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PHOTO: FEROZ AHMED

Mustafizur Rahman hones his skills as Taskin Ahmed looks on during training in Mirpur yesterday. Fans will be hoping that Mustafizur can make it a three-peat and claim another five-for against India in the third and final ODI today.

## Revitalised Nasir

NAIMUL KARIM



He may not be getting many chances to wield his bat lately, but Nasir Hossain, courtesy of his bowling improvement and his athleticism on the field, has become a vital cog in this Bangladesh's line-up.

During the post-match press conference of the second ODI, skipper Mashrafe Bin Mortaza had described Nasir as the best off-spinner on the country's ODI circuit.

Nasir initially saw the funny side of that comment.

"If there's no tiger in the team then the cat is considered as the tiger. There's no other off-spinner in the side except for me, which is probably why Mashrafe bhai said that," a smiling Nasir said.

"But to be honest, I bowl a lot more than before. I am working a lot more with Ruwan [Kalpage] and I have always enjoyed it," added Nasir.

Prior to 2015, Nasir averaged over 100 with the ball. Since the beginning of this year though, Nasir has averaged a brilliant 29.92 and has bowled almost as many overs as he did in the first three years of his career.

With the bat too, the 23-year-old has been amongst the runs in domestic cricket. However, things weren't as great for Nasir towards the end of 2014. His bad form compelled the selectors to drop him ahead of the Zimbabwe series last year. That was a move, which according to Nasir, helped his career.

"That break did make me feel a little bad. But from one aspect it was good for my career because I became more serious. There are many positive things that come from negative actions," Nasir admitted.

With Bangladesh one win away from completing a 3-0 whitewash of India, the

customary 'Banglawash' questions were posed and Nasir didn't dare to step out of tradition. "We are not thinking about that. We just want to go match by match," he quickly blurted.

However, the one aspect that the player shed some light on was the way they were going to approach the game.

"In our meeting in the dressing room we were told to play the way we would have played had we lost the first two matches. We have been asked not to show an ounce of complacency," said Nasir, adding that he expected the visitors to give it their all in the third and final ODI.

Mustafizur Rahman has been a major factor in the last two matches and Nasir believes the left-arm pacer can continue his good run.

"I think Mustafizur deserves 80 per cent of the credit for the wins. I don't think he has realised what he has done. He will bowl the same way in the third ODI," said Nasir.

While speaking about his shy colleague's lethal off-cutters, Nasir said, "We face him in the nets sometimes. Even we have trouble

facing his slower deliveries and cutters.

"There have been times when I asked him not to bowl those cutters to me in the nets," quipped the 23-year-old.

Towards the end of the press conference Nasir was asked if he thought Bangladesh had become a 'big' force to be reckoned with after this series victory. Nasir provided a level-headed reply. "We have played two consistent series. To be a big team we need to play consistently for at least two years," he said.

That last reply depicted the aggressive mentality that this current unit has been feeding its success off. There's an immense hunger amongst these players to win matches and at the moment it seems as though nothing less than a clean sheet can



## Taskin injured, Jubair called up

SPORTS REPORTER

The Bangladesh camp received their first bad news of the series as pacer Taskin Ahmed's injury issues resurfaced yesterday. The pacer, who took two crucial wickets in the first ODI, was diagnosed with a side strain. The diagnosis has hampered Taskin's chances of playing in the third and final ODI against India in Mirpur today.

Taskin's injury prompted BCB's selection committee to include leg-spinner Jubair Hossain in the squad

yesterday. The 20-year-old pacer underwent an MRI yesterday after training and the team management received the report at night.

According to sources, a final decision regarding the pacer's inclusion in the side will be taken today morning. He is likely to be rested if he complains of any kind of pain today. The bowler had earlier faced the same problem in November 2014 and was forced to the sideline for two weeks.

With the South Africa series scheduled to begin on July 5, the team management may not want to risk Taskin. The first phase of the

series will include the limited-overs matches. The T20Is will take place on July 5 and 7, whereas the three ODIs will be played on July 10, 12 and 15. As a result, after tomorrow, Taskin will barely have two weeks to get ready for the South Africa series.

While Mustafizur Rahman scalped a five-wicket haul in the first match, the much needed breakthrough in that game came through Taskin. He had first removed Virat Kohli and then bowled a brilliant bouncer to remove the settled Shikhar Dhawan. Those two wickets opened the floodgates for India. He

was however, limping towards the end of the first match and that was perhaps the reason why he wasn't given more than six overs.

The new inclusion in the side, Jubair, has played two ODIs, both against Zimbabwe, and has scalped a total of four wickets. The leg-spinner did impress in the lone Test against India. While there were debates between the selectors and the coach regarding the inclusion of Jubair, he eventually did make it through to the squad. The leg-spinner, who has often been ignored by domestic teams, has played just two limited-overs games this year.

## 'We came up against a wall'

SPORTS REPORTER

Ravichandran Ashwin has been one of the more effective Indian bowlers in this tour so far. The off-spinner was given the ball whenever the visitors needed vital breakthroughs.

While Ashwin was content with his own performance in the series, he said that it meant little since the team couldn't win. Speaking to reporters at the pre-match press conference in Mirpur yesterday, Ashwin said that it seemed as though India had come up 'against a wall' in this series.

"I think you can't take any credit away from Bangladesh. They have played some really good cricket. It looks like they own this particular ground. They know what needs to be done. We definitely came up against a wall where everyone in the team really knows what they are doing," said Ashwin.

"At this point in time, it [the third ODI] is going to be a very hard game for us. We are trying to come back. Having said that, that's the way things go. You can't throw in the towel or run away from the fact that there is still a game to go.

"It's towards the end of the season for us so it will be good if we can cap it off with a

win," he added.

When asked if they had any plans against pacer Mustafizur Rahman, Ashwin jokingly retorted, "If there is no counter then what can we do? Can we kidnap him?"

On a more serious note, the spinner hoped the top order could nullify the 'Mustafizur effect' in the third ODI. While he praised Mustafizur's bowling, he also believed that the challenge for the pacer had just begun.

"He is a good bowler; you cannot take the respect away from him. You cannot deny what he has done. He is a bowler that's come onto the scene. I am happy for him.

"But I think the challenge starts here for him. As an international cricketer I know much better than anybody else. People are going to watch out for him," said Ashwin.

Having lost the series, the tall off-spinner believes that the upcoming bilateral tours between the two sides are bound to be more exciting.

"Now we have a purpose for coming back to Bangladesh; now we know that a team can play like lions in their own den. We have to come back here and take them really seriously and see how well we can combat the conditions here. That's a challenge," said Ashwin.

## Discontent in Indian team?

IANS, Dhaka

The private coaches of India's ODI skipper Mahendra Singh Dhoni and Test captain Virat Kohli have spoken to TV channels, indicating that all is not well in the dressing room.

"The dressing room atmosphere is worrying him (Dhoni), he is not able to concentrate on the game," Dhoni's coach Chanchal Bhattacharjee said.

Within hours of Bhattacharjee's comments, Kohli's coach Raj Kumar Sharma was seen on another channel describing the ODI series loss to Bangladesh as "the most humiliating thing for Indian cricket".

"It was the Black Sunday of Indian cricket," Sharma said.

Sharma did not blame Dhoni's captaincy for the defeat, but some in India see the 'war of coaches' as a bigger problem - that Dhoni and Kohli are not pulling on well.



PHOTO: STAR

India captain Mahendra Singh Dhoni (L) and director Ravi Shastri are under heavy scrutiny after losing the series against Bangladesh. The two will be eager to leave Bangladesh with a win when India take on the hosts in the final ODI today.

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