

SPORT

ENIPs line up for BD A

SPORTS REPORTER

Middle-order batsman Rokibul Hasan, along with some other experienced national players, were selected in the Bangladesh A 14-man squad announced yesterday for the first four-day of the two-match series against Zimbabwe A to be held at the Sheikh Kamal International Cricket Stadium, Cox's Bazar from September 14-17.

Marshall Ayub, Naem Islam and pacer Shahadat Hossain have also been drafted in the side but there was no place for Junaed Siddiqui or Shahrir Nafees. "We are not considering Junaed Siddiqui for the longer version while Nafees might not be selected for the first game as we wanted to see some new players," said chief selector Faruque Ahmed.

Under the new policy of ENIP (Experienced National Important Players), the management, under the guidance of new head coach Chandika Hathurusingha wants to make sure that the experienced and discarded national players are being monitored so that there is no shortage when it comes to back-up players for the national side.

Marshall Ayub is likely to lead the team.

Zimbabwe will play the second four-day and three one-day matches against their Bangladesh counterparts at the Fatullah Cricket Stadium.

SQUAD

Liton Kumar Das, Sadman Islam, Marshall Ayub, Farhad Hossain, Rokibul Hasan, Shabbir Rahaman, Naem Islam, Nurul Hasan, Kamrul Islam Rabbi, Zuber Hossain, Saqlain Sajib, Shahadat Hossain, Mohammad Shohid and Muktar Ali.

Change in the air as Tigers seek turnaround

First Test in West Indies starts today

SPORTS REPORTER



The Tigers will not have the joy of reliving their sweet memories of the past when they meet West Indies today in the first Test of the two-match series at the Arnos Vale Ground in St Vincent. It was at this venue where they out-classed a weakened West Indies side by 95 runs in their last trip in 2009. They can also draw inspiration from their drawn match in St. Lucia on the 2004 tour, especially as captain Mushfiqur Rahim and coach Chandika Hathurusingha said a draw was a realistic target for the visitors.

With the home side strongly favoured to continue their dominance in the series after a 3-0 ODI success, the visitors' aim would be to belatedly make a mark on international cricket this year. The weather has been temperamental in the island with rain and sunshine alternating wildly. Bangladesh were scheduled for their last training session ahead of the Test yesterday and the team management will only decide on the final 11 after reviewing the pitch, informed team manager and selector Habibul Bashar.

"True we lost the ODI series badly but it's not an impossible task to draw the Test match, but for

BD-WI HEAD-TO-HEAD						
Matches	W	L	D	Highest score	Bat ave.	Bowl ave.
10	2	6	2	556	27.73	43
Matches in West Indies						
Matches	W	L	D	Highest score	Bat ave.	Bowl ave.
4	2	1	1	416	29.05	36.25
In St. Vincent						
Matches	Date	Result				

that the boys have to work hard and play their best cricket," said former captain Habibul Bashar, who has pleasant memories as a player in the Caribbean.

The team think tank has been contemplating a few positions although it is all but confirmed that 22-year old left-arm spinner from Natore Tajjul Islam is going to make his international debut. Can this young man handle the pressure as the only specialist spinner and take the workload in absence of Shakib Al Hasan, Abdur Razzak and Shohag Gazi?

The Bangladesh team has pinned their hopes on their batsmen to fulfill their desire of drawing the Test series against the high-flying West Indies side due to the fact that they have a very inexperienced bowling attack that lacks variety.

"Our realistic goal would be to draw the game. If we play well, bat well, then we will be in the game. Our bowling stock is limited. We must look to bat deep and bat long, score runs and be in the game," Hathurusingha told ESPNcricinfo.

Given the circumstances will Bangladesh field a batting-heavy side with eight batsmen in the line-up? If not then Bangladesh's alternative would be to choose three pacers and one spinner in Tajjul. Whether Shuvagoto Hom makes his Test debut by dint of his useful spin bowling and impressive performances in the three-day practice match and with the A team remains a big question as well. If he does, then who will be the player to make way?

Whatever line-up is chosen, it would be ridiculous if the axe falls on left-handed batsman Mominul Haque, whose last Test innings was a century against Sri Lanka.

In the end it will be interesting to see how Bangladesh adjust to the longer version from limited-overs cricket after a long break. This is especially crucial considering that they are playing against a team who are desperately looking to make amends under new captain Denesh Ramdin for their series loss to New Zealand in July. The last Test they played was against Sri Lanka at home in February this year.

Hosts take on Lankans today

SPORTS REPORTER



The Bangladesh Hockey Federation (BHF) is all set to host the second edition of the World Hockey League as the Round-1, featuring three teams, gets underway with the hosts taking on Sri Lanka on the opening day today at the Maulana Bhasani Hockey Stadium. Janata Bank, Sonali Bank and Rupali Bank are joint sponsors of the event, and have put up Tk 35 lakh.

Hong Kong is the other team in this group for the first of four rounds. The Round-1, featuring lower-ranked teams, will be held in nine venues across the world and the champions of each venue will advance to Round-2, the stage from which Bangladesh exited in the last edition.

This is only the second edition of the World Hockey League and in the first edition in 2012 Bangladesh emerged champions in Round-1 beating Hong Kong, Singapore and Thailand. They were impressive in the second round too as they beat Fiji, Oman and China but exited after losses to India and Ireland.

Nevertheless, the home side have kept their sights on the next round after emerging group champions but it will not be an easy task as they struggled against Sri Lanka to eke out a 2-2 draw before posting a 3-0 tiebreaker win over their sub-continent opponents during the Asian Games Qualifiers held in Dhaka last April.

Though Hong are ahead of Sri Lanka in the world rankings, in the same qualifiers in April Bangladesh had notched an easy 5-1 win over Hong Kong who had earlier suffered a 6-1 defeat to Bangladesh in the inaugural World Hockey League (Round-1) in 2012.

"During the Asian Games Qualifying tie, we took them lightly and were overconfident in our bid to post a big win and that attitude put us in problem but this time we are taking the Sri Lanka tie seriously and determined to stick to our plan and post a win," said captain Mamunur Rahman Chayan at an official press briefing yesterday.

"The (3-match) series against India last month was a learning one and we want to implement what we have learnt from the India series in the World Hockey League and definitely we want to emerge champions to keep our position intact in the world hockey," said Bangladesh's Pakistani coach Naveed Alam.

Naveed's counterpart, Pakistani Nadeem Ahmed Bhatt, is also hoping to take his side to Round-2 as well as prepare his charges for the upcoming Asian Games where Sri Lanka will be participating after 36 years.

"Obviously, this is going to be a sort of warm-up tournament for the Asian Games because Sri Lanka is going to take part in the Asian Games after 36 years," said Pakistani Nadeem. "Secondly, this is going to be a journey to qualify for the World Cup as well as the Olympic qualifiers, so we are looking forward to qualify for the FIH League-2 which is scheduled in January in Singapore."



Bangladesh captain Mushfiqur Rahim (L) and opening batsman Anamul Haque (R) enjoy the company of St Vincent's Prime Minister Ralph E Gonsalves during an official reception for the Tigers and the West Indians at the prime minister's residence in Kingstown on Wednesday. Team manager and former Test captain Habibul Bashar is also seen. PHOTO: WICB

Booters' practice ends in 3-0 win

SPORTS REPORTER

The Asian Games-bound national U-23 booters rounded off their practice matches with a 3-0 win over the Bangladesh Police AC at the Rajarbagh Police Line ground yesterday. The team leaves here for South Korea to participate in the Games on Sunday.

Coach Lodewijk de Kruif rested all the regular players except Atiqur Rahman Meshu and Yousuf Sifat who played in the 0-1 loss to Nepal on August 29 and, contrary to the scoreline, the second-string side could hardly impress against the third-tier side in the first half which also saw midfielder Abdul Malek sent off after 16 minutes.

However, winger Jewel Rana broke the deadlock, striking in the 55th minute and doubled the lead in the 75th minute before Meshu sealed the team's fourth victory in six practice matches they played since the start of the residential camp at BKSP on August 4.

The U-23 booters had started their warm-up matches with a goalless draw against a BFF XI before winning three successive matches -- two against Bangladesh Army and the other against their Nepal counterparts in the first FIFA friendly. They however suffered an identical 1-0 defeat to Nepal in the second game on August 29.

BFF general secretary Abu Nayeem said that they were sending the team a week before the start of the event so that the players could cope with the conditions.

Minhaz clinches Nat'l B Chess

SPORTS REPORTER

International Master Minhazuddin Ahmed became unbeaten champion in the 40th National B Chess Championship after he drew with FM Aminul Islam in the 11th and final round at the Bangladesh Chess Federation hall yesterday.

Minhazuddin earned nine points to clinch the title as well as qualify for the 14-player National A Championship where five Grand Masters -- Niaz Murshed, Ziaur Rahman, Reefat Bin Sattar, Abdullah Al Rakib and Enamul Hossain -- are supposed to take part directly.

Mahtabuddin Ahmed Robin and Uten earned 8.5 points each but the former became runner-up through tiebreak.

Serena crawls into semis

AFP, New York



Serena Williams roared back from an early deficit to defeat Flavia Pennetta 6-3, 6-2 on Wednesday and book a US Open semifinal clash with Ekaterina Makarova.

Playing in her first Grand Slam quarterfinal of 2014, world number one Williams kept her bid for a third-straight US Open title -- and sixth overall -- alive as she stretched her perfect record over the 11th-seeded Italian to 6-0.

In Makarova she'll face a first-time Grand Slam semifinalist. The 17th-seeded Russian advanced with a 6-4, 6-2 victory over former world number one Victoria Azarenka -- runner-up to Williams the past two years.

In a battle of two 32-year-olds, Williams denied Pennetta a repeat of her best Grand Slam performance -- a semifinal run in New York last year. But the Italian gave Williams some tense moments in the early going, seizing a 3-0 lead with two breaks of serve in just eight minutes.

World number one Williams responded by winning the next six games to take the first frame in less than half an hour.

Although Makarova is in the final four of a Grand Slam for the first time, she goes in knowing she has beaten Williams on one of the game's biggest stages -- in the fourth round of the 2012 Australian Open.

Novak sees Andy off

AP, New York



Novak Djokovic fended off a fading Andy Murray 7-6 (1), 6-7 (1), 6-2, 6-4 in a matchup of past US Open champions to reach the tournament's semifinals for the eighth consecutive year.

It took a while for the No. 1-ranked and No. 1-seeded Djokovic to push himself out front in a well-played, back-and-forth, 3-hour, 32-minute match that ended after 1 am on Thursday.

Djokovic broke the eighth-seeded Murray to go up 3-1 in the third set, then fended off a pair of break points in the next game. On the first, Murray sailed a backhand long to end a 28-stroke point, then leaned over and put a hand on his knee. On the second, he dumped a forehand into the net, then slammed his racket against his right thigh and yelled.

On Saturday, Djokovic will take on 10th-seeded Kei Nishikori, the first man from Japan to reach the US Open semifinals since Ichiya Kumagae in 1918. Nishikori outlasted third-seeded Stan Wawrinka of

Switzerland 3-6, 7-5, 7-6 (7), 6-7 (5), 6-4 earlier Wednesday.

That match lasted more than four hours, and Nishikori managed to shake off any lingering exhaustion from his previous victory, which took 4:19 and ended at 2:26 am Tuesday, equalling the latest finish in tournament history.

For two sets, Djokovic-Murray was reminiscent -- in terms of pure entertainment value and setting, if not quite star power -- of the 2001 classic between Pete Sampras and Andre Agassi, which also was a quarterfinal, and also under the lights at Arthur Ashe Stadium. That one, won by Sampras, featured four tiebreakers, because neither man broke serve even once.

If the sublime-serving Sampras against the terrific-returning Agassi provided a contrast in styles, Djokovic versus Murray was more a case of mirror images. Two of today's top returners, they combined for 11 service breaks, seven by Djokovic, including in the final game. They are also both brilliant baseliners and retrievers, and it helps that they know each other -- and each other's patterns -- so well.

McMillan to coach NZ batting

AFP, Wellington

Former international Craig McMillan was confirmed as New Zealand's batting coach on Thursday, after assuming the role on a temporary basis earlier this year.

McMillan, who played 55 Tests and 197 one-day internationals for the Black Caps, has been given a two-year contract, New Zealand Cricket said in a statement.

The 37-year-old worked as batting coach for the Black Caps tour of the West Indies in July and New Zealand A's recently completed tour of England.

Faf lifts SA to final

REUTERS, Harare



Faf du Plessis smashed a third century in four matches as South Africa beat Zimbabwe by 63 runs on Thursday to set up a final showdown with Australia in the triangular series tournament.

Zimbabwe were bowled out for 208 in reply to South Africa's imposing tally of 271 for six off their 50 overs in the last of the round-robin matches.

It was always going to be difficult for Zimbabwe, who upset Australia in their last match on Sunday, to beat South Africa and make a considerable improvement in their run rate in order to usurp their neighbours and advance to Saturday's series finale.

Zimbabwe needed to overhaul South Africa's total in just 29 overs to

reach the final but fell well short despite wicket keeper Brendan Taylor amassing 79 in 96 balls.

Du Plessis, promoted up the South African batting order to three to fill a void for next year's World Cup, continued to flourish as he scored 121 after smashing five fours and four sixes in his knock.

He and JP Duminy put on a 103-run partnership for the fifth wicket to haul South Africa to a decent tally on a difficult surface with early morning turn for Zimbabwe's spin attack.

SCORES IN BRIEF
SOUTH AFRICA: 271 for 6 in 50 overs (Du Plessis 121, Rossouw 36, De Villiers 16, Duminy 51; Madziva 2-53)
ZIMBABWE: 208 all out in 47.2 overs (Raza 29, Masakadza 26, Taylor 79, Chigumbura 13, Waller 17; Duminy 3-35)
Result: South Africa won by 63 runs.
Player-of-the-match: Faf du Plessis.

SRT expects India to do well in WC

AP, New Delhi

Retired batting maestro Sachin Tendulkar has backed defending champions India to do well at next year's World Cup because of the team's all-round ability.

"India are definitely among the strong contenders for the title," Tendulkar was quoted as saying in Chennai by The Hindu newspaper on Thursday. "It is a well-balanced side and is tough to beat."

The 41-year-old Tendulkar, who retired last year with the most runs and most centuries in both Tests and one-day internationals, praised all facets of the Indian team as it took a 3-0 lead after four games of a five-match ODI series in England.



HISTORY-MAKER: Kei Nishikori of Japan celebrates after beating Stan Wawrinka of Switzerland in the US Open quarterfinals at Flushing Meadows in New York on Wednesday. PHOTO: AFP