

# SPORT



The Export Leader



## Shakib banks on ODI momentum

AL-AMIN from Khulna

Shakib Al Hasan was not ready to award the Tigers the favourites tag in the two-match Test series against Pakistan, like he did ahead of the ODI series that the home side swept 3-0.

And if we go by what the ace Bangladesh all-rounder said before the first Test that commences in Khulna on April 28, it will be a good contest against Pakistan, who have won all the eight Tests between the two sides.

"I don't think we should focus on any target in the Tests. What we need is to carry the confidence of our one-day success into the Tests. And if we can do that it will be a very good series," Shakib told reporters at the Sheikh Abu Naser Stadium yesterday.

Shakib scored a century when Bangladesh last met Pakistan in Dhaka in 2011, which the hosts lost by seven wickets. But he felt that Pakistan still enjoy the upper-hand in the batting department.

"They are a better batting side with some experienced players in their ranks. But I think we have got a better bowling unit and our fielding is far better than theirs," observed the all-rounder who took six wickets in that Dhaka Test.

When asked if Bangladesh have got the firepower in their arsenal to claim 20 wickets against a team they have never done that against, Shakib said that it would depend on what sort of wicket they would be bowling on.

"There are pitches where it's tough to take even ten wickets. I don't know how the wicket will behave here and I don't want to say what type of wickets I need because that absolutely depends on the team management. What I can tell you is that if we can get help from the wicket, we have the capability to take 20 wickets," Shakib said, adding that there were some new faces who could bolster the team if given the opportunity.

"Soumya [Sarkar] has started well in the ODIs. I believe he will carry his form if he makes his Test debut in the series. Liton [Kumar Das] has scored a lot of runs in domestic cricket and I believe he is a talented young player and will also do well if he gets his opportunity.

[Mohammad]Shaheed is a good bowler and I've played alongside him in the Dhaka Premier League", said Shakib, emphasising that this sort of performance puts a positive pressure for those who are in the team.

Regarding his own performance Shakib said that he did not believe he did that badly in the home series so far.

"I don't know but I feel I haven't done that badly in the [ODI] series", quipped Bangladesh's champion left-arm spinner, also mentioning that he needed good rhythm to do well in the Test series.

He also jokingly added that he didn't want to bowl for long in the series as it would supposedly allow the opponents to score more runs.



Bangladesh Test skipper Mushfiqur Rahim (R) realises that he hasn't brought his goggles, while Shakib Al Hasan, Mominul Haque and Tamim Iqbal (L-R) wait for practice to begin at the Sheikh Abu Naser Stadium in Khulna yesterday.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

## Mushy's chance at hand

AL-AMIN from Khulna

Who was the first Bangladesh cricketer to have started training at the Sheikh Abu Naser Stadium on Sunday afternoon? You don't need to guess as the answer is obvious. It's Mushfiqur Rahim. The Bangladesh Test captain walked onto the greens 30 minutes ahead of the schedule start of Tigers' training at 2pm.

Sporting a pad on his left-foot, the right-hander was hitting the ball as straight as an arrow in the nets with the other Nasir, the ball boy of the team, acting as a bowler. And by the time the other members of the team walked out of the

dressings room one after another, Mushfiqur had enough of batting practice that even a middle-order batsman could get in the nets yesterday.

He was also the last man to leave after complying with the slip catching practice next to the centre wicket. This is the biggest forte of Mushfiqur's rise from a technically sound talented cricketer from Bogra to the Numero Uno Bangladesh batsman. He is not only the Mr. Consistent of Bangladesh in all formats but also the most hard and disciplined cricketer.

Mushfiqur is also a cricketer who has evolved with time. In the early days he played shots in the V and had hardly ventured the pull

shots, the down-the-wicket extra-cover drives or those slog sweeps. And those who have seen him growing not only appreciated his tireless efforts of reinventing himself, but also acknowledged that it's a reward for his hard work.

He is a kind of batsman who has learnt the art of nudging and pushing for singles when a bowler is bowling a decent line. He could have been a very good F1 driver for his ability to understand when to step up a gear.

He has made the slog-sweep an art but ask him and he will tell you it took hundreds of hours to perfect that shot. His boyish smile belies his ability of being a ruthless batsman against anything short

and wide.

The 26-year-old is now up against an even-bigger hurdle to overcome beyond his batting abilities. Will Mashrafe Bin Mortaza's absence have any effect in the Test series? It's a question that was thrown at his BKSP mate Shakib Al Hasan during an impromptu briefing on the ground.

Shakib batted straight while terming Mashrafe and Mushfiqur as two valuable assets of the Tigers.

But with an allegation of a defensive mind-set tagged on Mushfiqur compared to a fearless and aggressive Mashrafe, it is now his time to shrug off that label.

And we believe he will bury that notion.

## Srinivasan allegedly hired spies

AGENCIES, New Delhi

According to the reports on Sunday, reports are coming in that N Srinivasan spent close to 14 crore rupees to spy on other BCCI board members through a London agency.

The BCCI are supposed to meet in Kolkata and discuss the role of N Srinivasan on the alleged matters. The BCCI is expected to launch an official enquiry into the matter that is expected to be headed by Anurag Thakur.

The BCCI's Working Committee during its meeting in Kolkata on April 26 will discuss the 5 lakh rupee valuation of the Chennai Super Kings, which has been objected by some IPL Governing Council members.

The other question that was raised was Rs 25,000 being paid upfront to the BCCI for the sale of the franchise.

## Knit Concern runners-up

SPORTS REPORTER

Dhaka Gladiators Badminton Club became unbeaten champions in the Helvetia First Division Badminton League with all-win record at the Shaheed Tajuddin Ahmed Indoor Stadium.

Knit Concern and Maha SC became second and third with seven and six wins respectively while Knit Concern finished top in women's event with two wins over Dewan Textile, who became runners among three teams.



Pakistan may have been drubbed in the ODIs, but they maintained a positive atmosphere during training at the Sheikh Abu Naser Stadium in Khulna yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

## 'Test is different'

SPORTS REPORTER from Khulna

It has been some sort of unexpected struggle for the Pakistan cricket team ever since they arrived in Bangladesh. They suffered a humiliating 3-0 ODI whitewash against a tail-up Tigers. They threw up a changed side with a changed captain to turn their fortune in the lone T20 International, but suffered the same fate -- another heavy defeat at Bangladesh's home of cricket in Mirpur.

They had a scary Saturday morning when a powerful earthquake that struck Nepal had also jolted Bangladesh before taking a nervy flight to Jessore en route to Khulna and onboard a different captain for the two-match Test series.

But amidst all those demoralising defeats and uproar back in Pakistan, they have been doing one thing religiously -- coming to the field just on time and training as hard as possible. Pakistan were the first of two teams to train at Khulna's Sheikh Abu Naser Stadium in the morning.

And to be honest, they looked as disciplined as their coach Waqar Younis, who started the drill at 9.30 am and finished it at 1.30pm.

The training was so intense that a persistent Waqar convinced the curator of the ground to allow his



SAMI ASLAM

batsmen to have net-practice session on the other three wickets kept for the Tigers.

And during the gruelling session they decided to allow the team's youngest member Sami Aslam, who

scored a fluent 40 odd in the third ODI, to have a few words with the Bangladesh media.

Aslam, a product of youth system, didn't say a lot or even looked reluctant to speak about their opponents.

In his entire bout, he emphasised two things in a nutshell. Firstly, his desire to make an impression as an opener, someone Pakistan desperately need at the top, if given the opportunity.

Secondly, he put emphasis on Pakistan's Test rankings which is currently fourth, five places above Bangladesh.

"I am working hard and, if given an opportunity, I am very much confident that I will play a vital role in the Test series," Aslam told reporters.

"Test is entirely different from ODI and T20 and I am pretty much confident that our team will do better than what they have done so far. We are number four in this format and we have a strategy, and having Misbah [ul Haq] and Younis [Khan] in the side, we make a good team to win the series," said the left-hander.

## 'Pakistan cricket at nadir'

THE DAWN, Karachi

Cricket commentator and former Test captain Ramiz Raja has described Pakistan's hammering at the hands of Bangladesh as "embarrassing" and the "lowest point in our international history".

Ramiz Raja expressed his disappointment in the "lack of direction" and the lack of "fresh ideas" from the Pakistan Cricket Board which had rendered the national cricket team as a "rudderless ship".

Raja said that the country is no longer churning out talent like they did in the past, and even if any player comes through they are not "used properly" by the team management.

He said that the emerging lot of players are "timid" and have a boxed in mentality. He pointed out flaws in the players brought up, and said that they -- having technical and mental issues -- do not know how to construct an innings.

The former national captain said that Pakistan cricket needs a tonic of aggression, and its overall strategy needs to be improved.

The only silver lining seen by the cricket commentator is the emergence of newly-appointed captain Azhar Ali as the top run-getter, with a century and a half-century in three innings.

Talking about the upcoming two-match Test series between hosts Bangladesh and Pakistan which begins in Khulna on April 28, Ramiz said, "I think Bangladesh should be relentless as this a golden chance for them to create history."

## INA NUTSHELL

### Lucky fans spend WC winnings

AGENCIES, Wellington

Paid-off mortgages, two-month holidays and a brand new business are among the spending sprees of sports fans who snared catches during the World Cup.

Seven spectators banked \$107,142.86 each, tax-free, for one-handed catches as the world's top batsmen sent sixes sailing into the stands in the tournament.

Their windfall came after brewer Tui paid a combined \$750,000 in its Catch A Million competition.

For Aucklander Arjun Bhardwaj, 24, who moved to New Zealand from India on his own as a 17-year-old, the payout means he will open his first business and return home to visit family.

"I'd been looking to set up my own business for a while but not able to afford it. I can do that now."

Sajjad Ahmad, 42, of Wellington, said the winnings meant his family had financial security.

Some of the lucky few from the promotion have tucked their windfalls in savings accounts or are "letting the dust settle" before splashing out, including Okura man Travis Committee, Lower Hutt's John Raynor and Jamie Gough of Dunedin.

New Plymouth's Stu Chapman is using \$50,000 to have a good time with his family. Family is also the big winner for Sunjay Ganda of Rangiora, who said his wife was able to stay home with their young child, rather than being forced back to work.

### Ganguly donates to stricken family

AGENCIES, New Delhi

Former India captain Sourav Ganguly has decided to give away his BCCI pension for this year to the deceased Under-19 Bengal cricketer Ankit Keshri's family.

Ganguly has also decided to use the pension, which he will be getting in future years from the

Board, to fund the treatment of injured players who are registered under the Cricket Association of Bengal.

"I have decided to give away my pension amount to Ankit's family," Ganguly, who is the current joint-secretary of the CAB, told reporters after CAB's finance committee meeting.

"It's also my personal decision to fund the treatment of injured players, the ones that are CAB-registered. I will use the amount that I get as pension from the Board," he added.

As per BCCI's pension scheme, former Test cricketers receive an amount of Rs 4,20,000 annually.

