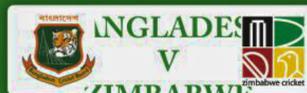


SPORT



DOMINANCE VS RECOVERY

Tigers' eyes on the prize

NAIMUL KARIM

When the Tigers take the field in Mirpur today, there's no doubt that their sole target will be securing the series. If they win today, it will be the third time that the Tigers won four consecutive series.

They have done it in the past against lower-ranked sides in 2006 and 2009; however, the achievement in 2015 definitely soars above the rest, since the Tigers have claimed wins against three of world cricket's heavyweights.

While winning the series will obviously be the team target, the match will also provide an opportunity for a number of players to prove themselves. Shakib Al Hasan -- who had taken a five-wicket haul in the first ODI and was the chief destroyer on Saturday -- will not be playing as he will be away on paternity leave. Opener Anamul Haque will have a chance to shine after he was announced as Shakib's replacement yesterday.

While the absence of Shakib is bound to weaken Bangladesh's bowling line-up, it might also compel some of the others to step-up and give more effort. Although Mustafizur Rahman and Arafat Sunny bowled well on Saturday, they failed to get wickets. With skipper Mashrafe Bin Mortaza unlikely to bowl 10 overs due to his fitness issues, the onus is likely to be on those two bowlers.

Nasir Hossain, who bowled just three overs in the last game, will definitely get a lot more overs in the absence of Shakib as well.

Bangladesh's team management may look to spice things up a bit by replacing Shakib with leg-spinner Jubair Hossain. In that case there will be an extra bowler to depend on. However, if Shakib is replaced by a batsman then it is likely that Imrul Kayes will come in the eleven.

Imrul, who just a year back was virtually written off limited-overs cricket, will hope to change his fortunes in this series if he gets an opportunity.

The same goes for the other batsmen who failed to perform in the first ODI. The likes of Mahmudullah Riyad and Liton Das will especially want to pull their socks up ahead of today's crucial encounter.

The equation will become a lot more interesting if Mushfiqur Rahim ends up being dismissed for a low score. Can the batters post a defendable target without the influence of their highest run-getters -- Mushfiqur and Soumya Sarkar -- of the year?

Zimbabwe skipper Elton Chigumbura came down hard on his players after their 145-run defeat on Saturday. He criticised his batsmen's technique and believed that it was possible to chase the 270-odd run target set by the hosts.

As Chigumbura said later during that post-match press conference, the visitors still haven't lost hope and are confident that they can eke out a win in the series.

The visitors, despite getting a good start, seemed to be in a hurry while batting and lost their wickets while attempting to hit boundaries. Wicketkeeper Regis Chakabva, who had a good series the last time he came here, is expected to replace the injured Richmond Mutumbami.



Dashing opener Tamim Iqbal might have missed out on a big one in the first ODI on Saturday but he is confident of making up for the lapse when the Tigers take on Zimbabwe in Mirpur today.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

'I want to play a bigger knock'

SPORTS REPORTER



Fluent drives and almost near-perfect connections down-the-track at the start of the first ODI, Tamim Iqbal looked in sync. While his strike-rate was low, he seemed to read the conditions well and looked set for a big score. In addition, Bangladesh were losing wickets and the hosts needed him there.

However, all those predictions were tossed aside when one of Tamim's numerous down-the-track hits landed in the safe arms of the long-on fielder. He was out for a disappointing 40. One of the aspects that further dented his cause was his inability to take and rotate the strike frequently.

Speaking to reporters a day after the match, Tamim said that he regretted losing his wicket after getting set.

"My dismissal wasn't great. I was set. I should have batted longer. I was doing what I wanted but my application in that delivery wasn't correct. I was trying to hit the ball over cover but I

ended up playing that way. It was a mistake.

"I have to start from zero in the next match. I was on 40 yesterday so in that regard it was a big miss. I wasn't scoring freely at the time of my dismissal but I could have covered it. I will try to play a bigger innings tomorrow [Monday]," said Tamim.

"The good part about this team is that someone always comes up with a big score. But none of us should think about it. I got out for 40 and then what if [Sabbir Rahman] Rumman and Mushfiqur [Rahim] didn't do well? The outcome may have been different. Whoever gets set should try to score big. It shouldn't be left to others," he added.

He further said that the wicket at Mirpur on Saturday was a bit tricky due to its 'dual nature'.

"There was extra bounce on some deliveries in the early stages, which isn't usual here. But I felt it was easier to play the pace bowlers than the spinners. There were two kinds of turn. One came to you slowly and the other would bounce sharply against you. It took a bit of time to adjust. But those who batted for 20 or 30 balls, it

became easier for them.

"We thought we would get around 250-260 when Mushfiqur and Sabbir were batting quite well. I think 273 was really good score for that wicket," said Tamim.

Speaking on the overall 145-run victory, which was Bangladesh's biggest ever over Zimbabwe in terms of runs, the left-hander stated that none of his teammates nor he expect an easy encounter against the Zimbabweans today.

"We didn't think we could win so easily. We knew before the game that we would have to work quite hard to win the game. We needed to keep the processes right so that we could work properly and achieve our desired result.

"We were always serious and will remain serious for the next two matches. We may have to work very hard to win the next two matches," said Tamim.

"The first match is always important because players are unsure and a bit nervous. Confidence usually goes up in the team that wins the first time. We have to work hard in the next two games but we will have the confidence," he added.

Gambler caught in first ODI

SPORTS REPORTER

An Indian national accused of betting through an online website was arrested during the first ODI between Bangladesh and Zimbabwe at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur on Saturday evening.

According to Bangladesh Cricket Board director Jalal Yunus the board's security team spotted the individual at the grand stand of the stadium and observed his 'suspicious' activities.

"According to the security team he was on the phone throughout and that's when they decided to intervene. After that they realised the person was indeed sending messages and betting," said Yunus.

"We caught him on the day itself and delivered him to the police," he added.

Betting from the ground is often referred to as 'pitchesiding'. It allows the individual to take advantage of the slight delay between the live action at the ground and the television broadcast of matches overseas to place bets or pass information on to others before the odds are adjusted.

Raza fined for dissent

SPORTS REPORTER

Zimbabwe's Sikandar Raza has been fined for breaching Level 1 of the ICC Code of Conduct during the first ODI between Bangladesh and Zimbabwe in Mirpur on Saturday.

According to a press release from the ICC, Raza was fined 15 per cent of his match fee by Jagavall Srinath of the Emirates Elite Panel of ICC Match Referees.

The player was found to have breached Article 2.1.5 of the ICC Code of Conduct for Players and Player Support Personnel, which relates to showing dissent at an umpire's decision during an international match.

After being given out caught behind, Raza delayed leaving the wicket, shaking his head and uttering some words that were contrary to the spirit of the game.

The charge was levelled by on-field umpires Aleem Dar and Sharfuddoula, third umpire Enamul Haque, and fourth umpire Anisur Rahman.

Pak, Eng win warm-ups

AFP, Abu Dhabi

Pakistan and England tuned up for their four-match one-day series with comfortable wins against minnows Nepal and Hong Kong respectively in Abu Dhabi on Sunday.

Pakistan beat Nepal by 121 runs while England thumped Hong Kong by 163 runs in 50-over games to gear up for the bigger challenge starting later this week.

Pakistan put up a strong 326 for 6 in 50 overs with half-centuries from skipper Azhar Ali (73) and Shoaib Malink 63.

In reply Nepal could manage 205-5 in their allotted 50 overs with Anil Mandal (61) and Gyanendra Malla (41) making some useful runs.

England rode on aggressive 36-ball 71 by Moeen Ali and 56-ball 64 by opener Alex Hales to post a big 342-8.

Hong Kong were bowled out for 173 in 40.2 overs with paceman David Willy grabbing 4-43.

Legends in a frame



The opening game of cricket's All-Stars Series created quite a buzz at a baseball stadium in New York on Sunday. It provided an opportunity for fans to see a galaxy of stars, retired from the game, renewing old rivalries in a slam-bang T20 match. Indian legend Sachin Tendulkar led one half called 'Blasters' against Australian leg spinning wizard Shane Warne's other half titled 'Warriors'. The Warriors drew the first blood of the three-match series, winning by six wickets with 16 balls remaining. But the game was more than fun where a Virender Sehwag showed that he has hardly lost that brute power-hitting, a Ricky Ponting provided that pristine touch, a fast and furious Shoaib Akhtar hit the deck as hard as he did during his heyday and Warne proving a point to his great rival Sachin that he was the boss on Sunday by dismissing the little right-hander from Trinidad and Tobago - Brian Lara. The Daily Star Sport brings all the stars in one frame for its valued readers to enjoy.



Rain denies Oz progress

AFP, Brisbane

New Zealand's hopes of stonewalling an Australian victory took a massive blow with the contentious dismissal of leading batsman Kane Williamson on a rain-hit fourth day in the first Gabba Test on Sunday.

The accomplished Williamson took up where he left off after his 140 in the first innings to reach his 50 off 55 balls but fell to a marginal leg before wicket decision nearing tea.

The Black Caps were 142 for three off 53 overs chasing an improbable 504 runs for victory with Ross Taylor on 20 and skipper Brendan McCullum not out four when a combination of bad light and rain prevented any play after tea.

English umpire Richard Illingworth gave Williamson out after he was struck high on the back leg from spinner Nathan Lyon and the Kiwi batsman called for a review.

Replays showed the ball clipping the very top of the bails and the umpire's decision stood.

Williamson had looked up to the task and efficiently dissected the Australian field with his crisp strokeplay. The Australian bowlers were unable to get him to play a false stroke up until his dismissal.

Rain twice intervened on the fourth day with no play after tea and there will be an earlier start to Monday's final day's play.

Much will hinge on McCullum and former captain Taylor to keep the Kiwis in the contest, but the Black Caps are still holding hopes of pulling off an astonishing victory.

"We're in with a chance. That first hour in the first session is going to be crucial for us," opening batsman Tom Latham said.

"Those two boys that are in at the moment can set a platform for us. It's important Brendan goes out and plays his natural game.

"If he goes out and bats for an hour or two, we could certainly be a long way to winning the match."

Lyon did not discount New Zealand's remote chance of scoring 362 more runs to win, but said the winning odds were firmly in Australia's favour.

"If we don't bowl well and they get away they have two very dangerous batsmen at the crease, so it's definitely a chance," Lyon said.

SCORES IN BRIEF
AUSTRALIA: First innings 556-4 decl
NEW ZEALAND: First innings 317
AUSTRALIA: Second innings 264 for 4 decl (Burns 129, Warner 116; Craig 3-78)
NEW ZEALAND: Second innings 142 for 3 (Latham 29, Guptill 23, Williamson 59, Taylor 20 not out; Lyon 2-33)



PHOTOS: AFP