

SPORT

Zimbabwe look for fresh start

SPORTS REPORTER

It actually hasn't been too long since Bangladesh played their last international series. South Africa were here just around four months ago and produced quite an entertaining tour. In retrospect though, this little lull has seemed to last a lot longer than it actually did. The reason behind that of course could be accredited to the Tigers' brilliant campaign this year.

And so, as the Zimbabweans took the field in Mirpur yesterday, there was a familiar sense of excitement that spread through the ground. The walkie-talkies were buzzing, the security -- understandably so -- was beefed up and the number of media personnel had increased two-fold.

The challenge may not be similar to the ones the Tigers faced in the earlier part of the year, but at least they are back in action and ready to face a team that is looking to start anew.

Why is that? Because Zimbabwe haven't exactly produced the best results coming into this series. A series defeat to Afghanistan at home is not a result that a full-member nation would be proud of and Zimbabwe skipper Elton Chigumbura hoped his players could move past that defeat.

"The most important thing is to pick yourself up and our focus now is to make sure that we improve from the last series. We must have some positive results. What happened in the past. We are regrouping and focusing on this tour," said Elton Chigumbura during a press conference in

Mirpur yesterday.

Zimbabwe's defeats in the ODI and T20I series at the hands of Afghanistan attracted plenty of criticism. Some even thought that Zimbabwe cricket was nearing its end. Chigumbura though brushed aside those concerns.

"It is not [the end of Zimbabwe cricket]. It is the beginning. We have good youngsters who are coming up. It is just a matter of giving them more games. We have a bunch of guys who are positive. Obviously [others] may make those comments. But we believe that we have a big future ahead of us," said the Zimbabwean.

"We are used to the wickets and conditions here. The good thing about our team is that we have guys who have played here before. They will have to raise their game. Anything can happen in cricket. You might be on top in one series and then not do well in the next," he added.

When asked about whether there were any security concerns within the team, Chigumbura said, "We will play cricket and those who are qualified to look at these things will do their job. They have given us the go-ahead to play here. We have been asking for more matches. This opportunity to play is something we take positively. Hopefully it will be a good tour for us."

Coach Day Whatmore echoed Chigumbura's sentiments.

"We always go with our cricket board administration. We work for them. They will never put us in a situation where we are compromised. We are happy to come and play after Zimbabwe Cricket has agreed on the tour," he said.



Zimbabwe players enjoy their first training session with a flying whistle rocket ball at the BCB Academy ground in Mirpur yesterday.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

Mashrafe to lead BCB XI

SPORTS REPORTER



The Bangladesh selectors sprung a surprise yesterday when they announced quite a strong BCB-XI squad for the practice match against the Zimbabweans in Fatullah on Thursday.

The 14-member side includes five players from the main squad, including ODI and Test captain Mashrafe Bin Mortaza who will be leading this side as well.

Apart from Mashrafe, the selectors also included Mushfiqur Rahim, Sabbir Rahman, Liton Das and Jubair Hossain in the side. The rea-

soning behind the inclusion of each of these players seems to be different. Mashrafe, who has just recovered from dengue, has been working hard to regain his fitness levels.

He only recently began to bowl in the nets. In addition, he is yet to attend all the training sessions on a regular basis. On Monday for instance, the skipper took breaks during a training session which required the players to take part in a practice match with simulated conditions.

According to chief selector Faruque Ahmed, Mashrafe has been included in order to be given more game-time. Although at the moment it seems as though the management is looking to test his fitness levels.

Mushfiqur, who has had a relatively poor run ever since the Pakistan series, reportedly expressed his desire to take part in the game. The diminutive batsman will hope he can regain form and smash those slog-hits in style again.

Liton and Sabbir may be regulars in the playing eleven now, but they still have a lot to prove and the management probably wants them to get a head-start ahead of the main series.

Leg-spinner Jubair, on the other hand, will want to get his hopes high of making the playing eleven after a rather dull recent phase. He is the only player from the national side who wasn't picked during the Bangladesh Premier League draft

and he will hope to change that statistic through a good performance in this series.

He has been bowling well in training, frequently deceiving batters with his flighted deliveries and the management now hopes he can replicate that on the field.

Apart from the national players, a number of cricketers who have done well in the National Cricket League have also been selected.

SQUAD

Imrul Kayes, Anamul Haque, Liton Das, Shahriar Nafees, Mushfiqur Rahim, Sabbir Rahman, Mashrafe Bin Mortaza, Mehedi Maruf, Jubair Hossain, Sanjamul Islam, Delwar Hossain, Shafiqul Islam, Towhidul Islam, Rassel



All-rounder Nasir Hossain (L) and young left-arm pacer Mustafizur Rahman fight for the possession of a soccer ball during the Tigers' training session at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

Hafeez leads Pak fightback

AFP, Sharjah

Opener Mohammad Hafeez notched a brilliant 97 under pressure to help Pakistan stage a comeback in the third and final Test against England in Sharjah on Tuesday.

The 35-year-old was just three runs away from his ninth Test hundred as he took Pakistan to 146-3 at close on the third day at Sharjah Stadium, leading by 74 runs with seven wickets intact.

Nightwatchman Rahat Ali was the other not out batsman on nought as Pakistan lost the key wicket of Younis Khan for 14, trapped leg-before by fast bowler Stuart Broad with just two overs to go in the day.

But Hafeez held the innings together well, smashing nine bound-

aries and three sixes during his aggressive 155-ball knock as Pakistan seek to avoid squandering a 1-0 lead in the three-match series.

Earlier, off-spinner Shoaib Malik took a career best 4-33 as England were bowled out for 306 in their first innings, taking a 72-run lead over Pakistan's total of 234.

James Taylor top-scored with 76. Pakistan were lucky not to lose Hafeez after Australian umpire Bruce Oxenford gave him caught behind off paceman James Anderson in the fifth over of the innings with the score on four.

But Hafeez, then on two, challenged the decision and got away on referral as television replays showed there was a gap between ball and bat, much to the relief of the Pakistan camp.

Pakistan were off to a confident start of 101 -- only their second 50-plus opening stand in Sharjah -- with Hafeez earning the lead by hitting spinner Samit Patel for a boundary and then taking three runs.

He completed his 13th Test half-century with another boundary off Patel and then hoisted James Anderson for a six and boundary to post the 100-mark.

SCORES IN BRIEF

PAKISTAN: First innings 234
ENGLAND: First innings 306 (Cook 49, Bell 40, Taylor 76, Bairstow 43, Patel 42; Rahat 2-48, Shah 3-99, Malik 4-33)
PAKISTAN: Second innings 146 for 3 (Hafeez 97 not out, Azhar 34; Anderson 1-36, Broad 1-19)

Manohar to replace Srini in ICC?

AGENCIES, New Delhi

Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) President Shashank Manohar could be the next International Cricket Council (ICC) Chairman.

According to a BCCI official, "After Jagmohan Dalmiya's death and the change at the top, equations within the BCCI have changed. The secretary Anurag Thakur and president Manohar now enjoy the numbers. Of late, the secretary and president haven't been happy with the way Srinivasan has been representing BCCI at the ICC.

"This could end the Srinivasan era, for now. But in BCCI, things can always change," said the official.

Holder banned for 2nd ODI

AGENCIES, Johannesburg

West Indies captain Jason Holder has been given a one-match suspension for maintaining a slow over-rate for the second time this year, meaning he will miss the second ODI against Sri Lanka, said an ICC spokesman.

The decision was taken after West Indies fell two overs short of the target during their one-wicket defeat at the hands of Sri Lanka in the opening ODI in Colombo.

In addition to the suspension, Holder was fined 40 percent of his match fee.

Khulna crowned champions

Razzak unhappy with NCL wickets

SPORTS REPORTER



Khulna were crowned the champions of the National Cricket League -- Bangladesh's premier four-day domestic competition -- yesterday for the fourth time as their final round match against Rangpur ended in a draw in Chittagong.

The match in itself was the least bit interesting considering that almost three whole days were washed out. However, that didn't stop Abdur Razzak and his young brigade from celebrating after the last ball of the fourth day was bowled yesterday.

"It feels really good to win [the title]. It

always does," laughed Razzak. "We had to change our team after almost every round this time because of international commitments. So it feels extra special to manage to win the title this time," the veteran left-arm spinner told The Daily Star.

In a sense it was a sweet revenge for Khulna, who had missed out on the championship last season by one point to Rangpur.

In the previous season, Khulna had won their final round game within three days and looked likely to win the championship since it seemed as though league leaders Rangpur were going to draw their final game as the match had just entered its third

innings at the start of day four.

However, Rangpur's opponents Dhaka dramatically collapsed on the final day and gave Rangpur a feeble 100-run target, which they romped to in style. Unfortunately, the former champions have been relegated to Tier Two this time.

On the whole though, Razzak wasn't happy with the kind of wickets that were provided during the six rounds of this tournament. There were plenty of talks regarding the wickets prior to the start of the league this time. Meetings were held by the tournament committee and the curators were provided instructions as well to make sporting pitches.

However, according to Razzak, all those measures didn't create much of a difference.

"We didn't play on sporting wickets. None of the venues had sporting wickets. They were slow and mostly helped batters. The pacers couldn't bowl and even the spinners didn't get much turn."

"These were the kind of wickets where batters could have played on for as long as they wanted if they didn't

take any risks," said the left-arm spinner.

"There was a little bit in the Khulna wicket on the first day, but after that it was all the same. In Fatullah for instance, there was no swing or spin. It [the pitch] didn't do anything. I feel that bowlers need to be encouraged as much as the batsmen," he added.

POINTS TABLE

Teams	TIER 1				Pts
	Mat	Won	Lost	Draw	
Khulna Division	6	1	0	5	54
Dhaka Metropolis	6	1	0	5	44
Dhaka Division	6	1	1	4	43
Rangpur Division	6	0	2	4	39
TIER 2					
Barisal Division	6	2	0	4	59
Rajshahi Division	6	2	1	3	54
Sylhet Division	6	1	2	3	38
Chittagong Division	6	0	2	4	35

SCORES IN BRIEF

BARISAL V CHITTAGONG Barisal: 489 and 303 for 6 (Shahriar 174 not out, Al-Amin 68; Dolar 2-32) Chittagong: 425 Result: Match drawn	RANGPUR V KHULNA Rangpur: 344 Khulna: 286 for 7 dec (Imrul 107, Ziaur 62 not out; Tanveer 2-56) Result: Match drawn	DHAKA V DHAKA METRO Dhaka Metro: 286 for 3 (Shamsur 105, Mehedi 99, Mehedi 52; Mahbubul 1-27) Result: Match drawn
----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

Malik announces Test retirement

AFP, Sharjah

Former Pakistan captain Shoaib Malik announced his retirement from Test cricket after he failed in the second innings of the third Test against England in Sharjah on Tuesday.

The 33-year-old only made a comeback in the longer format of the game after five years in the first Test against England in Abu Dhabi, smash-



Pakistan all-rounder Shoaib Malik (C) walks back to the dressing room after scoring a golden duck in what he later announced was his last innings on the third day of the third and final Test against England in Sharjah yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

ing a career-best 245.

But since then he has made nought, two, seven, 38 and nought in the remaining five innings of the series, prompting him to call it a day.

"I am retiring from Test cricket after this match," Malik told reporters. "The reason of my leaving Tests is not because of slump in form but it's because I want to give more time to my family and concentrate on the 2019 World Cup."

"I realised today that this is the right time to leave the place for youngsters and Pakistan have many talented players who can fill in," said Malik, who made his Test debut against Bangladesh in Multan in 2001.

In all, he played 35 Tests, scoring 1,898 runs with three centuries and eight half-centuries. He has so far taken 29 wickets, with his best figures of 4-33 coming on Tuesday. Malik said he would continue to play one-dayers and Twenty20s.



FIRST-CLASS-FIRST: The players and officials of Khulna celebrate after winning the National Cricket League title at the Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium in Chittagong yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

BATTING & FIELDING									
Mat	Inns	Runs	HS	Ave	100	50	4s	6s	Ct
34	58	1860	245	35.76	3	8	234	17	17

BOWLING					
Mat	Inns	Runs	Wkts	Ave	4w
34	41	1460	25	58.40	1