

# SPORT

## 'No pressure on spinners to turn the ball'

Prior to departing for India to take part in the Indian Premier League ace all-rounder Shakib Al Hasan spoke to the media during the soft launch of his restaurant, Shakib's Dine, in posh Banani. He shared his views on the current scenario of Bangladesh's bowling and his expectations from the India series. Following are the excerpts of the interview:

SPORTS REPORTER

Q: Despite the defeat, how do you think the series panned out overall?

Shakib: Really good. If we could have done better at the end it would have been better. There is a sense of regret. But overall I think we haven't played this well in the past. I think this was even better than the World Cup. It will help us gain confidence ahead of the upcoming series.

Q: Is it a concern that Bangladesh's bowlers can't take 20 wickets? Are the first-class wickets good enough to help improve their skills?

Shakib: Maybe for the spinners they are; because they bowl for a long time on these wickets. Fast bowlers don't get more than four or five overs if the wicket doesn't offer help and they get demoralised. For them to bowl for a long period

in Test cricket or to learn something from domestic cricket, become difficult. The mental support that they require isn't there. In fact I think our domestic cricket is the only setup in the world that has teams that do not field more than two pacers in their side. So we never managed to inspire them.

Q: It's not just the pacers. You don't have too many spinners who can actually turn the ball too...

Shakib: What I believe is that due to the pitches in our country, any occasional turner of the ball can play the role of a spinner in our domestic cricket. So in the Dhaka Premier League we see each team having four to five spinners, of which there are at least two occasional spinners. In our leagues, you don't have to be a good spinner to do well. One reason for that is definitely the wicket. We don't play



*"In our league, you don't have to be a good spinner to do well. One reason for that is definitely the wicket. We don't play on prepared wickets."*

on prepared wickets. They are unprepared, slow and low, there's no spin on it but it's still difficult for the batsmen. And since it's just 50 overs, teams look to just restrict the run-flow.

Q: Do you have any suggestions for the improvement of spinners?

Shakib: I actually don't know what to suggest. I personally think that world-class spinners have special talent. Take for instance, [Muttiah] Muralidaran, there won't be another Murali. Shane Warne, Anil Kumble, Saqlain Mushtaq... these players had talent apart from just perseverance. Even though they received the same training as the others, they stood apart. So we need to hunt these talented players in our country as well.

Also, whenever I play in other countries I notice that spinners can turn the ball in extremely flat tracks. They need to create that skill in order to survive there but that is not the case here. We don't need to work hard to be a very good bowler in the Premier League. On the whole I think we are good for ODIs quality-wise, but in Tests we are still not up to the mark.

Q: Do you think Bangladesh are favourites for the India series?

Shakib: (laughs) Depends on what team India sends. They reached the semifinals of the World Cup and they have several match-winners. It won't be easy for us, but we have confidence at home and the performance in the last series will inspire us. The World Cup will inspire us. The crowd will support us a lot more than the other series. We will definitely want to win the series. But if we can win even one match, I don't think it will be a bad result, provided we can play every match consistently.

Q: Can we get any 'home advantage' against India?

Shakib: Against an Asian team it will be difficult to get home advantage because they play in similar conditions. But we can definitely utilise our home conditions against South Africa and Australia. We have better spinners than theirs, so from that aspect we will get at least a little bit of advantage. The wickets here will be different compared to the kind of wickets they play on throughout the season.

## IN A NUTSHELL

### BJP MP against Indo-Pak series

AGENCIES, New Delhi & Kolkata

A Bharatiya Janata Party parliamentarian on Monday expressed his opposition to the proposed India-Pakistan cricket series in the UAE in December.

Former home secretary and MP from Bihar's Arrah, RK Singh, raised the issue in the Lok Sabha during zero hour.

Alluding to Pakistan's role in the 26/11 Mumbai terror attack and release of its mastermind Zaki-ur-Rehman Lakhvi, Singh said: "A country which is giving shelters to the terrorists, who have attacked and had carried out bomb blasts against us, what is a point of playing cricket with that country, I don't understand."

Pakistan Cricket Board chairman Shahryar Khan meanwhile announced, "We resume the India-Pak series in UAE. This is the re-beginning of the revival of Indo-Pak cricket."

He also informed after meeting Indian board's president Jagmohan Dalmiya that the series would start in December as per schedule and comprise three Tests, five ODIs and two T20Is.

"The preparation is on in full swing. We have to overcome the final hurdle. You may know as per the MoU there will be five series between the two countries in eight years," he said.

### 'Yuvraj didn't ask for it'

PTI, New Delhi

Delhi Daredevils CEO Hemant Dua on Monday said it was market forces that determined Yuvraj Singh's price of 16 crore rupees and the franchise is firmly backing the ageing star despite his failure to turn the team's fortunes in the ongoing eighth edition of the Indian Premier League.

Yuvraj has managed only 205 runs at a dismal average of 18.63 from 12 games and DD are practically out of contention for a place in the play-offs.

"I think we talk about 14 crore-16 crore but that's all a marketplace. As Yuvraj had rightly said [in Vizag], he never asked for that price. It was [the] marketplace [that was responsible]," Dua told PTI.

He did state that they would have ideally liked to get him for lesser amount but once bidding started they had to go all out.

### Marriage works for Murray

AFP, Madrid

Andy Murray praised the impact of marriage on his career after winning only his second clay court title at the Madrid Open with a 6-3, 6-2 rout of Rafael Nadal.

The Scottish star wrote "marriage works" on the on-court camera after thrashing the nine-time French Open champion.



Murray has yet to lose since getting married to long time girlfriend Kim Sears at a ceremony in his home town of Dunblane a month ago.

The two-time Grand Slam champion won his first clay court title on Monday in Munich.

Murray has even taken to wearing his wedding ring on the laces of his shoes during matches and was quick to put it back on his finger after sealing victory over Nadal.

"It [marriage] has been nice and a lot of people have spoken about the honeymoon period," Murray said on Sky Sports 3.

"But we've been together a very long time and getting married was the next step."

## Salma powers MSC

SPORTS REPORTER



An all-round performance from Salma Khatun guided Mohammedan Sporting Club as they confirmed the Dhaka Premier Division Women's Cricket League with an 11-run victory over Rupali Bank Kriya Parishad in a rain-interrupted super-league match at BKSP yesterday.

Mohammedan remained unbeaten in the league and clinched their fifth title in a row and overall sixth out of seven. They will play their last league match against Abahani on May 15.

Salma led from the front as she claimed four wickets for 39 runs after scoring an unbeaten 60 off 47 that featured seven boundaries.

The match was rescheduled to 45-over-a-side affair following rain in the morning

and Mohammedan decided to bat first, scoring 197 runs for four. Rumana Ahmed was the other notable scorer for Mohammedan as she slammed 50 off 63 balls, smashing six boundaries.

Sathira Jakir took three wickets for 39 runs.

In reply, Farzana Haque and Lata Mondol hit half centuries, but their efforts were not good enough as Rupali Bank completed their 45-over quota for 186-9. Farzana took 90 balls to score 60 runs, while Lata added an unbeaten 47-ball 57.

### SCORES IN BRIEF

**MOHAMMEDAN:** 197-4 in 45 overs (Fatema 27, Rumana 50, Salma 60 not out; Sathira 3-39)  
**RUPALI BANK:** 186-9 in 45 overs (Shamima 40, Farzana 63, Lata 57 not out; Salma 4-39, Rumana 2-21)  
**RESULT:** Mohammedan won by 11 runs.



The victorious Mohammedan team pose for photographs after confirming the Dhaka Premier Division Women's Cricket League title with an 11-run victory over Rupali Bank Kriya Parishad at BKSP yesterday.

PHOTO: COURTESY

## Test stature increasing

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh has collected six points after the annual update in the ICC Test rankings. The difference between two bottom-ranked sides -- Bangladesh and Zimbabwe -- has increased to 34 points, as Zimbabwe dropped 13 points.

The draw against Pakistan in the first Test at Khulna helped them improve their points while Pakistan -- who were earlier No.3 in the rankings -- have moved down to No.6.

South Africa (130) lead the team rankings followed by Australia (108), New Zealand (99), India (99), England (97), Pakistan (97), Sri Lanka (96), West Indies (84), Bangladesh (39) and Zimbabwe (5).

## Some go home, a few abroad

SPORTS REPORTER



The end of the Pakistan series has finally given the Tigers a much needed break. The national team has been on the road since the beginning of this year.

While they did get a brief break after the World Cup, it was shortened due to the preparations for the Pakistan series, which included the inaugural one-day tournament of the Bangladesh Cricket League.

The national cricketers will be away from cricket till May 19, after which they will have to report to the BCB for a fitness test. While certain cricketers have preferred spending some quality time with their families, others have decided to use the break to continue working on their fitness levels.

Opener Tamim Iqbal, who underwent a rebirth of sorts with his brilliant performance in the Pakistan series, has reportedly decided to take a break from the game. He is currently planning on travelling outside the country on a family vacation. The player apparently wants to celebrate his maiden double-century in the best possible manner.

His opening partner in the ODIs Soumya Sarker, on a similar note, has decided to go back home to Satkhira and visit his parents. Soumya, who lives with a group of friends at an apartment near the stadium in Mirpur, doesn't frequently get a chance to meet his parents since they both work in different regions.

Fortunately though for the left-handed opener, the schedules have matched along fine this time and he hopes to spend a good week with his entire family.

Young Sabbir Rahman has decided to utilise the break to go to India with his family. "I will be leaving tomorrow for Bangalore. I hear it's a good place for sightseeing. I plan to spend four to five days there with my family and in the midst of all that I have planned a medical check-up for my father there as well," said Sabbir.

Opener Imrul Kayes might have had a good run in the Test series but the player, who has been in and out of the national team, is far from being satisfied and has opted to use the break to improve his fitness levels.

Like Imrul, even Rubel Hossain has a schedule to keep up with. The bowler, who is recovering from a side-strain, will be visiting the SBNS every day this week in order to be fit in time for the India series.

## SRH survive Miller magic

STAR SPORTS DESK

Sunrisers Hyderabad overcame late scare from David Miller to edge past Kings XI Punjab by five runs at the Rajiv Gandhi International Stadium in Hyderabad yesterday.

Batting first the Sunrisers rode on a brilliant 81 off 52 deliveries from David Warner which led them to a powerful 185. In reply, Punjab were reduced to 81 for 5 in just 12.3 overs and looked nowhere near their target.

That was of course, until the arrival of South Africa's master-hitter Miller. He smacked 89 off 44 deliveries and gave the hosts a scare.

In the last over they required 27 runs and Miller got 22 of those.

**SCORES IN BRIEF**  
**HYDERABAD:** 185 for 5 (Warner 81; Hendricks 2-40) v **PUNJAB:** 180 for 7 (Miller 89; Henriques 3-16)

## Kallis jumps to Biff's defence

AGENCIES, Johannesburg



Former South Africa all-rounder Jacques Kallis has jumped to the defence of skipper Graeme Smith, who is involved in a very 'messy and public' divorce with his Irish pop star wife Morgan Deane.

Smith has been making headlines in South Africa and Ireland after it was revealed in March his three-year marriage to Deane had come to an end.

The Sunday Times, which ran headline story on March 8, has been ordered to apologise to the former opening batsman for publishing an article suggesting Deane had found out about the impending divorce when Smith accidentally sent her a text message that was meant for his lawyer.

Kallis said Smith has been wronged by the media in the reportage of facts related to the divorce proceedings. He, according to Sport24, criticised the media for giving only 'one side of the story and not the other'.

Kallis added that Smith, nicknamed Biff, had always been there for Morgan and their children.

He said Smith has insisted on not responding to the various allegations appearing in the media as he believes it would only worsen the matter and affect his children.

Kallis said all accusations against Smith were 'outrageous, unfair and untrue'.

Kallis also implored Smith and Deane to act in a 'private and dignified manner going forward for the sake of their children'. The pair have two children, Cadence, two, and Carter, one.

## Tigers may not face Steyn

CRICINFO



Dale Steyn has suggested he may not be available for the full duration of South Africa's next international assignment, against Bangladesh in July, as he tries to manage his workload with one eye on appearing at another World Cup.

"At this stage of my career, I'd rather be saving myself to go and participate in the major tournaments, rather than wasting the few balls I have left in my career in a Bangladesh match," Steyn said in an interview with Wisden India.

"I'd rather go to Bangladesh to help and support future South African bowlers, and use what is left of the 10,000 or 20,000 deliveries that I have in my body for the big tournament. That's where I'm at personally. But at the beginning of my career, I would have done everything. I would have gone every tournament and to every place. But I've done it all now."

Steyn, who has been playing international cricket for a decade, has competed against all nine Test teams he could have faced. He maintains that Test cricket is the format he wants to "play a lot more," in, especially because, at 31, he considers his

days "numbered."

In the same time period, Steyn has been less prolific in limited-overs cricket. He has featured in two fifty-over World Cups and four World T20s but been rested from several other series as South Africa sought to keep him fresh. As his career reaches its twilight years, Steyn said that trend will continue because he placed greater value on major tournaments than bilateral series.

"It might sound very cocky or naive of me, or self-centered, but I want to win a World Cup for my country. And they only come around once every four years. If you're playing in the Twenty20 World Cup, luckily they come around every second year," he said. "So with all due respect to places like Bangladesh or Zimbabwe, going and playing three ODIs in Bangladesh does nothing for my confidence as opposed to knowing that I'm going to a World Cup."

That could leave South Africa without several senior players for their two T20Is, three ODIs and two Tests against Bangladesh. Apart from Steyn, AB de Villiers, JP Duminy and Morne Morkel could all miss some part of the series as all three are expecting the birth of their first children around the time of the tour, which could present an opportunity for the team to blood some new players.