

SPORT

TIGERS leave tonight

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh's World Cup contingent, save Tamim Iqbal, will leave Dhaka for Brisbane tonight. The 15-member World Cup squad accompanied by the rest of the members of the team management will spend two weeks in Brisbane in a bid to acclimatise to the conditions there. Tamim is scheduled to leave a day later.

The Tigers are scheduled to play two official warm-up matches prior to the World Cup. On February 9 they will face Pakistan, while on February 12 they meet Ireland. Both the matches will take place at Blacktown Olympic Park Oval in Sydney. Apart from the official warm-ups, they are also set to play two extra warm-up games in Brisbane.

While Bangladesh's training camp officially ended on Thursday, there were a number of players who visited the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium yesterday in a bid to keep up with their individual routines.

Tamim, who is recovering from surgery on his left knee through rehab, was one of them. He had an individual batting session yesterday morning.

In comparison to the other teams, Bangladesh's build up to the World Cup remained low-key. While the top eight cricketing nations have been involved in competitive ODI series, the Tigers had to depend on the country's domestic circuit. The last bilateral series that Bangladesh played was back in November, against Zimbabwe. Ever since then, the players were involved in the Dhaka Premier League.

The two-week camp at Brisbane has been described by many as the 'most important' phase of Bangladesh's preparations for the mega event. While most of the bowlers stated that they would work on adjusting their lengths, the batsmen are looking forward to get accustomed to the bounce in Australia.

The Tigers begin their World Cup campaign on February 18 against Afghanistan at the Manuka Oval at Canberra.



Bangladesh ODI skipper Mashrafe Bin Mortaza stands between Mahmudullah Riyad and Taskin Ahmed (L), as the youngster snaps a selfie of the trio at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium yesterday. INSET: Tamim Iqbal, who attended an individual training session, bats in the nets while coach Chandika Hathurusingha looks on. PHOTOS: STAR

Bangladesh win against Singapore

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh beat host Singapore 3-0 in a place deciding match of the Hockey World League (Round-2) in Singapore yesterday.

The team in red and green, who lost in tie-breakers in the quarterfinal against Oman on the previous day, scored the three goals in the first three quarters of the match.

Farhad Ahmed Shitul put Bangladesh ahead in the 13th minute, before Jubair Hossain Niloy doubled the lead just before the break.

After resumption, Mainul Islam Koushik struck the third goal from open play. Although Bangladesh are out of running for the three spots for Round-3, this win gives them a chance to finish among the top five teams of the eight team group, provided they can beat Ukraine in the 5th/6th-place-deciding match tomorrow.

Bangladesh, who lost to Ukraine 1-2 in the 40-minute practice match, will hope to beat Ukraine tomorrow, to finish at least fifth, as their hope of playing the semifinal was dashed by Oman.

TIGERS' VENUES DOWN UNDER

NAJMUJ NOOR

On February 26, Bangladesh's opponents are yet another giant contenders fresh from their laurels from the T20 World Cup. At the MCG, however, Sri Lanka are not a team in any of the eight occasions that has gone beyond the score of 300 or the seven times that the team total was in the 290s. Yet, with a handful of veterans on the verge of retirement keen on a follow-up championship act after the T20 trophy would be a fitting finale to their glorious careers. The MCG is also the venue of one of the quarterfinals and the final as well. It isn't so much any razzmatazz

of the MCG that is intimidating. It is a favourite ground for hosts Australia but other reputable teams are equally passionate to go in for the kill at this prestigious ground at least as a dress rehearsal for one of the quarterfinals or the final itself. Here is another interesting stat. For ODI teams batting first in 86 matches for the last 25 years, 44 were won by teams batting first and 40 lost. Bangladesh will probably decide to bat first to avoid chasing a tall total.

The author is a marketing professional from the airline and telecommunications industry. He is a former Bangladesh national cricket player.



Super Smith powers Aussies

AFP, Hobart



Steve Smith's incredible summer continued when he produced an unbeaten century to guide Australia to a three-wicket victory over England in a tri-series one-day international in Hobart on Friday.

Promoted to the captaincy with regular skipper George Bailey suspended for a second slow over rate breach in 12 months, Smith's unbeaten 102 enabled Australia to chase down England's imposing total of 303 for eight.

Australia, also missing the rested David Warner and Shane Watson, made 304 for seven to win with just one ball to spare and remain undefeated in the competition, guaranteeing themselves a berth in Sunday's final.

Ian Bell's brilliant 141 set up the England total, which appeared to be enough for much of the game.

England was still in pole position when Brad Haddin strode to the wicket for Australia with the home side at 216 for five.

Another 88 runs were needed from 76 balls, but Haddin's 42 off 29 balls as part of a quickfire 71-run stand turned the game.

Smith, who hit four centuries in Australia's four-Test series against India that finished earlier in the month, faced 95 balls, hitting six fours and one six.

SCORES IN BRIEF

ENGLAND: 303 for 8 in 50 overs (Ali 46, Bell 141, Root 69, Buttler 25; Sandhu 2-49)

AUSTRALIA: 304 for 7 in 49.5 overs (Finch 32, Marsh 45, Smith 102 not out, Maxwell 37, Faulkner 35, Haddin 42; Woakes 2-58, Ali 2-50, Finn 2-65)

Result: Australia won by three wickets.

Player-of-the-match: Steve Smith.

De Kruif takes over today

SPORTS REPORTER



The long wait for Lodewijk de Kruif is set to be over as the 43-year-old coach is scheduled to arrive here early morning today to take charge of the national football team, four days before the start of the Bangabandhu Gold Cup International Football Tournament.

His arrival will bring an end to the 'hide-and-seek' games that the Bangladesh Football Federation has played over the temporary appointment of the Dutch coach in the last few weeks. The arrival of De Kruif is expected to boost the team after their disappointing defeat against Abahani in the first practice match last week.

Except for the SAFF Championship, De Kruif has had a good time with the national teams during his assignments.

"To be honest, De Kruif will get a prepared team and he will have to work only on the tactical aspects as I have already prepared them in all the other aspects," said assistant coach Saiful Bari Titu yesterday.

It is widely believed that the national

players always show their seriousness under foreign coaches and their approach, attitude and mentality change drastically under them.

"Though De Kruif will have a very short time, I believe he will have a good impact on the players in terms of their mental preparation," said Titu. "I have worked with De Kruif for one year and noticed that he is a good motivator and he can bring the best out of the players," he added.

Veteran striker Zahid Hasan Emily also thinks De Kruif's presence would work as a tonic for the players.

"I think training will gather extra pace once De Kruif takes charge because the players have a good understanding with him and we know each other very well," said Emily adding that they are determined to produce good results on home soil.

The national team are likely to play their second practice match against Sheikh Russel KC at Bangladesh Krira Shikkha Protisthan today.

However, De Kruif will take the final decision regarding the practice match as he has desired to play a closed-door match before the tournament.

'It was a Black Day'



In a column written on the International Cricket Council's Media Zone, Pakistan legend Inzamamul Haq

described Pakistan's defeat to Bangladesh in the 1999 World Cup as a 'Black Day'.

"The Pakistan team was on a roll as we defeated New Zealand. With our Super Six place secured, came that 'Black Day' which took the sheen out of our four glittering victories. We lost to the then qualifier Bangladesh!

"The simple fact is it was not our day and that we lost to a better team. The tricky pitches sometimes minimize the gap between supposedly weak and strong teams. And that exactly happened at Northampton on May 31, 1999. Nothing else. Full stop. Our players, perhaps, couldn't take the pressure of that defeat against Bangladesh which I guess resulted in two more defeats against South Africa and India in the Super Six," he wrote.

Reflecting on Pakistan's inability to defeat India in the mega event till date, he wrote: "It's hard to give logic as to why we haven't defeated India in any World Cup match. True we were inexperienced in 1992, we didn't feel the pressure even when

we lost against them in 1996, but the defeat at Manchester in 1999 still pinches me as I do believe ours was a better team than India.

"I still don't know what goes wrong with us against them in a World Cup. I hope next month Pakistan finishes on the right side



INZAMAMUL HAQ

of the result," he wrote.

Despite losing to Australia in the final of the 1999 World Cup, Inzamam believed that the Pakistan side that year was the strongest of all the World Cup teams.

"I still believe this was the strongest Pakistan side to date to have featured in an ICC Cricket World Cup, at least, in the five ICC showcase events in which I had been involved.

"Imran Khan's inexperienced

"Cornered Tigers" had won the ICC Cricket World Cup 1992, but the Pakistan side in 1999 had more experience and, more importantly, we all went to England with the tags of 'in form' bowlers and batsmen," wrote Pakistan.

Despite having reached the final, the defeat at the hands of Australia turned them into 'villains', according to Inzamam.

"We had turned villains back home as all hell broke loose!

"Unfortunately, there is no acceptance or tolerance of defeat in Pakistan culture, something that needs to change and change quickly before we keep shooting ourselves in the foot," he wrote.

Inzamam described the PCB's inability to handle 'bad results.'

"The PCB buckles under this pressure, it goes out on a witch-hunt and starts chopping and changing the side, which further rattles the side besides creating fear of defeat amongst the players. I don't think any professional player can live and perform under this level of fear!

"We, as a nation, need to learn and start accepting defeats as this is also part of the game! In school, one of my favourite poems was Try Again by William Hickson. I suggest people should also read this," he concluded.

Record stand sets up big Kiwi win

AFP, Dunedin



A record batting blitz by Luke Ronchi and Grant Elliott set New Zealand up for an overwhelming 108-run win over Sri Lanka in their fifth one-day international in Dunedin

Friday.

In a stunning display of power hitting, Ronchi (170 not out) and Elliott (104 not out) bludgeoned an unbeaten 267 to lift New Zealand from 93-5 to 360-5 in their 50 overs in a world record sixth-wicket stand.

Sri Lanka had their own century-maker in Tillakaratne Dilshan and looked to be in with a chance as long as he was at the crease.

But when Dilshan fell for 116 it sparked a spectacular collapse in which Sri Lanka lost eight wickets for just 41 runs in eight overs.

The end came with more than six overs remaining as, for the second game in a row, Sri Lanka showed little fight in the lower order to let New Zealand go 3-1 up in the series.

In the fourth ODI in Nelson on Tuesday, their last six wickets were whittled out for just 31 runs. Faced with a daunting target of 361 to win in Dunedin, Sri Lanka confidently progressed to 93 before losing their first wicket when stand-in captain Thirimanne was removed for 45.

After Kumar Sangakkara went cheaply for nine, Mahela Jayawardene (30) joined Dilshan to lift the momentum as the tourists reached 211 in the 36th over.

But the game turned when strike bowler Trent Boult was brought back into the attack

with immediate success bowling Jayawardene to start the slide.

Four balls later Mitchell McClenaghan claimed the prized wicket of Dilshan and the Sri Lankan fight was over.

SCORES IN BRIEF

NEW ZEALAND: 360 for 5 in 50 overs (McCullum 25, Williamson 26, Taylor 20, Elliott 104 not out, Ronchi 170 not out; Kulasekara 2-71, Thirimanne 2-36)

SRI LANKA: 252 all out in 43.4 overs (Thirimanne 45, Dilshan 116, Jayawardene 30, Mendis 18; Southey 2-42, Boult 4-44, McClenaghan 2-56, Elliott 2-42)

Result: New Zealand won by 108 runs and lead 7-match series 3-1.

Players-of-the-match: Luke Ronchi and Grant Elliott.



New Zealand's Luke Ronchi (R) smashed his way to the highest score by a number seven or lower batsman in ODIs yesterday. He hammered 170 off 99 balls. PHOTO: AFP

PCB's sets conditions for BD tour

CRICINFO, Karachi

The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) has demanded a slice of 50 per cent of the revenue from the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) in return for touring the country in April-May this year. The PCB has also stipulated a condition to exchange Under-19 and A team tours. It is understood that PCB's governing board agreed that the tour should only go ahead if the BCB agrees to the conditions.

The PCB has also insisted on making every agreement a written and legally binding one before any commitment. Both PCB and BCB executives are set to meet in the UAE on the sidelines of the ICC meeting for a final round of talks.

Bangladesh, according to the present FTP, are supposed to host Pakistan for two Tests, three ODIs and a T20 between April 10 and May 7. However, the PCB is yet to hand the BCB an assurance on the tour. The FTP is no more a central agreement between the ICC and its members. Now there are bilateral agreements between member nations and boards can decide whether playing each other is commercially viable.