

SPORT

Lots to work on as T20 season begins

SPORTS REPORTER

The Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) had announced a 27-member preliminary squad for the forthcoming T20 internationals last week and it includes a number of players who did well in the recently concluded Bangladesh Premier League.

What will be interesting to see is how the selection committee ends up trimming at least half of this squad by the time the ICC World Twenty 20 arrives because there are plenty of questions surrounding the Tigers' performances in the T20 format.

The one thing that has to be made clear right at the start, despite its obviousness, is that there is a huge difference between Bangladesh's ODI and T20I outfits. The numbers perhaps best explain the scenario.

Take for instance the scenario of the batsmen; of 27 players in the list, Anamul Haque is the only one to have

a batting average above 30 in T20 cricket. However, his place in the playing eleven is not certain.

The averages of some of the more dependable batsmen paint a bleak picture. Shakib Al Hasan, for instance, averages 24 while Mushfiqur Rahim and Tamim Iqbal hover around 20 and 18 respectively.

In addition, the team's average runs per wicket in this format is just 18.50, which is the least among teams that have played at least 30 T20Is. Teams like Ireland, Netherlands, Afghanistan and even Scotland have fared better in this field.

And so, with a T20 series against Zimbabwe, one which could be converted into tri-nation tournament, and the Asia Cup due in the next two months, it will be interesting to see how the team management tries to deal with their batsmen.

Will they work on the young established ODI batsmen, the likes of Soumya Sarkar, Liton Das and Sabbir Rahman and try to bring the best out of

them or will they give batsmen like Jahurul Islam and Imrul Kayes, who haven't been regulars in this format, a chance to prove themselves. Both Jahurul and Imrul impressed in the BPL, scoring half-centuries during vital moments of matches.

The fact that leg-spinner Jubair Hossain isn't in the squad makes the expected spin combination quite clear, with Arafat Sunny and Shakib. However, finalising the pace line-up will also require some work.

The selectors have included Abu Hider in the side and it will be interesting to see if the 19-year-old goes on to make the final cut.

There are chances that he will of course, with Rubel Hossain and Taskin Ahmed failing to impress in the BPL and the fact that the duo are quite prone to injuries.

The scenario of course will become a lot clearer when the players join the camp in the second week of January, as that's when the team management will



Spanish ace Rafael Nadal was off to a flying start in 2016, defeating countryman David Ferrer 6-3, 6-7, 6-3 in the semifinal of the Mubadala World Tennis Championships in Abu Dhabi yesterday. PHOTO: AFP

PRAN-BSJA MEDIA CUP Daily Star off to flyer

SPORTS REPORTER

The Daily Star got off to a winning start in the Pran Frooto-BSJA Media Cup cricket tournament with a 13-run win over Daily Naya Diganta in one of two opening matches at the Maulana Bhasani Hockey Stadium.

The Daily Star restricted Naya Diganta to 79 for two in the stipulated six overs after putting up a fighting score of 89 for three on the board. Fazlur Rahman was adjudged man of the match for his all-round performance.

Former national cricket team captain Khaled Mahmud Sujan and Bangladesh Cricket Board director Jalal Younus inaugurated the 24-team six-a-side tournament while sponsor Pran Beverage chief operating officer Anisur Rahman and head of marketing Atiqur Rahman were among other guests.

In the day's other matches, Maasranga TV thrashed New Age by 58 runs, Dhaka Tribune routed Shokaler Khabor by four wickets, GIV beat bdnews24 by 22 runs, Daily Shamokal overwhelmed Jugantor by 77 runs, Channel 1 beat Banik Barta by 26 runs, Kaler kantha beat the independent by 18 runs and Raido Today beat Jagonews by three wickets.

Smith's expertise called-on SA-Eng 2nd Test from today

AFP, Cape Town

Former South African captain Graeme Smith linked up with the South African team as an adviser on Friday ahead of the second Test against England which starts at Newlands on Saturday.

"Graeme was a wonderful cricketer for South Africa and a wonderful captain," said current captain Hashim Amla. Smith will be with the team for the rest of the four-match series.

South Africa will make at least two changes following a crushing 241-run defeat in the first Test in Durban.

Amla announced that Kagiso Rabada will replace the injured Dale Steyn.

Meanwhile, England bowler James Anderson is poised for a comeback in this match after missing out previously due to injury.

KKR retain Shakib for IPL 2016

SPORTS REPORTER

All-rounder Shakib Al Hasan has been retained by the Kolkata Knight Riders for the next edition of the Indian Premier League. Apart from Shakib, the franchise has also retained Andre Russel, Brad Hogg, Chris Lynn, Morne Morkel, Sunil Narine and a host of local players.

On the whole, as many as 137 cricketers, including 37 overseas players were retained by the franchises.

Shakib had played four matches in the last IPL. He scored 36 runs at an average of 12 and scalped four wickets. KKR finished fifth in the last season and had missed the Playoffs by a whisker.

They had had a very good season until the very last week when they lost two matches in a row for the only time in the season; overall they won seven matches and lost six.

It is understood that the released players will be available in the auction which is set to take place on 6 February 2016 in Bangalore, with Pune and Rajkot being the new teams in the fray after the suspension of Chennai Super Kings and Rajasthan Royals.

PLAYERS RETAINED BY KKR: Gautam Gambhir, Kuldeep Yadav, Manish Pandey, Piyush Chawla, Robin Uthappa, Sheldon Jackson, Suryakumar Yadav, Umesh Yadav, Yusuf Pathan, Andre Russell, Brad Hogg, Chris Lynn, Morne Morkel, Shakib Al Hasan, Sunil Narine.



ICC U-19 WORLD CUP Hetmyer to lead Windies

CRICINFO, Port-of-Spain

Shimron Hetmyer has been named captain of West Indies for the Under-19 World Cup to be held in Bangladesh in January-February 2016.

Hetmyer, who was also featured in the 2014 edition of the tournament in the United Arab Emirates, is one of two players along with Alzarri Joseph, the pacer, to have first-class experience.

West Indies are placed in Group C alongside England, Fiji and Zimbabwe. They open their campaign on January 29 against Fiji in Chittagong.

Prior to the tournament, West Indies will play Bangladesh Under-19 in a three-match series as part of their preparation for the World Cup.

SQUAD
Shimron Hetmyer (capt), Keemo Paul, Kacey Carty, Shahid Crooks, Michael Frew, Jyd Goolie, Tevin Imlach, Ryan John, Alzarri Joseph, Kirstan Kallicharan, Obed McCoy, Gidron Pope, Odean Smith, Shamar Springer, Emmanuel Stewart.

Amir resurrected Pakistan include him in squads

AFP, Lahore

Paceman Mohammad Amir, who served a prison term for spot-fixing, said he was ready to respond to his critics with wickets—and love—after being selected for Pakistan's limited-overs tour of New Zealand.

The 23-year-old left-arter, who is set to make his international comeback less than four months after completing a five-year ban, remains a polarising figure for Pakistan's cricket-mad public and even some teammates.

Last week Mohammad Hafeez and Azhar Ali left a training camp which Amir was attending in protest at his prospective selection. They were later forced to return after being threatened with disciplinary action.

In an interview with AFP, Amir said he was confident most fans were on his side.

"I am sure fans will love me," he said. "But even if there are taunts and harsh remarks I am ready for that and will do my best to reply to them with love and by taking wickets."

Pakistan will play three T20Is and as many ODIs in New Zealand later this month.

Amir's inclusion however remains contingent on him being issued a visa by New Zealand—a potential hurdle given his criminal conviction for his role in arranging deliberate no-balls during Pakistan's tour of England in 2010, along with two others.

After pleading guilty to conspiracy to cheat at gambling and conspiracy to accept corrupt payments, Amir was handed a six-month jail sentence at the Feltham Young Offenders Institution but was released after three months.

He said: "I have toured New Zealand before and know they love the game and they are so caring and loving, so I don't expect anything untoward from them."

"I am sure they will adore me," he added. Since his ban was relaxed in April last year and completely lifted in September, he has seemingly picked up where he left off, taking 86 wickets in 21 domestic four-day and Twenty20 games.

Amir said he was grateful he had been handed a second innings in cricket.

"It's very difficult to get a second chance, so it's a big thing from my country, officials and fans that they have given me another chance," he said.

TWENTY20 SQUAD: Shahid Afridi (capt), Ahmed Shehzad, Mohammad Hafeez, Shoaib Malik, Iftikhar Ahmed, Mohammad Rizwan, Sohaib Maqsood, Sarfraz Ahmed, Anwar Ali, Imad Wasim, Wahab Riaz, Aamer Yamin, Umar Gul, Umar Akmal, Mohammad Amir, Saad Nasim.
ONE-DAY SQUAD: Azhar Ali (captain), Ahmed Shehzad, Mohammad Hafeez, Shoaib Malik, Asad Shafiq, Babar Azam, Sohaib Maqsood, Zafar Gohar, Imad Wasim, Anwar Ali, Sarfraz Ahmed, Wahab Riaz, Rahat Ali, Mohammad Irfan, Mohammad Rizwan, Mohammad Amir.



Under-23 team faces dearth of quality

SPORTS REPORTER



While all focus is on how the national football team will recover from their frustrating SAFF Championship campaign in this month's Bangabandhu Gold Cup, the Bangladesh U-23 team have been preparing silently, plagued by a plethora of problems, for the eight-team tournament starting from January 8.

The game's governing body has decided to field the Bangladesh Olympic team along with the senior side in a bid to prepare them for next month's South Asian (SA) Games, but Spanish coach Gonzalo Sanchez Moreno is seemingly struggling to form a competitive squad as he faces a dearth of quality defenders.

The former Barcelona youth team player initially picked 25 players from 42 players through a three-day trial and yesterday he called six senior players, including four defenders, to make up the deficiency he has in the backline after releasing five players from the initial 25-member squad.

Six players -- defenders Rezaul Karim, Mohammad Linkon, Arup Kumar Baddya and Kesto Kumar and goalkeepers Ziaur Rahman and Sultan Ahmed -- joined the Bangladesh U-23 squad, which consists of players who have experience in the senior side like Imon Babu, Shahedul Alam, Atiqur Rahman Fahad, Masuk Mia Jonny, Rubel Mia, Yousuf Sifat, Abdul Malek, Toklish Ahmed and Aminur Rahman Sajub.

It is believed that the Bangladesh U-23 team can be an even stronger team once seven players -- defenders Yeasin Khan, Tapu Barman, Raihan Hasan, midfielders Hemanta Biswas, Sohel Rana and Jewel Rana, who are now the essential part of the senior teams -- join the squad after the completion of the Bangabandhu Gold Cup.

Today, Moreno will meet the team management to discuss how many seniors players will be included in the side for the Bangabandhu Gold Cup.

Despite a 1-0 win over Bangladesh Army in Thursday's warm-up match, Moreno felt that he needed a good right wing back in his squad to produce good results in the Bangabandhu Gold Cup, as well as a good back-up for the existing goalkeepers, said assistant coach Syed Golam Jilani, quoting Moreno. He also said that the head coach is seeking a centre-back like Reza.

Jilani informed that they had only three defenders -- Shakil Ahmed, Nahidul Islam and U-19 player Manik -- before four senior defenders were called up to strengthen the backline.

"We are aiming to go match by match in the Bangabandhu Gold Cup as we are expecting to put up a good show as a team," said Jilani. "The players are also motivated to give their best because they know that good performances can open the doors to the national team for them."

The Bangladesh U-23 team will start their campaign by taking on Bahrain in a Group B encounter on January 10. Maldives and Cambodia are the other teams in their group.

Net bowler being suspected in ongoing probe on a bookie approach made on Sri Lanka's Kusal Janith Perera and Rangana Herath, sports minister Dayasiri Jayasekera said on Friday.

AGENCIES, Colombo

"We will make a complaint at the FCID (Financial Crime Investigation Division) against him," Jayasekera told reporters, adding that the bookies are believed to have approached the two players through the 'net bowler'.

Sri Lanka have started a probe following a complaint lodged by both Perera and Herath, that they were approached by bookies to underperform during the Sri Lanka-West Indies Test match played in Galle in October.

Kiwis look to induct spinners

AFP, Nelson

New Zealand were paying close attention to the Saxton Oval wicket on New Year's Day amid suggestions it could offer spin for Saturday's crucial fourth one-dayer against Sri Lanka.

Another win to Sri Lanka would level the series at two apiece and turn the fifth and final game into the decider.

A key piece of intelligence New Zealand took from the third match at Nelson's Saxton Oval on Thursday was a sign the pitch is starting to take turn.

They were thoroughly outplayed in that match with Sri Lanka bettering their 276-run total for the loss of only two wickets against New Zealand's predominantly pace attack.

The New Zealand bowling line-up is already destined for a shake-up with Tim Southee ruled out with an injured left foot, earning a recall for Matt Henry who took four wickets in each of the first two matches.

But consideration is also being given to dropping one of the quick bowlers in favour of pairing the leg-break option of Ish Sodhi with the left-arm spin of Mitchell Santner.

Santner said the pitch flattened out during the day with a suggestion of spin.

"It's starting to turn a little bit so the spinners might get more of a crack," he said, but added: "It's still going to be a good batting surface so pushing that 300 mark could be a competitive score."

Kane Williamson, standing in as captain while Brendon McCullum recovers from a sore back, confirmed the two-spinner option was under discussion.

IN A NUTSHELL

'Let players switch nationalities'

The head of Australia's players' union has made a radical proposal to introduce a transfer system to "better utilise unemployed Test-quality players", suggesting stars such as England batsman Kevin Pietersen could be retained on the international scene by playing for countries such as Zimbabwe.

The recommendation is contained among suggestions to enhance the international game in the Australian Cricketers' Association's annual report. ACA president Greg Dyer's argues that the ICC should "create a controlled and targeted international player transfer system, irrespective of passport qualification, aimed at levelling the strength of all Test countries and better utilising otherwise unemployed players."

Cricket Club flooded

A rescue fund has been set up for Corbridge Cricket Club in Northumberland which is facing a 100,000 pound repair bill after being flooded during Storm Desmond earlier this month.

Its pitch flooded and water got into its clubhouse, changing rooms and a storage unit. This was the second time the club has been flooded since 2005.



Compiled by Star Sport Desk

Kohli gets biggest paycheck

CRICINFO, New Delhi

Virat Kohli is the highest-paid cricketer in the IPL, according to salary figures released by the league on Friday.

While Kohli will cost his franchise Royal Challengers Bangalore approximately USD 1.89 million from their salary purse, they will actually pay him USD 2.26 million. MS Dhoni, long believed to be the most expensive IPL cricketer, will be paid USD 1.89 million, which is equal to his purse deduction, by Pune, who secured him in a draft of players who were part of the suspended Chennai Super Kings and Rajasthan Royals franchises.

Apart from Royal Challengers, who are paying Kohli and Chris Gayle more than the purse deduction, Mumbai Indians are paying Harbhajan Singh and Lasith Malinga more than the purse deduction they result in.

However, players like Rohit Sharma, Gautam Gambhir and David Miller are among those getting paid less than the purse deduction they are responsible for.