



ODI returnees Mahmudullah Riyad (L) and Anamul Haque share a light moment during training at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium yesterday. Riyad, Anamul and Litton Das are in contention for the number three spot in the batting order.

PHOTO:
FIROZ AHMED

Tamim brimming with confidence

SPORTS REPORTER



It is never ideal to start a series with a defeat; it is something every team wants to avoid. Had the Tigers won even one of the T20Is, the confidence levels in the team would have been very high ahead of the three-match ODI series which begins in Mirpur tomorrow. While Tamim Iqbal admitted to the above, he remained confident that the Tigers would do better in the ODIs, which he said is a different game altogether.

"In the past year, the players have been reading ODIs much better and that's the reason I am sure that we will get more success in this field. So as a unit we are obviously confident. You can't lose all your confidence because of one or two defeats. When it comes to ODIs, we are a lot more confident unit and we will only grow in confidence," said Tamim while talking to reporters before practice at Mirpur yesterday.

The one-day circuit seems to be a comfort zone for the Tigers; especially their sparkling performances since the World Cup enhanced their reputation. But while Tamim shied away from saying that, he reiterated his side's confidence in the format.

"It's not a comfort zone, but we are definitely a very confident side in the one-dayers," said Tamim.

However, the successes against Pakistan and India gave Tamim the belief that his side could repeat the act against South Africa.

"India and Pakistan, in my opinion, are stronger than South Africa in the subcontinent. There is no doubt that they [South Africa] are a very strong, professional unit. That is reflected in their ranking [number 4 in ODIs]. Their bowling attack and batsmen are really good.

"I think we have to do the same amount of work that we did against India and Pakistan to beat them. It's not like we have to do something extra to beat them, but it's also not that we can win easily; nothing like that. I think they are equally good and their ranking proves that," observed the experienced campaigner.

Despite the South African spinners' success in the T20 series, Tamim rated his side's spin attack more highly.

"I still believe and I will always maintain that our spinners are better than theirs on any day. Their spinners -- Imran Tahir and those who played the T20s -- are good, but if you ask me to compare then I will place our spinners 5-6 spots higher. This is my belief. For instance, look at Shakib Al Hasan, he is the top all-rounder in the world. He is also among the top ten ODI bowlers [number 8]," said a confident Tamim.

Tamim said that if a player like AB de Villiers is missing from any team -- be it Australia or Bangladesh -- then it is a plus point for the opponents. He also said that it would not be easy for the Proteas to adjust to the new ODI rules in their first game.

Shoot first!

SPORTS REPORTER

A video shoot arranged by sponsors had booked the board's cricket academy and also kept some of the national players occupied in the morning yesterday.

Speaking to reporters before training yesterday, opener Tamim Iqbal said that he would have preferred participating in such activities after the series.

"Had it taken place after the series it would have definitely been good. But then again if the board tells us to do this then I am sure the board must have a good reason for it. They definitely thought of something positive regarding us before taking this step.

"If they [BCB] ask us to do something we obviously can't say no. And the other thing is that the sponsors have their needs as well. So we have to balance out everything," said Tamim.

"But the good thing is that our practice was not being hampered. Although when one hears the word shooting, you tend to think a lot, but in actuality, no body worked for more than 20 to 25 minutes," he added.

Ryan cherishes the chance

SPORTS REPORTER



Having played his last ODI in November 2014, South Africa pacer Ryan McLaren is hoping to make a good comeback in the upcoming ODI series against Bangladesh.

While the visitors did ace the T20I series with two fluent victories, McLaren though expects a tougher contest from the hosts in the three one-day internationals.

"We will have to see how the wicket is being prepared when compared to the T20s. I can't imagine it being very different. I think if we apply our ODI basics as consistently as we can, then we stand a good chance. But playing Bangladesh on their home turf is really tough," said McLaren after training at Mirpur yesterday.

After completing a 2-0 sweep, South Africa's T20 skipper Faf du Plessis had stated that playing in the Indian Premier League (IPL) made it easier for a number of South Africans to play in the subcontinent.

McLaren, who has played for both the Mumbai Indians and Kolkata Knight

Riders, though had a slightly different opinion to share.

"I think the IPL conditions are slightly different to what it is here in Bangladesh. The wickets there are really good and sometime you don't get as



much grip on the wicket there as you do here in Bangladesh. You have to adjust your skills with these conditions," said the South African.

"It will be a challenge how we cope

with the different phases of the game," he added.

There will be quite a few changes to South Africa's ODI squad in the upcoming series. For one, their skipper AB de Villiers has been given a break. The series will also see the return of leg-spinner Imran Tahir, who was rested for the T20Is.

"You can never replace AB. He is a special player. He has been our leader for such a long time. Obviously he has been an incredible batsman over the years.

"But there are a couple of young faces to look forward to. Most of the guys have played in the WC, and I am sure the top six and seven can come together and score big totals," said McLaren.

"And Tahir has been our number one spinner in ODI cricket. He has done really well over the years. He is more experienced in these conditions as well. He will be vital for us in middle phases," he added.

On a personal front, McLaren is looking forward to playing for the Proteas again and excel in his first series in Bangladesh.



South Africa skipper Hashim Amla, who arrived in Dhaka on Monday, didn't seem to mind the heat yesterday morning during training at Mirpur. He will lead the Proteas in the absence of their star batsman AB de Villiers.

PHOTO: STAR

Clarke to be a father

AFP, Sydney

Ecstatic Australia captain Michael Clarke revealed Wednesday he and wife Kyly are expecting their first child, in an announcement made on the day the Ashes series starts in England.

The couple, who have been married for three years, took to Twitter to say they are "extremely ecstatic to announce we are expecting our first child. Can't wait to meet baby Clarke".

Rahane & co arrive in Zim

PTI, Harare

The Ajinkya Rahane-led Indian cricket team arrived here for the limited overs series against hosts Zimbabwe starting July 10.

The senior-most member of the 15-member squad, Harbhajan Singh tweeted about the team's grand welcome at a city hotel late Tuesday night.

Root ton drives England

AFP, Cardiff



Joe Root made Australia pay for dropping him on nought by making a century that rescued England from a dire position on the first day of the first Ashes Test at Sophia Gardens on Wednesday.

Root's 134 was the cornerstone of England's stumps total of 343 for seven. He came in with England struggling at 43 for three after the loss of skipper Alastair Cook and Ian Bell in quick succession before lunch.

But he still upped the tempo and, with Yorkshire teammate Gary Ballance who made a gritty 61, Root helped add 153 for the fourth wicket on a sluggish pitch.

It took Root just 118 balls to complete his hundred -- the quickest in the first match of an Ashes series -- and was the 24-year-old's seventh century in only 28 Tests.

This was also Root's first Test innings against Australia since he was dropped for the climax of the 2013/14 Ashes campaign in Sydney -- a match England lost as they were routed 5-0.

Root and Ben Stokes (52) put on a brisk 84 for the fifth wicket before both batsmen fell to left-arm fast bowler Mitchell Starc before stumps.

Moeen Ali was 26 not out and Stuart Broad unbeaten on nought at the close. Starc led Australia's attack with three wick-

ets for 84 in 19 overs.

But fellow left-arm quick Mitchell Johnson went wicketless as his 20 overs cost 87 runs.

Despite the initially overcast conditions, Cook decided to bat first after winning the toss. Josh Hazlewood struck with just his sixth ball on Wednesday when he had fellow Ashes debutant Adam Lyth, aiming legside, caught low down by a diving David Warner at gully.

Michael Clarke, bidding to lead Australia to a first Ashes series win in Britain in 14 years, lived up to his reputation as an enterprising captain by bringing on off-spinner Nathan Lyon as early as the 10th over.

Cook could not get Lyon away and the 14th consecutive 'dot ball' he received from the spinner saw him out for 20 when an edged cut was caught by wicketkeeper Brad Haddin.

The struggling Bell was then lbw for one to a rapid, full-length and swinging Starc delivery.

Root almost went lbw to Starc first ball, spared by a thin inside edge, and next ball he was dropped by a diving Haddin, unable to hold a right-handed chance.

SCORES IN BRIEF

ENGLAND: First innings 343 for 7 (Root 134, Ballance 61, Stokes 52; Starc 3-84, Hazlewood 3-70)

AUSTRALIA: Warner, Rogers, Smith, Clarke (capt), Voges, Watson, Haddin (wkt), Johnson, Starc, Hazlewood, Lyon. Toss: England

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