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Bangladesh all-rounder Mahmudullah Riyad (R) waits for his turn while bowling in the nets in Canberra yesterday. The Tigers launch their World Cup campaign against Afghanistan on Wednesday.

PHOTO:
BCB

'Not feeling any pressure'

BISHWAJIT ROY from Canberra

Down the track and boom! Tamim Iqbal's cross-batted smack against Zaheer Khan in 2007 still remains, arguably so, the most memorable cricket shot played by a Bangladeshi batsman in the World Cup.

The fearlessness with which Tamim and a number of others batted at the Port of Spain that day left a legendary Indian team stunned. Eight years on and the left-hander sees a bit of himself in some of these Afghanistan players, albeit his batting has changed quite a bit since then; with the older Tamim trying hard to spend as much time as possible at the crease.

"In my opinion, Afghanistan's main strength lies in their self-belief and fearless approach," Tamim said while speaking to The Daily Star at the lobby of Hyatt Hotel in Canberra yesterday. "And it's an approach that I love, because it's bound to bring you more success," he added.

However, despite the scenario, the left-hander believed that the Tigers were more than capable of crossing the Afghanistan hurdle.

"Look, since when have the Afghans become a fear factor for us? It was the Asia Cup when we lost the match against them. Before that there was no such fear. But the truth is that one match cannot change everything. I firmly believe that if we can play our game we can definitely win this game," said Tamim.

"It would be unwise to put unnecessary pressure. I know the expectation is high regarding this match. But after playing international cricket for so many years it would be ridiculous to say that the expectation is putting pressure on us. We should handle these kinds of things professionally," he added.

There will be extra pressure on the left-hander to perform this time around especially with teams crossing the 300-run mark with ease in the World Cup. The start pro-



vided by the openers would be extremely crucial. Prior to leaving Bangladesh Tamim had said that he would want to be the first Bangladeshi cricketer to score a century in the World Cup, and he probably won't get a better moment than this one.

"Despite the amount of runs scored, I am not ready to think that one needs to score 300 runs to win a match. If you can score 300, then that's good. But I believe that a score above 250 would be fantastic for us.

"I am confident because of our performance against Pakistan in the warm-up. Everybody forgot about that because of our poor show against Ireland. But our performance against Pakistan showed enough evidence about our ability to win," a confident Tamim said.

Having arrived in Brisbane in the last week of January, the Tigers tried their best to acclimatise to the foreign conditions as quickly as possible. "The common feeling in the team is that one is bound to be a good player if he is groomed in these kinds of condition.

"The facilities, the wickets, everything is fantastic here. But you cannot bring any major changes practising here only for a few weeks. So we have to rely on our own strength and we should try to play to the best of our ability," believed the opener.

There has been plenty of talk regarding Tamim's role in this World Cup. There was even a time when some expected him to be ruled out of the competition. He is still going through a rehab programme after undergoing a surgery on his knee.

However, the left-hander is ready to overlook all that when it comes to representing his nation in the mega event.

More inspiring than his effort is his philosophy of the game.

"You may not be Sachin Tendulkar but you have to dream of becoming a player like him. You have to have that self-belief," he remarked.

'Need to be aggressive'

SPORTS REPORTER

A little over a year ago Mahmudullah Riyad's position in the team was heavily questioned. The player was barely scoring runs and talks about favouritism within the team flooded the media.

One year on and a lot seems to have changed. With scores 42, 36 and 83 in the warm-up games, a slimmer Riyad, seems to be the batsman in form for Bangladesh.

He has tasted World Cup successes in the past; the most memorable of course was the win against England in Chittagong in 2011 when Riyad and Shafiul Islam brought Bangladesh back from the dead.

Drawing confidence from the past wins and his current form, Riyad reckoned that the Tigers could 'beat anyone' this time around.

"I am not saying that we are going to make upsets, if we play to the best of our ability then we can beat any one. We are looking to win the



first game and put it out of the way so that we can get a good start on the World Cup tour.

"The preparation has been good though we did not win the two matches. We experimented in those matches because the management wants to give everyone a go. For instance, bowlers who were supposed to bowl at a particular time were rested and others given a chance," explained Riyad.

Riyad exuded a balanced approach with

regards to their first match. While he didn't exactly dismiss Afghanistan, he wasn't ready to take it easy either.

"I don't think we are worrying too much, in a sense that we are not too tensed. We are quite focussed because we have prepared quite well for the last two to three months.

"Yes they beat us in the Asia Cup, but we beat them in the T20 World Cup and took one back. This is the World Cup and it's different. We need to try to start positively," said Riyad.

"There is always pressure no matter who you play with. But we need to concentrate on our strengths and weaknesses rather than being concerned about our opponents. We need to play aggressive cricket. I think we play our best cricket when we play aggressively," he added.

The batsman, who is expected to play at number four, also hoped that the top order, which struggled in the practice matches, would peak at the right time.

Four tons on Day One

SPORTS REPORTER



The first day of the fourth round of the National Cricket League witnessed four centuries; this despite the fact that Dhaka's strong batting line-up is yet to open their account. Except for the clash between Khulna and Rajshahi at Mirpur, centuries were scored at Fatullah and the BKSP.

It was important for Sylhet to make a good start against league leaders Dhaka and that's exactly what former national players Rajin Saleh and Alok Kapali delivered. They each scored a 118 and rescued Sylhet from a precarious 52 for 3. The pair shared a 239-run stand for the fourth wicket yesterday and helped Sylhet finish at a strong position at the end of day one. Both the players scored 14 boundaries each. While Rajin hit 12 fours two sixes, Alok hit 14 fours.

Liton Kumar was the hero of the day at the BKSP. The batsman who has been in sublime form ever since the Dhaka Premier League season, scored a career-high 175 for Rangpur and took his side to a relatively strong 268 for 4 at the end of the day against

Barisal. He hit 24 fours and four sixes in his three-hour stay. While the innings was long, there was no shortage of entertainment as Liton kept milking the boundaries in good time.



LITON KUMAR ...175

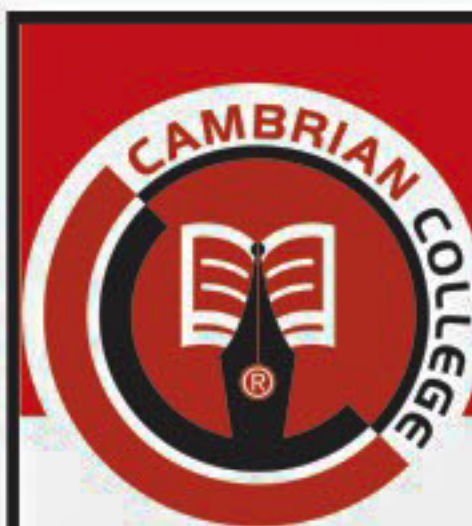
At the other ground at the BKSP, Marshall Ayub finally hit form with an unbeaten 111 against Chittagong. The Dhaka Metro skipper failed to get a start in the first three rounds of the league and was looking grim. The century yesterday, which featured 16

boundaries, is likely to boost the player's confidence who was a part of Bangladesh's last Test squad against Zimbabwe. While Marshall fought for Metro, Nur Hossain led their opponents bowling attack with a five wicket haul to subdue Marshall's teammates.

The only venue which did not feature any centuries was Mirpur where Khulna took on Rajshahi. After being put into bat, a number of Khulna's batsman got starts but failed to continue. While they shared a good opening stand worth 84, the team lost frequent wickets. At the end of the day Tushar Imran remained not out on 63 and was at the crease with Ziaur Rahman who was unbeaten on 21. They posted 256 for 5.

SCORES IN BRIEF

SYLHET: 291 for 3 (Rajin 118 not out, Alok 118 not out; Shahadat 2-64) v **Dhaka**
RANGPUR: 268 for 4 (Liton 175; Nasum 2-85, Shohag 1-56) v **Barisal**
DHAKA METRO: 290 for 6 (Marshall 111 not out; Nur 5-80) v **Chittagong**
KHULNA: 256 for 5 (Tushar 63 not out, Mehedi 51; Forhad 2-39, Saqlain 2-55) v **Rajshahi**



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INFO ZONE

NEW ZEALAND				SCOTLAND			
HEAD TO HEAD IN WORLD CUPS							
M	W	L		M	W	L	
1	1	0		1	0	1	
IN ALL ODIs							
M	W	L		M	W	L	
2	2	0		2	0	2	

Last Meeting : 3 rd Jul 2008 at Mannofield Park, Aberdeen. New Zealand won by 8 wickets(with 212 balls remaining).

KEY PLAYERS

COREY ANDERSON		MATT MACHAN	
38.10	AVERAGE	36.53	
132.06	STRIKE RATE	76.00	
6.26	ECO RATE	5.22	
3	50'S	2	
1	100'S	1	
131*	HIGHEST SCORE	114	
762	TOTAL RUNS	548	
38	TOTAL WICKETS	8	



Hamish Fitzsimmons: I never thought I'd see the once all conquering West Indian cricket team fall this low. Congrats Ireland.

Alt Cricket: England currently wondering whether mid-World Cup

nationality changes can be a thing.

Alexis Nunes: Must say I really admire the heart that @darrensammy88 shows always despite the challenges we seem to always face.

