

SPORT



TIME TO CONSOLIDATE



The field is where he belongs

NAIMUL KARIM

There wasn't a lot that Mustafizur Rahman spoke of following his historic debut on Thursday.

The one aspect though that the bowler wanted everyone to know was the amount of hard work his brother, Mokhlesur Rahman, had put in for the pacer's cause.

Hailing from a family of four brothers, Mustafizur, like his siblings, started playing taped-tennis cricket tournaments at an early age.

"The three of us couldn't complete our studies due to various reasons. But we tried really hard to create a different environment for Mustafiz," said Mokhlesur.

"Believe me, we had kept three teachers just for him. But he would just fall asleep while studying. I remember him telling me, 'why are you trying so hard when I am not interested?'" recalled Mokhlesur.

It was then that Mustafizur was introduced to cricket tournaments.

"Initially I never thought he would make it so far. You can easily earn around 4000 to 5000 taka by playing in these tournaments in Tetulia and I thought that would be good for him," said Mokhlesur.

It was in 2009 when his brother decided to take a leap of faith and requested a club coach in Satkhira to train Mustafizur. 'Altaf bhai', as Mokhlesur put it, accepted and that's how it all began for the left-arter.

Mustafizur and his brother travelled 45 kilometres every morning for five days a week, just so that the pacer could train with the professionals.

He had also fixed a strict training routine for Mustafizur, which demanded the bowler to run three to four kilometres every morning.

Eventually the hard work paid off and the club coach, Altaf, took Mustafizur to an inter-district age-level hunt.

"I was really nervous that day because there were 140 participants in that hunt and I thought the coaches would ask Mustafizur to leave even before letting him bowl. They tend to do that sometimes.

"I even remember scolding him for bowling a bad delivery first up. But after that it all went well and he was rated as the best bowler among the group," said Mokhlesur.

"The coach over there told me to not let Mustafizur play cricket with a tennis ball again," he added.

Mustafizur's life travelled on the fast lane ever since that day. He went on to play for Satkhira under-16s, and in the next two years, made it into the Bangladesh under-19s.

BCB selector Habibul Basher noticed Mustafizur during his time with the under-19s in 2014 and the absence of a genuine left-arm pacer helped his quick promotion.

It was an emotional moment for Mustafizur's family members yesterday, all of whom watched the game together at home.

"He is very shy. He doesn't talk a lot when we are around. But on the field he laughs and plays his heart out. It's there that he enjoys the most," an emotional Mokhlesur said.

Mokhlesur, though, is not yet satisfied. "The day I see him become a regular member in all three formats of the game is when I'll be happy. Because I know that he can do it."

'We need to nurture him'

BISHWAJIT ROY



Mustafizur Rahman is a name which is now on the lips of every Bangladeshi cricket fan. And the 19-year old pacer from Satkhira

deserves the spotlight after they way he traumatised the vaunted Indian batting line-up with a five-wicket haul on debut to ensure Bangladesh's stunning 79-run victory on Thursday night in Mirpur.

Captain Mashrafe Bin Mortaza and coach Chandika Hathurusingha wanted to surprise India by adding a fresh face in the four-man pace-attack and Mustafizur exceeded all expectations. Young Taskin Ahmed was the man who brilliantly capitalised on the additional bounce to open the gates for Mustafizur by taking the first two wickets, while Mashrafe and Rubel Hossain were performed bril-

liantly on way to concoct a rare brand of pace bowling.

Still Mustafizur's cunning off-cutters remain the most endearing aspect after Soumya Sarker's elegant knock set the tone of Bangladesh's dominance throughout the match.

The day after the match, Tigers skipper might have provided the most important message for the young pacer as he said: "We wanted to surprise India and (Mustafizur Rahman) what he did was beyond my imagination. I would have been okay had he only got the wicket of Rohit Sharma, but he finished with five wickets...amazing. He is a good prospect no doubt, but I don't want a player be a one-hit wonder."

"In my long career I have seen lot of players who had come with wonder, but only for few matches. I think a great opportunity is there for us and now we

should nurture him properly. It's now time for Mustafizur to work hard to stay in the tough world of international cricket. What I always say is that one should play seven to ten years in the team consistently to justify his talent and Mustafizur has a long way to go," suggested the Tigers skipper.

And it's true that the team management should use this new talent properly for his hopefully long career. Mustafizur is too young and his body needs to be more built to cope with the pressure of international cricket. He has done a wonderful job on his debut, but if needed the team management should stop somewhere to give him space for further development.

It was not an easy decision for the team management to leave out in-form left-arm spinner Arafat Sunny as Mashrafe said after the match, but they wanted to gamble with a new pacer and they were successful in the end.

Discipline the key

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Cricket Board president Nazmul Hassan Papon credited Bangladesh's improved performances in the last six months to the team's 'improving discipline'.

Speaking to reporters at the team hotel, where Papon had gone to congratulate the players, he said, "The support and the facilities that our players receive are not less than that of any other cricketing nation. However, they had a tendency to put in below-par performances mainly due to personal problems.

"We tried to address this issue and bring in a disciplined process. After this process everyone is a lot happier. Those who are doing well, want to do better and those who are outside the national team want to get in," Papon added.

Furthermore he praised skipper Mashrafe Bin Mortaza and coach Chandika Hathurusingha for employing four pacers in the game against India. He also praised the way Mashrafe handled the team throughout the game.

"He completely changed the mental belief of the side," said Papon.



Sabbir Rahman (R), Taskin Ahmed (C) and Nasir Hossain walk from the team hotel to the nearby mosque to say Friday prayers, the day after Bangladesh scripted a 79-run victory against India in the first ODI.

PHOTO: STAR

BPL behind success: Sunny

AGENCIES, New Delhi

They are dancing in the isles in Mirpur and why not, the Tigers are roaring and making a lot of noise. Bangladesh are not only competing with the big boys of international cricket, they are giving them a proper hiding.

Sunil Gavaskar, though, isn't surprised at the meteoric rise of the Tigers. Gavaskar hailed the Bangladesh Premier League and credited it for the recent Bangladeshi surge.

"Bangladesh have improved because of the Bangladesh Premier League. The interactions with overseas players have helped the young Bangladeshis to hone their skills and become more confident."

"Over the last couple of years, Bangladesh have improved a lot," said Gavaskar to NDTV. "It is not a surprise that they won the first ODI against India."

When asked about whether this win was retribution for the World Cup defeat, Gavaskar said, "May be for the fans, but the players certainly don't think that way."

"Umpiring decisions can go wrong at the time," said the ex-India opening batsmen, "It's not a big deal and definitely shouldn't be an excuse. Even during the Pakistan series, a few decisions went Bangladesh's way."



PHOTO: INTERNET The moment MS Dhoni collided mid-pitch with Mustafizur Rahman

Dhoni fined, Mustafizur too

AGENCIES, Mirpur

India one-day skipper MS Dhoni and Bangladesh tyro Mustafizur Rahman have both been fined by the International Cricket Council following their mid-pitch collision in Thursday night's one-day international, with the Indian skipper coming in for admonishment by the ICC's Match Referee.

Dhoni has been fined 75 per cent of his match fee for the incident, while Mustafizur has been docked half of his fee.

Dhoni and debutant left-arter Mustafizur collided in the 25th over as India's skipper was running to the danger end on a quick single.

The impact jarred the bowler and drew a quick rebuke from Dhoni before umpires quickly intervened to ensure things remained cool on the field. Dhoni then turned away with a smile.

Match Referee Andy Pycroft imposed the fines after dismissing Dhoni's version of events and saying an experienced Indian skipper should have done more to avoid the collision.

Indian media laud Tigers

STAR SPORT DESK



As India crashed to a 79-run defeat against Bangladesh in the first ODI of the three-match series, the Indian media reacted by praising the Tigers while analysing the lacklustre performance from the Indian batsmen and bowlers. The Indian print media focused mostly on the brilliance of the Tigers' batting and bowling -- particularly of Mustafizur Rahman's debut five-for.

The Hindustan Times wrote in their lead story 'Bangladesh take World Cup Revenge', about the manner in which 'the Indian

bowlers were taken to task by the fantastic opening batting from Bangladesh.'

They did not save too many words for the performance of Mustafizur, instead put their bowlers to the sword saying, 'Ravindra Jadeja was good in patches, while Bhuvaneshwar Kumar was decent, but Umesh Yadav and Mohit Sharma were especially taken apart by the Bangladeshis.'

'Rahman concert rocks India' was the headline of the New Indian Express as they focused on the positives of Bangladesh cricket.

'Bangladesh outsmarted India in all departments of the game and exacted sweet revenge for their quarterfinal loss at the hands of the same opponents in

Tigers' booming belief

BISHWAJIT ROY



The last few months the Bangladesh cricket team has been performing one wonder after another in ODIs. The Mashrafe Bin Mortaza-led team had presented a new Bangladesh in the World Cup in Australia-New Zealand by playing an exciting brand of cricket.

They continued their fearless brand to clinch a historic 3-0 success against Pakistan at home in the last ODI series. There were some cynics who tried to remind the inexperience of the Pakistan side but surely the Tigers' performance against India on Thursday night re-established Mashrafe's claim that Bangladesh are one of the most consistent teams in ODI cricket at the moment.

The attacking and professional approach against India in the first game

provided evidence that the absence of a team like Bangladesh in any multinational tournament would be a great loss.

Mashrafe told reporters before the start of the match that they started to believe that they could beat any team after the 2007 World Cup.

And it seemed that they have reached a new horizon now and opener Tamim Iqbal described it perfectly.

"There was a time when we believed that we needed to give our hundred percent and a bad performance from our opponents to win a match, but now we believe that if we can maintain our process then we can get the result," Tamim told The Daily Star yesterday.

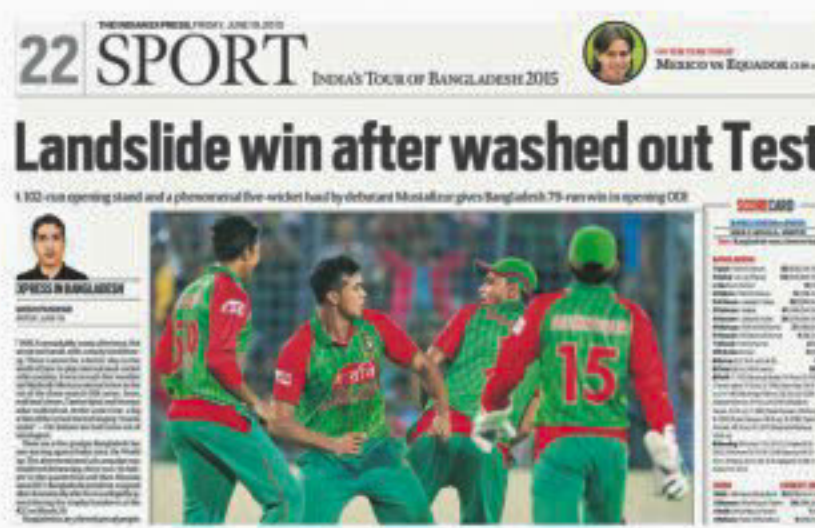
Since Mashrafe took over captaincy, Bangladesh's pace attack found a new belief which was evident in the World Cup. The performance against India in the first game strengthened that belief.

Apart from the fact that the pacers put on a brave face, the batsmen too continued with their fearless approach. The

reason was explained by Mashrafe. He said: "Everybody is contributing brilliantly to the team's progress but I must mostly credit our coach (Chandika Hathurusingha) for bringing so much belief to our batting. He gave our batsmen the freedom that they required. He asked them to trust their skill and talent and to play fearless cricket."

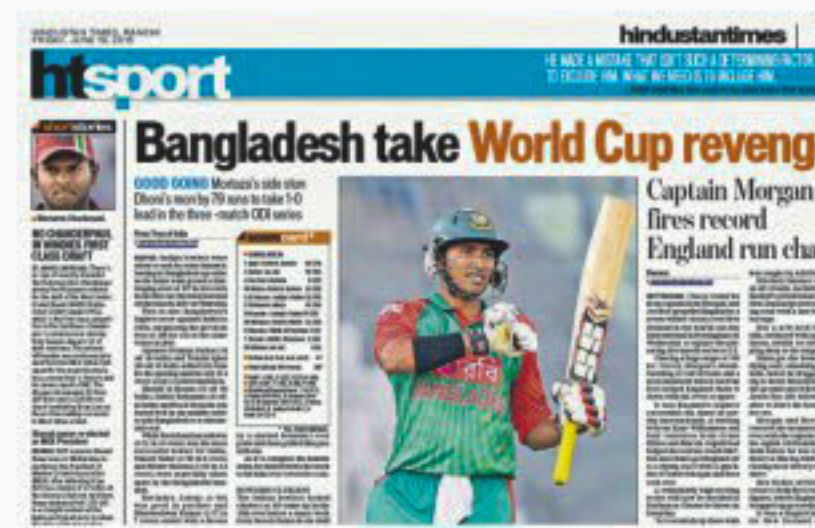
"Since the 2007 World Cup we have had ups and downs in our performances. So far our performances this year are very good and I think the reason behind it is self-confidence. A bad time can come again but what we must do is play good, positive cricket," he added.

Bangladesh established themselves as a good team at home but as Tamim said they need to win some more series' against top opponents to establish their full control at home and accomplish their dream of establishing themselves as one of leading nations in world cricket once they start to play good cricket overseas.



the World Cup.'

When it came to Mustafizur, they wrote, 'Debutant Mustafizur Rahman turned out to be the star performer for Bangladesh with the ball, picking up a five-for in his first international match, though he was well supported by Taskin



and Shakib.'

They also praised Bangladesh's relentless attacking approach with the bat and derided Shikhar Dhawan and Rohit Sharma for a 'shaky start made just 17 runs off the first four overs.'

up best: 'There are a few grudges Bangladesh have been nursing since the World Cup. The 'mauka mauka' ad campaign was considered demeaning, there was the 'no-ball gate' in the quarterfinals and then Mustafa Kamal, President of the ICC, resigned dramatically in the aftermath.'

'Bangladeshis are a fiercely proud people. They do not forget the slightest of slights committed against them, intentionally or otherwise. Between then and now, the no-ball has become their 'Hand-of-God' incident,' it continued.

'Protishodh, the Bangla word for revenge, had been lurking on the lips of the fans.'