



LOOKING TO ANOTHER MEMORABLE YEAR: Bangladesh skipper Mashrafe Bin Mortaza scaled many heights in 2015, but the numerous T20 engagements in 2016 will provide the skipper with a fresh challenge, starting against Zimbabwe in Khulna today.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

Mission 2016 starts today

SPORTS REPORTER



Seldom has there been such confusion regarding the playing eleven for Bangladesh in the last one-and-a-half years as there are now and there are many reasons for that.

For one, they don't really play too many matches in the shortest format of the game and secondly they have had a brilliant 2015. However, when they take on Zimbabwe at the Sheikh Abu Nasir Stadium in Khulna today for the opening T20, they will have dual objectives.

Apart from the win, they will want to see if any of the uncapped players in the squad fit into their plans. Abu Haider, Shuvagata Hom and Nurul Hasan are the men in question.

Having put up a brilliant show in the Bangladesh Premier League, Haider is likely to get a place in the playing eleven as a third pacer. He will have to battle for that spot against Al-Amin Hossain, who had a good time in the BPL as well.

Shuvagata, on the other hand, will have to fight against Arafat Sunny. Sunny, no doubt, has a good record for the Tigers in this format. However, whether Bangladesh will want two slow left-armers in the team remains a question. If not, Shuvagata could find himself a spot.

With Bangladesh's batting being a concern in this format of the game, the team management tends to go in with eight batsmen including Shakib Al Hasan. And if that's the ploy,



'No room for complacency'

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh captain Mashrafe Bin Mortaza has said that he wants the Tigers to utilise the Zimbabwe series in order to move away from the perennial pains of T20 cricket.

With the Asia Cup T20 and the ICC World Twenty20 knocking at the door, the Bangladesh skipper not only wants to win the series but also wants Bangladesh to finalise their T20 squad.

"We barely play two or three T20 matches in a year. We don't really get a chance to think about our performance levels. We lost against Zimbabwe in the last T20, so there's really no room to be complacent," said Mashrafe during the pre-match press conference.

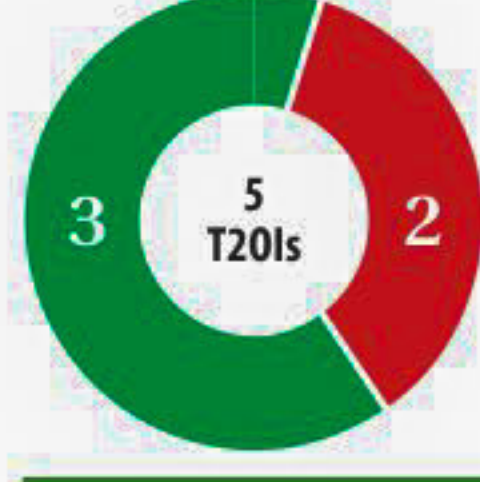
"This is the only opportunity for us to try

and test things out because we have the Asia Cup and the World Cup after this. Playing the qualifiers in the World Cup is going to be crucial and this is the best possible opportunity for us to step out of the troubles that we have been having in this format," he added.

The series was initially supposed to include two Tests. However, both the boards mutually agreed to play four T20s in order to get as much practice as possible for the World Cup. While Mashrafe admitted that he was disappointed to see the Tests being postponed, he believes that the circumstances compelled the boards to take the decision.

"I don't think there can be any alternative to Test matches. T20 cricket is given importance by other teams as well, not just Bangladesh. But their schedules are fixed three years in advance. That is a very important thing, considering that we don't

■ BANGLADESH vs ZIMBABWE ■



LAST MEETING
15th November
2015 at Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium, Dhaka
Zimbabwe won by 3 wickets.

know who we will play in the next six months.

"If you want the overall development of your cricket you need to play Test cricket, there is no alternative. But at the moment, we have two big tournaments up ahead and in a sense, we are being forced to play T20 cricket," said Mashrafe.

"We don't have many performances that we can look up to in this format. In fact we

are behind Afghanistan as well. We have to keep these issues in mind when play Zimbabwe," he added.

Not many of Bangladesh's national players managed to perform during the Bangladesh Premier League. The batters especially had a rough time throughout the competition. Mashrafe though believes that the players are a lot more confident following the practice sessions.

"I think they are hitting the ball a lot better than before and are more confident. The wickets in the BPL weren't good for batting. I don't think such wickets are present in any other parts of the world, especially at this moment.

"In India scores of 170 and 180 occur regularly. One of our targets will be to ensure that we understand what a good score is on a particular wicket. I hope we can get to know that after batting one over,"

SA 267 for 7 on Day One

AFP, Johannesburg

Steven Finn led a persistent England bowling attack as South Africa failed to capitalise on a promising start on the first day of the third Test at the Wanderers Stadium on Thursday.

South Africa were 267 for seven at the close, a disappointing return after reaching 117 for one at the mid-afternoon drinks break.

Having negotiated what could reasonably have been expected to be the trickiest part of the day - after winning the toss and batting in cloudy conditions on a pitch with pace and bounce - wickets fell at regular intervals.

South Africa slipped to 225 for seven before Chris Morris and Kagiso Rabada took them to the close with an unbeaten partnership of 42.

Eight of the nine batsmen in action reached 20, with Faf du Plessis scoring 16, but Dean Elgar's 46 was the highest score.

Elgar's dismissal, pushing at an off-spinner from Moeen Ali to be caught behind by Jonny Bairstow, started a slide. It ended a second wicket partnership of 73 with Hashim Amla, who fell to a superb delivery from Finn shortly afterwards for 40.

The tall Finn was hostile throughout the day, taking the wickets of Amla and Faf du Plessis for a return of two for 50.

SCORE IN BRIEF
SOUTH AFRICA: First innings 267 for 7 (Elgar 46, Amla 40, De Villiers 36, Bavuma 23, Vilas 26, Morris 26 not out; Finn 2-50, Stokes 2-53)

Elton banking on experience

SPORTS REPORTER



WALTON T20 CRICKET SERIES
14-15 January 2016
Presented by MARCEL

Zimbabwe captain Elton Chigumbura exuded confidence yesterday about bouncing back from the dismal performance against Afghanistan when they kick off their four-match T20I series against Bangladesh at the Sheikh Abu Naser Stadium in Khulna today.

The visitors came here after losses in both the ODI and T20I series to Afghanistan in the UAE but Chigumbura is banking on the return of experienced players like Vusi Sibanda, Sean Williams and Brian Vitori, though he made it clear that

his side will experiment ahead of the ICC World Twenty20.

"We had a bad series in UAE. We had couple of new guys in the team. This is a big series for us to make sure we bounce back. We just have to make sure we take it one game at a time and play good cricket, especially with the bat. We were disappointing with our batting in the last series," said Chigumbura while talking at a pre-match briefing yesterday.

"It's big. They are experienced, they've played here before. It's good to have their contribution on this tour. Hamilton is showing good signs since coming back. The other guys like Vitori will be looking to try to raise their game. Sibanda is also

there. They are hungry to stay in the team. It is a good combination of guys with different motivations. It will be good for the team," he reflected on the return of some experienced players.

When asked whether experimenting would be a focus for his side in the series, he said: "In the next four games you won't be shocked to see different guys batting in different batting positions."

He also said that his players' experience of playing in the Bangladesh domestic circuit is an advantage for his side but added: "At the end of the day, we just have to make sure that the guys who have been here execute their skills well."

Two more 100s in BCL

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Liton Das and Alok Kapali converted their overnight scores into hundreds but their efforts were in vain as East Zone could not avoid conceding a first innings deficit against Central Zone on the third day of the Bangladesh Cricket League's (BCL) first round match at the Shahid Chandu Stadium in Bogra yesterday.

Liton scored 128 runs off 251 balls, smashing 15 fours and two sixes, while Kapali's exact hundred came from 225 deliveries with the help of six fours and one six. However, Shaykat Ali's four-wicket haul secured a 39-run first innings lead for Central Zone, who stretched their lead to 103 runs with seven wickets in hand after finishing the day on 64 for 3.

At the Shahid Kamruzzaman Stadium in Rajshahi, left-arm spinner Sunzamul Islam claimed six wickets as North Zone tightened their grip on South Zone, finishing the day with a 203-run lead and six wickets in hand.

North Zone managed 48-run first innings lead thanks to Sunzamul's 6 for 79. Ariful Haque first denied Farhad Reza from a century and then Sunzamul picked



KAPALI ... 100

LITON ... 128

up the other overnight batsman, Taibur Rahman, as South Zone were bundled out for 344 in reply to 392.

North Zone rode on Junaed Siddiqui's half-century and first innings centurion Farhad Hossain's 48 to make 156 for four in their second innings.

SCORES IN BRIEF

CENTRAL ZONE V EAST ZONE
CENTRAL ZONE: 394 and 64-3 in 22 overs (Shamsur 15, Rony 15, Marshall 25; Hasan 1-24, Nazmul 2-2)
EAST ZONE: 355 all out in 117.4 overs (Mominul 33, Liton 128, Kapali 100; Shahidul 3-62, Sharifullah 2-52, Mosharraf 1-82, Shaykat 4-39)
NORTH ZONE V SOUTH ZONE
NORTH ZONE: 392 and 156-4 in 56 overs (Myshukur 21, Junaed 59, Farhad 48, Naeem 21 not out; Razzak 2-46)
SOUTH ZONE: 344 all out in 103.1 overs (Nafees 25, Fazle 70, Tushar 47, Taibur 76, Farhad 86, Gazi 21; Sunzamul 6-79)

India want to bounce back

PTI, Brisbane

Stung by the defeat in the series opener despite putting up a big score, India will have to plug their bowling loopholes when they take on Australia in the second one-dayer in Brisbane on Friday, fully aware that any slip-up will make their task of bouncing back difficult.

Chasing an imposing 310, Australia romped home with ease by registering a comfortable five-wicket win to take a 1-0 lead in the five-match series at Perth on Tuesday.

And at the Gabba on Friday, the visitors would be hoping to make life difficult for Australia but for that to happen Mahendra Singh Dhoni would be expecting a much-improved show from his bowlers.



Bangladesh Under-19 batsman Pinak Ghosh smashed 109 runs off 135 balls yesterday, helping his side to a win over their West Indian counterparts in the second match at the Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium in Chittagong.

PHOTO: ANURUP KANTI DAS

BD U-19s romp to series win

SPORTS REPORTER



A clinical bowling display after Pinak Ghosh's hundred propelled Bangladesh Under-19s as they clinched the series against their West Indian counterparts in style with one match in hand. The hosts posted a massive 171-run victory in the second match at the Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium in Chittagong yesterday.

The home team showed no contentment after winning the first match quite comfortably at Mirpur by eight wickets as they demolished their opponents. Bangladesh Under-19s demonstrated their strong batting ability after deciding to bat first, before left-arm paceman Mehedi Hasan Rana initiated an early collapse for West Indies. Spinner Saleh Ahmed Shawon tore down the West Indies middle order to wrap up their innings for only 128 runs.

Pinak hit form at the right time after making 150 runs against South Africa Under-19s in Durban in July last year.

During his 135 ball 109-run innings, Pinak smashed nine boundaries before being victim of a run out. He contributed 179 runs along Nazmul Hossain Shanto, who made 79 off 98 balls with five fours and a six, in the third-wicket stand. Captain Mehedi Hasan Miraz added an unbeaten 26-ball 54, with seven fours and a six, to set a 300-run target.

Rana and Shawon picked up three wickets each as West Indies lost wickets at regular interval.

Bangladesh Under-19s will play the third and final match, their last competitive match before the ICC Under-19 World Cup, at the same venue tomorrow.

SCORES IN BRIEF

BANGLADESH UNDER-19S: 299 for 5 in 50 overs (Pinak 109, Joyraz 21, Shanto 79, Miraz 54 not out, extras 27; Joseph 2-50, McCoy 1-27, Paul 1-66)
WEST INDIES UNDER-19S: 128 all out in 49.3 overs (Pope 23, Paul 25; Mehedi 3-35, Saifuddin 2-18, Saeed 1-22, Ariful 1-22, Shawon 3-19)
Result: Bangladesh Under-19s won by 171 runs.