

SPORT



Bangladesh Test captain Mushfiqur Rahim jogs at the home of cricket in Mirpur yesterday only to be advised afterwards that he needed a week's rest to heal his injured finger.

PHOTO: STAR

'It'll be tough against CSK'

PTI, Pune

Notwithstanding the comprehensive win against Rajasthan Royals in their IPL Eliminator, AB de Villiers says Royal Challengers Bangalore will be wary of Chennai Super Kings in Friday's qualifier as they are a tough team to beat.

"It is going to be a very difficult match. We know that CSK are a very good and tough team to beat. We would love to go to Ranchi and beat them. It would be amazing if we can then go a step further and win the trophy. Right now we have to take it step by step," said de Villiers.

Asked if his batting at No. 3 gives RCB a chance of winning, de Villiers said: "It does give me a chance to pace my innings and build it in cases like the one [against Rajasthan Royals]."

De Villiers said he was happy to play a part in the development of the youngsters in the side.

"What would life be without having a good influence on other people? That is what it is all about. I am trying to make a positive influence on some young players in the team and if Mandeep Singh says I have, it makes me a very happy man."

A painful finger KEEPING & GLOVES

SPORTS REPORTER



Injuries to key players, it seems, is the biggest headache for the national selectors ahead of Bangladesh's one-off Test against

India next month.

While the selectors are sweating to find two fit pace bowlers for the Test, scheduled to start at Fatullah on June 10, the latest news of skipper Mushfiqur Rahim being advised to take a full week's rest to heal the injured ring finger on his right hand added more concern to Faruque Ahmed's three-man panel.

"Since he (Mushfiqur) was complaining of pain we did the necessary medical examinations again on his right hand. The report confirmed that the internal damage is yet to completely heal and that's why the swelling and the pain is still there. We have advised him to take full rest for one week before further assessment," said BCB physician Dr. Debashis

Chowdhury to the Daily Star last night.

Mushfiqur injured his finger while keeping on the second day of the first Test at Khulna last month in the series against Pakistan. Although the medical report at that time confirmed only swelling due to internal bleeding, the Bangladesh batsman was advised not to don the keeping gloves until his finger had been fully cured.

Mushfiqur, who did not keep for the rest of that match however batted briefly and uncomfortably in the second innings of the famous drawn Test against Pakistan.

But his decision to keep in the second Test at Dhaka, where he stayed behind the wicket for almost two days, perhaps proved a big detriment to the healing of his injury.

It was also quite evident in his batting in both innings of the second Test where a batsman of his stature and technique was out playing ordinary shots. And on both occasions it was evident that he was definitely feeling uncomfortable gripping the bat.

There were calls from different quarters that Mushfiqur, a batting asset of Bangladesh, should avoid keeping, at least in the second Test, so that he could focus on his batting as well as allow his finger to undergo a proper healing process. But it was learnt that the 28-year-old Bangladesh captain had outright rejected that idea, which is now proving to be an unwise decision.

A debate has been going on for quite some time whether Mushfiqur, who is carrying a vulnerable right shoulder, should sacrifice the keeping gloves so that he can focus more on his batting and captaincy. He has been rigid in his stance to be the three-in-one in the team, but his painful right finger, which will heal sooner or later, might open the prospect of a different complexion.

It is still early to say, but in the present gloomy scenario one can not rule out the possibility of the selectors injecting a fresh wicketkeeper for the India Test as part of a disaster management plan.

IN A NUTSHELL

Mandeep AB's player-of-the-match

INTERNET

Royal Challengers Bangalore's star batsman AB de Villiers on Wednesday announced he would gift his player-of-the-match award in the IPL eliminator in Pune to teammate Mandeep Singh for his performance in the game.

Mandeep authored an unconquered 34-ball 54 to help his side beat Rajasthan Royals by 71 runs.

Reeling at 46 for 2 at one stage Mandeep and South African de Villiers put on a 113-run partnership to help their side post 180 for 4 at the end of 20 overs.

Umpire Raza wants to move on

INTERNET

Umpire Ahsan Raza has said he wants to forget the horrific 2009 terror attack, where he was shot at twice.

Raza, 40, who's looking forward to umpiring Pakistan's match against Zimbabwe, said it was hard to recover from the incident, which led to him receiving stitches around his stomach and a bullet damaging his right lung, the Dawn reports.

Raza, who'll officiate as an on-field umpire in the two Twenty20s and in one of the three one-day internationals, said he was proud to be a part of the series and credited the PCB for convincing Zimbabwe to undertake the tour.

Southee follows Miller suit!

INTERNET

Kiwi cricketer Tim Southee recently hit a reporter accidentally with a cricket ball whilst practising on the Lord's cricket ground. The 26-year-old "concerned" Kiwi rushed over to check on the health of ESPN cricinfo reporter Melinda Farrell after she was blindsided while delivering a report with her back to the action, the BBC reported.

The cricket reporter said that she will wear the heavy bruise with pride and she will wear it as a badge of honour.

Recently, a shot by Kings XI Punjab batsman David Miller hit a young boy on his chest directly causing him to faint. A week before that his six hit a police constable in the eye in Kolkata, resulting in the policeman losing his vision.

Captain didn't issue any KP ultimatum

AGENCIES, London

England Captain Alastair Cook has said he didn't give any ultimatum to the England and Wales Cricket Board over the selection or non-selection of former Test player Kevin Pietersen.

After the appointment of Andrew Strauss as ECB's new director for cricket, Pietersen was told that he would not be considered for selection this summer, with reports that Cook had threatened to resign if the batsman was recalled.

Cook said he didn't know where all this was coming from, adding that the players were not consulted and that he wanted it that way only, the BBC has reported.

He added that his job was to play for the team and win matches, and insisted that he agreed with the decision of not considering the maverick batsman for selection.

The South Africa-born batsman was given hopes of an international recall by ECB chairman Colin Graves on condition of scoring runs in county cricket, only for Strauss to say that Pietersen would not be selected because of 'trust issues'.

Final Test of fortitude

SPORTS REPORTER



The two-day fitness camp for the national cricketers ended yesterday at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur. The players will now take part in the last round of the Bangladesh Cricket League's (BCL's) four-day matches which will begin from Sunday. The last round has been delayed according to the wishes of national team's head coach Chandika Hathurusingha, who wants to give his charges an opportunity for match practice ahead of the lone Test against India from June 10 at Fatullah.

A number of leading players however will not be seen in the match, as the board granted Shakib Al Hasan a six-day leave from today as per the

all-rounder's wishes, while left-handed opener Tamim Iqbal has been advised by the medical team not to participate so he may continue with his rehab programme. Test captain Mushfiqur Rahim has also been advised a week's rest to heal his injured finger. But for the selectors and coach, the fitness and conditioning of pacer Rubel Hossain remain a big headache.

"He [Rubel] is not fully fit. Rubel could not reach our expected level of fitness today, so we can't declare him a hundred per cent fit. He has failed to achieve the desired level of fitness on time as he missed few important sessions owing to his personal problems," informed BCB physician Debashis Chowdhury yesterday.

One ray of sunshine for the selectors though is that Shafiqul Islam, who was out of the Pakistan series due to a finger

injury, will be available for selection.

The selectors are looking forward to getting back a fully-fit Rubel with the right rhythm in his bowling, as they do not have many pace bowling options available for the lone Test against India. The pace bowling department is the most vulnerable area of the Bangladesh Test team which was severely exposed during the second Test against Pakistan.

It would be a big problem for the team management to find a new ball pair for Mohammad Shahid, who had to bear an extra burden against Pakistan in the second Test, if Rubel does not fully recover from his side-strain in time for the match.

Chandika and the selectors plan to field Rubel in the four-day match so that he can be match fit ahead of the Test against India, but the pacer is unlikely to capitalise on the opportunity.



The pace quartet of (L to R) Shafiqul Islam, Robiul Islam, Taskin Ahmed and Rubel Hossain are working hard at Mirpur on Thursday to get fit ahead of the Tigers' India Test next month.

PHOTO: STAR

IPL retention policy to be changed?

INTERNET

According to reports, the player retention policy in the Indian Premier League (IPL) could be changed by the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) ahead of the 2017 edition of the marquee Twenty20 tournament.

As per the three-year contract signed by the franchises in 2014, teams can retain up to a maximum of five players and use the "right to match" card, which basically gives them first right of refusal, for another of their players.

However, it is believed that most teams are in favour of all the players going back into the auction from 2017 onwards and that each team should be given five "right to match" cards to enable them to match the bid amounts for a maximum of five players if they wish to do so.

If this proposal goes ahead, the likes of MS Dhoni and Virat Kohli, who have been with Chennai Super Kings and Royal Challengers Bangalore, respectively, ever since the first season, might have to go under the hammer.

On cricket map again

First Pak-Zim T20I today

AFP, Lahore



Pakistan and Zimbabwe will seek to improve their limited-over performances in the first of two Twenty20 matches held in Lahore Friday, in the first internationals on home soil for the hosts since 2009.

No Test-playing country has visited Pakistan since militants attacked the Sri Lankan team bus in Lahore six years ago, killing eight people and injuring seven players.

Zimbabwe agreed to the tour, which also includes three one-day internationals, only after being promised a level of security usually reserved for heads of state, involving 6,000 policemen and paramilitary troops and helicopters buzzing overhead.

Ahead of the match, Pakistan's captain Shahid Afridi stressed it was time to rebuild the team ahead of next year's World

Twenty20 in India.

"Cricket coming back to Pakistan is great news and we thank [the] Zimbabwe team for coming here," he said.

Afridi, who retired from one-day internationals following the 50-over World Cup, said he was delighted to finally play in Pakistan again.

Pakistan need to win both matches -- the second on Sunday -- to retain their fifth spot in the Twenty20 rankings. In the case of a drawn series, Pakistan will drop to seventh spot while Zimbabwe can gain three places to ninth if they win one match and seventh if they win both.

That, Zimbabwe captain Elton Chigumbura said, was an incentive.

"It's a good thing about cricket that any team playing good cricket on a given day can win, it's not about countries but it's about the eleven guys to go out and play good cricket," he said.

England fight back

AFP, London



Joe Root and Ben Stokes both fell agonisingly short of a hundred after rescuing England from a dire position on the opening day of the first Test against New Zealand at Lord's on Thursday.

At stumps, England -- who had been 30 for four when Stokes came in -- were 354 for seven after New Zealand captain Brendon McCullum won the toss and fielded.

Root (98) and Stokes (92) had put on 161 for the fifth wicket.

Jos Buttler (67) and Moeen Ali (49 not out) then added 103 before the wicketkeeper was lbw to Trent Boult off the last ball of the day.

England came into this match dealing with the fall-out from the sacking of coach Peter Moores and the ongoing furore surrounding Kevin Pietersen's continuing exile from the side. They were also up against a reinvigorated

New Zealand side fresh from a run to the World Cup final. And when England lost those four early wickets, it looked like their woes were about to multiply.

Yet it was two of England's 'young guns', the 24-year-old Root and the 23-year-old Stokes who turned the tide in the first of this two-match series.

Earlier, New Zealand were quickly among the wickets as they lost their first batsman for only 17. And the next three were lost for five runs in 15 balls in what was the 100th Test between the two sides.

SCORES IN BRIEF

ENGLAND: First innings 354 for 7 (Root 98, Stokes 92, Buttler 67, Ali 49 not out, Cook 16; Henry 3-93, Boult 2-70)

NEW ZEALAND: Latham, Guptill, Williamson, Taylor, McCullum, Anderson, Watling, Craig, Southee, Henry, Boult.

Toss: New Zealand.

Umpires: Sundaram Ravi and Marais Erasmus.



PHOTO: STAR

Bangladesh will host an international volleyball tournament for the first time. The DBBL Asian Senior Men's Central Zone Volleyball Championship will run from May 23 to May 28 at the Shaheed Suhrawardi Indoor Stadium in Mirpur, featuring seven teams from the Asian region, after Tajikistan decided to pull out. Teams from Afghanistan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan and Maldives have already arrived here, while Nepal and Uzbekistan will arrive today. Hosts Bangladesh will be rounding off the seven teams.