in popularity to batting maestro Sachin Tendulkar, due to his no-nonsense attitude and possession of an uncanny Midas touch.

As captain, the 33-year-old took India to the number one Test ranking, added the 50-over title to his resume in 2011, after a gap of 28 years, and also won the Champions Trophy in England to forge a permanent place in Indian cricket folklore.

His records probably never allowed administrators to look beyond him as the team's figurehead or put in place a succession plan as Dhoni continues to lead India in Tests, ODIs and the shortest Twenty20 format.

When a much-criticised Dhoni was able to keep his job after the 2011 humblings in England and Australia, the general consensus is that it will be up to the player himself to decide when he steps down or hand the reins over to someone else.

Making matters even worse is the fact that following the retirement of several senior cricketers in the past few years, India do not have a single viable option able to step in and replace Dhoni.

Rising star Virat Kohli was considered a possible alternative but the 25-year-old batsman's woeful form in England means he probably needs time to sort out his own problems before shouldering the extra burden of captaincy.

India's leading national dailies and social media users have been united in their condemnation of the disastrous Test series in England with Dhoni and Fletcher bearing the brunt of the collective anger.

Pakistan stun archrivals India

AFP, Bangalore

Pakistan pulled off a surprise 2-0 win over India Wednesday, with a late goal from Saddam Hussain ensuring them a share of the spoils in the first football series between the arch-rivals for almost a decade.

Pakistan's captain Kaleemullah put his side ahead in the 38th minute and a scrambled shot by Hussain in the 89th minute silenced the 5,000 Indian spectators at the Bangalore Football Stadium.

The home fans had been hoping for more of the same after India won the first match on Sunday 1-0.

Sk Russel start camp

SPORTS REPORTER



Sheikh Russel KC began their preparation camp for the AFC President's Cup at the BUET ground yesterday, but the start was not a very pleasant one for interim coach Jakaria Babu as only eight players turned up for training, out of which two refrained from training due to sickness and injury.

The coach worked with former Mohammedan goalkeeper Mamun Karim, winger Zahid Hossain and Sheikh Russel's old guns Shakil Ahmed, Rezaul Karim, Jewel Rana and Fazle Rabbi while Mithun Chowdhury, suffering from jaundice and former Mohammedan striker Zahid Hasan Emily, nursing a knee injury, watched the training from the bench.

Meanwhile, Wali Faisal, Jamal Hossain, Shahed Alam from Abahani and left-back Ashraf Mahmud Linkon of Sheikh Russel KC -- all of whom were supposed to join the train-

ing, were allegedly asked by their current club not to join the camp as the season is not over yet.

Hemanta Vincent Bishwas and Tapu Barman of Mohammedan and Atiqur Rahman Meshu of Abahani have also been in Sheikh Russel squad but are currently in the training camp of the national U-23 team for Asian Games.

"Our target is to do something good like we did in the qualifying round and I believe if I can get all the players together in the training, we will produce good results," said coach Babu.

The former Team BJMC coach, however, could not give a clear idea about the members of his squad.

"We have sent letters to five clubs to release their players in the greater interest of football as we (Sheikh Russel) will be representing Bangladesh in AFC President's Cup. We hope the remaining players will join soon," said Sale Jamal Selim, sports director of Sheikh Russel KC.

The final round of AFC President's Cup will be held in Sri Lanka from September 20.

Abul set for return

SPORTS REPORTER



After a gap of nearly a year and a half from international cricket, pacer Abul Hasan has returned to the fray. His inclusion in Bangladesh A's preliminary squad for the series against Zimbabwe A in September -- announced yesterday by the BCB -- reflects the bowler's grit and determination.

The bowler, who last played competitive cricket in March 2013, underwent two risky surgeries on his back and went through a long rehabilitation process before eventually beginning to bowl in the first match of the year.

"It was a dangerous phase in my career. There was a chance for my career to end. But

I am back now. I have been bowling in the nets for two months and I feel a lot better than before. I just want everyone to continue praying for me," Abul told The Daily Star.

"Throughout my rehabilitation phase I thought of Mashrafe (Bin Mortaza) bhai. I kept telling myself that if he can bowl after eight surgeries, I can return as well," he added.

The player shot to fame during the second Test against the West Indies in Khulna in 2012 when he became the second number 10 batsman to score a century on debut in the history of Test cricket. Like Taskin Ahmed, Abul is one of Bangladesh's brighter fast bowlers.

Back in action, the bowler's immediate aim is to get selected for the main Bangladesh A team against Zimbabwe A.

A. In the longer term, he harbours hopes of breaking into the main team before the World Cup next year.

A host of national discards have been named in the preliminary squad.

Former national vice-captain Shahriar Nafees, who last featured for Bangladesh in the first Test of the Tigers' Zimbabwe tour in April 2013, has been included in the 22-member squad.

Top order batsmen Junaed Siddique and Rokibul Hasan have also been included. The last time Junaed played he scored a half-century for North Zone in the finals of the Bangladesh Cricket League (BCL).

The series against Zimbabwe A is expected to begin on September 17. As per the current schedule the teams are expected to play two four-day games and three one-dayers.