

# SPORTS



Bangladesh captain Mashrafe Bin Mortaza (L) and his Indian counterpart Mahendra Singh Dhoni will battle for this glittering piece of glory in the three-match ODI series that starts at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur today.

## MCG RETURNS

In the last few weeks, it seemed as though none of the discussions regarding the Bangladesh-India series was complete without a reference made to Bangladesh's quarterfinal exit at the MCG. From the sporting addas at the tea stalls to the social media, instances of that game, certain umpiring decisions which were later condemned by Bangladesh's fans, against India were relived. The captains of both the teams though weren't concerned about the thriving issue.

We fight on the field. But this is not an actual war. I don't think players will remember what happened 3-4 months ago. People may talk about these things, but it's not right for cricketers to think about this. I'll request everyone to keep cricket in its place.



Mashrafe Bin Mortaza



That's like 4-5 months back. Anything about last couple of days... I remember. Let's not get into that... It was a game of cricket.

Mahendra Singh Dhoni

## 'Our pace attack can destroy any team'

BISHWAJIT ROY

There will be many factors at work when the Tigers take on India in the opening game of the three-match ODI series at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium today. From the controversy at the MCG to the Tigers' task of securing qualification for the ICC Champions Trophy by keeping themselves within the top eight teams, there are plenty of reasons the Tigers will want to do well. Mixed with the special emotions invoked by taking on India, an adrenaline-fuelled Tigers will undoubtedly be going for glory.

Bangladesh captain Mashrafe Bin Mortaza admitted the presence of those pressures and said that he wanted his team to transcend those thoughts and focus on the matches one by one, and to continue their good showing which stemmed from the ICC World Cup in Australia-New Zealand.

Despite his side's stupendous 3-0 whitewash of Pakistan in the last home series, the inspirational skipper didn't hesitate to label India as favourites for this series while speaking at the pre-match press conference yesterday. However he also provided a bold statement in favour of his side, saying, "Bangladesh are one of the teams that are currently playing good cricket in ODIs. People are accepting that fact as we are playing a good brand of cricket and I don't think it's a pressure for us, rather it gives us confidence."

It's often heard from the Bangladesh players that playing against India always invokes special feelings in them but like his other teammates, Mashrafe was also not sure why that should happen. However, he said that success against a team like India would always make a big statement to the world cricket fraternity.

"To me it's like another series. Challenges are always there no matter who the opponents are, but I must say everybody puts a special emphasis when playing against India. India are such a team against whom your performance will be especially boosted and that's why everybody will try to give their best," said Mashrafe.

It will be a surprise if rain does not intervene during the ODI series, but the skipper made it clear that it would not be surprising to see the Tigers pull off victory against India in the series.

"I firmly believe that India are favourites, but when we enter the field we don't think who the favourites are. I hope we can play our best cricket against them. After the 2007 World Cup we started to believe that we could beat any team in the world. True, we lost many games since, but we always kept faith that we could beat anybody," said a confident Mashrafe.

Mashrafe said that there was no shortage of confidence among the players when it came to beating India. While the vaunted Indian batting line-up can be a real threat to Bangladesh, Mashrafe issued a warning saying that he has got a good pace attack with the

## MS too takes Tigers seriously

NAIMUL KARIM



At the Grand Stand of Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium yesterday afternoon was standing a man, who looked to be in his mid 30s, with a picture of Shakib Al Hasan in his hand. Now that of course is a very common scenario, with several fans waiting at the stands just to have a glimpse of their heroes training.

Exception in this case was that he wasn't from Bangladesh. "Bangladesh should win this series. That should make everything a lot more exciting," Sameer Pathak from New Delhi quipped while waiting there for Shakib, one of his favourite players.

Sameer might have come to Dhaka on work, but his undying passion for the game kept him at the stadium throughout out Bangladesh's training session in the afternoon. "The way they played against Pakistan was brilliant," an excited Sameer said while citing one of the instances of the last series.

While Sameer had been a keen spectator of the Bangladesh-Pakistan series, India skipper Mahendra Singh Dhoni however, was on a different page. Like India's Test captain Virat Kohli, Dhoni too believes that the Tigers are a much stronger outfit in the ODIs. He however, admitted that he didn't get a chance to watch Bangladesh's 3-0 whitewash over Pakistan.

"Frankly it's very difficult for us to watch any other nation playing because we play throughout the year. Yes I have said thank you to one of the formats, but still the amount of cricket that has taken place... it's very difficult to follow any other series.

"As far as videos are concerned, we have the luxury of video analysts. More than that I can't really comment on it," said Dhoni.

"But what's more important is to have good first-class teams and I feel the upcoming players in Bangladesh, most of them have done well whenever they have got an opportunity to play. That's definitely good for them because to have a bigger pool of players is something that's important," he added.

The lone Test match was constantly interrupted by the rains and the ODIs are

expected to receive a similar welcome. And that's why Dhoni wants his side to get the best possible start and get a head-start in the series.

"To win the series is first and foremost and taking one game at a time is something that makes the job slightly easy. Because there is also chance of rain so it's important to be focused. If we gather some kind of momentum it's important we switch off at the right time with the rain break.

"And once the time comes for us to switch on we do that and try to get as many runs as possible," said Dhoni.



A HAPPY UNIT: The Indian team enjoy their time at the BCB Academy ground in Mirpur yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

## THE NUMBERS

5

more wickets and Shakib Al Hasan will become the second Bangladeshi after Abdur Razzak to take 200 ODI wickets.

1

more ODI win and Bangladesh will overtake the West Indies and move up to the seventh spot in the ICC ODI rankings.

0

Bangladeshi batsmen have scored ODI centuries against India in a bilateral series so far. Although Mushfiqur Rahim (117) and Alok Kapali (115) did score centuries in the Asia Cups of 2014 and 2008.

101.8

is Virat Kohli's current batting average against Bangladesh.

6

is the number of wickets Stuart Binny took against Bangladesh in the second ODI last year. His figures of 6 for 4, are the best ever bowling figures by an Indian.

## About time Mushy scored big

SPORTS REPORTER



Tamim Iqbal had hogged all the spotlight during the last home series against Pakistan with back-to-back hundreds. The left-hander's batting was simply outstanding in that series. And now when Bangladesh are looking to continue their good form against visiting India in the three-match ODI series, without any doubt they will expect a similar kind of performance from the opener, who had also played a memorable innings to upset India in the 2007 World Cup.

The home team will also be looking to their most dependable batsman in the middle and he is none other than Mushfiqur Rahim and hope that he will overcome his poor showing in the recent Test matches and continue with his good ODI form.

Mushfiqur was the batsman who actually held the middle order together and gave solidity to Bangladesh batting in the Pakistan series. Those memories are still fresh in the minds of millions of cricket lovers; the way the little right-hander executed his slog sweeps with near perfection and the manner in which he backed away from the wicket to launch the ball over covers, terrorising the Pakistan bowling attack during his knocks of 106, 65 and an unbeaten 49.

The technically-sound Mushfiqur's effortless shots are perhaps the most enjoyable scenes for Bangladesh cricket fans today. To many, the sound of his willow seems like music to the



The Tigers will need Mushfiqur Rahim to put behind his Test disappointments and carry his stellar shorter version form in the home series against India.

PHOTO: STAR

ears. He seems like a hard nut to crack when he is out in the middle, but unfortunately the performances of the country's best batsman in the last three Tests were not satisfactory.

After a brilliant ODI series against Pakistan, he suddenly lost his rhythm and his scores in the last three Test matches were 32, 0, 12, 0 and 2. Most importantly the manner in which he was dismissed in those innings raised many eyebrows. Many doubted whether his finger injury hindered the consistency in his batting.

Mushfiqur injured his finger while keeping on the second day of the first

Test at Khulna in the series against Pakistan and he did not keep for the rest of that match. However, he batted briefly and uncomfortably in the second innings of the famous drawn Test.

But his decision to keep in the second Test at Dhaka perhaps proved to be a big setback to the healing of his injury and it was quite evident in his batting in both innings of the match, where a batsman of his stature and technique was playing ordinary shots. In the one-off Test against India he did not take up the gloves, but wished to stand behind the stumps in the ODI series. However, his

## Banner painter dies in Mirpur

SPORTS REPORTER

A 35-year-old man died yesterday afternoon in Mirpur after he fell from the third floor of a six-storey building. According to police, Sentu Sardar was attempting to tie a banner on the building opposite to gate number two of the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium.

According to Mizanur Rahman, sub-inspector of Mirpur police station, Sentu was pronounced dead after being taken to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital. Mizanur also informed that Sentu used to paint and hang banners for a living.

"Judging by the burn on his hand, we think he might have suffered an electric shock before falling off," said Mizanur.

The accident shocked those who were around the stadium, which is being prepared for the ODI series between Bangladesh and India.

While the accident took place outside the stadium, the venue had its own share of problems as a passerby, posing as a ticket-buyer, surpassed the stadium's security and attempted to steal a journalist's mobile phone. Fortunately he was caught later on, courtesy of the stadium's ground staff, who had witnessed the entire

## INA NUTSHELL

### Gayle, KP take on drone

Chris Gayle and Kevin Pietersen flexed their batting muscles in a competition that tested their big-hitting abilities, taking part in a 'Drone Down' competition, where they were challenged to knock a moving drone out of the sky, putting their accuracy skills to the test.

The duo engaged in some healthy sledging and eventually, despite Pietersen coming close with his final shot, it was Gayle who found the target.

### Run-up is 2.6 miles

If the sight of Shoaib Akhtar or Dennis Lillee covering a few extra strides to bowl with long run-ups provides delight to the viewer and incites fear in the batsman, imagine the kind of emotions elicited by the sight of a man running 2.6 miles before releasing the ball. This slightly freakish record was claimed by Ian Biddle, a 43-year-old father of two, in the course of a celebrity cricket match this week.

Biddle, a financial consultant by day and a cricket coach by evening, was put forward by Alcester and Ragley Park Cricket Club to attempt to break the previous record for the longest bowling run-up. The previous record stood at 1.6 miles, and was held by a bowler called Jason Rowson, who completed the 1.6 mile approach immediately after running a full marathon unrelated to the attempt.

### Kallis joins T&T

Former South African all-rounder Jacques Kallis will join Trinidad and Tobago Red Steel on Thursday ahead of their opening match of the Caribbean Premier League (CPL) on Sunday against Zouks, manager Colin Borde has confirmed.

Borde said the inclusion of other internationals, the likes of Cameron Delport and Johan Botha also from South Africa and Pakistan's Kamran Akmal will add strength to Red Steel, reports CMC.

Compiled By Star Sport Desk