

SPORT



Tigers seem at ease for ODIs

SPORTS REPORTER

On Sunday, India's Test skipper Virat Kohli had described Bangladesh's ODI contingent as a dangerous side capable of upsetting any team at home. And as Mashrafe Bin Mortaza and company attended their first training camp ahead of the three-match ODI series in Mirpur yesterday afternoon, one could sense that the Tigers too were a lot more excited.

The general training sessions took place with a lot of vigour as the players who just joined the side tried their best to make an impact. The entrance of Sabbir Rahman seemed to increase the intensity of the fielding sessions and it also led Nasir Hossain, who is likely to play a more responsible part in the ODIs as compared to the one-off Test, to up his game as well.

The players suffering from niggles were trying their best to get into their usual rhythm. Skipper Mashrafe, who had hurt his hands in a rickshaw accident on June 4,

returned to bowl in the nets. He bowled six overs yesterday and the team physio seemed satisfied with the captain's progress.

Mushfiqur Rahim, who didn't keep in the Test for his finger injury, donned the gloves after a while yesterday and tested himself. On Sunday, Mushfiqur had made it clear that he wanted to keep in the ODI series and also stated that his finger was doing a lot better.

While there's no doubt that the ODI side seems a lot more balanced in all aspects, as compared to the Test outfit, there is however, one spot that the team management is yet to put a lid on. Mahmudullah Riyad's unfortunate injury prior to the Test has opened the number three position for discussion yet again.

While Riyad scored most of his runs in the last few months at number four -- he averages above 100 in that position -- he was compelled to bat at number three with Anamul Haque out of the side. However, in the Pakistan series, he batted at number three and Soumya Sarker opened the innings alongside

Tamim Iqbal. As a result, the number three spot is up for grabs again, as it has been for a long time.

With Soumya hammering a brilliant century in the last game against Pakistan, it's unlikely for the team management to demote him. It therefore seems as though Mominul Haque, Litton Das and Rony Talukdar will battle for that position.

Going by the statistics, Mominul should have the best chance amongst the three. He has played just 15 ODIs at that position and has already become the fifth highest run-getter in that position. However, Litton, serving as a back-up wicketkeeper and also impressing many with his fluent innings on the last day of the Test, may just be preferred over the left-hander.

Speaking to reporters yesterday, Litton, who opens in domestic cricket, didn't specify as to which position he preferred to play in if picked. He was however, confident of displaying his best form.

"There is obviously a bit of a difference between international cricket and domestic. The main

difference is the mentality. And there's also a lot more pressure in international cricket.

"I enjoyed batting in the Test. Unfortunately though I couldn't take my team over the follow-on mark," rued Litton.

An aggressive batsman, Litton hit Ravichandran Ashwin for quite a few boundaries before falling to the off-spinner. When asked about the innings, he said that he hadn't pre-planned anything. "I just saw the ball and if I thought it was worth being hit I did," smirked the youngster.

Describing Mushfiqur as a player of a 'high standard', he admitted that he wasn't looking to compete with his senior partner, with regards to keeping. He however exuded plenty of confidence regarding the ODI format.

When asked if he had to prove anything to the coaches as a debutant, Litton provided a rather unusual but firm reply: "There's nothing like that. They [coaches] know how I have come here. I was the highest run-getter in the domestic league [DPL]. It's all about playing for your team."



Litton Das (L) and Mustafizur Rahman walk off the field after a training session at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday. They two are the new faces in the Tigers' ODI squad for the India series.

PHOTO: STAR



India's ODI captain Mahendra Singh Dhoni and seven other players arrived in Dhaka yesterday to play a three-match series against Bangladesh.

PHOTO: STAR

Dhoni & co in town

SPORTS REPORTER

Captain Mahendra Singh Dhoni and seven other players joined the Indian team in Dhaka yesterday evening. Certain members of the Test team on the other hand were given a celebratory send off as the entire team went out for dinner late night.

India's team manager Biswarup Dey described the draw in the lone Test at Fatullah as a 'moral victory' for the visitors and reckoned it was reason enough to have some fun.

"Team India decided to go out last night. We decided to celebrate because of the good performance. Some of the Test players are leaving and so it was also the last day with all the players together," said Dey.

Apart from Dhoni, the other players to arrive yesterday include Stuart Binny, Ravindra Jadeja, Axar Patel, Suresh Raina, Mohit Sharma, Dhawal Kulkarni and Ambati Rayudu.

Smith No. 1 Test batter

CRICINFO, Dubai

Steven Smith has jumped to the top of the ICC's Test batting rankings, the first Australian since Michael Clarke in 2012 to hold the No. 1 position.

Smith started Australia's tour of the West Indies at No.4 but has now leapfrogged the previous No. 1, Kumar Sangakkara as well as AB de Villiers and Hashim Amla to take the top spot.

Smith was player-of-the-match in the second Test in Kingston and it continued a remarkable period: he is Test cricket's leading run scorer over the past year, with 1226 at 102.16.

Win was important: Neymar

AFP, Temuco

Brazil captain Neymar scored once and set up an injury-time winner as the five-time world champions scraped a 2-1 win over Peru on Sunday after Colombia suffered a shock defeat to Venezuela.

Neymar headed in a fifth-minute equaliser before creating a goal for team-mate Douglas Costa deep into stoppage time to seal Brazil's 11th consecutive victory since last year's World Cup.

"This is a very tough competition," Neymar said afterwards as he collected a man-of-the-match award. "We got the win and that's important."

Neymar has now reached 44 international goals at the age of 23, a year earlier than Brazilian legend Pele.

"I want to keep on reaching records, with goals, assists and everything that can help the team to win," Neymar said.

The Brazilian star was at the centre of the action throughout the game, even getting a bizarre yellow card for pushing aside the foam the referee had sprayed on the pitch to show where a free kick should be taken.

Brazil coach Dunga praised the contribution of his captain.

"Neymar was again decisive," Dunga said afterwards. "He's played three finals in Spain (with Barcelona), and he's had a long season. But he comes here and takes responsibility for sorting out our problems."

Peru, who took the lead after only three minutes when Christian Cueva punished a defensive blunder by David Luiz, looked to have done enough to secure a share of the points.

But with the final whistle looming, Neymar advanced menacingly down the left flank and threaded a pass through a forest of bodies for unmarked Shakhtar Donetsk striker Douglas Costa.

Douglas, who had earlier squandered a golden chance created by Neymar, made no mistake with his

second opportunity, calmly placing his shot beyond the despairing dive of Pedro Gallese.

While Brazil can now start planning for the knockout rounds, Group

RESULTS
Venezuela 1 (Rondon 60) Colombia 0
Brazil 2 (Neymar 5, Douglas 90+2) Peru 1 (Cueva 3)



NEYMAR

Crivals Colombia must regroup after their upset defeat to Venezuela.

A second-half goal from Russian-based striker Salomon Rondon settled a hard-fought encounter in Rancagua as the highly-rated

Colombians struggled to break down the Venezuelans.

Despite a starting line-up packed with star names from Europe's strongest leagues, including James Rodriguez from Real Madrid, Manchester United's Radamel Falcao and Chelsea's Juan Cuadrado, Colombia were never able to impose their attacking style on the contest.

Venezuela's goal came after a quick throw caught Colombia's defence off guard.

Juan Arango improvised a first-time cross across the box to Alejandro Guerra, who headed back into the path of Rondon.

The Zenit St. Petersburg striker, reportedly a summer transfer target for English clubs Tottenham and Liverpool, guided a superb header over Arsenal goalkeeper David Ospina before being mobbed by his teammates.

Colombia rallied furiously in search of an equaliser but could find no way past Venezuelan goalkeeper Alain Baroja.

Novak remains number one

IANS, London

Serbian tennis superstar Novak Djokovic maintained his No. 1 place in the Association of Tennis Professionals (ATP) world ranking in singles, released on Monday.

Djokovic finished runners-up in the French Open tennis tournament recently. He topped the list with 13,845 points, reports Efe. The rankings underwent no changes this week, as Swiss Roger Federer holding the second place, followed by Scotland's Andy Murray.

French Open champion Stanislas Wawrinka remains in fourth with 5,790 points.

'We're ready for England'

REUTERS, Kingston

Australia's short Caribbean tour always looked like something of an hors d'oeuvres for the Ashes and captain Michael Clarke finally allowed himself to address the main course after wrapping up a comfortable 2-0 series sweep on Sunday.

The tourists needed less than four full days to thrash West Indies in the second Test and will clearly be charged with confidence going into the first clash against England, which begins in Cardiff on July 8.

"I think I'm allowed to talk about [the Ashes] now," Clarke told reporters at Sabina Park.

"Credit to the boys, I was really honest and made it very clear I didn't want it spoken about at all throughout this series and I'm extremely thankful and proud that none of the guys have spoken about it."

IN A NUTSHELL

Rory to be released from hospital



Australia's Moises Henriques and Surrey teammate Rory Burns were said to be in "decent shape" Monday following their sickening collision when they ran into each other trying to take a catch in a county match.

Henriques and Burns were knocked unconscious as they collided while going for a chance in a Twenty20 match away to Sussex at Arundel on England's south coast on Sunday. All-rounder Henriques broke his jaw in three places after he was struck by Burns's knee. Burns sustained head and facial injuries.

Both players needed oxygen treatment and three ambulances were called on to the outfield before the pair, who regained consciousness before leaving the ground and gave a thumbs-up sign to concerned spectators, were taken to St. Richard's Hospital in nearby Chichester for further assessment.

Surrey's director of cricket Alec Stewart subsequently said on his Twitter account that Burns would be discharged from hospital later on Monday, although Henriques would require further observation.

Spotlight still on Sangakkara

Kumar Sangakkara will get a chance to build on his prolific Test record before retirement when familiar foes Sri Lanka and Pakistan contest their fourth series in two years from Wednesday.

The 37-year-old has not responded to media speculation that he will play three more home Tests -- two of the three matches against Pakistan and one against India in August -- before ending his 15-year-career.

Sally to miss Beijing Worlds

Australian Olympic hurdles champion Sally Pearson said Monday she needs further wrist surgery, ruling her out of the Beijing World Athletics Championships in August.

Pearson injured her left wrist when she tumbled during a Diamond League race in Rome earlier this month and the 28-year-old will have more surgery on Tuesday. Doctors described the injury as a severe "bone explosion" and have put no timeframe on her recovery.

Compiled By Star Sport Desk

Bangladesh cricketers Taskin Ahmed and Soumya Sarker (5th and 6th from L) pose for photographs along with the officials of PepsiCo and Transcom Beverages Ltd after the players struck deals to become brand ambassadors of the soft drink at a function in the city on Monday.



PHOTO: COLLECTED