

SPORT



THE DAWN OF T20-16

Fresh faces added to the experiment

Third Bangladesh-Zimbabwe T20I today

NAIMUL KARIM
There might be as many as four Bangladeshi players making their T20I debuts when the Tigers play Zimbabwe in the third T20I in Khulna today. The most obvious changes in the eleven are likely to take place in the pace department. With Mustafizur Rahman and Al-Amin Hossain not in the squad, uncapped pacers Abu Haider and Mohammad Shahid are expected to replace them. Haider was the second highest wicket-taker in the Bangladesh Premier League and was by far the most impressive pacer. Shahid, who has played Test cricket for

However, the chances of the left-hander featuring today are less considering that there is no room in the top four positions. Muktar, on the other hand, may come in at number eight. If he is in the eleven, he will be expected to play the role of a bowling all-rounder. If the hosts go on to win today, it will be their fifth series victory in this format of the game. More than the victory however, the experiments and the changes in the side have garnered attention. The team management is yet to confirm a fifth bowler in the side and they are also testing various batting options. An aspect that the hosts will want to improve in this series is their batting. Their batting has not been entirely impressive so far



The Tigers are expected to inject some new blood into the side when they face Zimbabwe in the third T20I in Khulna today. Mohammad Shahid (L) and Mosaddek Hossain are among the hopefuls and they were seen in high spirits yesterday.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED



BANGLADESHI GLOBAL CEMENT

with batsmen struggling to take singles and none of them making the most of their starts. The Zimbabweans are facing a similar scenario. They had rested their skipper Elton Chigumbura in the last match and according to their team management they too will be looking to experiment. With the likes of Mustafizur and Mushfiqur out of the

picture, both of whom played important roles in the first two matches and the hosts still sorting out their batting order, the final two T20Is may actually be a good opportunity for the visitors to apply some pressure. Zimbabwe just have not been able to perform as a team in the first two matches. While they batted well in the first game, their bowlers clicked in the second. They will hope both departments fire today at the Sheikh Abu Naser Stadium.

Tigers seek singles solution

SPORTS REPORTER



Bangladesh opener Soumya Sarkar has said that Bangladesh's batsmen will try to address the issues that they have been facing with regards to the lack of singles in the remaining matches of the T20I series. In the last match, Bangladesh's batsmen had batted out 27 dot balls in the first 10 overs and over 40 in the entire game, which ended up affecting the final score. Despite a series of boundaries, the hosts managed just 167.

"It's something that we will look into. It's always good to take as many singles as possible. Because in an over if we hit a boundary and then take a single, it just makes things a lot more smooth. "In the last match I didn't take as many singles as I would have wanted. The total number of dot balls was also a bit too much and we had to cover up with boundaries," Soumya told reporters in Khulna yesterday ahead of today's third T20I. Despite getting a good start, the left-hander was sent back for 43. It was a crucial blow for the hosts considering the amount of damage

that he could have done had he stayed on. Soumya regretted giving away his wicket at that point of time. "There's always a sense of regret when you fall at such a stage. This feeling may worsen in the future. For instance, if years from now I look back in my career I won't see many half-centuries because of this reason. So the next time I get a chance, I will try my best to utilise it," said Soumya. With a victory away from taking the series, the team management decided to include three new players in the squad for the last two T20Is. Soumya reckons that

the changes will not affect the rhythm of the team. At the other end, the convener of Zimbabwe's selection committee Kenyon Ziehl told reporters that he firmly believes that the visitors can still come back in this series. "We were 2-0 down in Sharjah [versus Afghanistan] recently and we came back. Somehow we show our best attributes when we are 2-0 down. We are in the same situation and we have to bounce back. "With that in mind, we still have combinations we want to try towards finalising our squad. We are still testing combinations with a win in mind," he said.

'No extra pressure at home'

Spinner Saleh's 'injury not grace'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Chittagong



The first target of the Bangladesh team is to ensure qualification to the second round in the Under-19 T20 World Cup beginning across the country on February 27, said captain Mehedi Hasan Miraz. The team, however, faced an injury threat as left-arm spinner Saleh Ahmed Shawon was injured after being hit in the head by a shot off the bat of Saeed Sarkar during net practice at the Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium in Chittagong yesterday morning. He was taken to a private hospital in Mehedibag. Doctors said the injury is not a serious one. "The injury is not grave. The doctors' report is positive. Hopefully he can leave the hospital today and recover within a day," Mehedi said while addressing the first press conference of the World Cup at a city hotel yesterday afternoon. He was confident of the team's strengths. Apart from the four spinners, he thought that the batting line-up was also good and that the team had experienced cricketers, with 10 or 11 of them having played first-class cricket. The U-19s do not have good memories of the previous edition in 2014 held in the UAE, where they crashed out in the group stage. Mehedi talked about the difficulty of playing a world cup -- whereas in other series there is an opportunity to recover from setbacks, in a world cup one mistake can be fatal. "We played two matches well, but had one bad game, and could not play the quarterfinal. The coaching staff has repeatedly asked us not to repeat that mistake in our home ground," Mehedi explained.



EYES ON THE PRIZE: Bangladesh under-19s captain Mehedi Hasan Miraz poses with the ICC Under-19 World Cup trophy at a press conference in Chittagong yesterday.

"We have practised well in the last one year, played both home and away series. The expectations will be high as the world cup will be held in Bangladesh. We have home advantage and we have worked hard. Now we just need to play our natural game and hopefully we can do something good." When asked about Australia pulling out of the tournament due to security fears, he said, "Even if Australia would have come it would not have been a problem. On subcontinent wickets Australia, New Zealand and South Africa get little

advantage. Instead, the Asian teams -- Pakistan, India, Sri-Lanka and Bangladesh -- are more favoured." The other side of the home advantage is the pressure the home team faces from fans. "Cricket is a game of expectations. Everyone has high expectations -- the coach, audience and family members all have high expectations. We have to play with that pressure. I don't think that will play a role; we will try to enjoy the game. The world cup at home is not an extra pressure," Mehedi added.

Shamsur, Hom take command

SPORTS REPORTER



Out-of-favour Shamsur Rahman hit a hundred as Central Zone recovered from their early hiccup against South Zone in the rain-interrupted first day of the second-round match of the Bangladesh Cricket League (BCL) at the Shaheed Kamruzzaman Stadium in Rajshahi yesterday. Central Zone reached 233 for 5 at tea and not a single ball was bowled in the third and final session due to rain. Put in to bat first, Central Zone made a poor start as Rony Talukdar was dismissed for a duck and Marshall Ayub for five by pacer Robiul Islam. Shuvagata Hom, who joined the team after playing the first two T20Is against Zimbabwe in Khulna, came to the crease to repair the early damage along with opener Shamsur Rahman, adding 145 runs for the third wicket. Shamsur scored 103 off 177 balls, smashing nine fours and a six while Hom contributed 83 off 100 balls in a knock that also featured nine fours and a six. At the Shaheed Chandu Stadium in Bogra, four batsmen got good starts but failed to convert those into big scores as East Zone lost eight wickets for 203 runs against North Zone, who won their first-round game against South Zone, before bad light stopped play. Shadman Islam, Liton Das, Mominul Haque and Tasamul Haque failed to make the best of their starts.

SCORES IN BRIEF	
CENTRAL ZONE V SOUTH ZONE	CENTRAL ZONE: 233 for 5 in 63.2 overs (Shamsur 103, Shuvagata 83, Tanveer 23 not out; Robiul 2-52, Razzak 1-82, Gazi 1-62, Asif 1-19)
EAST ZONE V NORTH ZONE	EAST ZONE: 203 for 8 in 76 overs (Shadman 33, Liton 43, Mominul 31, Tasamul 45; Shuvashis 1-20, Hasan 1-58, Tajjul 1-25, Nasir 2-27, Sunzamul 3-33)



Shamsur Rahman's 177-ball 103 was the highlight of the first day of the second round of the BCL. The batsman's knock helped bail his side, Central Zone, out of a precarious situation against South Zone.

India ready for SA Games

SPORTS REPORTER

Guwahati and Shillong, the two cities of Indian's north-eastern states of Assam and Meghalaya, are gearing up for the 12th South Asian (SA) Games, which will get underway from February 5 after a five-year hiatus. A two-member delegation from India, who came here on Sunday, met the sports minister before holding a press conference to apprise the media about their preparation for the games. "We are ready to host the SA Games and hope Bangladesh are also ready to take part. We hope the athletes will remain disciplined during the games and return with glory," said SM Bali SM, joint secretary of Indian Olympic Association, at the press conference held at the BOA Auditorium, adding that Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi would declare the eight-nation games open in Guwahati. Rakesh Kumar, secretary of youth and sports in India, was also present on the occasion. Some 2672 athletes including 1167 female athletes would be vying for 228 gold medals, as many silver medals and 308 bronzes in 23 disciplines. Bangladesh contingent will participate in all the disciplines except for triathlon. The curtain of the games will fall on February 16.

Only pride to play for

PTI, Canberra

The series already out of their grasp, India will be desperate to salvage some pride by avoiding a white-wash but their spiritless bowlers need to put up a far more inspired show to stop the Australians in the fourth and penultimate cricket ODI here on Wednesday. Pride will be on the line for India in the remaining two games of the five-match series and it would require improvement in the bowling performance for the visitors to clinch an elusive victory in the so far disappointing trip.

Gayle's parting shot at BBL

CRICINFO, Melbourne



Chris Gayle has bid farewell to the Big Bash League for this summer -- and possibly forever -- with a social media outburst in which he hit back at former cricketers who criticised his behaviour during an interview with journalist Mel McLaughlin. Gayle also declared himself a league-builder in the Twenty20 format and said that if he had played his last BBL innings, his "memory with the fans will live on forever". His final innings certainly was memorable: a 12-ball half-century that equalled the all-time fastest T20 fifty set by Yuvraj Singh in 2007. But Gayle will be remembered more for the interview in Hobart in which he asked

McLaughlin for a drink and told her: "don't blush, baby". His comments were widely criticised, including by Cricket Australia, and while Gayle was not suspended by his team, Melbourne Renegades, it is considered unlikely he will be welcome in future BBL tournaments. Gayle used his Instagram account on Tuesday, the day after his last innings of the series, to thank the Renegades and the Australian fans for their support. "People think I may have played my last innings in Australia but my memory with the fans will live on forever!!" Gayle wrote. "I build leagues around the world and Big Bash is one of them... 'Give the people what they want'." Although he did not name anyone, Gayle was scathing about the criticism

he had received. "To the media, Thank you also! The Haters, I thank you even more... I think a lot of past and present cricketers who smile in front my face could've have their say in the public when my so-called issue was going on, but y'all don't have the b**** to stand firm when it matters -- but yet when you see me you're like, Chris that's BS against you, it was blown out of proportion... smh [shaking my head]...don't tell me, tell the media and public!" "The past cricketers who say I make myself look like a chop, the others who claim I was no good to the youngsters while playing for the Thunder, the next one who said he expected that sort of behaviour from Chris -- 'Y'all can kiss my 'Black Rass'. I love Australia and I will be back again even for the... oi oi'."

Yuvi's 10-ball challenge

AGENCIES, New Delhi

Indian batsman Yuvraj Singh is disappointed with Chris Gayle for equalling his record for the fastest T20 half-century as he said he expected the towering West Indian to break his record. Yuvi also issued a challenge to both Gayle and AB de Villiers to break his record. "I'm disappointed Gayle, who got to fifty in 12 balls. Kaka, make sure u get it in ten balls next time or maybe AB de Villiers legend," Yuvraj tweeted on Gayle's knock in the Big Bash League in Australia.