

SPORT

Pacers fight for fitness

Fitness camp begins today

SPORTS REPORTER

The focus will be on the pace department when the Tigers begin their two-day fitness camp at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur today, ahead of next month's home series against India. Bangladesh's pace vulnerability was severely exposed during the second Test against Pakistan in Mirpur, where newcomer Mohammad Shahid had to bear an extra burden following injuries to Shahadat Hossain and Rubel Hossain. Shahadat was out after bowling two deliveries, while Rubel is recovering from a side-strain.

Shafiqul Islam, who was out of the Pakistan series due to a finger injury is another bowler the Tigers will hope to find fit.

There are not too many pace bowling options for the selectors for the lone Test against India as only Rubel, Shafiqul, Shahid and Abul Hasan are in the line-up. And Hasan is not a first-choice bowler for the Tests.

On the morning of the fourth day of the first Test against Pakistan in Khulna, it was revealed that Rubel had complained of a side-strain and was subsequently dropped from the second Test. Now the team management will desperately be looking forward to getting back a fully fit Rubel for the only Test against India, which will start from June 10 at the Fatullah Cricket Stadium.

After two days of fitness training it will be confirmed whether Rubel and Shafiqul can play the last round of the Bangladesh Cricket League (BCL), starting from May 24.

"I am not sure if I will be able to take part in the Bangladesh Cricket League.

The area where I suffered the side-strain still feels a bit tight. I haven't been bowling with my full strength in training. I will have to analyse the situation further.

"My main target is to become fit for the first Test, so I don't want to take any risks. I won't be in the fitness session tomorrow (May 20) because I have to go to court," Rubel told the Daily Star over phone.

Shafiqul however was hopeful. "I am much better now. I will start bowling the day after tomorrow at full strength and hopefully I can play the BCL," he said.

After their fitness sessions, the players will play the final round of the BCL match before returning to the camp on May 29 to prepare for the home series against India. The visitors will arrive on June 7 to play one Test and three ODIs against the Tigers.



RUBEL HOSSAIN



Bangladesh's World Cup heroes Mahmudullah Riyad (L) and Taskin Ahmed spent some time against each other in the nets in Mirpur yesterday in a bid to rejuvenate their form ahead of the India series which begins on June 10.

PHOTO: STAR

Sourav taking Ravi's place?

AGENCIES, New Delhi

With India's squad for the upcoming Bangladesh series set to be announced on May 20, there are expected to be a few changes in the playing personnel with several first-choice players reportedly keen on a rest at least during the 3-match one-day international series that follows the one-off Test.

It has now emerged that there could be a change in the support staff as well with the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) being keen on Sourav Ganguly replacing Ravi Shastri as the team director.

According to a report in the Hindustan Times, Shastri is seen as a supporter of former BCCI president N Srinivasan and the new BCCI regime, with Jagmohan Dalmiya as president, is intent on doing away with his services. The 52-year-old was appointed as director of cricket following India's 3-1 Test series defeat to England last year and has been with the Indian team ever since.

"The president believes Shastri has been pro-Srinivasan. He does not see Shastri as a long-term member of the team. He is very keen on having Ganguly as a part of the national set-up," a BCCI source said.

Ganguly has been linked to several roles with the Indian team over the last few weeks, ranging from head coach to high performance manager. Apart from having had the experience of playing for India for over a decade, the fact that he had a tremendous overseas record as India captain is likely to hold him in good stead.

India may pick full-strength side today

PTI, Mumbai



As they pick India's squad for the upcoming Bangladesh cricket tour on Wednesday, selectors are

expected to settle for a tried and tested combination with flamboyant Virat Kohli set to lead a largely unchanged team that faced Australia.

The Board of Control for Cricket in India had announced that the All-India Senior Selection Committee will meet here to pick the teams for the one-off Test scheduled from June 10-14 at Fatullah followed by the three ODIs in Mirpur starting June 18.

It was learnt by PTI that none of the senior players, including Kohli, had informed the selection panel,

headed by Sandeep Patil, of any wish to stand down from the three-week tour.

Kohli led India in the opening Test against Australia at Adelaide in injured Mahendra Singh Dhoni's absence and then captained the team in the final Test after the wicketkeeper-batsman retired post the third match in Melbourne in December last year.

There's, however, doubt over the availability of pace bowler Mohammed Shami, who missed this year's IPL due of a knee injury.

In case the Bengal bowler is declared unfit, Mumbai's Dhawal Kulkarni, who went to play in the triangular one-day series and then stayed on for the World Cup as an extra member of the squad, is the front runner to take his place.

The rest of the pace attack is



VIRAT KOHLI

expected to comprise Ishant Sharma, Varun Aaron, Umesh Yadav and Bhuvaneshwar Kumar.

Shikhar Dhawan, Murali Vijay, Lokesh Rahul, Kohli, Cheteshwar Pujara, Ajinkya Rahane and Rohit Sharma are expected to fill the batting line-up.

Though there's a question mark

over Suresh Raina, who flopped by getting a pair of ducks when given a chance in the final Test against Australia.

Wriddhiman Saha is a prime contender to take up Dhoni's place behind the wickets in the lone Test while Ravichandran Ashwin is set to keep his place as the leader of the spin attack.

Karn Sharma, who played in the opening Test in Adelaide in place of Ashwin, is unlikely to be picked. Ravinder Jadeja was the third spinner in the Test squad that played in Australia.

Dhoni, if available, will lead the ODI squad, which largely should reflect the team that exceeded expectations by entering the semi-finals of the 50-over showpiece event before succumbing to eventual champions Australia.

Six to bid for Tigers today

SPORTS REPORTER

The Bangladesh Cricket Board yesterday accepted the technical proposals of six companies for the national team's sponsorship rights for the next two years.

The board will conduct the bidding process today afternoon when the companies will have to submit their respective bids. The floor price for the bidding has been set at TK 30 crore.

Top of Mind, an event management company, was awarded the sponsorship rights for the Pakistan series, which witnessed the likes of Grameenphone and Robi Axiata Ltd participate as well.



Security personnel escort buses carrying the Zimbabwe and Pakistan cricket teams as they leave the Gaddafi Cricket Stadium in Lahore after their practice sessions on Tuesday.

PHOTO: AFP

Malik, Sami return for Pakistan

AFP, Lahore

Pakistan on Tuesday announced surprise recalls for former captain Shoaib Malik and paceman Mohammad Sami but left out struggling spinner Saeed Ajmal for the two Twenty20 Internationals against Zimbabwe.

Malik, the 33-year-old all-rounder, has not figured since a poor showing against Bangladesh in the last of his 59 T20 Internationals in Dhaka in 2014. But a return to form in the recently concluded "Super8" domestic T20 meet has led to him being recalled, said chief selector Haroon Rasheed.

"In the absence of Ajmal who needs some time to adjust to his remodelled action, we needed someone who could bowl also and Malik has shown some good recent form," Rasheed told AFP.

Sami, 34, was once regarded as one of the world's fastest bowlers after he burst on to the scene in the early 2000s. But he last played for Pakistan on the tour of Sri Lanka in June 2012.

The 15-man squad also sees the return of batsman Umar Akmal who was left out of the Bangladesh tour for exhibiting a "poor attitude" during the World Cup in Australia and New Zealand in February and March.

There are two uncapped players, Noman Anwar and all-rounder and former Pakistan U-19 captain Imad Wasim.

Squad: Shahid Afridi (captain), Sarfraz Ahmed, Ahmed Shehzad, Mohammad Hafeez, Mukhtar Ahmed, Noman Anwar, Shoaib Malik, Umar Akmal, Mohammad Rizwan, Anwar Ali, Hammad Azam, Imad Wasim, Bilawal Bhatti, Wahab Riaz, Mohammad Sami.

Mumbai in final None knows better: Zim

AGENCIES, Mumbai

Mumbai Indians put up a superb all-round performance crushing Chennai Super Kings by 25 runs to enter the final of the eighth edition of Indian Premier League on Tuesday.

En route their third entry to the summit round after 2010 and 2013, Mumbai scored 187 for six largely due to the brilliant cameo from Kieron Pollard who smashed a 17-ball-41 on the platform laid by Lendl Simmons' 65 off 51 balls.

In reply, CSK's much vaunted line-up could muster only 162 in 19 overs as none of the top-order batsmen went onto play a match-winning knock.

Such was the domination by the home team that CSK never looked a part during better part of the match and ended second best in the process. But the five-time finalists and two-time champions will get another crack during the second Qualifier to be played in Mahendra Singh Dhoni's hometown Ranchi.

The telling blow was dealt by Harbhajan Singh (2/26 in 4 overs), who removed the dangerous Suresh Raina (25) and skipper MS Dhoni (0) off successive deliveries to swing the match decisively in MI's favour. Lasith Malinga (3/23) and R Vinay Kumar (2/26) did play their part as MI have now won nine out of 11 matches.

Faf du Plessis (45) played well but just like Raina was deceived by slow nature of the pitch going for a big hit.

SCORES IN BRIEF

MUMBAI: 187 for 6 in 20 overs (Simmons 65, Patel 35, R Sharma 19, Pollard 41; Bravo 3-40)

CHENNAI: 162 all out in 19 overs (Du Plessis 45, Raina 25, Bravo 20, Jadeja 19, Ashwin 23; Malinga 2-22, Harbhajan 2-26) Result: Mumbai won by 25 runs.

AFP, Lahore



Zimbabwe's cricket chief said Tuesday his team had decided to tour Pakistan because they too had experienced the cost of isolation as the African team embarked on the first series by a Test-playing country since 2009.

Speaking at a press conference alongside captain Elton Chigumbura after arriving overnight in the city of Lahore, Ozias Bvute likened Pakistan's six years without top-flight cricket at home to the removal of Zimbabwe's Test status from 2005 to 2011.

"For many years Zimbabwe was isolated so therefore we understand the politics of isolation. We've therefore said no, isolation is not the right way," he said.

"We must break the barriers that exist in between us. We are therefore here to firm our position that brotherhood supersedes everything else and cricket unites us. We hope to give you a decent show."

Zimbabwe's Test status was removed after senior players quit to protest the sacking of then-captain Heath Streak, who was appointed after Andy Flower retired in a stand against the policies of the government of Robert Mugabe.

Zimbabwe are the first Test team to tour Pakistan since militants attacked

the Sri Lankan team bus in March 2009, killing eight people and leading to the suspension of all international cricket in the country.

The tour was almost called off last week after gunmen massacred 45 minority Shiites in the city of Karachi, but Zimbabwe finally decided to go ahead.

Bvute confirmed there were fears but denied any player was forced to tour.

"Being human beings those events [in Karachi] unnerved a lot of people and created doubts in members of our fraternity as whether it [the tour] was the right thing to do. We obviously weighed the pros and the cons of what we wanted to achieve," he said.

"The position was that our players were offered the opportunity to voluntarily come to Pakistan. They accepted the position and that's why we have [a] full strength team."

Chigumbura admitted the heightened security, featuring 6,000 policemen, was something new for his team, but said they were focused on cricketing matters.

"Obviously this is something new for us but, as I said, we are not worried about [that] as players and the main thing for us is to play cricket."

Zimbabwe will play two Twenty20 Internationals on Friday and Sunday followed by three one-day internationals on May 26, 29 and 31 – all in Lahore.

INA NUTSHELL

Kohli warned about Anushka

INTERNET

The Board of Control for Cricket in India has confirmed that Royal Challengers Bangalore skipper Virat Kohli will be warned for speaking with girlfriend Anushka Sharma during an Indian Premier League match.

"We shouldn't blow the thing out of proportion but I have spoken to him and told him he shouldn't speak to anyone when technically the match is still on," IPL chairman Rajiv Shukla was quoted as saying in an India Today report.

ICC's Anti-Corruption and Security Unit doesn't permit players to talk to anyone that has not been officially cleared. This also includes team owners which is why celebrity owners do not sit with the team during games.

Root rose because of Moores

INTERNET

England middle-order batsman and vice-captain Joe Root has credited former coach Peter Moores for his rise in terms of form, which has resulted in him being named as the nation's player-of-the-year in cricket.

Root said that over the past year, Moores had got the best out of him, the BBC reported.

The right-hand batsman added that when he was brought back into the team by Moores, he worked and spent time strengthening the stuff he was good at and as a result had amassed 1,135 Test runs.

Yuvi earned \$13,347 per run

INTERNET

If you needed proof that the money spent on players in the Indian Premier League is getting out of hand, here it is. The best paid player in the IPL, Yuvraj Singh, was paid an astonishing 13,347 dollars for every run he scored in this year's tournament.



Eyebrows were raised when struggling franchise Delhi Daredevils splashed a whopping 3.31 million dollars on Yuvraj at the auction in February. Yuvraj scored 248 runs from 13 innings at an average of 19.07 and strike rate of 118.09.