

SPORTS

Experimental side named

Fresh faces inducted; Nasir cut

SPORTS REPORTER

The national selectors picked two fresh faces in pacer Abu Haider and wicketkeeper batsman Qazi Nurul Hasan for the first two T20I matches of the four-match series against Zimbabwe as look for a good combination in the shortest version of the game. The Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) yesterday confirmed that Zimbabwe will play four T20I matches against the Tigers in Khulna.

Shuvagata Hom was the other uncapped player in the 14-member squad, which excluded Nasir Hossain, Liton Das, Jubair Hossain, Anamul Haque and Kamrul Islam Rabbi, who were part of the previous T20 squad. Meanwhile, Shakib Al Hasan and Soumya Sarker returned to the fold after missing the T20I series against Zimbabwe in November last year.

The most notable omission from the team was all-rounder Nasir Hossain.

"We all know what Nasir is capable of so we wanted to bring some new players in the team in order to find a good T20 combination. We are now in a building process in this format so we wanted to do some experiments and we will continue to do so for the last two games," chief selector Faruque Ahmed explained as the reason behind Nasir's omission.

"The basic idea was to try players as much as possible since we are going to play the Asia Cup and ICC World Twenty20. During the last tournament [BPL] we found some new players and we wanted to see how they would respond at the next level. We are not good in this format so our main focus is to find a proper combination," he continued.

When asked about whether pacer Rabbi deserved more chances as a newcomer in the national fold, Faruque said: "Al-Amin Hossain made a good comeback in the BPL and that's why we wanted to see how he would respond in international cricket again, while Rony (Abu Haider) impressed us most during the BPL. He had variation in his bowling and we wanted to see whether he could continue his variation in the international level," he said.

The former national skipper also made it clear that they considered the Zimbabwe series as a preparation for the upcoming T20 events.

The BCB's cricket operations committee had earlier proposed including a Test match in this tour and the national selectors were also in favour of a Test match but finally four T20I matches were settled upon.

"Actually time was a big factor otherwise I'm sure the authority would consider a Test match. Now we have to make sure that we take the opportunity to tune-up as a good T20 team ahead of two big events," he concluded.

ITINERARY

January 15: 1st T20I at Khulna
January 17: 2nd T20I at Khulna
January 20: 3rd T20I at Khulna
January 22: 4th T20I at Khulna

SQUAD

Masrafe Bin Mortaza (captain), Shakib Al Hasan (vice-captain), Tamim Iqbal, Imrul Kayes, Soumya Sarker, Shabbir Rahaman, Mushfiqur Rahim, Mahmudullah Riyad, Arifat Sunny, Qazi Nurul Hasan, Shuvagata Hom, Mustafizur Rahman, Abu Haider and Al-Amin Hossain.



NEW BOYS IN THE HOOD: Uncapped cricketers Abu Haider (L) and Nurul Hasan will hope they can impress selectors during the four-match T20I series against Zimbabwe in a bid to seal their positions in the national team ahead of the ICC World Twenty20

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

Australia snub 'unfortunate'

SPORTS REPORTER

Former Australian national cricketer Stuart Law, who is currently in town as Bangladesh Under-19s technical advisor, has termed Cricket Australia's decision to not send its team to Bangladesh to take part in the Under-19 World Cup as unfortunate.

Speaking to reporters at the Bangladesh Cricket Board's (BCB) National Cricket Academy he said: "It's unfortunate. The young Australian team has missed a chance of playing at the world stage."

Furthermore, Law also believed that the security threat in Bangladesh had 'died down' in the last few months.

The Australian returned to Bangladesh on Monday to join the under-19 team after a short gap. He had initially worked with the team in August last year. Speaking to reporters, Law admitted that security concern was one of the

issues that compelled him to delay his return here.

"I will stay with the team until the end of the World Cup. I couldn't come earlier because of personal reasons. There was also the threat of security, but along with

that I had a few personal issues which I had to work on. I had an illness and I had to make sure that I was a hundred per cent fit," said Law.

When asked about his opinion with regards to the security sce-

nario in the country, the Australian said: "You talk about it all around the world. You never know, the threat could pop up anywhere, in any country. But when you get information from an intelligence organisation, you probably should sit down and go through the process."

"But the threat seems to have died down somewhat. It's still there, but it's going to be there throughout the world, no matter where you go, New York or London; Dhaka's no different really. Anything could happen anywhere."

"I feel really comfortable in Bangladesh and I love coming here. People are always smiling, happy and gracious when they greet you. They are not the problem. There are just other members of the society you are not really sure about," he added.

"There's always that [threat] in the back of your mind, but not in the forefront. I am here to watch our boys play cricket, hopefully we will have some

success along the way."

Law also believed that Australia would tour Bangladesh soon.

"It's in the tour programme and I think Australia will honour that. At that time they chose not to come and it's their decision."

"But I think they should still come and play Bangladesh in Bangladesh... so whether that's in one month, six month or 12 months time as long as they fulfil that... as per the ICC you have to honour each series, so Australia will have to come here at some stage," said Law.

Law's first assignment upon his return will be the Bangladesh Under-19's three-match series against the West Indies which begins later this month. While the Australian did admit that the junior Tigers haven't been as consistent recently, he reckons they can come back on track.

"Let's not put pressure on these young men, since cricket has pressure as it is. I am looking forward to the West Indies series," said Law.



Bangladesh U-19s technical advisor Stuart Law speaks to the media.

PHOTO: STAR

Tamim faces penalties

SPORTS REPORTER

Opener Tamim Iqbal is going to face financial penalties as the disciplinary committee of Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) found both the left-hander and Sylhet Superstars owner guilty in regards to the altercation between them during the third edition of the Bangladesh Premier League (BPL).

"After talking with everybody we found that both parties were guilty on that day. Even if someone initiated it, Tamim should have kept his patience as a national player and BPL icon player. He was on the field and these incidents have no place there," said BCB director and disciplinary committee chairman Sheikh Sohel yesterday while talking to reporters at Mirpur.

Sohel also said that Sylhet owner was the main wrongdoer as he illegally entered the field and started the incident and for that he will incur maximum penalties.

There was plenty of drama prior to the start of the BPL's day fixture on November 22 and following the end of game Tamim, Chittagong Vikings skipper, launched a scathing attack against a 'franchisee official' and said that one can't treat cricketers like beggars.

Amla 201 makes it even

REUTERS, Cape Town

England's openers came through the last half an hour unscathed after South Africa declared on 627 for seven and the second Test was heading for a draw on Tuesday.

South Africa captain Hashim Amla made a double century and Temba Bavuma struck his maiden Test hundred on the fourth day to take South Africa to within just two runs of England's mammoth first-innings total.

England reached the close on 16 for no wicket with an 18-run lead after Alastair Cook and Alex Hales negotiated six overs as South Africa sought to turn the pressure back on the tourists after dragging themselves back into the match.

Amla scored 201 and the Bavuma 102 not out as South England to searing heat

It made the prospect of a result highly unlikely with just one day to play, but the hosts' morale should be lifted after a 241-run loss in the first test in Durban and a series of mediocre results in 2015.

Amla, whose captaincy had been criticised, was the cornerstone of the fightback, spending almost 12 hours at the crease and facing 477 balls. He was dropped twice on Monday but showed impressive concentration.

South Africa were still under pressure at the beginning of the fourth day at 353 for three but it was only after the third new ball was taken after lunch that England made a breakthrough when Stuart Broad bowled Amla for 201.

SCORES IN BRIEF

ENGLAND: First innings 629 for 6 decl
SOUTH AFRICA: First innings 627 for 7 decl (Elgar 44, Amla 201, De Villiers 88, Du Plessis 86, Bavuma 102 not out, Morris 69; Broad 2-94, Finn 2-132)
ENGLAND: Second innings 16 for no loss.



South Africa skipper Hashim Amla scored a fluent 201 -- smashing 27 fours -- against England on the fourth day of the second Test in Cape Town yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

Mamunul retained as captain

SPORTS REPORTER

The Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) has retained Mamunul Islam as the captain of the national team for the Bangabandhu Gold Cup which begins on Friday.

After the SAFF Suzuki Cup debacle, Mamunul had announced his intention of giving up captaincy but the national teams' committee convinced Mamunul to continue his role in the Bangabandhu Gold Cup.

"The national teams' committee and team management talked to Mamunul to continue him as captain and Mamunul agreed," said BFF general secretary Abu Nayeem Shohag.

NZ take series

AFP, Mount Maunganui

New Zealand beat Sri Lanka by 36 runs in the final one-day international at Mount Maunganui to wrap up the series 3-1 on Tuesday.

New Zealand made 294-5 with Martin Guptill making 102 and both Kane Williamson and Ross Taylor out for 61.

In reply, Sri Lanka were all out for 258 at the start of the 48th over. Angelo Mathews made 95, while New Zealand's Matt Henry took five for 40.

Sri Lanka arrive today

SPORTS REPORTER



Sri Lanka will be the first team to arrive here today to take part in the Bangabandhu Gold Cup, which gets underway at the Shamsul Huda Stadium in Jessore from Friday.

After the arrival in the capital at noon, the SAFF Suzuki Cup semifinalists will fly out to Jessore and they will take on the Bangladesh national team in the opening match.

All eight participating teams will have one match each in Jessore -- their respective opening matches -- before the Dhaka-leg gets underway from January 12.

Malaysia and Nepal will arrive here on Thursday, the day before Bahrain will come. Maldives and Cambodia are scheduled to arrive on Saturday.

Meanwhile, it was previously said that except Malaysia and Bahrain, the four other foreign teams would bring their senior national outfit, but media reports suggest that Nepal and Maldives are sending their

under-23 teams in a bid to prepare for next month's South Asian (SA) Games.

Bangladesh Football Federation general secretary Abu Nayeem Shohag was not aware of the media reports, and on the contrary, claimed that both Nepal and Maldives had confirmed that their senior teams would be sent.

Shohag, however, admitted that Bahrain and Malaysia would not send their first teams. It has been learnt that Malaysia would send a mixed team comprising players of Super League outfit FELDA United FC.

The game's governing body is still waiting to get the Tier-A tournament approval from FIFA and AFC for the fourth edition of Bangabandhu Gold Cup. In the last edition, only the match between Bangladesh and Sri Lanka got the Tier-A status.

"We asked FIFA and AFC to give Tier-A approval, but we are yet to get a response," said Shohag, adding that they would only know as to how many matches would get Tier-A status after getting the approval from FIFA and AFC.

Gayle let off easy

AFP, Sydney



The Melbourne Renegades fined star opener Chris Gayle US\$7,000 on Tuesday after an attempt to flirt with a female presenter on live TV which cricket authorities condemned as "completely out of line".

Ten Network reporter Mel McLaughlin found herself being asked out for a drink during an interview with the burly West Indian late Monday.

Live on air, Gayle -- who later insisted he was just joking -- said he was happy to be interviewed by McLaughlin "just to see your eyes for the first time".

"Nice, so hopefully we can win this game and we can have a drink after," he said.

"Don't blush baby," the Jamaican added, prompting the unimpressed McLaughlin to shake her head and reply, "I'm not blushing."

"Sorry," added Gayle, breaking into a big laugh.

Crickets Australia and Big Bash League officials did not see the funny side of what Gayle later said was meant as a joke.

Crickets Australia chief James Sutherland offered support for McLaughlin, saying that no one should have to face such comments which were "completely out of line" and "inappropriate for the workplace".

He said Gayle was not in a "nightclub" and his behaviour was "not cool".