

# Views split on split-captaincy

SPORTS REPORTER



Bangladesh's dismal run in international cricket this year led to the Bangladesh Cricket Board's (BCB's) directors discussing the possibility of introducing a split-captaincy policy. One of the points of discussion during the board meeting last week was regarding the possibility of Mushfiquir Rahim shouldering too much stress. Questions were also raised regarding the captain's strategy in a number of ODIs this year.

As an alternative some of the directors suggested that a different ODI captain be named, with pacer Mashrafe Bin Mortaza leading that front.

While the policy is not finalised as yet, there have already been several opinions on the issue among the cricketing fraternity.

Former national captain Khaled Mashud is against the policy and believes that merely changing the captain cannot turn things around for Bangladesh.

"I am personally happy with the way Mushfiquir captained. I don't think there is any point blaming him. When the entire team is not performing there's no point even if you bring Mahendra Singh [Dhoni] to lead the side. None of the players have performed well," said Mashud.

"Yes, Mushfiquir may have made mistakes [strategic] but I believe that's because none of the other senior players are managing to provide him with enough ideas to implement. So there are times when he has to do things alone. The other players need to take part in this aspect," he added.

Mashud also believes that there's no good enough alternative.

"Countries like India and Australia have many senior players. Do we have someone who can lead apart from Mushfiquir? Sure Mashrafe is available. But is he fit enough to take charge? He has a separate pressure all together," said Mashud.

On the other hand, former national captain Roquibul Hasan believes that a split-captaincy would be good for the national team as it would relieve some pressure off Mushfiquir.

"I think it will be a positive move if it happens. Mushfiquir currently is a three-in-one player. He is technically the side's best batsman. When you're the captain and the best batsman of a side that is struggling with it's batting, that's a heavy toll," said Roquibul.

"Like in the last ODI he missed a sitter (stumping). The present day scenario shows that every team follows a different line-up in the different formats," he added.

However, like Mashud Roquibul believes that an alternate captain will be hard to find.

"Presently Mashrafe is an automatic choice if he is fit. But the selectors should look into this matter and start grooming a future captain from now on. He should not just be a good batsman, but also have a good brain, strategy and be someone who can face the media," he said.

Echoing Roquibul's thoughts, chief selector Faruque Ahmed believed that such a change 'would not be a bad idea'.

"In a majority of the countries they have separate captains for all the formats. What happens is that the pressure is shared. I think apart from India most of the countries are doing this. It won't be a bad idea," said Faruque.



PHOTO: STAR

Nepal U-23 goalkeeper Alan Neupane catches the ball under pressure from Bangladesh U-23 striker Wahed Ahmed (2nd from R) during their international friendly match at the Sylhet District Stadium yesterday. The visitors won the match 1-0.

## Nepal win frenetic Sylhet friendly

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The two-match SS Steel International Friendly Series ended all square after hosts Bangladesh U-23 suffered a 0-1 defeat against their Nepalese counterparts at the Sylhet

District Stadium yesterday.

Substitute midfielder Sushil KC struck the all-important goal for Nepal in the 78th minute to beat the hosts, who had won the first match of the series by the same scoreline in Dhaka on Tuesday.

However, it was not the match itself but the mismanagement on the part of the local organisers, the uneven playing surface and the feisty attitude from both sets of players that marked the first international football match held in Sylhet.

The organisers, who had allegedly sold more than 10,000 tickets above the 25,000-capacity, struggled to get a grip on the number of spectators waiting to enter the stadium. At one point, thousands of frenzied spectators broke through the main gate and thronged by the touchline, forcing a one-hour delay to the start of the match.

Once the match started, the visitors controlled proceedings and almost snatched a lead in the 10th minute, but midfielder Bhola Nath Silwal's tame effort from close range let the visitors down. The visitors had the upper hand in the first half in terms of possession but they could hardly break the backbone of Bangladesh, who fielded the same squad from the one that beat Nepal in the first match.

The match had an ugly look about it all through as players of both sides, especially the hosts, were committing dangerous fouls and argued over every decision referee Jasim Uddin made.

The hosts appeared to better composed from the start of the second half, even though the striking pair -- Wahed Ahmed and Toklish Ahmed, both from Sylhet -- failed to pose much of a threat to the opposition.

However, the hosts were unlucky not to take the lead in the 64th minute when midfielder Hemanta Vincent Biswas's powerful shot from 25 yards out came off the crossbar. Nepal, though, found the goal they were desperate for in the 78th minute when Rabin Shrestha's cross from the left was turned in beautifully with a left-footed drive by Sushil which zoomed past Bangladesh goalkeeper Liton to the near post.

The hosts, who had made a number of changes in the second half, failed to create any goals-coring chances in the rest of the match, leaving the frenzied spectators with little to cheer about and more importantly, a big question mark over their preparation for the upcoming Asian Games.

Bangladesh's head Coach Lodewijk de Kruif blamed the players for not concentrating too much on the game.

"I'm very disappointed with the performance of our players. My motto is to protect my players because they are like my children, but today they were not ready to play in front of 40 to 50 thousand people," said the Dutchman, who however gave credit to the Nepalese and felt they deserved the victory.

## Hockey team back to Dhaka

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Having trained at the Bangladesh Krira Shikkha Protisthan (BKSP) for the last 12 weeks, the national hockey team returned to Dhaka yesterday to take part in the World Hockey League (Round-1), which is set to get underway from September 5 at the Maulana Bhasani National Hockey Stadium.

With Sri Lanka and Hong Kong being the other teams in the tournament, hosts Bangladesh are hoping to move to the next round as champions. Bangladesh, who beat both these teams on home ground in the Asian Games Qualifiers in March this year, had a good preparation at the BKSP where they also played a three-match series against India earlier this month.

Bangladesh will face Sri Lanka on September 5 before taking on Hong Kong on September 7.

The World Hockey League, which was introduced in 2012, is a qualifying tournament where Bangladesh reached the second round last year after emerging champions in the first round. Bangladesh put on a brilliant performance in the second round where they beat China, Oman and Fiji but lost against hosts India and Ireland to be eliminated.

Bangladesh coach Naveed Alam not only wants his team qualify for the Round-2 of the four-phase league, but also wants them to prepare in best possible way for the Asian Games to be held from September 19 to October 4.

Team manager Anvir Adil Khan informed that the players have checked in at the Maulana Bhasani Hockey Stadium's dormitory which has been renovated recently at a cost of approximately Tk 60 lakh. The players will move to Hotel FARS on September 4 before the start of the World Hockey League and return to dormitory after the completion of the tournament, where they will stay till leaving here for Korea for the Asian Games.

## Gazi out of WI Tests

SPORTS REPORTER

Off-spinner Shohag Gazi has been withdrawn from the Test series against the West Indies due to begin on September 5. The team management will decide on a replacement for the spinner today.

The 23-year-old, who was reported for a suspect action during the second ODI against the West Indies on August 22, needs to have his action tested in an ICC-accredited facility within two weeks of being reported.

As a result, the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) has decided to withdraw the player from the series and complete the due processes as soon as possible. There are three possible replacements to take his place in the Caribbean, with Elias Sunny a leading candidate along with Mukhter Ali and Jubair Likhon.

"He will need to go through a visa process and then have his action tested. We also need to know his results as soon as possible. Therefore we decided to bring him back," chief selector Faruque Ahmed told The Daily Star.

According to a BCB official, Gazi is likely to get his action tested on September 19. It approximately takes around two weeks for the results of the test to arrive.

The other players who will be returning along with Gazi are Mohammad Mithun, Mashrafe Bin Mortaza, Taskin Ahmed and Abdur Razzak.

Robiul Islam, Shafiul Islam, Taijul Islam and Shuvagata Hom have been sent to the West Indies to join Bangladesh's Test side.

## Sharma ruled out of series

Eng-Ind 3rd ODI today

AFF, Nottingham

India opener Rohit Sharma has been ruled out of the remainder of the one-day series in England after suffering a broken finger, it was announced Friday.

Murali Vijay will fly to England as his replacement but is unlikely to arrive in time for Saturday's third one-day international at Nottingham's Trent Bridge ground.

Sharma appeared to sustain the injury while fielding during world champions India's 133-run win in the second ODI in Cardiff on Wednesday after making 52 when the tourists batted.

A statement issued by the Board of Control for Cricket in India said: "Rohit Sharma has sustained a fracture on the middle finger of his right hand, and has been ruled out of the ongoing ODI and T20 International Series against England, as a result."

It added: "The All-India senior selection committee has picked Murali Vijay as his replacement.

"Vijay will join the squad in England at the earliest."

India's win in Cardiff left them 1-0 up in the five-match series.

## 3-on-3 b'ball underway

SPORTS REPORTER

Cityc Open 3-on-3 Basketball Championship kicked off at the Dhanmondi Basketball Gymnasium yesterday, with 23 teams split into four groups taking part in the two-day event.

A total of 26 matches took place in the opening day. The event was inaugurated by the president of Bangladesh Basketball Federation Mostafa Jalal Mohiuddin where sponsor Citycell's head of corporate communications Taslim Ahmed was also present as special guest. The final will take place today at 4:30pm at the same venue.

# Utseya hattrick goes in vain

REUTERS, Harare



South Africa survived a batting collapse precipitated by a hattrick from spinner Prosper Utseya to beat Zimbabwe by 61 runs in the third match of the triangular series on Friday.

Utseya, who finished with career-best figures of five for 36, became only the second Zimbabwean to take a hattrick in a one-day international as South Africa delivered an off-key batting performance to be bowled out for 231.

But Zimbabwe, with their best chance of rare win over a major cricketing power, fell well short of the target as they were bowled out for 170 off 38.3 overs.

South Africa, who convincingly beat Australia thanks to a fine batting display on Wednesday, raced to 142 after 24 overs before stand-in captain Hashim Amla was stumped off Utseya for 66.

Five runs later fellow opener Quinton de Kock also departed, caught for a run-a-ball 76 as he tried to reverse sweep to become the first of Utseya's hat-trick victims.

Rilee Rossouw was caught at first slip from the next ball and the big-hitting David Miller was trapped lbw as Utseya bowled an attacking line to the left-hander.

Utseya took his fifth wicket when he trapped JP Duminy lbw.

South African wickets continued to tumble at regular intervals as they teetered at 195 for nine with seven overs left before a last-wicket partnership of 36 lifted them to a more respectable total.

Imran Tahir made 23 not out to ensure the visitors used up all but one ball of their allocated 50 overs.

Impressive hitting from Sikandar Raza and Hamilton Masakadza gave Zimbabwe a confident start but spinner Aaron Phangiso bowled the beefy Masakadza with his fourth ball and uprooted the wicket of the danger-



Zimbabwe off-spinner Prosper Utseya holds up the match ball after his five-wicket haul, which included a hattrick, during the triangular series ODI against South Africa at the Harare Sports Club yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

ous Brendan Taylor for a duck.

Sean Williams and Malcolm Waller put together a 46-run fifth wicket partnership but Waller was caught off a short delivery from Dale Steyn and Williams, who top-scored for Zimbabwe with 46 runs off 79 balls, holed out to Amla at midwicket off Ryan McLaren.

SCORES IN BRIEF

SOUTH AFRICA: 231 all out in 49.5 overs (Amla 66, De Kock 76, Du Plessis 15, Tahir 23 not out; Chatara 2-28, Utseya 5-36)

ZIMBABWE: 170 all out in 38.3 overs (Raza 35, Masakadza 25,

Williams 46, Waller 20, Chigumbura 22; Steyn 3-36, Phangiso 2-33, McLaren 3-24)

Result: South Africa won by 61 runs.

Player-of-the-match: Prosper Utseya.

## Tigers begin 3-dayer today

SPORTS REPORTER

With a view to fine tune skills before the two-match Test series, the Tigers play a three-day practice match against St Kitts and Nevis starting from today at the Warner Park in St Kitts.

"The weather is fine at this moment and the boys are now practising. Everybody is looking forward to the Test series and the three-day match will help the boys to change gears," said selector cum team operation manager Habibul Bashar over telephone yesterday.

"The team had a good outing and we had a meeting after the only T20 match was washed out. What has happened in the ODI series has happened; now the boys are fully focused on the Test series and they are eager to achieve something in the series," said the former national skipper.

Bangladesh's confidence is at a low following one defeat after another this year and the batsmen should look to score some runs (weather permitting) in the three-dayer to regain confidence after their 3-0 defeat in the ODI series.

After the practice match, the Tigers will fly for St Vincent where they play the first Test from September 5 to 9 and the second and final Test will take place in St Lucia from September 13 to 17.

# Top seeds sail through

AFF, New York



Novak Djokovic reached the third round of a Grand Slam for the 25th consecutive time while Serena Williams racked up her 80th US Open

win as the top seeds eased into the third round on Thursday.

They were joined in the last 32 by 2012 winner Andy Murray and reigning Wimbledon women's champion Petra Kvitova.

But former world number one Ana Ivanovic, the eighth seed, and 2011 champion Samantha Stosur were knocked out on a day when stiff winds brought new challenges at Flushing Meadows for players already tackling plus-30 degree heat (+90F).

World number one and top seed Djokovic breezed past France's Paul-Henri Mathieu 6-1, 6-3, 6-0, firing 13 aces and 33 winners as the 2011 champion comfortably remained on course for a fifth successive final appearance.

"It's very windy, but I managed to adjust to the conditions that obviously are not easy for myself and my opponent," said Djokovic, who next meets Sam Querrey of the United States, after his brief 90-minute appearance.

World number one Williams, chasing a third successive New York title, her sixth in total and an 18th major, sent 25 winners past Vania King and broke serve six times, wrapping up a 6-1, 6-0 victory on windswept Arthur Ashe Stadium in just 56 minutes.

It was her second win over an American at the tournament this week after beating teenager Taylor Townsend and next she will face another in Varvara Lepchenko for a place in the last 16.

"It's so hard to play in the wind but I am happy to get through a solid match with the conditions today," said the top seed whose colourful leopard print dress was as striking as her tennis.

Eighth-seeded Murray brushed aside 27-year-old German qualifier Matthias

Bachinger, the world number 235, with a convincing 6-3, 6-3, 6-4 win.

Canadian fifth seed Milos Raonic made the third round with a 7-6 (7/4), 5-7, 6-4, 7-6 (7/3) win over German qualifier Peter Gojowczyk on the back of 26 aces and 64 winners.

Eighth-seeded Ana Ivanovic suffered her earliest US Open exit in five years when the former world number one lost 7-5, 6-4 to Karolina Pliskova of the Czech Republic, the world number 42.

Stosur, the 24th seed, squandered two match points in a 3-6, 6-3, 7-6 (10/8) defeat to Estonia's Kaia Kanepi, a six-time Grand Slam quarter-finalist.

There were no such dramas for Kvitova who defeated fellow Czech Petra Cetkovska 6-4, 6-2 while Canadian seventh seed Eugenie Bouchard, the runner-up at Wimbledon, beat Sorana Cirstea of Romania 6-2, 6-7 (4/7), 6-4.

Victoria Azarenka, the runner-up to Williams for the past two years, also made it through, winning nine games in succession from 0-3 down to defeat Christina McHale of the United States 6-3, 6-2.

Fifteen-year-old American CiCi Bellis, who became the youngest winner of a US Open match since 1996 when she won her first round match, went down 6-3, 0-6, 6-2 to Zarina Dijas of Kazakhstan.

Isner, a quarter-finalist in 2011, beat Germany's Jan-Lennard Struff 7-6 (7/5), 6-4, 6-2 while Querrey beat Spain's Guillermo Garcia Lopez for the fourth time in four meetings -- including last week's Winston Salem warm-up -- thanks to a 6-3, 6-4, 6-4 victory.

Australian 19-year-old Nick Kyrgios, who famously defeated Rafael Nadal at Wimbledon, reached the third round by seeing off Italy's Andreas Seppi 6-4, 7-6 (7/2), 6-4.

He will next face Spanish veteran Tommy Robredo who came back from two sets to love down for the seventh time in seeing off Italy's Simone Bolelli 5-7, 6-7 (5/7), 6-4, 6-3, 6-2.