



What is the Bangladesh think-tank -- (L-R) selector Habibul Bashar, captain Mashrafe Bin Mortaza and coach Chandika Hathurusingha -- contemplating? Will there be another surprise in store for the visiting Indians in the second one-day international today? PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED



'It will be a different India'

SPORTS REPORTER



India opener Rohit Sharma is confident that the visitors can come back in the series despite a poor showing in the first ODI.

Speaking to reporters in the pre-match press conference in Mirpur yesterday Rohit said that the team had identified 'what went wrong' in the first ODI and would do their best to rectify them in the upcoming matches.

"From our point of view it's very important that we stick to our game plan. We know what went wrong in the first match. We thought about it. When we come back and play the second ODI, it will be a different Indian side," said Rohit.

"Obviously we tried our best in the first game as well but things did not work out. We have got

certain plans and hopefully we can execute those plans," he added.

The opening batsman stressed the need for early wickets.

"It's always important to take wickets up front and that is something which we will be focusing on. We were missing that in the first game.

"Their batsmen kept going against our bowlers. We have quality bowlers and hopefully they can do better tomorrow," said Rohit.

He also urged his team to put up a much better batting performance.

"There's no pressure on us. We just need to come and play the way we have been playing. We just have to get our basics right and be a little more aggressive. We just have to bat well, that's the bottom line," said Rohit.

"I think the guy... the left-arm seamer bowled really well and he was making full use of the

conditions. The conditions worked in his favour. And not to forget that we played some stupid shots in the middle as well.

"Obviously the pressure is always on the team which is chasing 300. Once we lost a couple of wickets, they built the pressure really well and bowled according to the field," he added.

The first ODI witnessed the hosts attack India right from the word go; be it batting or bowling, the Mashrafe Bin Mortaza and company took the charge. When asked if India were surprised with that tactic, Rohit said: "They like to play like that on that kind of a wicket. They have nothing to lose. India has got everything to lose. We have to be extra careful.

"We understand that coming to their territory... we expected them to play this way. I am sure we will be more prepared in the next game," he added.

'Attack is the best form of defence'

NAIMUL KARIM



It wasn't too long ago when winning a match seemed to be a near-impossible task for Bangladesh. No matter what the situation of the game was or what position the Tigers were in, they just didn't seem to have it in them to cross the final line.

Be it the shocking defeat at the hands of Sri Lanka, which saw the Lions overcome a perilous 67 for 8, or the lack of belief displayed in the West Indies where the hosts raced to their target of 218 despite being reduced to 34 for 5, the Bangladesh of the past almost irrevocably depended upon a defensive approach.

The Sri Lankans were given an opportunity to thrive with part-time bowlers brought on at that point of time. Once the dangerous Thisara Perera got settled, the mood of that game changed.

Against the West Indies, Mushfiqur Rahim and company failed to stand up against the aggression of Kieron Pollard and Denesh Ramdin.

A year on and the tides have changed. It's the Bangladeshi cricketers who have been looking to assert their authority right from the start of the game.

It was something that was evident in the World Cup, the Pakistan series and also in the game against India on Thursday.

The four-man pace attack was a sign that the hosts meant business; that they were prepared to take the risk of playing an uncapped pacer, since it seemed to be their only real shot at a victory.

While the team management knew that they were playing to India's weakness, they weren't so sure about Mustafizur Rahman. As Mashrafe Bin Mortaza had put it, "Mustafizur was taken as a surprise. I would have been happy even if he had picked up just one wicket. His five-wicket haul amazed me."

It's this new mindset that has developed over the last one year, which has allowed Bangladesh to change their brand of cricket and coach Chandika Hathurusingha has a lot to do with this new move.

"The attacking mindset comes if you believe in your ability. You need to create that confidence in the dressing room and confidence in how they train and how they go about doing their jobs," said Hathurusingha.

"When you believe what you are doing is right, it transfers to the aggression on the field. And our guys are really confident in their own game

now and whatever happens, they play that way. More often than not, you become victorious if you play aggressive cricket," he added.

A seemingly firm believer of the phrase 'attack is the best form of defence', the Sri Lankan believed that the hosts could have put up a much better show in the first ODI.

"I am not happy at all. Although we won, the scary part is that we still can improve. Not only with our batting, but also in our fielding and bowling execution.

I think we played much better against Pakistan. When you get a start, you always talk about going big in a partnership, which we did against Pakistan. We had three or four hundreds against Pakistan," explained Hathurusingha.

With the 'surprise factor' seemingly playing a big role in this series, it won't be a wonder if the second ODI witnesses more of it.

Bangladesh's batsmen faced deliveries, which came off a board made of granite during their nets sessions yesterday, a training method they had followed prior to the World Cup in order to get accustomed to the bounce in Australia and New Zealand. One suspects that the wicket today could have a lot more bounce and pace on it.

Fed faces Seppi in Halle final

AFP, Halle

Roger Federer reached the Halle grass-court final for the 10th time after beating giant Croatian Ivo Karlovic 7-6 (7/3), 7-6 (7/4) in Saturday's semifinals.

The Swiss, who has won the title seven times, will go on to face Italy's Andreas Seppi, who advanced at the expense of Kei Nishikori after the Japanese world number five retired injured when trailing 4-1 in the first set.

World number two and top seed Federer needed two tie-breaks to claim a 13th win in 14 meetings with Karlovic.

"It is always difficult to play against Ivo but the important thing was that I remained calm," Federer said.



Tigers have it in themselves

BISHWAJIT ROY



All the pre-series talks centred around the vaunted Indian batting line-up, but they failed to draw the first blood. Still only after a single defeat, one certainly cannot write them off. But Bangladesh's batting also proved in the first game that they had got the talent as well as the courage to put the opponents' bowling to the sword.

The pressure is now on Mahendra Singh Dhoni's side when they take on the Tigers today in the second ODI at Mirpur and they will definitely try to come down hard on the home side to restore their pride. Everyone knows what Dhoni's India can do, but the fact remains that this new-look Bangladesh team believes in a different mantra that can spring more surprises to the visitors.

While a four-man Bangladesh pace attack terrorised the formidable Indian batting, skipper Dhoni had to hide his pacers. It would not be a surprise if Dhoni also embraces the same fate in the second match. There were talks about India's ploy to continue with short of length delivery as they did in the last World Cup but that strategy backfired. An aggressive Tamim Iqbal, new batting sensation Soumya Sarker, silent killer Mushfiqur Rahim, trusted Shakib Al Hasan, destructive Sabbir Rahman and cool Nasir Hossain have all got the ability to turn the tables on India, even if the other newcomer Litton Das does not spring a surprise of his own.

This Bangladesh bowling can repeat its extraordinary demonstration, but the batting still needs to do better, since the fact that 300-plus runs is not a challenge for the Indian batting line-up. Bangladesh's bowling might have done a wonderful job to post a facile win in the first game, but without doubt they fell short of runs on the board, especially after the way Tamim and Soumya set the tone. Many felt that it could have been a much better total had the Bangladesh top order showed some respect to off-spinner Ravichandran Ashwin.

So the question whether there was any special plan for the lanky spinner ahead of the second match. But when coach Chandika Hathurusingha smilingly said, "watch the ball, hit the ball." It only reflected the mentality and mood of the home team. Yes, a plan could be made for a particular player, but this team doesn't believe in any fear factor. They are ready to show respect to good balls if needed, but not ready to bog down against anybody.

It seemed that Bangladesh knew what challenge waited from the wounded Indians and they were ready for that. A big test awaits first match hero Mustafizur Rahman, but then again Chandika has the same mantra for the young pacer which is 'express yourself and play fearless cricket'.

"It's going to be a challenge for him [Mustafizur] because people have gotten to know him and will respect him a little more. But again, he has to go and execute well. But we expect the Indians to go hard at him," said Chandika.

A clear statement came from the Sri Lankan while he was speaking at the pre-match press conference yesterday at Mirpur: "The way we are playing is a bit different."

During his encounter with the media, confidence oozed from his voice though he emphasized on the improvement on his side. "I won't say we are favourites, but we are confident about the series," he responded to a question about whether his side is now favorites in the second game after 79-run victory.

Chandika started his journey with the Tigers playing a second-string Indian side but he was happy to see a full-strength India after one year. "The best example is that India sent their strongest team. It speaks for itself where we are at this stage," said a confident Tigers coach.

One more win will put another feather on his successful cap, but most importantly the biggest challenge that lies is to ensure his charges continue with their exciting brand of cricket.



The Indian players flaunt their football skills while shaping up during training at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

Will Mushy issues persist?

SPORTS REPORTER



Bangladesh may have cantered to a 79-run victory at Mirpur on Thursday, but there was a moment in the match when that all too familiar feeling of helplessness had crept in amongst the fans and even the players to a certain extent.

After the exchange, the Tigers were struggling to break India's opening stand of Shikhar Dhawan and Rohit Sharma. A busy Mashrafe Bin Mortaza was doing all he could with his pacers being given short spells.

When the chances did come though, they were given away. Mushfiqur Rahim had spilled two relatively easy catches, both of which were nicks off Shikhar Dhawan.

A still silence had taken over the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium at that point of time. "Will it be another match that the Tigers will lose due to dropped catches on the field?"

There were plenty of talks surrounding Mushfiqur's finger injury ahead of the match. He hadn't kept in the one-off Test and it was because of

his uncertainty that Litton Das was picked up in the squad as a backup wicketkeeper.

While Mushfiqur was more than adamant about donning the gloves in the first ODI, the events that took



place in that match though depicted a sense of nervousness. Luckily for Mushfiqur, this was a new Bangladesh side. A side that has the ability to come back into the game despite being cornered.

However, it's not everyday that a team gets away by dropping catches against one of the best batting line-ups in the world.

Asked about Mushfiqur's keeping, coach Chandika Hathurusingha chose his words for the reply carefully. "I am not concerned about his keeping. I am actually concerned about his finger," he told The Daily Star at Mirpur yesterday.

Asked if he was concerned when Mushfiqur dropped those two catches during the match, Hathurusingha provided a tactful reply. "I am worried whenever any fielder drops catches, not just Mushfiqur," he smiled.

The Sri Lankan was also asked if he was worried about Mushfiqur's batting, which recently hasn't been clicking for the wicketkeeper-batsman. To that though, the Sri Lankan replied with a flat 'No'. "He has been our best batsman for a long time. He even scored a century four matches ago," said the coach.

With Bangladesh one victory away from a miraculous series win, the team management will hope that Mushfiqur can rise above the challenges troubling him.

Shastri furious with pace trio

AGENCIES, Dhaka



Team India Director Ravi Shastri sent out a strong message after Team India's miserable showing in the first One Day International against Bangladesh at the Sher-e-Bangla Stadium on Thursday.

According to a Times of India report, Shastri gave the players a dressing down after India surrendered meekly to Bangladesh. The hosts stunned Dhoni's boys by 79 runs to take a 1-0 lead in the three-match series.

Shastri, who allegedly addressed the players in the dressing room after the

match, had made it clear that such a shoddy performance was not acceptable.

Shastri was particularly unhappy with the misfiring pace trio. Bhuvneshwar Kumar, Umesh Yadav and Mohit Sharma leaked 148 runs in just 19.4 overs as Bangladesh threatened to post over 330 runs at one stage. India did well after the rain break to restrict the hosts to 307 runs.

Shastri was also furious with the approach of Indian players against a Bangladesh side which looked hungry to win. After giving the players the day off on Friday, Shastri supervised the training session on the eve of the second ODI.