

SPORT

Can Tigers set the record straight?

South Africa arrive here today

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In terms of ODI cricket, 2015 has been a terrific year for Bangladesh so far. With eight wins in 12 matches, Mashrafe Bin Mortaza and company have the fourth best winning percentage this year, with only Australia, New Zealand and South Africa ahead.

And the Tigers will hope to continue that run against the South Africans, who arrive here today to play two T20Is, three ODIs and two Tests.

Like every other side that has toured the Tigers' den this year, South Africa too have a brilliant record against Bangladesh. The two teams have faced each other twice in T20 Internationals and Bangladesh lost on both occasions. Bangladesh though did beat South Africa once during a T20 tri-series contest including Zimbabwe in June 2012.

The Tigers are currently ranked nine with 77 rating points while South Africa are sixth with 110 points. If Bangladesh do manage to win both the games, their rating points will rocket to 93 while the Proteas will fall to eighth. On the other hand, if the Tigers lose both the matches, their rating points will plummet to 73, which will leave them just two points above Scotland, the tenth-ranked side.

The hosts have a slightly better record in the ODIs, having beaten South Africa in the 2007 World Cup. But apart from that solitary win, there's not a lot for the Tigers to show. The two

teams have met on 14 occasions with South Africa winning 13 times.

Bangladesh have never managed to beat the Proteas at home and in fact have never bowled them out in an ODI at home either. Having performed well against Pakistan and India in the last two series, the Tigers will hope they can do better against a side that is not quite used to playing in the sub-continent.

That's the reason why the Tigers think-tank may opt to use an extra spinner in the ODIs instead of placing four pacers like they did against India. However, as Bangladesh spin coach Ruwan Kalpage said on Sunday, it would be a bad move to depend solely on spin, since a number of South Africa players are regulars in the Indian Premier League and have played on tracks that turn.

Bangladesh also don't have good memories against South Africa when it comes to Tests. The two teams have met eight times in this format and South Africa won all eight of them. Seven of those eight wins were innings victories.

On two occasions did South Africa's batsmen post 400-plus partnerships against Bangladesh. The first was back in 2003 when Boeta Dippenaar and Jacques Rudolph shared an unbeaten 429-run stand for the third wicket in Chittagong. The second instance was also in Chittagong, in 2008 when Neil McKenzie and Graeme Smith shared a 415-run stand for the opening wicket, thereby breaking the world record.

The last time South Africa came to play a full series in Bangladesh was back in 2008.



Bangladesh's pace sensation Mustafizur Rahman prepares himself for the upcoming South Africa series at the BCB gym in Mirpur yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

'Not a healthy competition'

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The fact that the West Indies have confirmed taking part in a tri-series in Zimbabwe, which will also feature Pakistan, hasn't gone well with Bangladesh Cricket Board director Jalal Yunus.

Bangladesh are currently ranked seventh in ICC's ODI rankings with 93 points. The West Indies, on the other hand, are poised at number eight with 88 points while Pakistan have 87 points in ninth position.

The cut-off date for qualification for the 2017 Champions Trophy is September 30 and the top eight teams in rankings will go through. The three-nation series is likely to begin in August. While it's still uncertain whether the series will affect Bangladesh's chances of playing in the Champions Trophy at all, Yunus, during a press conference yesterday expressed his unhappiness over the latest series of events.

"I feel the FTP that the ICC had in place before was much better. Ever since the FTP has started depending on bilateral agreements, the system has gone bad. It has created a lot of loopholes. I don't support this. This not a healthy competi-

tion," said Yunus.

Before West Indies confirmed their participation in the tri-series, they had no other ODIs scheduled before September. As a result, when Bangladesh beat India at home earlier this month, it was assumed that the hosts had confirmed their spot for the Champions Trophy.

"We don't have much to do about

this. There is no ICC FTP these days so it is not in their hands or ours. We also have a chance if we can do well against South Africa," Yunus said.

"There isn't much time and other teams are busy too. We will finish the South Africa series in August and Australia will come in September. There's not much chance of a new series," Yunus added.



BCB director Jalal Yunus unveils the title sponsors for the South Africa series in Mirpur yesterday. National Polymer will sponsor the series.

PHOTO: STAR

Rahane India's captain in Zim

AFP, New Delhi

Middle-order batsman Ajinkya Rahane was Monday named captain of a second-string India team for a short limited-overs tour of Zimbabwe as the selectors rested key players including captain Mahendra Singh Dhoni.

Virat Kohli, Rohit Sharma, Ravichandran Ashwin, Shikhar Dhawan, Ravindra Jadeja and Umesh Yadav were the other regulars not picked for the tour that comprises three one-day and two Twenty20 matches.

Veteran off-spinner Harbhajan Singh, who turns 35 on Friday, was included in the 15-man squad even though he has not played one-day cricket for India since 2011 and Twenty20 matches since 2012.

All matches will be played in Harare, with the one-dayers scheduled for July 10, 12 and 14, and the Twenty20 games on July 17 and 19.

SQUAD

Ajinkya Rahane (captain), Murali Vijay, Ambati Rayudu, Manoj Tiwary, Kedar Jadhav, Robin Uthappa, Manish Pandey, Harbhajan Singh, Axar Patel, Karn Sharma, Dhawal Kulkarni, Stuart Binny, Bhuvneshwar Kumar, Mohit Sharma, Sandeep Sharma.

Focus on off-spin

T20 and ODI teams to be picked today

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Major changes are unlikely when the national selectors decide on the squads for the limited-overs series against South Africa as the team has been in good form.

But few are likely to be left out due to injury problems.

Pacer Taskin Ahmed is likely to miss the two-match T20I series due to a side-strain and his availability for the three-match ODI series will also depend on his progress.

Pacer Abul Hasan, who was in the team for the Tigers in the last T20I against Pakistan which they won by seven wickets at Mirpur in April, is unlikely to retain his place in the side but the team think-tank is more concerned with the fitness of Mahmudullah Riyad.

Without the all-rounder, the World Cup hero who missed the Indian series due to a finger injury, Bangladesh won the ODI series but the team management is desperately looking for an off-spin option against South Africa, against whom the Tigers are planning to take a different strategy.

The name of Shohag Gazi also has come into discussion. But the concern of course is whether he can bowl the

same way as he did in the past after remodeling his action. How ready he is to return to action after a long gap is another concern that will be talked about, as he played his last ODI in August last year against the West Indies.

Gazi may get a chance to prove his worth against South Africa in the T20 warm-up match to be held in Fatullah on July 3.

The practice match will also be important for Riyad, who will begin batting on July 1. If he feels comfortable then there is a chance for him to play the lone T20 practice match. The team management will be happy if the all-rounder is at least available from the ODI series.

Shuvagoto Hom is the other option. When it comes to Test cricket, the selectors have loved to consider him as a specialist off-spinner.

Leg-spinner Jubair Hossain, who was suddenly called up for the third ODI against India, is also in consideration for the T20I and ODI series. Taskin's injury was a setback but as the team is planning a different strategy against South Africa they are more concerned with their spin options.

The selectors will sit today to decide on the squads for the T20I and ODI series.

Kottan leaving

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Austrian coach George Kottan is set to leave Abahani midway within a couple of days to join the FIFA goal project next month.

"I had a six-month contract with Abahani which ran from January to June. The contract expires tomorrow (Tuesday) and I will work at the grassroots level with the FIFA goal project from July. I have no alternative but to leave Abahani," Kottan told reporters yesterday.

However, Abahani management requested the Austrian to stay until the league is completed that is the middle of August.

"After they requested me to stay, I communicated with the FIFA on whether it is possible to join a few days later but they are yet to reply," said Kottan, who had previously worked with FIFA goal project for 10 years.

Abahani are in the fourth position in the league table with 20 points from 11 matches, six behind league leaders Sheikh Jamal DC.

Lanka go level with Pakistan

AFP, Colombo



Dimuth Karunaratne hit 50 off 56 balls as Sri Lanka trounced Pakistan by seven wickets in the second Test in Colombo on Monday to square the three-match series 1-1.

Chasing 153 to win, the hosts made light of a delayed start of 30 minutes due to a wet outfield and raced to victory in 26.3 overs before lunch on the fifth and final day at the P Sara Oval.

Karunaratne and skipper Angelo Mathews added a brisk 72 for the third wicket after two wickets had fallen with the score on 49 to raise Pakistan's hopes. Mathews remained unbeaten on 43, sharing a fourth-wicket partnership of 32 with Lahiru Thirimanne, who hit the winning boundary off leg-spinner Yasir Shah.

The win ended Sri Lanka's three-match losing streak at the P. Sara Oval and set up a potentially thrilling finale when the third Test begins at the Pallekele stadium near the popular hill resort of Kandy on Friday.

Mathews said it was a very good comeback by his team after losing the first Test in Galle by 10 wickets.

"The boys showed a lot of character after that defeat," he said, adding it was important to go for quick runs in the second innings because of the threat of rain.

"We wanted to bat positively because we were not sure about the weather," he said. "We gave the boys the green signal to play freely because it is easy to get bogged down."

Pakistan captain Misbahul Haq said being bowled out for 138 on the first day after electing to bat had cost his team dearly.

"That session from lunch to tea on the first day really dented us because we lost all our main batsmen in that period," he said. "It made all the difference in the match."

"The batting in the first innings is not consistent enough and that is a big worry for us. We put up a big score at Galle and here we collapsed from 74 for three to 138 all out.

"The bowling has been good, especially Yasir who now has 54 wickets from his first nine matches. He is a match-winner, but the injury to Wahab [Riaz] was a big blow."

Pakistan pace spearhead Wahab suffered a hairline fracture of his left hand while batting on the first day and has been ruled out of the series.

"Hopefully we will recover from this loss and try and win the final Test," said Misbah.

Kithuruwan Vithanage, promoted to open the batting in place of Kaushal Silva, smashed four boundaries and two sixes in an aggressive 34 off 23 balls.

The left-hander contributed a major share of the 49-run opening stand with

Karunaratne, when Pakistan hit back with two wickets off successive balls.

Vithanage holed out in the deep off the last ball of left-arm spinner Zulfiqar Babar's second over after striking two sixes earlier in the over.

Veteran Kumar Sangakkara, playing his last Test match against Pakistan, fell to the first delivery he faced, caught at short-leg by Azhar Ali off Yasir.

Sangakkara, 37, Test cricket's leading current run-getter, said on Saturday he will appear in only the first two Tests against Pakistan and play two more against India in August before retiring from the international game.

Karunaratne had hit four boundaries when he was leg-before to Yasir with 32 runs still needed for victory, but vice-captain Thirimanne partnered his skipper to a facile win.

Hard-working Sri Lankan seamer Dhammika Prasad was named man of the match for his seven wickets in the Test.

SCORES IN BRIEF

PAKISTAN: First innings 138
SRI LANKA: First innings 315
PAKISTAN: Second innings 329
SRI LANKA: Second innings 153 for 3 (Karunaratne 50, Vithanage 34, Mathews 43 not out, Thirimanne 20 not out; Yasir 2-55)

Result: Sri Lanka won by seven wickets.
Player-of-the-match: Dhammika Prasad.

IN A NUTSHELL

BCCI gives 'clean chit' to trio

Indian cricket board on Monday gave a clean chit to three international cricketers, who were accused of accepting bribes from a Mumbai-based businessman by ousted IPL commissioner Lalit Modi.

BCCI secretary Anurag Thakur said "there is nothing in it" when asked about the ICC acknowledging a letter from Modi in June 2013, claiming that two cricketers from India and a West Indian were paid in cash and kind to the tune of 20 crore rupees each.

"Lalit Modi had written a letter to ICC, so they informed BCCI about the letter. The three players are international players and fall under the international jurisdiction. There is no information on these players from ICC so far, so it is in a way a clean chit for them to play," said Thakur here on Monday.

The acknowledgement of Modi's letter came only on Sunday from the ICC.

Gayle storm crushes St Lucia

Chris Gayle struck nine sixes on his way to an unbeaten 90 off 36 deliveries as Jamaica Tallawahs crushed St Lucia Zouks by 10 wickets in Gros Islet for their first win in the Caribbean Premier

League on Sunday. Chasing 119 to win, Jamaica reached 121 without loss in 10 overs.

Gayle's blitz came after Jamaica's bowlers had restricted St Lucia to 118 for 9 despite a decent start.

The St Lucia openers Johnson Charles and Andre Fletcher put on 39 after being asked to bat before Jerome Taylor broke through in the sixth over. Rusty Theron



then stepped up with a return of 3 for 19 from three overs as St Lucia failed to get going despite being reasonably placed at 94 for 3 after 15. Theron's strikes included those of Ross Taylor and Kevin Pietersen -- who made 26 off 25 -- in the 16th over.

St Lucia continued to slip as Krishmar Santokie bowled Darren Sammy and Liam Sebastian for ducks in the 17th. Zouks managed 6 for 24 in the last five

Compiled By Star Sport Desk