

SPORT



THE DAWN
OF T20-16

Recalls likely for older hands

Series decider today

SPORTS REPORTER from Khulna

Thanks to Zimbabwe's victory in the third T20I, the fourth and final game today promises a lot more excitement. This will be Bangladesh's 50th T20I game and they will be looking to mark the landmark with a victory. Incidentally, their first T20I game was also against Zimbabwe at the same venue in November 2006, a match that they won.

The visitors had their backs against the wall prior to Wednesday and having overcome the obstacle, they will now be able to play with a lot more confidence. Having gone down to Afghanistan recently, a draw against Bangladesh away from home can help them gain much-needed confidence.

the tactic.

"We gave these players enough chances to play because of a bad experience we had during the 2015 World Cup. When Al-Amin Hossain and Anamul Haque had to go they were replaced by Shafiqul Islam and Imrul Kayes.

"Shafiqul was still unfit and Imrul didn't perform well. They weren't ready to play. And we don't want that to be repeated. That's the reason why we want them to get as much game-time as possible, so that they can all be ready," Mahmud said yesterday.

"There's nothing to worry about. We are still one match ahead and we are all confident of winning the series," he added.

The key player for Bangladesh in the final game will be Sabbir Rahman. The batsman has been in form throughout the series and has scored 139 runs so far.

Sabbir has managed to do what most of the other Bangladeshi batsmen have not. He has managed to stay at the crease and play longer innings. His half-century in the last match suggests that he is capable of doing more.

Another player who impressed in the last game was Nurul Hasan. Although the wicketkeeper-batsman came in to bat late, his smooth scoops and charge towards the end suggests that the youngster is quite capable of making the World Cup squad.

Akin to Bangladesh, Zimbabwe, according to coach Dav Whatmore, is also expected to make changes to their side. They may bring back their skipper Elton Chigumbura for the final game.

Malcolm Waller, who has enjoyed whacking Bangladesh's bowlers ever since the end of last year, will be the key player for the visitors.



WHO'S IN, WHO'S OUT? Bangladesh cricketers (FROM L-R) Imrul Kayes, Soumya Sarkar, Taskin Ahmed and Sabbir Rahman have a chat at the team hotel in Khulna yesterday. A lot of experimentation with youngsters has gone on in the first three matches, but today's deciding T20I at the Sheikh Abu Naser Stadium in Khulna may see a return to safer ways. PHOTO: STAR

Vitori's action flagged

SPORTS REPORTER

Zimbabwe's mood took a drastic turn today as left-arm pacer Brian Vitori was reported for a suspect bowling action during the third T20I against Bangladesh.

The visitors were celebrating their 31-run victory over hosts Bangladesh in the third T20I on Wednesday, but the news will definitely dampen their spirits. Vitori has been a constant fixture in their side, playing all three matches, although he is yet to claim any wickets.

The match officials' report, which was handed over to the Zimbabwe management team after the match, cited concerns about the legality of the 25-year-old's deliveries, according to a statement on the ICC website.

He must undergo testing within 14 days at an ICC-accredited facility, but is free to bowl before then.



The Bangladeshi side, on the other hand, is most likely going to take a step back from its initial strategy of providing all the new players with enough game time and bring some changes in order to ensure a series victory.

After the last game, there is a good chance that the team management will include Tamim Iqbal and Arafat Sunny in the playing eleven. If Tamim enters the side, he will replace Imrul Kayes, while Sunny may come in place of Mukhtar Ali.

Taskin Ahmed may also enter the fray and replace Mohammad Shahid.

While the team's makeup in the third T20I was criticised heavily, team manager Khaled Mahmud defended

made that obvious when he publicly criticised the team management's decision, to include four debutants in the game, following the match on Wednesday.

According to a member of the team management, the decision to make five changes was made in a bid to provide each of the players with as much game time as possible.

The problem at hand, as it seems, is that there are a number of players who are suffering from niggles. Mustafizur Rahman has an issue with his shoulder, Tamim Iqbal has a slight problem with his hand, Mushfiqur Rahim is recovering from a strain in his hamstring and then there's Mashrafe Bin Mortaza, who has a history of getting injured before major events.

As a result, the management wants the newer players to be as prepared as

T20 trials face litmus test

NAIMUL KARIM from Khulna

It might have been a depleted Bangladesh side that went down to Zimbabwe on Wednesday, but almost nobody in Khulna took the defeat lightly.

It was for the first time that the people of the city watched their team lose a limited-overs match here and the discussions at the gatherings sounded quite anxious.

From the addas at the random tea stalls to the limited conversations on the battery-driven scooters, there was just one question doing the rounds: Will Bangladesh field a weak team for the final T20I as well?

The 31-run defeat did not sit too well with the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) president and he had

possible in case any of them are called in as replacements during the Asia Cup -- which will be a T20 tournament -- and the ICC World Twenty20.

The two tournaments are scheduled to take place back to back with and according to the management there is a chance that the players may be affected by fatigue.

To counter that they want to create a bigger pool of players for the Asia Cup and the ICC World Twenty 20, which is why players like Mosaddek Hossain and Mukhtar Ali were included in the playing eleven on Wednesday. The team management wanted to see how these players reacted under pressure.

However, like the BCB president, there were a couple of others within the think-tank who criticised the move. Their point being that there should have been more balance in the playing eleven.

According to them, leaving out players like Tamim Iqbal and Arafat Sunny exposed the inexperience of the debutants.

"One can't treat these games like practice matches" was the common sentiment expressed by those who opposed the move.

With the final game today, it is still uncertain as to whether the team management will stick to its original plan of providing the newer players with as much experience as possible or whether they are going to turn back to the experience of Tamim, Sunny and Taskin Ahmed.

Whatever be the move, the one thing that is certain following the BCB's reaction after Wednesday's defeat is that anything less than a win could perhaps lead to serious ramifications in the team management's strategy.

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Saleh returns to practice

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Cg

The Bangladesh U-19 team received a boost with left-arm spinner Saif Hasan returning from injury to the field of practice at the Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium yesterday, ahead of the Under-19 World Cup that will start across the country from January 27.

He was injured when he was hit on the head during net practice on January 19. The spinner however did not bowl on his return to practice.

Other than the home side, three other sides had practice sessions in the port city. Zimbabwe U-19 had their workout earlier in the morning at the same stadium as the hosts, while the other two teams in the port city -- Namibia U-19 and England U-19 -- practised at the M A Aziz Stadium in the morning and afternoon respectively.

The U-19 world cup tournament will feature a total of 16 teams playing in four cities and will continue till February 14.



LAYING DOWN THE LAW: Bangladesh U-19 batsman Saif Hasan gets some valuable tips from the team's technical consultant, former Australia batsman Stuart Law, during practice at the Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium in Chittagong yesterday.

Injection of new blood continues

SPORTS REPORTER

The national selectors brought another pacer to the senior fold as Ariful Hoque was drafted into the 25-member preliminary squad for the Asia Cup and ICC World Twenty20. With two major T20 events on the cards, Bangladesh's team think-tank, particularly coach Chandika Hathurusingha, have been going through a massive experiment which saw all-rounder Mukhtar Ali, who was not even selected for the 27-member preliminary squad announced on December 30 last year, to play the third T20I against Zimbabwe in Khulna.

Mukhtar was included in the list this time while Saqlain Sajib, Jahurul Islam, Anamul Haque and Shohag Gazi missed the long-list. Pacer Rubel Hossain was also not included, as the right-arm pacer was yet to recover from his calf-muscle injury.

With 23-year old right-arm pacer Ariful, there are now eleven pace bowlers in the list, so the question was: why so many pacers?

"Actually we are searching for a bowling all-rounder who can hit hard late in the game. Basically we designed the preliminary squad focusing on the practice matches and we want to see how this young guy responds there. We saw Mukhtar in one match and we

also want to see more options and that's the reason we included him," selector Habibur Bashar explained as the reason.

"Ariful has decent performances in different levels, so let see how he responds," he added.

Regarding Rubel's chances, Bashar said: "Rubel will be able to start bowling in the nets after January 30, so he is unlikely to be considered as there is a deadline for submitting the team for the ICC World Twenty20."

"Anamul and Jahurul have been injured while Saqlain has very little chance of breaking into T20 cricket. On the other hand we are not so impressed with Shohag Gazi," he informed.

The players will report for camp in Khulna on January 23. After nine days of training in Khulna, they will travel to Chittagong on February 7 where the camp will continue till February 18.

The Asia Cup will be held in Bangladesh from February 24 to March 6 while the ICC World Twenty20 will take place in India from March 9 to April 3.

PRELIMINARY SQUAD

- Tamim Iqbal, Soumya Sarkar, Imrul Kayes, Liton Das, Mosaddek Hossain, Mushfiqur Rahim, Mohammad Mithun, Qazi Nurul Hasan, Shakib Al Hasan, Mahmudullah Riyad, Nasir Hossain, Sabbir Rahaman, Shuvagata Hom, Ariful Hoque, Arafat Sunny, Mashrafe Bin Mortaza, Mustafizur Rahman, Abu Haider, Al-Amin Hossain, Shafiqul Islam, Mohammad Shahid, Abul Hasan, Taskin Ahmed, Kamrul Islam, Mukhtar Ali.

Whatmore remembers Rana's smile

SPORTS REPORTER from Khulna

Zimbabwe coach Dav Whatmore reignited memories from the past when he went to visit former Bangladesh Test cricketer Manzarul Islam Rana's mother in Khulna yesterday.

Rana, who played six Tests and 25 ODIs, passed away on March 16, 2007 in a road accident. He was 22.

Whatmore spent some time chatting with the player's mother and glancing through the trophies that the player had won during his cricketing career.

"I vividly recall him coming into the team. I had a look at him. I liked what I saw and got him into the national team. He is someone who will always be special to me and I will always remember fondly," Whatmore said while speaking to reporters outside Rana's residence.

When asked to state the most memorable quality of Rana, Whatmore said: "His smile. He was a whole-hearted cricketer. He was a bowler, a batsman and a fielder and a hell of a character in the dressing room. He offered a lot to the team and had a beautiful smile."

"Whenever I am in Khulna, I make it a point to remember him and visit his mother," the Australian added.

In 25 ODIs, Rana had a batting average of 20.68 and a bowling average of 29. The last match that he played was in Fatullah when he represented Khulna in the National Cricket League. Although Khulna lost that match to Dhaka by three wickets, Rana had finished with a nine-wicket haul.

Sharifullah puts brakes on Razzak

SPORTS REPORTER

Veteran left-arm spinner Abdur Razzak returned with a five-wicket haul but Central Zone still posted a healthy first innings total of 381 against South Zone thanks to Sharifullah's 91 on the third day of the second round Bangladesh Cricket League (BCL) match at the Shahid Kamruzzaman Stadium in Rajshahi yesterday.

The entire second day's play was washed out and the third day also had a delayed start due to the wet outfield. Central Zone resumed their innings on 233 for five and they could add a further 148 runs. Sharifullah hit 91 off 94, smashing 10 fours and a six. Razzak added four wickets to his sole scalp to finish with five for 134. In reply, South Zone lost three wickets for 81 runs before bad light stopped play.

At the Shahid Chandu Stadium in Bogra, North Zone also made a poor start in reply to East Zone's 214 as they lost three wickets for 59 runs before bad light stopped play. The day's play started at 2.45pm due to a wet outfield and foggy weather.

SCORES IN BRIEF	
CENTRAL ZONE V SOUTH ZONE	CENTRAL ZONE: 381 all out in 99.4 overs (Shamsur 103, Shuvagata 83, Sharifullah 91, Shahidul 32 not out; Robuil 2-72, Razzak 5-134, Asif 2-48)
SOUTH ZONE: 81-3 in 28 overs (Nafees 13, Fazle 32, Tushar 33; Shuvagata 2-25)	
EAST ZONE V NORTH ZONE	EAST ZONE: 214 all out in 83.1 overs (Shadman 33, Liton 43, Mominul 31, Tasamul 45, Hasan 24; Roy 2-29, Hasan 2-58, Nasir 2-29, Sunzamul 3-33)
NORTH ZONE: 59 for 3 in 19 overs (Junaed 28, Farhad 19; Hasan 2-29)	

Eng look to top order

REUTERS, Pretoria

England's top order are determined to end the test series against South Africa on a high after failing to give their team solid starts so far, number three Nick Compton said on Wednesday.

The touring side hold an unassailable 2-0 lead in the series heading into the fourth and final match starting at Centurion Park on Friday. "For me and a lot of the other guys, there's a lot to play for. It's a test match for England," Compton said on Wednesday.

"You're playing in South Africa, it's another great experience being at a ground many of us haven't played at before and there's a lot of personal pride. And obviously from a team point of view, make no bones about it, this team wants to keep moving forward."

Although England have flourished in the middle order, opens Alastair Cook and Alex Hales have struggled and they will aim to rectify that.

Afridi's last hurrah in NZ?

AGENCIES, Wellington

Cricket uncovered something special when 16-year-old Shahid Afridi strode to the crease on October 4, 1996 at Nairobi and smared a world record 37-ball century against Sri Lanka's one-day international attack, but tonight, in the third and final T20I against the hosts, could be his final appearance in New Zealand.

"Maybe this will be my last tour," the 35-year-old conceded. "I've always trying to play a major role, striving to perform with both bat and ball."



Former Bangladesh coach Dav Whatmore -- who is currently in charge of the Zimbabwe team -- makes it a point to visit the mother of late Manzarul Islam Rana, his former charge, whenever he is in Khulna. Here he is seen reminiscing with Rana's mother during his visit to the beloved cricketer's home yesterday. PHOTO: BCB