

Can Tigers turn the tables?

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Bangladesh have gradually been delving into one of their worst ODI performances in a calendar year. And the current stats -- 11 defeats in 12 matches -- are likely to get worse at St Kitts today, unless Mushfiqur Rahim and company can miraculously gain their confidence levels back.

The last time the Tigers went winless in their first 12 ODIs of a year was in 2003 when they ended up losing 20 off their 21 matches. The year before that was not as fruitful either, with the Tigers losing 13 out of the 14 ODIs.

To naked eyes, Bangladesh's problem is quite clear. The top-order needs to come to

the party. Apart from Anamul Haque and Tamim Iqbal none of their batsmen have managed to score more than 40 runs in this series so far and that is an alarming sign.

Imrul Kayes is not having the best of comebacks into ODI cricket, Shamsur Rahman is clearly having problems with the shorter delivery, Mahmudullah Riyad's absent-minded approach is not helping and captain Mushfiqur suddenly seems to be under pressure against the spinners.

While the problem is obvious, there seems to be no path to address the issue. The Tigers seem to be reeling on the setback that they had after the first ODI which they gave away after having a stranglehold over the hosts.

A lot will depend on the way Anamul and Tamim -- their best batsmen in the series so

far -- start the innings. They will need to put up a good stand in order to instil confidence in the rest of the batsmen.

For inspiration, they don't need to look too far behind. The last time the two teams faced at St Kitts, the Tigers chased down 249 with three wickets remaining.

The bowling, on the contrary, has been steady. Their pacers, Al-Amin Hossain and Mashrafe Bin Mortaza have been giving them great starts and endings. Al-Amin's slower deliveries out foxed a number of West Indian batsmen in the last game and he bowled with a lot of conviction in the death overs. With six wickets, he is currently the highest wicket-taker of the series.

Mashrafe, too seems to have found his rhythm back. His bowling, especially in the

death overs, seemed to have vastly improved in the last game. His figures of 3 for 39 in the last ODI reflect his best bowling figures in the last four years.

West Indies, on the other hand, seem to be running on special performances from their players. Kieron Pollard and Denesh Ramdin shared a cracker of a partnership in the first ODI, while Sunil Narine ran through Bangladesh's batsmen in the second. Coach, or no coach, Dwayne Bravo's men seem to be doing fine.

The third and final ODI, in essence, may be a dead rubber. However, with the BCB's administration visibly irritated at the players' performance, the result of this match could very well influence a few decisions at the upcoming board meeting at Mirpur this week.

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Former national captain Akram Khan criticised the manner in which Bangladesh players batted in their 177-run defeat at the West Indies in the second ODI on Friday. He also said that the entire team management will be 'questioned' on the side's poor performance after the series.

Akram, who heads Bangladesh Cricket Board's cricket operations committee, believed that Bangladesh's batters needed to show more patience in the series.

"I felt really bad. I hoped that we would do well after the first game. We played away below our standard in all departments in the second ODI. It's not that the players are not working hard but the batsmen have just not been able to get to their targets.

"Generally a batsman takes his time and aims to play 50 overs. This did not happen. This is the main problem. It will be very difficult if the series continues this way," Akram told reporters at the Sher-e-Bangla National Cricket Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.

He further said that the operations committee would dig deeper into the issue after the series.

"No matter how high profile a coach is or the players or the selectors are, there has to be an answer for this performance. We will discuss as to how we can come out of these issues at the end of the series.

"However, asking them to give answers does not mean that they will be suspended if they don't perform well. It's just a process to figure out how things can work better," said Akram.

As of now, Akram hopes that his players can regain their confidence levels for the rest of the tour.

"The national team's confidence level fluctuates quickly. If they can play two good matches their confidence will increase. On the other hand, if they lose two matches, it goes away. We brought two psychologists in the past and tried to fix this issue. We are trying our best. I believe that this team can do well," said Akram.



AKRAM KHAN



Shohag's action reported

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Bangladesh off-spinner Shohag Gazi has been reported for a suspect bowling action during his side's 177-run loss in the second ODI against West Indies in Grenada on Friday.

An ICC press release stated that the match officials' report cited concerns about the legality of the 23-year-old's bowling action for all deliveries.

Shohag's bowling action will now be scrutinised further under the ICC process relating to suspected bowling actions. He is required to undergo testing within 21 days, and, during this period, Shohag is permitted to continue bowling in international cricket until the results of the tests are known.

Shohag faced similar allegations back in 2012 when an umpire at the Shafi Darashah tournament in Bangalore reported him for his quicker delivery. He had to go through a few checks before being able to play first-class cricket again.

BFF bans Maruf for one year

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The Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) yesterday came up with two drastic measures regarding discipline and sanctity of football, as it suspended celebrated coach Maruful Hauque from domestic football for one year for 'breach of code of conduct' and brandished punishment of varying measures on two championship league clubs for colluding to play a fixed match. The decision was made in a Professional Football League Committee (PLFC) meeting with Abdus Salam Murshedy in the chair.

Maruf has been suspended for making disparaging comments against the BFF, specifically demand-

ing removal of the entire PLFC, alleging to favour another big club while he was in charge of Sheikh Russel KC in February this year.

"The comments he had made to the media against the BFF high-ups are in violation of the BFF code of conducts. Issues like these can only be addressed by the club president, not the coach. In light of violation of code of conduct, he has been suspended from all football activities for one year and fined Tk 30,000", said Murshedy after the meeting.

Maruf had criticised the PLFC for twice postponing a match against Sheikh Jamal DC. However, the then Sheikh Russel coach had apologised after being served a show-cause notice by BFF for his remarks.

However, the final decision and the

severity of the punishment, which came more than five months after the incident, raised questions about the intention of the decision. Maruf, who is currently in UK completing coaching course UEFA A license part-II, could not be reached for a comment.

Meanwhile, this was not the only a surprising decision that emerged from yesterday's meeting. The PLFC also slapped Farashganj Sporting Club and Wari Club with point reduction, official and player suspension and monetary fine for playing a fixed match during the Bangladesh Championship League in the 2003-2014 season.

The decision, although praised in general, raised a few eyebrows as Wari Club found three of their officials and four of their players suspended for

different terms, in addition to monetary fine (Tk 4 lacs) and point reduction (6 points); Farashganj got away with only monetary fine (Tk 5 lacs) and point reduction (nine points).

The decision came after the fixed-match identification committee had, on August 16, come to the conclusion that the match on May 21 this year, which Farashganj won 3-2, was a fixed one.

"No official or player of Farashganj SC admitted to playing a fixed match to the match-fixing identification committee. Hence we could not suspend any individual. But since it has appeared to us that they did play a fixed match, we punished the club," said Murshedy explaining why no Farashganj official or player were suspended for the offence.

Nepal arrive today

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The Nepal national U-23 football team will arrive in Dhaka today to play two FIFA A-category friendly matches against Bangladesh national U-23 team, as part of both teams' preparation for September's Asian Games.

The first match will be held at the Army Stadium in Dhaka tomorrow while the second match will be held on August 29 in Sylhet, which is going to host its first ever international football match.

"Since the pitches at the Bangabandhu National Stadium and the Kamalapur Stadium are in poor condition due to water-logging following incessant rain, we have decided to take the first match to the Army Stadium, which is comparatively in better condition," said BFF vice president Tabith M Awal during a press conference at the BFF House yesterday. Tabith also informed that the decision to hold the second match in Sylhet has been taken in order to spread international football at district level.

The visiting Nepal U-23 team will virtu-

ally get no time to practise as they would arrive here at 5:00pm today and travel to BKSP straight from the Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport.

"We have fixed the schedule after consulting with the All Nepal Football Association (ANFA) and we had no alternative due to the flight schedule of Biman Bangladesh Airlines. Besides, the hosts always take home advantage. However, Nepal will get enough time to practice before the second match," said Tabith, who is also a member of National Teams Committee.

The two matches will be sponsored by steel manufacturing company SS Steel. The company's chairman Kazi Shakil announced that they would bear all the expenditure regarding the two matches.

National team's assistant coach Rene Koster said they are taking the two matches seriously and want to win both matches rather than experiment ahead of the Asian Games.

Koster urged spectators to turn up in big numbers at both matches to support the home side. The price of gallery tickets for both matches has been fixed at Tk 20.

Kvitova takes New Haven title

AFP, New Haven

Reigning Wimbledon champion Petra Kvitova won her second WTA Connecticut Open title in three years Saturday, defeating Slovakia's Magdalena Rybarikova 6-4, 6-2 in the US Open warm-up event.

Fourth-ranked Kvitova, the 2012 New Haven winner who lost to Simona Halep in last year's final, will be the women's third seed when the year's last Grand Slam tournament begins Monday in New York.

"It was great to win the title. I'm very happy to play the final like that," Kvitova said. "Hopefully I can show that at the US Open."

India to start anew ODI series against Eng from today

PTI, Bristol



Their morale battered by the Test series debacle, India would look to make a fresh beginning and salvage lost pride when they take on England in a five-match ODI series starting in Bristol on Monday.

On one hand, the Indians will be distracted by the 1-3 series loss in the Test series prior and will want to do well in the ODIs, on the other, they will also need to balance their approach keeping next year's World Cup in mind.

That tournament, to be hosted by Australia and New Zealand, is now just six months away. From here onwards, every ODI played by the Indian team will be a preparatory step towards defending their 2011 crown Down Under.

And to do so, they will be evaluating players in the three ODI series between now and the World Cup -- in England, at home against West Indies and then the tri-series on the Australian tour.

Already, the selectors have taken stock of the situation at hand and the 17-man squad is a reflection of their thoughts.

Sanju Samson and Karn Sharma represent their line of thinking in that the squad will need an additional wicket-keeper as well as a probable third spin-bowling all-round option.

4th Super Cup from Oct 25

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The Professional Football League Committee (PFLC) yesterday decided to start this year's Super Cup from October 25.

"If everything goes in the right direction, the fourth edition of Super Cup will start on October 25 and the executive committee of BFF will fix the number of participating teams," said PFLC chairman Abdus Salam Murshedy.

The executive committee's earlier decision was to organise the tournament with top six teams of the recently-concluded professional football league.

The league committee also decided to hold the players' transfer for the 2014-15 Bangladesh Premier League over Nov 22-Dec 11.

US Open starts today

Focus remains on Roger, Serena

AFP, New York



Roger Federer hopes to mark the 10th anniversary of his first US Open title with a sixth triumph in New York and become the oldest Grand Slam champion in more than 40 years. The final major event of the year starts at Flushing Meadows today.

In an astonishing reversal of fortunes, the 33-year-old, written off as a relic of the game when he slipped to a fourth round loss to Tommy Robredo 12 months ago, finds himself perfectly positioned to win a staggering 18th major.

Buoyed by claiming a sixth Cincinnati title -- his 80th career crown -- and with long-time rival Rafael Nadal again sidelined with injury, the Swiss is relishing the twilight of his career.

On the other hand, Serena Williams is taking nothing for granted as she vies for a third straight US Open title, which would put her alongside two greats of the game.

The 32-year-old once known for stepping up her game when it mattered most has thrice been thwarted in 2014 in her bid to join Chris Evert and Martina Navratilova as 18-time Grand Slam singles champions.

Although she has lifted five WTA trophies this year, she has failed to make it past the fourth round at the Australian Open, French Open or Wimbledon.

Federer's last-16 loss to Robredo in 2013 in New York meant it was the first year since 2002 that he had failed to make a Grand Slam final. The defeat also marked the first time in 10 years that he hadn't made at least the last-eight at Flushing Meadows.

Suddenly, his five consecutive US Open titles from 2004-2008 appeared a detail in history and his 17th and most recent major success -- the 2012 Wimbledon title -- looked certain to be his last.

WALTON

আমাদের পণ্য

রেফ্রিজারেটর কেনার সময় ফ্রিজার পাট বড় এবং ফ্রিজার পাটে তাপমাত্রা ন্যূনতম মাইনাস 18°C নিশ্চিত হয়ে কিনুন, যা আমাদের দেশের খাদ্যাভ্যাস আবহাওয়া ও পরিবেশের জন্য খুবই জরুরি।

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