



Tamim Iqbal plays an aggressive shot during practice at Sheikh Abu Naser Stadium yesterday. While aggression will be a key component during the Tigers' second T20I against Zimbabwe today, they must also ensure that there is a balance in their approach.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

Batsmen seek balance

Second T20I against Zimbabwe today

NAIMUL KARIM from Khulna



"Watch," a terrified Nasir screamed as a ball smashed onto the side-screen in front of which close to three-dozen journalists were busy observing the national team's training.

Nasir had to make the extra effort of keeping everyone on their toes yesterday as the training session was quite intense.

All four practice nets -- two on each side of the side-screen -- at the Sheikh Abu Naser Stadium in Khulna were occupied with batsmen trying their best to get a feel of the middle of their bats. And in the process, there were a few edges and skiers that everyone had to watch out for.

The above incident perhaps best reflects the kind of intensity with which the Tigers, especially the batsmen, have been training since their arrival in Khulna. And the reason behind that could be the fact that they haven't been doing that well with the bat in this format of the game.

It was something that was evident in their last match against Zimbabwe as well. While they romped home eventually, they required all of the eight batsmen in the side to overcome Zimbabwe's total of 163, which incidentally was the highest ever total they chased down at home and the second highest overall.

The most obvious problem seems to be the batsmen's inability to make the most of their starts.

Admittedly, it is a tricky scenario. One can't just go all out attempting to smack every delivery for a boundary but at the same time, a batsman can't take too much time to get set.

Bangladesh's batsmen are yet to find the right balance. The numbers paint a better portrait. The average runs scored per wicket for Bangladesh is just 18.66. Countries like Zimbabwe, Ireland, Afghanistan and even Scotland have fared better. The highest score in a T20I by a Bangladeshi batsman is 88. Tamim Iqbal posted that three years ago.

The reason behind the bleak picture could be the fact that Bangladesh haven't played too many T20s, either internationally or in the domestic circuit.

Going into the Asia Cup T20 and the ICC World Twenty20, there are a number of things that the team management is trying out, but it's obvious that this is the aspect which should

matter the most to the management; and they seem to be addressing it well in these training sessions.

Bangladesh are likely to field an unchanged side for the second T20I in Khulna today. While winning the match would be their main priority, they would undoubtedly also want to see at least one of their batsmen playing a big knock.

The player closest to achieving that target was Sabbir Rahman, who had hit a valuable 46 in the first T20I. However, he was dismissed long before the game was in hand and the management will hope that they can witness a bigger knock.

Zimbabwe on the other hand will hope they can finish the match better. A record opening partnership gave them the best possible start in the opener, yet they seemed to lack the sense of confidence that was required to finish well.

They had an opportunity to take the game away from the hosts in the last match and they will hope they get one again today.



BANGLADESHI GLOBAL CEMENT

Younis wary of Kiwis

AGENCIES, Auckland

Pakistan's head coach Waqar Younis has cautioned his players to be ready for a strong comeback from New Zealand in the second T20 international on Sunday after the green shirts won the first match in Auckland on Friday.

"It is great to have this win under the belt. Finally to break the losing streak that started against England. But I still say New Zealand at home are a dangerous side and the second match is very important for us," Waqar said from Auckland.

The former Test captain and fast bowler said that New Zealand were capable of bouncing back strongly and his players would have to be prepared for that.

"The second match will be tougher for us," he added.

This Bangladesh is different: Atapattu

SPORTS REPORTER



Marvan Atapattu has a long history with Bangladesh. From the time he was an under-19 cricketer in 1989 to coaching a Bangladesh Premier League side last year, he has come here under various banners.

As a batsman Atapattu enjoyed playing against Bangladesh quite a bit. He had scored a double century against the Tigers in 2001. He also averages a staggering 90.40 in the nine ODI innings that he featured in against Bangladesh.

However his latest visit, which entails him to work for Zimbabwe as a batting consultant, hasn't begun on the best of notes. Speaking to reporters yesterday, the former national Sri Lankan opener admitted that he expects the first assignment to be quite the challenge.

"Every team goes through different phases and I think at the moment Bangladesh is on a very high note. They have won against major countries and they are

playing as a team.

"Most importantly, they believe that they can win games from any situation and I think that's the major change I have seen since I have been touring this country since 1989," said Atapattu.

"It's a challenge to start with. We are playing a very good side who are on top of their game and have played a lot of T20s in the past, not only in the BPL but they also beat other sides internationally," he added.

While Zimbabwe began well against Bangladesh on Friday, they failed to make the best of their start in the last game. Going into the second T20I, Atapattu is confident that the players will be able to learn from their mistakes.

"We were beaten as early as the 19th over. We were in a position to probably add at least 20 more runs to our total but unfortunately it didn't happen because of good bowling and also because we couldn't bat smartly. We will try to rectify that and do better in tomorrow's game," concluded Atapattu.

India look to stay alive

IANS, Melbourne

Having lost two games in a row, India will aim to keep themselves alive in the ongoing five-match One Day International (ODI) series when they face Australia in the third game at the Melbourne Cricket Ground (MCG) here on Sunday.

To be fair to the visitors, their batsmen did reasonably well, posting totals of 309 and 308 respectively in the first two matches after skipper Mahendra Singh Dhoni won the toss and decided to bat on both occasions.

Rohit Sharma has been the star performer, scoring back to back centuries at the top of the batting order. The Mumbai lad scored an unbeaten 171 in the first match before posting 124 in the second.

However, the Indian bowling lacked any sort of fizz as the hosts easily overhauled the targets on both occasions. Rookie pacer Barinder Singh Srani had a promising debut, taking three top order wickets in the series opener. But he seemed out of depth in the second match, conceding 51 runs without a wicket in his nine overs. Off-spinner Ravichandran Ashwin also took a couple of wickets in the first ODI.

But the rest of the Indian bowlers have not been able to make any sort of impression.

BD U-19s complete clean sweep

SPORTS REPORTER



Spinner Sanjit Saha scalped five wickets after Saif Hassan's unbeaten hundred propelled Bangladesh Under-19s as the hosts posted a 16-run victory in the third and final match to inflict a series whitewash on the West Indies Under-19s at the Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium in Chittagong yesterday.

The visitors batted better than in their first two games but it was not enough to stop the home team from maintaining their winning spree in their last series ahead of the ICC Under-19 World Cup.

Bangladesh Under-19s will play their opening World Cup match against South Africa Under-19s at the same venue on January 27.

Bangladesh's top-order batting stumbled after electing to bat first but opener Saif Hassan carried on in one end and got good support from number six batsman

Shafiqul Hayat as the pair added 87 runs in their fifth-wicket stand, helping the home team reach 235 runs for seven wickets at the end of their allotted overs.

Saif hit an unbeaten 107 off 147 balls, smashing eleven fours and three sixes while Shafiqul whacked nine boundaries, scoring 61 off 69 balls.

In reply, Tevin Imlach and Gidron Pope made a flying start, adding 82 runs in 13 overs in their opening stand but Sanjit took away the initiative by taking five wickets for 21 runs in his 10-over spell. West Indies Under-19s were finally bundled out for 219 runs with one ball to spare.

SCORES IN BRIEF

BANGLADESH UNDER-19S: 235 for 7 in 50 overs (Saif 107 not out, Jaker 24, Shafiqul 61; Smith 2-55, Kallicharan 2-30, Pope 2-20)

WEST INDIES UNDER-19S: 219 all out in 49.5 overs (Imlach 38, Pope 57, Carty 42, Coolie 23, John 26; Sanjit 5-21)
Result: Bangladesh Under-19s won by 16 runs.

South Africa Broad-sided

REUTERS, Johannesburg

A venomous spell of fast bowling from Stuart Broad led England to an emphatic seven-wicket win over South Africa in the third test on Saturday to clinch the series.

Broad's brilliant return of 6-17 on a lively wicket skittled the Proteas for 83 in their second innings on the third day.

England reached their modest victory target of 74 with relative ease as

captain Alastair Cook (43) top-scored in guiding them to 77 for three from 22.4 overs under gloomy skies.

The tourists now have an unassailable 2-0 lead in the four-match series, with the final game to be played in Pretoria.

South Africa bowled out England for 323 in the morning session for a slender first-innings deficit of 10 runs, but were no match for the bounce and movement of a rampant Broad as they crumbled to their second lowest test score since returning to international cricket in 1991.

Broad's inspired spell after lunch was

reminiscent of his 8-15 against Australia at Trent Bridge last August as he tore through the South African top order aided by some excellent catching.

After removing openers Dean Elgar (15) and Stiaan van Zyl (11), Broad grabbed the key wicket of captain AB de Villiers (0) when he induced an inside edge to wicketkeeper Jonny Bairstow.

It got worse for the home side when their other kingpin Hashim Amla (five) clipped the ball to James Taylor at short-leg, who showed excellent reactions to take a low catch.

Temba Bavuma became Broad's fifth victim when he tried to evade a rising delivery, but only succeeded in gloving the ball onto his stumps.

Broad's brilliant day was completed when he ended the innings with an excellent catch off his own bowling as he dived forward grab a ball that had come off the boot of batsman Faf du Plessis.

Rabada, 20, had earlier claimed his first five-wicket haul in test cricket when he bagged 5-78 to limit England to 323.

It was a first home series defeat for South Africa against a team other than Australia since England won 2-1 in 2004-05.

SCORES IN BRIEF

SOUTH AFRICA: 313 all out and 83 all out in 33.1 overs (Elgar 15, Rabada 16; Broad 6-17, Stokes 2-24)

ENGLAND: 323 all out and 74 for 3 in 22.4 overs (Cook 43, Hales 18; Elgar 2-10)
Result: England won by seven wickets and lead the four-match series 2-0

Player-of-the-match: Stuart Broad (ENG)



OH MY BROAD: England pacer Stuart Broad tore through South Africa's feared batting line-up, taking six wickets for just 17 runs as South Africa were routed for 83 in their second innings and eventually suffered a seven-wicket defeat on the third day of the third Test yesterday at Johannesburg. PHOTO: REUTERS

'Ten out of ten is my dream'

SPORTS REPORTER



"I still have one big dream left which is to take ten wickets in an innings before my career ends." This was the way veteran left-arm spinner Abdur Razzak expressed his desire while he was talking about his

achievement of becoming the second player to take 400 wickets in first-class cricket after another left-arm spinner Enamul Haque Jr. The 33-year old South Zone skipper achieved the feat by taking an eleven-wicket haul in the first round match of Bangladesh Cricket League (BCL) against North Zone at the Shahid Kamruzzaman Stadium in Rajshahi on Friday.

"I don't know how people will judge it but to me it's a huge achievement. I was not aware of this until my teammate Enamul [Haque] informed me after returning to the

dress room. When I had started my career, 400 wickets were never on my mind. It's a long journey and I believe taking 400 wickets is something to be cherished," said an excited Razzak.

Razzak, a veteran of 12 Tests and 153 ODIs, played his last international match against West Indies in August 2014 and apparently his chances of making a comeback to the national side are very slim and it seems that the experienced campaigner was well aware of reality and that's why he only talked about his one final desire before ending his career.

"I took nine wickets in an innings [9-84 against Chittagong in Bogra in the NCL in November 2012] but it's my long-cherished dream to take ten wickets in an innings; something I never achieved in any level, even with the taped-tennis ball cricket. I know it would not be an easy task to fulfil my dream but I will live with this dream till end of my career," he concluded.



ABDUR RAZZAK