

SPORT

Double blow for Tigers

SPORTS REPORTER

Cricket Series 2015
TIGERS

Bangladesh received a double blow ahead of their series against Zimbabwe yesterday as regular opener Soumya Sarkar was ruled out for three weeks due to a side-strain and Mashrafe Bin Mortaza-led BCB XI was knocked down by seven wickets in the lone warm-up game against the visitors at the Khan Shaheb Osman Ali Stadium in Fatullah.

Young left-hander Soumya might not have justified his talent on the Bangladesh A team's recent tours, but his brilliance in the last three series is still fresh in the minds of millions of fans, who will however miss him during the three-match ODI and two-match T20I series against Zimbabwe.

A strong BCB XI also failed to orchestrate an ideal prelude to the series, as it was the case against Pakistan during a warm-up match before that series courtesy of Sabbir Rahman's blistering hundred. That warm-up match actually set the tone of the Tigers' fairytale run against Pakistan, India and South Africa in a memorable 2015.

However, it was not all bad news as their inspirational captain Mashrafe Bin Mortaza - under whom the Tigers achieved glorious successes since the World Cup - bowled seven overs without any complaints to give the impression that he was ready to lead the team in Saturday's first one-day match against Zimbabwe, when the Tigers will hope to maintain this year's winning streak at home.

Mushfiqur Rahim also tuned up well during his unbeaten 81, a knock which featured five fours and two sixes to send a positive message to the Bangladesh top-order. The diminutive right-hander showed the evidence that he was ready to dismantle the Zimbabwean bowling attack with his near-

perfect slog sweeps.

It's true that a warm-up match result can hardly reflect the true picture, especially when the home side hid their true bowling attack. But it was expected that the home batting, that boasts batsmen like Imrul Kayes, Anamul Haque, Liton Das, Mushfiqur and Sabbir Rahman, should have piled on the runs on a placid track to set the tone for the series.

After Imrul and Anamul had a 105-run opening stand, a 300-plus target seemed achievable, but the BCB XI batting lacked the killer instinct in their approach. The Zimbabweans however, took the chance to regain their confidence after morale-shattering defeats against Afghanistan at home.

Sikandar Raza smacked a massive six over long-off against pacer Delwar Hossain to finish the chase of the 278-run target in style, but it was Craig Ervine and Sean Williams' clinical batting efforts which built their platform before Elton Chigumbura, the captain, put the hosts' bowling to the sword for an easy win.

Ervine later well defined what actually they achieved from this warm-up game.

"I think it is always good to start off a tour on a winning note, especially to win with quite a few wickets in hand against a large total. It is good practice for us. It is not going to be easy to play the ODIs against Bangladesh. It is more about taking the confidence from a practice game. We didn't have a good series at home against Afghanistan but we have put that behind us now," said Ervine.

SCORES IN BRIEF

BCB XI: 277 for 8 in 50 overs (Mushfiqur 81 not out, Kayes 56, Anamul 52, Nafees 38; Jongwe 3-20, Cremer 3-21)

ZIMBABWE: 281 for 3 in 46.4 overs (Ervine 95, Williams 54 ret'd; Chigumbura 64 not out; Sunzamul 2-70, Shafiq 1-47)

Result: Zimbabwe won by 7 wickets



Opener Imrul Kayes might have hit a half-century for a losing cause in the lone practice match at the Fatullah Stadium yesterday, but his performance earned him a recall to the Tigers' ODI series against Zimbabwe, starting on Saturday.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

Another injury, another chance

SPORTS REPORTER



Both hit half-centuries in the warm-up match against Zimbabwe, but it was left-hander Imrul Kayes who got the nod ahead of Anamul Haque to replace the injured Soumya Sarkar for the first two ODIs on November 7 and 9 as his good form in the longer-version matches was taken into consideration.

It was no surprise that Imrul was recalled when it was confirmed that Soumya had a left side-strain - which will cause him to miss the matches against Zimbabwe since the injury takes two-three weeks to heal - because

chief selector Faruque Ahmed made it clear while announcing the 18-member preliminary squad that Imrul was a good choice as a back-up opener.

Imrul was a late replacement for the injured Anamul in Bangladesh's World Cup squad, but the left-hander didn't feature in any of Bangladesh's historic wins this year and the impression was there that the batsman was virtually written off from the limited-overs circuit.

"I must say it's a big opportunity for me because I didn't get the chance to play one-day cricket after the World Cup. I am now in good touch, so I will try to cash in on this opportunity. I would like to thank the selectors and the team management for choosing

me," said a soft-spoken Imrul while he was talking to reporters after the warm-up match against Zimbabwe at Fatullah yesterday.

"I am trying to improve my ODI batting. I did a lot of work on the weaknesses of my batting in regards to limited-overs cricket. Now I am enjoying my batting and I hope that I can improve my batting if I continue to bat in this way," he added.

When asked about what areas he had to work on to improve his batting in the shorter-format, Imrul said: "During the World Cup I initially struggled against bouncers, so I worked on that. I also made some changes to my technique and that's why I am now batting comfort-

DID you know?

If Bangladesh win the series 3-0 against Zimbabwe, they will get one rating point and will remain 7th in the ICC ODI Rankings. If the result is reversed, then Bangladesh will lose eight points and slip to 8th, just behind Pakistan. Even if Bangladesh win the series 2-1, they will lose two points.

Tickets go on sale

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Tickets for the three-match ODI and two-match T20I series between Bangladesh and Zimbabwe went on sale yesterday and will be available at four different branches of United Commercial Bank Limited (UCB).

While the UCash and online sales of tickets started yesterday, physical tickets will be available from today, ahead of the first ODI which begins tomorrow.

Ticket prices will range from Tk 100 to Tk 1000, exclusive of 15% VAT, depending on the quality of seating.

The UCB branches in Pragati Sarani, Mirpur Road, Uttara and Shantinagar will be offering the sale of tickets through UCash, while physical tickets can only be bought at the UCB branch in Mirpur.

Fans will now also be able to purchase tickets and get it delivered to the comfort of their homes, thanks to a recent agreement between UCB and Kaymu.com.bd.

Fans can order tickets from Kaymu using UCash.

Upon ordering a ticket, Kaymu will call the user to confirm the purchase. Following confirmation, tickets will be delivered to the user within 24 hours.

SEATS	PRICE
Grand Stand North/South	1,000
VIP Stand	500
Shahid Mushtaque/Jewel Stand	300

19TH ASIAN ARCHERY C'SHIPS

Ruman only one through

SPORTS REPORTER

Archer Ruman Sana moved into the pre-quarterfinal of the individual recurve bow event in the 19th Asian Archery Championships after beating his illustrious opponent from China in the 1/16 round in Bangkok yesterday.

Ruman, a student of Bangladesh Krira Shikkha Protisthan, surprised 9th-ranked Huang Rui 6-4 to set his pre-quarterfinal clash against Japan's Kawata Yuki, who is ranked eighth.

The 18-year-old archer, who also qualified for the pre-quarterfinal of the World Archery Championships in July last year, had earlier beat China's Liang Jiajie 10-9 in shootoff after a 5-5 draw in the second round and Vietnam's To Anh Khoa 6-2 in the first round.

The other local archers - Sheikh Sojib and Javed Alam - could not shine like their teammate and were eliminated from the second round while Shamoli Roy, Mathui Pru Marma and Hira Moni were also eliminated from the women's individual recurve bow events from different stages.

In the individual compound event, archers from Bangladesh suffered defeats in different stages of the elimination round.

Pakistan topple England

AFP, Sharjah



Spin trio of Shoaib Malik, Yasir Shah and Zulfiqar Babar shared nine wickets between them to help Pakistan beat England by a big

127-run margin in the third and final Test in Sharjah on Thursday.

Shah finished with 4 for 44, Malik - playing his last Test - took for 26 and Babar grabbed 2 for 31 to bundle England out for 156 soon after lunch on the fifth and final day for a 2-0 series win at Sharjah Stadium.

England, set 284 to win, were always on the back foot on a turning pitch as

only skipper Alastair Cook showed some resistance during his 241-minute fight, scoring 63 with four boundaries.

It was Malik who gave Pakistan the prized wicket of Cook, stumped by wicketkeeper Sarfraz Ahmed, to finish with seven wickets in the match.

Shah had Ben Stokes stumped in the next over for 12 to spark celebrations in the field as Pakistan players embraced each other.

The victory lifts Pakistan to an equal highest ever number two in the ICC (International Cricket Council) Test rankings, a spot which they previously attained only for a few days in August 2006.

Pakistan won the second Test by 178

runs in Dubai.

Pakistan skipper Misbahul Haq attributed teamwork for the win.

"We finally managed to win and credit to England for fighting well," said Misbah, who praised man-of-the-series Shah.

"If you look back at the series everyone contributed, especially Shah, who won us both the games and was outstanding," said Misbah.

Misbah said he will take time before making a decision on retirement.

"I will think (about retiring from Tests) because our next series is seven months away so I will decide whether I want to continue or not."

Alastair Cook's team fought well throughout the three Tests and was unlucky not to win the first Test in Abu Dhabi, forced into a draw due to bad light with just 24 needed for victory.

England are now pushed to sixth from their pre-series third in the Test rankings.

Cook said playing Pakistan in the United Arab Emirates was always tough.

SCORES IN BRIEF

PAKISTAN: First innings 234

ENGLAND: First innings 306

PAKISTAN: Second innings 355

ENGLAND: Second innings 156 (Moeen 22, Cook 63, Rashid 22, Broad 20; Babar 2-31, Malik 3-26, Shah 4-44)

Result: Pakistan won by 127 runs and clinched 3-match series 2-0.

Player-of-the-match: Mohammad Hafeez.



Pakistan players celebrate after dismissing England's last batsman, Ben Stokes, on the fifth day of the final Test in Sharjah yesterday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

'It's a really tough tour'

AFP, Sharjah



Alastair Cook admitted his Ashes winning England team was second best to Pakistan as they lost the three-match series 2-0 following defeat in Sharjah

on Thursday.

Chasing a daunting 284-run target, England were bowled out for 156 on a weary fifth day pitch, with leg-spinner Yasir Shah taking 4-44 and Shoaib Malik finishing with 3-26.

"It is a really tough tour," said Cook, who top-scored with 63 in the second innings.

"Our record here is second to best. For everything in the last 15 days with our commitment and desire to do well in really testing conditions, we could not achieve it."

good enough with the bat to repel the Pakistan bowlers at crucial times and then in the field we slipped some tough half chances yesterday when the game was still very much alive.

"We were there but we were not quite good enough to put Pakistan under enough pressure to grab the opportunity."

Cook admitted England did not have quality spinners as compared to Pakistan.

"It is clear that we haven't got world class spinners, that is very obvious to see. That does not mean they can't develop into," said Cook whose spinners Moeen Ali and Adil Rashid finished with nine and eight wickets respectively.

The 2-0 loss slid England to sixth in the Test rankings, something Cook doesn't worry about.

"I think the rankings are hard. Do they lie? I don't know, they do probably when it is such close points between third and sixth or seventh. Let us not worry about rankings."

"If we played a bit more consistent here it would have been good. We are an inconsistent side at the moment."

Younis back in ODI fold

AFP, Lahore

Pakistan Thursday recalled senior batsman Younis Khan in the 16-man squad for the one-day series against England starting later this month, despite reservations over his current form.

The 37-year-old batsman was discarded from the one-day team after a poor tour of New Zealand and 2015 World Cup in April, where he managed just 77 runs in six matches.

SQUAD

Azhar Ali (cap), Mohammad Hafeez, Ahmed Shehzad, Younis Khan, Shoaib Malik, Sarfraz Ahmed, Mohammad Rizwan, Babar Azam, Yasir Shah, Wahab Riaz, Zafar Gohar, Mohammad Irfan, Rahat Ali, Anwar Ali, Amir Yamin, Bilal Asif.

India caught in spin

AFP, Mohali



Dean Elgar was the unlikely bowling hero for South Africa as the tourists skittled India for 201 on the opening day of the first Test in Mohali on Thursday.

The part-time left-arm spinner, who had managed just six wickets in 17 previous Tests, grabbed four for 22 runs on the dry, dusty pitch which he later described as not being good for cricket.

South Africa were themselves reduced to 9-2 in reply before ending an eventful day's play on 28 without further loss at the I.S. Bindra stadium.

Off-spinner Ravichandran Ashwin claimed Stiaan van Zyl leg-before for five and left-arm slow bowler Ravindra Jadeja bowled Faf du Plessis for no score with his second delivery.

Elgar (13 not out) and skipper Hashim Amla (nine not out) warded off the immediate threat from the Indian spinners to ensure there were no further setbacks for the tourists.

Opener Murali Vijay was the lone top-order Indian batsman to offer resistance, making 75 before he was sixth out, leg-before while trying to sweep off-spinner Simon Harmer.

India were reduced to 154-7 before Jadeja (38) and Ashwin (20 not out) lifted the total with a 42-run stand for the eighth wicket.

Elgar slammed the wicket as one that teams would usually encounter on the fourth day of a Test despite recording his best-ever Test figures.

"It is not a good cricket pitch but it is wicket that will produce a result either way," he said. "We sorted of expected it to play like that but we didn't expect it to crumble the way it already has."

"It was right up there with the hardest ever Test cricket I've played. Lets hope that it

can backfire (on India) and turn out to be a great victory for us."

Indian batting coach Sanjay Bangar said his team's total of 201 was not inadequate on what he said was a "challenging" pitch.

"I am not saying it is a good wicket or a bad wicket, but it is a challenging wicket where run-making is not so easy," said Bangar.

"It may look that we have only 201 on the board but it is worth much more than that in these conditions."

South Africa, the number one Test side, claimed three wickets in the morning session after India won the toss and gained the advantage of batting first on a pitch that is expected to deteriorate further.

The first wicket fell before a run had been scored when Shikhar Dhawan hung his bat out to a swinging ball from Vernon Philander and edged a catch to Amla at first slip.

Cheteshwar Pujara and Vijay retrieved the situation with a 63-run partnership for the second wicket when Elgar stepped up with the ball and, an over later, with a low catch to make it 65-3.

Elgar trapped Pujara leg-before for 31 with his fourth delivery when he was summoned by Amla to bowl the 22nd over.

Four balls later, Elgar dived in the covers to remove Indian captain Virat Kohli for one on his 27th birthday - also giving debutant fast bowler Kagiso Rabada his first Test wicket.

India, who went to lunch at 82-3, were set back once again by Elgar who took two wickets off successive deliveries spread over two overs to reduce the hosts to 102-5.

SCORES IN BRIEF

INDIA: First innings 201 (Vijay 75, Pujara 31, Jadeja 38, Ashwin 20 not out; Philander 2-38, Elgar 4-22, Tahir 2-23)

SOUTH AFRICA: First innings 28 for 2 (Elgar 13 not out, Amla 9 not out; Ashwin 1-4, Jadeja 1-7)



Bangladesh cricketers, sporting the new jersey, pose for photographs during the unveiling of the Tigers' kit at the Sonargoan Hotel yesterday. The new design was selected from a contest titled 'Adammya Jersey Design Contest' organised by Bangladesh team's sponsors Robi.

PHOTO: STAR