

SPORT



Bangladesh superstar Shakib Al Hasan (C) relaxes along with his teammates, indulging in a game of football yesterday, ahead of the third and final Test against Zimbabwe at the Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium in Chittagong today, where the Tigers will seek their first ever 3-0 Test series victory. PHOTO: ANURUP KANTI DAS

It's a problem of education, if he (Balotelli) had been educated, well, he would not be like he is now. --Dutch legend Johan Cruyff on Mario Balotelli's recent



Shakib set to be fully free

SPORTS REPORTER



Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) president Nazmul Hassan Papon yesterday said that he was in favour of lifting the ban on talismanic all-rounder Shakib Al Hasan regarding participating in overseas tournaments.

"We have seen positive changes in Shakib's behaviour and attitude. The senior players, including Shakib, have taken responsibility during the ongoing series [against Zimbabwe]. He can apply for the ban to be lifted and then it depends on the board members, but personally I am in favour of [lifting] it," said Papon while talking to The Daily Star yesterday after returning from an ICC Board meeting.

Shakib was handed a six-month suspension on July 3 and it was significantly reduced on August 26, allowing him to return with a bang against Zimbabwe.

The board's decision to not provide him with No Objection Certificates (NOCs) to play in foreign leagues until December 31, 2015 did not see any change but now it seems that the ban will be reduced, pending formalities.

During the ICC Board meeting in Dubai, the BCB boss discussed the FTP with his counterparts and finalised Bangladesh's first tour of India for a one-off Test in August next year.

"We all but confirmed the next FTP till 2023 with the other full members. Pakistan agreed to visit our country in April next year to play a full series, but we are yet to confirm other tours. We first signed the FTP with India and they will host us next year for

Siddikur skips Chiangmai Classic

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh's premier golfer Siddikur Rahman withdrew his name from the Chiangmai Golf Classic, set to begin on Thursday, as a precaution for his troublesome back which kept him out of action for five months.

Siddikur, who made a return to the field last week and finished joint fifth in the Panasonic Open India, took the decision to withdraw after consulting his coach Shane Gillespie, who is currently in Thailand as well.

In a message sent to Dhaka, Siddikur informed that he would work with his coach this week and will participate in the Manila Masters which will begin on November 20.

PCB to apply for Aamer's clearance

AFP, Abu Dhabi

Pakistan's cricket chief on Tuesday said that an appeal will be lodged with the anti-corruption unit to clear the way for seamer Mohammad Aamer to play domestic matches before his five-year ban expires.

The International Cricket Council (ICC) on Monday revised its anti-corruption code which means that banned players can feature in home matches a few months prior to the end of their ban, specifically benefiting Aamer.

The ICC said it will be up to the home board, the Anti-Corruption Security Unit (ACSU) chairman Ronnie Flanagan and ICC Board to take the final call.

Aamer's ban expires in August 2015.

Tigers' eyes on record

NAIMUL KARIM from Chittagong



A feisty performance from Bangladesh's spinners against Zimbabwe may have already secured the Test series for the Tigers, there is still a lot to play for when the teams clash at the port city of Chittagong today in the third and final Test.

While Bangladesh aim to get their best ever series result in Test cricket, 3-0, and gain a healthy lead over bottom-ranked Zimbabwe, the visitors on the other hand have their pride at stake. As the Tigers managed to eke out a Test win last year at Harare, the Zimbabweans would definitely want to take one back. The only time that Zimbabwe won a Test in Bangladesh was back in November of 2001 in this very city.

It's a statistic that the visitors want to change. Their target however, would be an extremely difficult one to achieve, mainly for two reasons and the spin factor is the first one.

Of the 350 wickets taken by bowlers at the Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium, 228 of them have fallen to spinners, which is two times that of the pacers. Bangladesh's spinners have so far taken 36 wickets in two matches which is the highest ever for the Tigers in a Test series. If they manage to take 15 more scalps in this Test, it will

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To make matters worse for the visitors, Chittagong happens to be a happy hunting ground for ace all-rounder Shakib Al Hasan, who just needs two more wickets to take the highest number of wickets in a series for Bangladesh. He is the highest wicket-taker at this ground and also his best bowling figures of 7 for 36 came here in 2008.

The second factor is that the wicket at Chittagong tends to support the batsmen and

barely has anything in it for the pacers. So even if they can counter the spin, the visitors' lack of depth in spin will make it hard for them to bowl Bangladesh out twice. The 12 matches played here have seen 23 centuries, four double-centuries and one triple century. The ground has also witnessed six 500-plus scores. As teams pile on the runs, matches at this ground generally tend to head for a draw. Bangladesh have drawn four out of the eight Tests here.

While the odds favour the hosts, Bangladesh captain Mushfiqur Rahim reckoned that it would be a difficult task to complete a 3-0 whitewash. "It's a rare feeling for us and it has never happened before. But the reality is that a win in this Test is going to be more difficult than the first two. They [Zimbabwe] have been here for three weeks now and have probably adjusted to our conditions well.

"Nevertheless we are prepared both mentally and physically and we are going to try our best to complete the 3-0 sweep," said Mushfiqur at the stadium yesterday.

Bangladesh are expected to make two changes to their side today. Pacer Shafiqul Islam is expected to come in for Shahadat Hossain while Imrul Kayes is expected to replace Shamsur Rahman at the top.

Zimbabwe on the other hand are expected to field the same side.

'We have a lot to prove'

NAIMUL KARIM from Chittagong



Right before the start of the series there were talks about the kind of wickets the Tests and the ODIs would be played on. Would the Bangladesh team management employ the traditional spin-friendly wickets or would they inject some pace into them and spice it up?

The latter idea was thrown in to provide the players with some practice ahead of the World Cup -- with the Zimbabwe series being the last before the mega event -- next year, due to take place in the pace-friendly conditions of Australia and New Zealand.

By the way the series has gone so far the Tigers obviously seem content in playing to their strengths. It is likely that the five ODIs would take place in similar conditions. And who would blame them?

Having gone through a torrid year

which has seen them fail to win against a Test nation in any format, until this series, it was only obvious for the management to take all the steps possible to help boost Bangladesh's confidence.

And according to Bangladesh captain Mushfiqur Rahim, that is exactly what has happened.

"If we played in different conditions, yes it would have been good for us considering that the World Cup is nearby. But the bigger thing is to perform as a team and win in Tests, T20s or whatever and build confidence.

"The last two matches that we won will boost the team. After this series we will have time to practice for the World Cup, it may not be too healthy... but we have an opportunity to go there [Australia] before the World Cup and practise. This series was also important for the rankings," explained Mushfiqur.

Bangladesh's players did seem to shift gears after they managed to hold

on to a nervous win in the first Test. The body language seemed a lot better in the second Test with partnerships rolling and the bowlers striking at the right time.

"Before, at the critical moments, we could not create a partnership, take a wicket or take a brilliant catch. But now those things are happening. Batsmen are playing longer innings," believes Mushfiqur.

He however warned against complacency and maintained that there were a number of areas that needed improvement. "The way we lost matches this year, I think we have a lot to prove," he said.

"We dropped a number of catches. Had it been any other team they probably would not have given us another chance. We need to maintain concentration levels throughout the game. Batting-wise there were a few silly dismissals. A batsman simply can't get out after getting set or scoring a 50," analysed Mushfiqur.

Pakistan call the shots

AFP, Abu Dhabi



Opener Tom Latham hit a maiden hundred but Pakistan still managed to secure a big lead in their bid to win the first Test against New Zealand in Abu Dhabi on Tuesday.

The left-handed opener scored 103 to defy the Pakistani bowlers as wickets fell from the other end with paceman Rahat Ali (4-22) and spinner Zulfiqar Babar (3-79) wrapping up New Zealand's first innings at 262.

That gave Pakistan a big 304-run lead and despite their opponents falling 105 runs short of the follow-on mark, the hosts batted again and finished the third day at 15-0.

Mohammad Hafeez (five) and Azhar Ali (nine) were at the crease as Pakistan led by 319 runs with two days left to push for a 1-0 lead in the three-match series.

Pakistan had declared their first innings at 566-3. Pakistan's regular opener Ahmed Shehzad was earlier ruled out of the remainder of the match and two Tests to follow after he suffered a skull fracture from a missed bouncer on Monday.

It was Latham who followed his father, Rod, to hit a Test hundred. They became the third New Zealand pair of father-son and 11th overall to score a Test century.

Walter and Richard Hadlee and Ken and Hamish Rutherford had also done it for the Kiwis in the past. Rod hit his only century against Zimbabwe at Bulawayo in 1992.

Latham kept one end intact as New Zealand recovered from a precarious 47-3 to 215-5 after Babar and Rahat had jolted them in the morning session.

Latham, whose previous best of 83 came against the West Indies earlier this year, hit 13 boundaries during his patient 222-ball knock and added 83 for the fourth wicket with Corey Anderson who made 48.

He was finally adjudged leg-before off Rahat and despite a review had to leave the field with New Zealand at 215-6.

BJ Watling (42) and Ish Sodhi (25) furthered the fight through their ninth wicket stand of 43 runs but Yasir Shah bowled Sodhi and Babar had Watling leg-before to end the innings.

SCORES IN BRIEF

PAKISTAN: First innings 566 for 3 in 170.5 overs (Shehzad 176, Misbah 102 not out, Younis 100 not out, Hafeez 96, Azhar 87; Anderson 2-68, Sodhi 1-162)

NEW ZEALAND: First innings 262 all out in 87.3 overs (Latham 103, Anderson 48, Watling 42, Sodhi 25; Rahat 4-22, Babar 3-79)

PAKISTAN: Second innings 15 without loss in 6 overs (Azhar 9 not out, Hafeez 5 not out)

Foreigners shine

SPORTS REPORTER



Bulky 33-year-old Ashar Zaidi, a Karachi-born all-rounder who holds a British passport, hogged the spotlight on the opening day of the Dhaka Premier League yesterday.

The left-hander toyed with the opposition bowlers during his 103-ball 141 which included 18 fours and five sixes, as defending champions Gazi Tank got off to a flying start, demolishing Old DOHS by 247 runs at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur.

His belligerent knock and out of favour Jahurul Islam's 78 guided Gazi Tank to a mammoth total of 357 for six. Old DOHS faced a

daunting challenge which they failed and got bundled out for 110 runs.

The opening day belonged to the foreign players as Sri Lankan Roshane hit an unbeaten 111 as Partex upset Sheikh Jamal by 11 runs at the Fatullah Cricket Stadium.

In the day's other match at BKSP, Prime Doleshwar posted a massive 139-run victory over Kalabagan courtesy of Mehedi Maruf and Asif Ahmed, who both hit half-centuries to set a stiff target of 274 runs for their opponents.

SCORES IN BRIEF

GAZI TANK: 357-6 in 50 overs (Jahurul 78, Mosharraf 23, Ashar 141, Nazmul 27, Abul 35 not out; Jayed 2-74, Shehan 2-66)

OLD DOHS: 110 all out in 41.5 overs (Ehsanul 26; Shohid 2-14, Sharifullah 2-9, Kapali 3-20)

Result: Gazi Tank won by 247 runs.

PARTEX SC: 200-8 in 50 overs (Roshane Silva 111 not out, Arman 40; Mehedi 3-41, Arafat 2-31, Dawson 2-34)

SHEIKH JAMAL: 189-8 in 50 overs (Amit 20, Tushar 72, Dawson 34, Sayeem 24; Azim 3-43, Masum 3-23)

Result: Partex won by 11 runs.

PRIME DOLESHWAR: 273-8 in 50 overs (Mehedi 55, Rony 45, Asif 63, Elias 41; Rabbi 3-18)

KALABAGAN KC: 134 all out in 38.4 overs (Shamsur 52, Nasum 31; Elias 3-22, Habibur 2-30, Asif 2-10)

Result: Prime Doleshwar won by 139 runs.



PHOTO: STAR

The seemingly out-of-shape Pakistani-born English cricketer Ashar Zaidi hit a century on the opening day of the DPL.

'We need to believe in ourselves'

SPORTS REPORTER from Cig

For a team that has beaten Pakistan in Test cricket and Australia in an ODI in the recent past, Zimbabwe are yet to pose the challenge that was expected of them. The hosts had a close shave in the first Test, however, they failed to learn from their mistakes and ended up conceding a bigger defeat in the second.

Hamilton Masakadza is one of the few visiting batsmen to have hit form in the tour. It was his highest Test score, 158 in the first innings of the second Test and a half-century in the second that kept Zimbabwe going.

Despite the disappointment though, the Zimbabwean expects his side to bounce back with a win in the third Test.

"I think it's just the conditions. It's different from back home. It's different playing against Australia and the South Africans than playing Bangladesh. We had played on similar wickets but our spinners out-bowled theirs. That has not been the case here," said Masakadza at the pre-match press conference at the Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium here yesterday.

"It's just a matter of the guys saving their confidence and taking it out tomorrow and believing in themselves," he added.

The Zimbabwean also said that the visitors had worked on plans to counter Shakib Al Hasan who had been in spectacular form in the series.