

SPORT

'A different challenge'

SPORTS REPORTER

Seven years ago Bangladesh cricket's selection committee came under heavy scrutiny when they decided to pick a young Mushfiqur Rahim ahead of the experienced Khaled Mashud for the World Cup. The likes of Shakib Al Hasan and Tamim Iqbal were also selected and in the end it proved to be a gamble that paid off for Faruque Ahmed and company.

Seven years on, the ball is again in Faruque's court. In a week's time, the chief selector will be announcing his second World Cup squad. However the former national captain, who received heaps of praise after Bangladesh's show down in 2007, has said that he is facing a different challenge this time around.

"These are two different situations. When I made the team in 2007, we barely had options. We played international cricket but our domestic structure wasn't as developed. We had to focus on our age-level cricket. It was a challenge and a gamble.

"Today Shakib, Tamim and Mushfiqur are all established. And those alongside them have matured," explained Faruque.

While the thought process may be a little different, Faruque's logic 'to base the selection on a player's form rather than just experience' seems to be similar to that of his last World Cup so far. A number of young players were included in the last Zimbabwe series and all of them have a chance of making it through to the final 15.

Sabbir Rahman replaced the experienced Nasir Hossain, Abdur Razzak had to make way for the likes of Arafat Sunny and Taijul Islam. There is also the case of Jubair Hossain, the young leg-spinner who was highly impressive throughout the series. However, how much of a risk is Faruque actually willing to take? A 'calculated amount' says Faruque.

"Risks are meant to be calculated. I want a player to perform, but at the same time I don't want him to be shattered. In 2007, we felt that three or four players had the ability to play at this level. I did not expect them all to score 50s, but our thought process was right.

"It's not as though I am always going to be successful, but if you have a good logic then you are likely to make the best possible team," he explained.

Despite the series of defeats that the Tigers went through this year, Faruque believed that by beating Zimbabwe at the end of the year, the cricketers peaked just at the right time.

"The situation before the final stage is always important. It helps a team to stand. The two-week training camp at Brisbane and the practice matches will be very important. I remember in 1999 we played two good practice matches against county teams. In 2007, we beat New Zealand in a practice match before the World Cup.

"The World Cup in New Zealand and Australia will be very challenging, but if we can start well, maybe something can happen," concluded Faruque.



FARUQUE AHMED



India batsman Virat Kohli (R) celebrates his century in company of fellow centurion Ajinkya Rahane on the third day of the third Test against Australia at the Melbourne Cricket Ground yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

Raffo takes charge of Muktiyoddha

SPORTS REPORTER

Italian coach Flavio Raffo arrived here yesterday to take charge of Muktiyoddha Sangsad KC for the upcoming football season. The UEFA Pro (part completed) coach expressed his enthusiasm about guiding the All Reds to success.

"I am glad to be here and even though I don't have much knowledge of Bangladesh football, I think with good coaching we can take the game here higher. Insha'Allah I will be able to do something good with Muktiyoddha Sangsad," said the Italian over phone when contacted yesterday.

The 41-year-old coach, who played as a midfielder for clubs in Serie B and Serie C during the 90s and early 2000s, hung up his boots in 2006 before concentrating on coaching. Prior to coming to Bangladesh, Raffo managed clubs such as Ivory Coast's Premier Division side Africa Sport D'Abidjan and Oman's Premier League outfit Al Ittihad.

Muktiyoddha parted ways with their former coach Shafiqul Islam Manik at the end of last season after three years.

Jamal ends at 26th

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh's professional golfer Jamal Hossain Mollah finished the season ending PGTI event, the McLeod Russell Tour Championship, in 26th position at the Kolkata Royal Golf Club yesterday.

The 29-year-old golfer finished with a score of one-over (289), after settling for a final round of two-over (74). He returned a card of two birdies, two bogeys and a double bogey in the fourth round of the 1.5-crore rupee event.

The two-time PGTI winner finished the season in 19th position on the PGTI Order of Merit with a total purse of 1,294,050 rupees.

South Asian karate on

SPORTS REPORTER

The 2nd South Asian Goju-Ryu karate championship began at the BKSP in Savar yesterday.

State Minister for Youth and Sports Biren Sikder inaugurated the two-day meet which is being organised by Bangladesh Goju-Ryu Karate Association.

Apart from hosts Bangladesh, karatekas from India, Nepal, Bhutan and Pakistan are participating in the competition.

DFAs to get dist stadia

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A 12-man committee comprising members of the National Sports Council (NSC), Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) and District Sports Associations (DSAs) proposed lending districts stadiums to 64 District Football Associations (DFAs) for four months each year and disbursing NSC funds to DFAs.

"The NSC in principle agreed to allow the DFAs to use the district stadiums from September to December for running the district leagues. The BFF also requested NSC to disburse Tk 5 lakh to each of the DFAs every year as grants. Even though the amount was not agreed upon, the NSC officials agreed to provide funds to DFAs. A proposal has been made to work out ways so that these funds can be given to DFAs without any hassle," informed BFF general secretary Abu Nayeem Shohag.

De Kruif comes here on January 3

SPORTS REPORTER

Former Bangladesh coach Lodewijk de Kruif is prepared to come to Dhaka on January 3 to hold talks with Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) over his pending salaries as well as working out the possibility of guiding the national team in the Bangabandhu Gold Cup to be held next month.

BFF vice-president and member of the National Teams Committee Tabith Awaal confirmed that the Dutchman would arrive here on January 3.

"De Kruif will arrive on January 3 and is scheduled to go back the next day. However, we will hold talks with him about offering him the interim job of guiding the national team during the Bangabandhu Gold Cup. If the talks are successful, de Kruif will then stay here till the end of the tournament," Tabith told The Daily Star over phone yesterday.

The coach and his deputy Rene Koster were relieved of their duties in October, and the head coach is believed to have four months' salaries still unpaid by the BFF.

When contacted through social media, de Kruif also confirmed that he would come here to settle the pending issues and that he was eager to work with the national team again.

The BFF has been in contact with de Kruif and a German coaching staff simultaneously, but it is believed that the Germans will not be available before the Bangabandhu Gold Cup, which is scheduled to be held from January 16 to 27.

The national team, meanwhile, will start their camp on December 31 at the BKSP in Savar under the guidance of current coach Saiful Bari Titu.

Kohli, Rahane reign

AFP, Melbourne

India counter-punched their way back into the third Test reckoning on the back of centuries by Virat Kohli and Ajinkya Rahane in a record stand at the Melbourne Cricket Ground on Sunday.

Kohli savaged the Australian bowlers, particularly Mitchell Johnson, for his third ton of the series, while Rahane hit his highest Test score of 147.

The pair did it easily, piling on a record 262 runs for the fourth wicket by any pair at the MCG and eclipsing Michael Clarke and Shane Watson's 194 against Sri Lanka two years ago.

Kohli was out in the last over of the day, brilliantly snapped up by Brad Haddin off Johnson for 169 in 380 minutes off 272 balls with 18 fours.

At the close, India were 462 for eight, trailing by 68 runs with two days remaining. Mohammad Shami was nine not out.

The last time India had put on a 250-plus stand in an overseas Test was the 353 by Sachin Tendulkar and VVS Laxman for the fourth wicket in Sydney in 2004.

Rahane was finally out leg before wicket to Nathan Lyon for 147 in the 108th over. He batted for four hours and faced 171 balls with 21 fours.

The two were particularly severe on Johnson, with Kohli crunching three fours off one over and Rahane repeating the dose in Johnson's following over.

The last time Johnson (1-133) had been punished as much was 0-104 against England at the Gabba in 2010.

Rahane raised his highest Test score with a cross-bat four off Johnson, bettering his 118 against New Zealand in Wellington in February.

Their running between the wickets was impressive as was their array and placement of shots to neuter the Australian attack.

India's cause was aided by a poor day in the field for Australia with three dropped catches.

Lyon bungled a regulation two-handed head-high chance off his own bowling when Rahane was on 70 and Watson put down Kohli (88) at first slip off Johnson.

Substitute fielder Peter Siddle made it three with a dropped two-handed chance off Lokesha Rahul but the debutant was out off Lyon's next ball, caught by Josh Hazlewood for three.

The ragged Australian fielding was in contrast to the morning session when Brad Haddin took a stunning catch to dismiss Cheteshwar Pujara off the second ball of the day.

SCORES IN BRIEF

AUSTRALIA: First innings 530 (Smith 192, Harris 74; Shami 4-138) **INDIA:** First innings 462 for 8 (Virat 68, Dhawan 28, Pujara 25, Kohli 169, Rahane 147; Harris 4-69, Lyon 2-108)

Whatmore to coach Zim?

CRICINFO, Harare

Dav Whatmore is expected to be appointed as Zimbabwe's coach ahead of the 2015 World Cup, replacing Stephen Mangongo who was sacked from the position earlier in December after a five-month tenure. Whatmore will be joined by a new batting coach, who is yet to be named, and Douglas Hondo as bowling coach, with an extension to Whatmore's deal due to be negotiated after the World Cup. A Zimbabwe Cricket release stated that

Whatmore is "arriving in Harare this evening, for his interview tomorrow".

For now, Whatmore's primary task will be to ensure Zimbabwe have a better tournament than they did in 2011, where they only managed to beat the Associates in their group and lost heavily against the other full members. Zimbabwe's only two major scalps at an ICC event are South Africa in the 1999 World Cup, and Australia during the 2007 World T20.

Whatmore has little over a month to prepare Zimbabwe ahead of the showpiece event in Australia and New Zealand, and he will be doing so at a Dubai-based academy as well as at their home country.



Mercurial Chelsea winger Eden Hazard fires a shot into the back of the net to tie the score at 1-1 against Southampton at St. Mary's Stadium yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

Late thunder Boulton

AFP, Christchurch

Two late wickets by Trent Boult put New Zealand back in control of the first Test against Sri Lanka Sunday after a maiden Test century by Dimuth Karunaratne had briefly given the tourists a glimmer of hope.

Sri Lanka were closing in on wiping out their 303-run first innings deficit with seven wickets in hand when Boulton brought their cautious progress at Christchurch's Hagley Oval to a halt.

He removed the defiant Karunaratne for 152 and Niroshan Dickwella for four as Sri Lanka were reduced to 293-5 at stumps, still 10 runs from making New Zealand bat again.

Angelo Mathews is not out 53 with Tharindu Kaushal on five while Boulton, New Zealand's chief wicket taker, has three for 62.

Karunaratne's wicket was vital for New Zealand after the 26-year-old had stood in 87-run partnership with Lahiru Thirimanne (25) for the third wicket and then a 97-run stand with Angelo Mathews.

The left-hander had been under enormous pressure after making a four-ball duck in his opening bat when Sri Lanka were rolled for a paltry 138 in reply to New Zealand's 441 and were forced to follow on.

But he handled the occasion with aplomb as he easily surpassed his previous Test best of 85.

SCORES IN BRIEF

NEW ZEALAND: First innings 441 (McCullum 195, Neesham 85, Williamson 54; Mathews 3-39, Lakmal 3-90) **SRI LANKA:** First innings 138 (Mathews 50; Boulton 3-25, Wagner 3-60) **SRI LANKA:** Second innings 293 for 5 (Karunaratne 152, Mathews 53 not out, Silva 33, Thirimanne 25; Boulton 3-62)

The banter keeps going

AFP, Melbourne

Virat Kohli says he enjoys the on-field banter with Australia but he let his bat do the talking Sunday with a Test-best 169 to help India fight back in the third Test.

Kohli claimed his third century of the series and his fifth against Australia as he joined Ajinkya Rahane (147) in a 262-run fourth-wicket stand. They reduced the home side's lead to 68 with two wickets left and two days to play in Melbourne.

The spiky Kohli relishes his verbal clashes with the far from reticent Australians.

He proved a constant irritant to the Australian bowlers in his stay of more than six hours at the crease, confirming his stature as India's pre-eminent batsman after the departure of Sachin Tendulkar, Rahul Dravid and VVS Laxman.

Kohli was just as forthright at his post-day press conference as he fired some verbal bouncers at the Australians.

"I like playing against Australia because it's very hard for them to stay calm," he said.

"I don't mind. I will give it on the field. It really excites me and brings the best out in me.

"They don't seem to be learning the lesson."

West Indies fight back

AFP, Port Elizabeth

Kraigg Brathwaite and Marlon Samuels hit half-centuries as the West Indies fought back on the third day of the second Test against South Africa at St George's Park on Sunday. Brathwaite made 65 not out and Samuels was unbeaten on 60 as the West Indies reached 144 for two in reply to South Africa's 417 for eight declared.

Morne Morkel was the only successful South African bowler, taking two wickets in two balls.

He ended a 55-run opening partnership between Brathwaite and Devon Smith by having Smith caught at first slip, with Leon Johnson edging the next delivery to third slip.

Bad light ended play with 16 overs remaining after rain delayed the start of play by an hour.

With most of the second day lost to rain, South Africa were hoping to score quick runs on Sunday morning before making inroads into a potentially fragile West Indian batting line-up. But they were frustrated on both counts.

The West Indies took four wickets before lunch, including the prize scalps of Amla and AB de Villiers, who were dismissed in successive overs.

Only 80 runs were scored during the morning but Dale Steyn went on the rampage after the interval, thrashing 58 off 28 balls with six fours and five sixes. Amla declared when Steyn was caught attempting another big hit off left-arm spinner Suleiman Benn.

Amla hit two fours in the first over of the day, bowled by Jerome Taylor, but only added ten to his overnight score of 23 before he was trapped leg before wicket by a ball from Jason Holder which nipped back off the pitch.

New cap Temba Bavuma scored a boundary off his first ball, when a defensive shot flew to third man off a thick edge from Holder but De Villiers was out in the next over, bowled by Taylor.

Van Zyl made 29 before he was caught behind, playing a loose drive against the left-armed Kenroy Peters.

SCORES IN BRIEF

SOUTH AFRICA: First innings 417 for 8 decl (Elgar 121, Du Plessis 103, Amla 33, Van Zyl 29, Steyn 58; Taylor 2-114, Peters 2-69, Gabriel 2-80) **WEST INDIES:** First innings 147 for 2 (Brathwaite 65 not out, Smith 22, Samuels 60 not out; Morkel 2-24)