

SPORT

Nurul, Haider raring to go

SPORTS REPORTER

Nurul Hasan and Abu Haider have been sweating it out along with the rest of the team at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur for the last few days; however, there seemed to be an extra sense of determination amongst them yesterday.

After all, it was the first time that they were attending the camp as official members of the Bangladesh national cricket team and from a player's perspective, there are few things in life that could be more exciting.

It was a sentiment that was quite visible when the duo spoke to the media yesterday. The one thing that was certain after the interactions was that both Haider and Nurul weren't merely satisfied having broken through to the 14-member squad; they are dreaming big.

"It feels really good to be in the national team for the first time. But now that I am here, I have to remain focused for the upcoming tournaments and perform well," said Nurul.

His junior colleague, as expected of a 19-year-old, seemed a bit more excited.

"Ever since I was a kid, I dreamt of playing for the national team. I got the news from someone from the media and it felt really good. After I went home, everyone started calling and congratulating me. It was really good," said Haider.

The pacer has a clear picture about where he wants to see himself in the coming months.

"Those who play well here will proba-

bly get a chance to play in the Asia Cup and the T20 World Cup and I am aware of that.

"I performed quite well in the BPL and I would like to hold on to that form and do the same for my country. If I get a chance to play, I will try to make sure that I make a place for myself in the team," said Haider.

The four-match T20I series against Zimbabwe will be Bangladesh's last opportunity to experiment with their playing eleven and that's the reason why the selectors have decided to try out some of the younger players. This strategy led to the axing of Nasir Hossain as well.

While the Zimbabweans may not be the toughest of opponents to warm up for the mega events, they did beat Bangladesh in the last T20I at home. And that's a result all the national players will remember.

Like Hider, Nurul sees this series as an opportunity for him.

"The series against Zimbabwe is quite important because we have a chance of improving our T20 rankings. My target will remain the same; perform as well as I can if given the opportunity," said Nurul.

"Even if I score one run and help my team win, that in itself will be a big achievement according to me," he added.

In the same vein, Haider emphasised the importance of sticking to his strengths.

"I can bowl in one area consistently and that is my strength. My pace isn't that great, but I am not concerned about that. After all, pace isn't the only strength for a bowler in T20 cricket," said Haider.



ALL SMILES: Head coach Chandika Hathurusingha (L), who joined the Tigers in the national camp yesterday upon returning to the country, shares a light moment with skipper Mashrafe Bin Mortaza.

PHOTO: STAR

Mash emboldens U-19s

SPORTS REPORTER



ICC UNDER-19 CRICKET WORLD CUP BANGLADESH 2016

"When a person like Mashrafe Bhai speaks to you, your self-belief automatically increases and that's what happened yesterday." This was the way Bangladesh Under-19 captain Mehedi Hassan Miraz highlighted his team's meeting with inspirational Bangladesh skipper Mashrafe Bin Moratza, who advised the young Tigers to enjoy their games during the ICC Under-19 World Cup, which is to be held in Bangladesh from January 22.

This time around, expectations from the Bangladesh team are greater than ever before. The notion is that as

hosts Bangladesh have a good chance to rewrite history in the event, where their best performance came in 2006 when they finished fifth.

Miraz, who is going to lead the team for the second time in the mega event, also sparked the expectation but yesterday Mashrafe gave them different views ahead of the tournament.

"It was a good session for us. We got a lot of inspiration from his speeches. What he repeatedly told us was that we must keep away from taking pressure; rather it would be wise for us to enjoy the tournament. And he said that it's not question of pressure but an opportunity for us and representing their country itself is a big inspiration for

any athlete," added Miraz.

"He advised us to prepare ourselves for international cricket and if we can do something in the coming World Cup then it will help us lot, but he also mentioned that the world will not end if we fail to fulfil those expectation; this is something which was additional inspiration from the great man. If I am not mistaken, he is an idol for every upcoming cricketer and Mashrafe bhai's cricket career itself is a great inspiration for us," he concluded.

Under the leadership of Mashrafe Bangladesh had achieved many successes in the last year and the Tigers skipper gave the reasons behind his team's success to his juniors by saying: "The success will come if you can play as a family."

Dhanawade rewarded

AGENCIES, New Delhi

Pranav Dhanawade, who rewrote record books with a brilliant unbeaten 1009, was felicitated by Mumbai Cricket Association (MCA) vice-president Dilip Vengsarkar on Wednesday.

Dhanawade on Tuesday became the first cricketer to score more than 1000 runs in an innings.

The 15-year-old Dhanawade has been offered 10,000 rupees per month scholarship for five years by the MCA, commencing from January 2016 to December 2021.

U-19 WORLD CUP Ireland accept ICC invitation

THE TIMES OF INDIA

Ireland on Wednesday accepted the International Cricket Council's (ICC) invitation to replace Australia in the 2016 Under-19 World Cup in Bangladesh, starting on January 27.

"Firstly, we are grateful to ICC for extending the invitation to us to participate in the tournament. Given the circumstances of the invitation, however, it was important that we used the brief time we had to investigate the safety and security situation in Bangladesh. While we are fully aware of the heightened security risk in the country, all we can do is rely upon expert advice, which tells us that the tournament security plan appears very comprehensive an estimation supported by the independent assessments we have seen," Cricket Ireland CEO Warren Deutrom said in an official release.

Ireland will slot into Group D and kick-start their campaign against India in Mirpur on January 28.

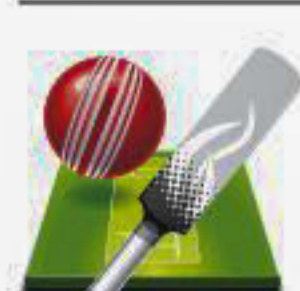


BCB tournament committee chairman Akram Khan (C) speaks to the media regarding the Bangladesh Cricket League.

PHOTO: STAR

BCL begins on January 12

SPORTS REPORTER



The Bangladesh Cricket League (BCL) is all set to begin from January 12. The four-day cricket competition is considered to be a more competitive version of the National Cricket League (NCL), with the best 80 players of the NCL getting an opportunity to perform.

Four franchises, based on four zones, will be taking part in the competition. The teams are yet to be revealed.

The league will follow a double round system and there will be a gap of three days after each match. As a result, the competition is going to last a lot longer than its previous editions.

The winning team will receive Tk 25 lakh, whereas the runners up will get Tk 15 lakh. The match fee has been set at Tk 40,000 and the player of the match will receive Tk 25,000. The player of the tournament will receive Tk one lakh.

Storm brews around Gayle

AGENCIES, Sydney

The storm surrounding star cricketer Chris Gayle over an attempt to flirt with an Australian presenter intensified Wednesday as new allegations about his behaviour towards women emerged.

More female journalists aired complaints against the West Indian after he was fined USD 7,000 on Tuesday for his approach to reporter Mel McLaughlin.

Gayle apologised and tried to brush off the exchange with McLaughlin as a harmless joke. However, he may be facing expulsion from Australia's Big Bash League if some of the other claims are substantiated. But his team, Melbourne Renegades say he will still play.

Fox Sports reporter Neroli Meadows branded the Jamaican a "creep".

"He does this constantly," she told the Australian Broadcasting Corporation. "He's a creep, he has creepy behaviour."

Nine News reporter Yvonne Sampson also claimed that Gayle had asked her out on a date after

Shaky England hold on for draw

AFP, Cape Town



England were given a scare before the second Test against South Africa ended in a draw on the fifth and final day at Newlands on Wednesday.

On what had been expected to be a low-key day after high scoring in the first innings, England lost six second innings wickets by mid-afternoon, when they held a precarious lead of 118.

Jonny Bairstow and Moeen Ali negotiated the rest of the afternoon and England were on 159 for six when play was called off for bad light 15 minutes after tea and abandoned 45 minutes later.

England will take a one-lead into the third Test of the four-match series, starting in Johannesburg on January 14 but South Africa will take heart from a strong fightback with both bat and ball after taking a battering in England's first innings.

Inspired by Ben Stokes' 258, England made 629 for six declared but South Africa batted solidly to reply with 627 declared, led by captain Hashim Amla's 201.

The flurry of wickets on Wednesday was in complete contrast to the first four days when both teams scored more than 600 runs in their first innings and 1272 runs were scored for the loss of only 13 wickets.

After four days of unrelenting sunshine,

the sky was partly overcast on Wednesday.

The fast bowlers, led by Morne Morkel, gained some movement, while off-spinner Dane Piedt obtained some turn from a pitch which had previously offered no assistance to the bowlers.

Piedt was the most successful bowler, taking three for 38.

Alastair Cook and Alex Hales fell within the first three overs of the day, both without adding to their overnight scores of eight and five respectively, while Joe Root was bowled just before the mid-morning drinks break. Nick Compton fell shortly before lunch.

Cook, who has scored only 42 runs in four innings during the series, was caught down the leg side by wicketkeeper Quinton de Kock off Kagiso Rabada and Hales fell to an outstanding catch by Chris Morris at third slip, diving low to his right, off Morne Morkel.

Root made 29 off 29 balls before he was bowled by Morris' first ball of the innings, a full delivery which swung late to take out his off stump.

SCORES IN BRIEF

ENGLAND: First innings 629 for 6 decl.

SOUTH AFRICA: First innings 627 for 7 decl.

ENGLAND: Second innings 159 for 6 (Root 29, Taylor 27, Stokes 26, Bairstow 30 not out; Piedt 3-38)

Result: Match drawn.

Player-of-the-match: Ben Stokes.

Hashim Amla steps down

AFP, Cape Town

Hashim Amla resigned as South Africa captain at the end of the second Test against England at Newlands on Wednesday.

AB de Villiers will lead the team in the remaining two Tests of the series.

"This decision is not an easy one but the more I think about it the more I believe I can be of greater value to the Proteas as a fully-focused batsman and senior player at this time of rebuilding our team," said Amla.

According to a Cricket South Africa statement, Amla decided to step down before the second Test. He told his teammates about his decision at the end of the match.

"I felt someone else could do a better job," he told journalists, adding that he had been thinking about resigning for several weeks.

Amla captained South Africa in 14 Tests, winning four, losing four and drawing six.

The second Test ended in a draw, leaving England 1-0 up in the four-match series with the next Test to start in Johannesburg on January 14.

শিখর ছোঁয়ার অপেক্ষায়

সেরা ৩২ স্পেলার

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