



Mahmudullah in Herald's WC XI

NZHERALD.COM
The New Zealand Herald have put in continual effort into a World Cup XI -- a team that features the best performers of this tournament and is updated weekly -- and have now inducted Mahmudullah into the side. The Herald started with the ICC's official 2014 World ODI XI, before updating it as they saw fit.

The latest iteration of the team features big hitters Shikhar Dhawan, Brendon McCullum and AB De Villiers to begin the innings. The middle-order adds more stability, adding Virat Kohli, Kumar Sangakkara and now, Mahmudullah Riyad. There is a potent all-around presence and bowling attack as well with Corey Anderson, Daniel Vettori, Mitchell Starc, Mohammed Shami and Trent Boult rounding out the team.

SEE PAGE S-4 COL 1



(L) Imrul Kayes and Mashrafe Bin Mortaza share a light-hearted moment as they fool around while Sabbir Rahman launches a football into orbit, showing his left foot is just as powerful as his bat during the Tigers' training at the MCG yesterday.



PHOTOS: AFP

Time to shed 'minnows' tag

AL-AMIN

Ever since Bangladesh set the March 19 quarterfinal date with India at the MCG, the topic that did the rounds most was whether the Tigers would be able to floor Mahendra Singh Dhoni's juggernauts that have so far lived up to a popular Indian slogan "We won't give it back" understandably as a reference to their tag as defending champions.

The whole nation is now riding on euphoria after the Tigers' impressive group stage campaign that included a magnificent victory over England and a near-miss against co-hosts New Zealand. And it seems it can't wait for the MCG showdown.

And in these emotional times it's always a professional hassle you are destined to confront if you are a sports editor of a newspaper because it's your time to answer questions ranging from ifs and buts, naive and odd and then the obvious -- a formula of how to win the match in question.

But then again, being a self-proclaimed expert, you will have to satisfy them with logic. So, is their any rationale behind the notion for Bangladesh to win against India come the D-day tomorrow? Let's first focus on what experts around

go beyond Upon recharge of Tk. 33 or Tk. 70 on all GP packages* enjoy 11 Paisa every 10 seconds 24 hours to all operators. For details, visit www.grameenphone.com

Umpires wired for sound

AFP, Sydney

Communications between on-field officials and TV umpires at the World Cup will be aired on television from this week's quarterfinals, the International Cricket Council said Tuesday. The decision covers umpire referrals, consultations and DRIS player reviews and follows a trial during the one-day series between Australia and South Africa in November last year.

"The International Cricket Council (ICC) confirmed that TV umpire communications during decision-making will be available to the host broadcaster to put to air for the quarterfinals, semifinals and final of the World Cup which will be played between 18 and 29 March," said an ICC statement.

Can Tigers defy the norm?

BISHWAJIT ROY from Melbourne

It's been a touch-bit difficult to predict Bangladesh's strategy in the World Cup so far. They seem to tweak their plan in each game. What's also uncertain is to whether the changes that they made in each of those matches worked out well for the team.

When the media were abuzz with regards to Scotland's weakness against spin, coach Chandika Hathurusingha and company decided to field eight batsmen with just Shakib Al Hasan as the specialist spinner. They probably reckoned that the power of the Bangladesh's pace attack and the part-time spinners would have been enough for the Scots. The move clearly didn't work and they ended up taking quite a heavy pounding at Nelson.

In the next match against England, they replaced the extra batsman, Nasir Hossain, with Arafat Sunny; slightly surprising; considering England's powerful pace attack. Arafat, who was most likely brought in to expose England's weakness against spin ended up leaking 42 runs in eight overs and wasn't allowed to complete his quota.

Against New Zealand, Arafat was replaced by Taijul Islam and the Tigers opened with two left-arm spinners. The move was obviously inspired by the fact that New Zealand crumbled against spin the last seven times they played the Tigers. Taijul was picked over Arafat since the former has the ability to scalp wickets, accord-

ing to the team management, while Arafat is more about restricting runs.

Taijul though ended wicket-less and went for almost six runs an over. Taskin Ahmed had a bad day on the field as well and had it not been for some good bowling from Nasir and Soumya Sarker, the Black Caps would have won the game in a more serene manner.

As they head towards their most crucial encounter of the World Cup this Thursday, the job only gets tougher for the team management. It's going to be difficult to stick to a particular ploy against India who have excelled in every field in the World Cup thus far.

India's bowlers have picked up 60 wickets in the group stages; as a result it won't be a surprise if the Tigers prefer playing Nasir as the eighth batsman in the side. But then again, India's batsmen have been in good form as well and facing them with just four specialist bowlers could prove to be costly.

As per the ongoing discussions, the team management is likely to play four specialist bowlers on Thursday and go in with Nasir. That would mean that Nasir, Soumya, Sabbir Rahman and Mahmudullah Riyad would have to complete the fifth bowler's duty. That would also mean that the four specialist bowlers -- Mashrafe Bin Mortaza, Shakib Al Hasan, Taskin and Rubel Hossain -- would have no room for errors.

The decision to pick a batsman over a spinner could be justified by the fact that India play spin

well and also the Melbourne Cricket Ground is not expected to provide much turn. In addition, it's expected to rain in the morning tomorrow. In fact, the Tigers were forced to train indoors yesterday morning due to inclement weather.

A glance at the statistics would let you know the players that the Tigers would worry about the most. Virat Kohli averages 126.50 against the Tigers. Suresh Raina and Mahendra Singh Dhoni too have boasted healthy averages against Bangladesh.

The good news for the Tigers is that their two in-form batsmen have traditionally played well against India. Mahmudullah has an average of 50 against India, while Mushfiqur Rahim is the only player in the camp to have scored an ODI century against them.

The other factor is that Bangladesh's batsmen have enjoyed batting against India's spinners. Ravichandran Ashwin and Ravindra Jadeja both average above 50 against the Tigers. On the other hand, Mohammad Shami took a four-wicket haul against the Tigers the last time he played against them in Fatullah.

India are clear favourites for the game on Thursday. They are in sublime form and lead the head-to-head stats 24 to three. However, the one thing they can't overlook is Bangladesh's momentum; an aspect that surprised England and almost got the better of New Zealand.

As Shakib put it in a press conference yesterday, from here on it's all about having one good day on the field.



PHOTO: AFP

It's time for Shakib Al Hasan to excel.

the world forecast as the conclusion of this 'uneven' battle.

"They have done their best. So, it's time for the minnows of Bangladesh to rest on their laurels. India should think beyond it," might be the rudest of remarks.

India should not be complacent and must be alert of any banana-peels, may conclude another expert.

Bangladesh should take inspiration from their famous World Cup win against India in 2007 to plot another upset, may quip perhaps another expert, who is preferably an anti-Indian.

If we go by statistics, India, who won their last six games with ease, are supposed to win at a canter.

But let's reflect on what Bangladesh have done in their last five games so far. They have lost against Sri Lanka badly. But other than that they were the team that loved to overcome adversity, the adversity of establishing their very existence as a Test nation against Afghanistan and Scotland, the challenge of overcoming being in the shadows of the big names against England, and against New Zealand in their own den.

To be honest that has hardly enabled them to remove the 'minnows' tag they have been associated with them in every win or in every defeat.

And if you ask me, my first and only appeal to an impressive brand of Tigers, who are fearless while taking the attack to the opponents, that it's about time they played to shrug off that minnows tag, for it is more than just winning or losing a game.

India camp relaxed

REUTERS, Melbourne

If India, the most watched and heavily scrutinised team in world cricket, are under any pressure ahead of Thursday's World Cup quarterfinal against Bangladesh, they are doing well to hide it.

With the weight of expectation of the world's second most populated country on their shoulders, India's players could hardly be any more relaxed.

On Tuesday, less than 48 hours before the start of the match, the players ventured to the Melbourne Cricket Ground.

Rather than hitting the nets to practise their batting and bowling, the players took it easy, with a light-hearted game of soccer on the stadium's sprawling outfield.

Despite being followed by a massive Indian media contingent, the team did not make themselves available for media interaction, maintaining a cloak of silence until Wednesday's mandatory pre-game news conference.

As the defending champions India will go into Thursday's match as overwhelming favourites to win but still wary of their opponents.

Bangladesh famously beat India at the 2007 World Cup but have beaten their great rivals just once since then and retired India

bowler Javagal Srinath said history would not repeat itself this week.

"I know that every time India meet Bangladesh in the World Cup, everyone goes back to 2007 and what happened in Port of Spain. This Indian side bears no resemblance to that team whose morale was so low right from the start of the competition," he wrote in a column that appeared in Tuesday's Hindustan Times newspaper.

"Even though Bangladesh are playing their best cricket, this is a happy Indian side that has mastered the art of winning crunch games."

For India, the weight of expectation can sometimes be overbearing. A crowd of 80,000 is expected to flock to the MCG for Thursday's sudden-death encounter.

Complacency may have loomed as the biggest danger but India captain Mahendra Singh Dhoni has said the pressure to succeed was enough to ensure they never let their guard down.

"Irrespective of which team we play or which tournament we play, we are under pressure," he said after his team's final pool game win.

"The good thing, the boys are quite used to it. Once a few times there have been instances where we are down, but from that position, also, we have come back strongly and we have done well."



It would appear to any casual observer that Bangladesh and India are set for a FIFA World Cup quarterfinal clash at the MCG tomorrow with all the football being played. Here, Dhoni dribbles past a 'defender'.

PHOTO: AFP



TODAY'S MATCH

South Africa v Sri Lanka

First Quarterfinal

Time: 9:30am

Venue: Sydney

THURSDAY'S MATCH

India v Bangladesh

Second Quarterfinal

Time: 9:30am

Venue: Melbourne

fastest banglalink 3G in 64 districts

to activate preferred internet pack dial *5000#

start something new

to know more: +1218, 121,01911304121(free) | banglalink.com.bd | facebook.com/banglalink