

Tigers staying positive

BISHWAJIT ROY from Brisbane

The news that there's a high chance of today's match being washed out and the points being split spread joy across Bangladeshis both here and back home. The social media for one was filled with several opinions on the issue, most of which was of the chance for the Tigers to gain one valuable point.

How much this potential point can help the Tigers' aim of securing a quarterfinal berth is still uncertain. A majority of the fans however had already begun welcoming it since yesterday.

Mashrafe Bin Mortaza however, has a completely different point of view compared to most of the fans. The 31-year-old skipper said that it would be 'negative' to hope for only one point.



"We are preparing to play a full match. We don't want to play a curtailed game as forming team combination becomes harder. We are disappointed with the rain but preparation difficulties have been there for both sides.

"But they are used to playing in these conditions and missing a few days wouldn't matter for them. We needed at least some time to bat and bowl in the nets here. We definitely want to play. It would be some experience playing

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All-rounder Shakib Al Hasan (L) shares a light moment with batsmen Soumya Sarker and Nasir Hossain during their training session at the Brisbane Cricket Ground's indoor facilities yesterday. Bangladesh's on-field training session had to be cancelled due to inclement weather.

PHOTO: BCB

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TODAY'S MATCHES

Pakistan v West Indies

Time: 4:00am
Venue: Christchurch

Australia v Bangladesh

Time: 9:30am
Venue: Brisbane

SUNDAY'S MATCHES

Afghanistan v Sri Lanka

Time: 4:00am
Venue: Dunedin

India v South Africa

Time: 9:30am

Minnows or not?

BISHWAJIT ROY from Brisbane

"It is very tough to bracket the teams under small and big tags in cricket," a glaring Mashrafe Bin Mortaza said in response to a question at the pre-match press conference yesterday.

For a moment his expression almost matched the gloomy conditions outside. It was quite obvious that the Bangladesh skipper did not like that his team were being referred to as 'minnows'.

For someone who possesses that rare 'give-it-back-to-you' attitude and has comeback from career-threatening injuries a number of times, it wasn't a surprise the way Mashrafe reacted. On the field, too, one could notice his aggressive approach and how restless he gets if the game gets out of his grasp.

However, going by Bangladesh's record in the last ten years, questions such as whether defeating Australia in 2005 would inspire the Tigers ahead of their World Cup clash against Australia sounds quite legitimate.

That was a famous win and unfortunately their only success against the Aussies. And things have only got worse for the Tigers since famous victory.

After wins against New Zealand and the West Indies, many reckoned that the minnows tag would gradually fade away. The logic that at home and on their best day, the Tigers can beat any side in ODIs didn't pertain for too long. They haven't been as consistent



when it comes to beating big teams.

The minnows tag gets more pronounced due to Bangladesh's poor run in the longer version.

While players can be blamed for the not-so-great record, a close look however would suggest that very little has improved in Bangladesh's cricketing infrastructure and facilities. From irregular competitions to the

lack of leagues in different parts of the country, it could be safely said that not much has development has taken place outside the capital.

These are features that have been written about a countless times in the media. However, in the last few weeks these things have been highlighted yet again, mainly due to the excellent facilities observed in different parts of Australia.

Ever since Bangladesh team arrived in Brisbane, the cricketers have been amazed with the cricketing facilities here.

While it would be illogical for one to expect similar kind of facilities in Bangladesh, the state of cricketing infrastructure in the divisional cities have plenty of scope for improvement.

But the question remains as to who will take the responsibility.

History suggests that our cricket administration has mainly centred around 20 to 25 national players and when the rare wins arrive we tend to take them as steps of progress, not knowing that there's still a lot to do at the grassroots.

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Steyn fit for India

AFP, Melbourne

South Africa's premier fast bowler Dale Steyn is fit to lead their attack in a key World Cup match against India on Sunday after recovering from a bout of sinusitis.

"He is fine, there is nothing to be concerned about," coach Russell Domingo said Friday, adding the bowler had gone down with a cold and 'flu during a practice match in Christchurch ahead of the tournament.

South Africa will welcome Steyn's return to full fitness for the Pool B match at the Melbourne Cricket Ground after he appeared out of sorts over the past two weeks.

The 31-year-old bowled just seven overs in his team's first warm-up match against Sri Lanka and was rested for the second practice game against co-hosts New Zealand.

Steyn was clearly troubled by a sore throat and blocked nose during South Africa's World Cup opener against Zimbabwe in Hamilton last Sunday, where he returned with unflattering figures of one for 64 from nine overs against the Proteas' lowly-ranked opponents.

The form of Steyn, one of the game's most devastating fast bowlers with 152 wickets from 97 one-day internationals, is seen as central to South Africa's chances of winning a maiden World Cup title.

He is the spearhead of a formidable attack that includes Morne Morkel and Vernon Philander, with Kyle Abbott and Wayne Parnell also in the mix for the India game.

THIRD EYE

The Baz factor

arguably the most balanced attack, as proven by their annihilation of England on a near-perfect batting pitch.

But the X factor is certainly the skipper. As his 25-ball 77 would imply, the man does not know a backward step and he brings this quality to his leadership. In an era of unimaginative and defensive captaincy, McCullum's aggression



stands out and can very well be the deciding factor in close matches. For much of England's innings there were slips and men in catching positions employed. One might say that is easy to do when a side is all out for 123, but England had managed to reach 100 for the loss of just three wickets.

Many other captains would have eased off when the partnership between Joe Root and Eoin Morgan was blossoming. But McCullum --

not least through his electric fielding which rubs off on his team -- kept the pressure on a struggling Morgan and once the beleaguered England captain holed out off Daniel Vettori, immediately brought his standout bowler back and reaped the rewards. Unlike many other captains, he did not fall back on a strategy discussed in the dressing room of preserving a few overs of the frontline bowlers for the death and instead went for the kill by bowling both Trent Boult and Southee out with more than 15 overs remaining. The result: England bowled out for 123 and the game ending long before the sunset.

Up next, it is Bangladesh versus the other co-hosts, favourites Australia. Let's not mince words, the formbook has Australia pulverising Bangladesh on the second fastest pitch in the country in Brisbane. But the silver lining seems to have come in the form of dark clouds. Cyclone Marcia has been wreaking havoc in Brisbane and it may be a washout today, in which case Bangladesh will share points with Australia and therefore increase their chances of a quarterfinal place. They should be hoping to play

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5 facts

Australia have won 18 and lost one of their ODIs against Bangladesh. This 94.7 per cent is the second highest win percentage between Test-playing nations, after Pakistan's 96.9 per cent against Bangladesh.

Shane Watson's unbeaten 185 from just 96 balls against Bangladesh at Dhaka in April 2011 is the highest ODI score recorded by an Australian.

Tamim Iqbal needs 10 runs to become the second player to score 4,000 ODI runs for Bangladesh -- Shakib Al Hasan reached this landmark against Afghanistan in the team's first match on Wednesday.

43 of the 54 balls delivered by Mashrafe Mortaza against Afghanistan were dot balls.

Australia's average first innings score in their last 10 home ODIs is 274. They have won nine of these matches.



SCOREBOARD

| ENGLAND v NEW ZEALAND | | | | |
|--|-------|-----|----|---|
| ENGLAND | R/B | A/6 | | |
| Bell b Southee | 8/17 | 1/0 | | |
| Ali b Southee | 20/15 | 4/0 | | |
| Ballance c Williamson | | | | |
| b Boult | 10/26 | 0/0 | | |
| Root c Vettori b Milne | 46/70 | 3/0 | | |
| Morgan c Milne b Vettori | 17/41 | 1/0 | | |
| Taylor b Southee | 0/2 | 0/0 | | |
| Buttler c Ronchi b Southee | 3/7 | 0/0 | | |
| Woakes b Southee | 1/2 | 0/0 | | |
| Broad c Vettori b Southee | 4/10 | 0/0 | | |
| Finn c Taylor b Southee | 0/8 | 0/0 | | |
| Anderson not out | 1/2 | 0/0 | | |
| Extras: (lb-6, w-7) | 13 | | | |
| Total: (All out in 33.2 overs) | 123 | | | |
| Fall of wickets: 1-18, 2-36, 3-57, 4-104, 5-104, 6-108, 7-110, 8-116, 9-117. | | | | |
| Bowler | O | M | R | W |
| Southee <td>9</td> <td>0</td> <td>33</td> <td>7</td> | 9 | 0 | 33 | 7 |
| Boult | 10 | 2 | 32 | 1 |
| Milne | 5.2 | 1 | 25 | 1 |
| Vettori | 7 | 0 | 19 | 1 |
| Anderson | 2 | 0 | 8 | 0 |
| NEW ZEALAND | | | | |
| | R/B | A/6 | | |
| Guptill b Woakes | 22/22 | 3/0 | | |
| McCullum b Woakes | 77/25 | 8/7 | | |
| Williamson not out | 9/22 | 1/0 | | |
| Taylor not out | 5/5 | 1/0 | | |
| Extras: (lb-4, w-8) | 12 | | | |
| Total: (For 2 wks in 12.2 overs) | 125 | | | |
| Did not bat: Elliott, Anderson, Ronchi, Vettori, Milne, Southee, Boult. | | | | |
| Fall of wickets: 1-105, 2-112. | | | | |
| Bowler | O | M | R | W |
| Anderson | 5 | 0 | 37 | 0 |
| Broad | 2.2 | 0 | 27 | 0 |
| Finn | 2 | 0 | 49 | 0 |
| Woakes | 3 | 1 | 8 | 2 |
| Result: New Zealand won by 8 wickets. | | | | |
| Player-of-the-match: Tim Southee. | | | | |
| Toss: England | | | | |

Man of Steel

TIM SOUTHEE

When Eoin Morgan won the toss, he must have been hoping for a fresh start after the Australia thrashing. What he wasn't aware of however was that New Zealand had already scripted their version of English thumping. There isn't a better sight than watching out-swinging deliveries hitting the top of the stump and when Tim Southee managed to do that on a regular basis, you knew that this was the making of something special. He eventually notched the third best figures in a World Cup, 7-33, to crush England and leave them reeling.

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