



PHOTO: ANURUP KANTI DAS

Bangladesh under-19s will need to hit the ground running in the upcoming ICC Under-19 World Cup, where they will face off against defending champions South Africa in the opening match on Wednesday. The home team have a chance to fine-tune their skills when they take on England in their final warm-up match at the ZACS in Chittagong today.

England look to end 18-yr drought

AGENCIES, Undated



England and the West Indies will start as favourites to advance to the Super League Stage from Group C at the expense of Zimbabwe and debutant Fiji in the ICC U-19 Cricket World Cup 2016, which will be played in Bangladesh from 27 January to 14 February.

England, seeking to end an 18-year drought after winning its only title way back in 1998 in South Africa, reached the semi-finals in the United Arab Emirates two years ago.

The current side is led by Brad Taylor, an off-spinning all-rounder from Hampshire who is one of nine players in the squad to have played

county cricket at the senior level. Taylor was appointed captain just ahead of the tri-series in Sri Lanka before Christmas last year.

"That tournament was really important for us. Conditions in Bangladesh are going to be very different from what we're used to in England, so that allowed us to acclimatise to similar conditions and pitches."

Taylor also said he expected the West Indies to be the toughest opponent in the group, but refused to take victory against Zimbabwe and Fiji for granted.

"We play Fiji in our first game and we have to concentrate on winning that one first," he said. "We won't be taking them lightly and the same goes for Zimbabwe in our last game."

The West Indies will be captained by top-order batsman Shimron Hetmyer, who also took

part in the 2014 tournament. He and fast bowler Alzarri Joseph are the only two players in the squad with first-class experience.

Legendary West Indies captain Clive Lloyd, who is now the chairman of selectors, was confident of a good performance by the teenagers. "We have put together a group of players we believe will perform for the West Indies."

"We see them as future Test cricketers and this tournament is an opportunity for them to be exposed at the international level against strong opposition," he said.

While Zimbabwe will be led by Brandon Mavuta, Fiji will make its maiden appearance in the tournament under Saimoni Tuitoga, who said his team are excited at the chance of play in a world event.

"We are honoured to be the first to represent the nation in a cricket World Cup," Tuitoga said. "It's not going to be easy but we know this opportunity is one that should not be taken for granted and want to make sure that we push the Tier One nations."

"For our families, our coaches and for us we want to make sure that we fight through to the end and at least try and win two of our three group matches. The underdog tag relieves a lot of pressure and expectation from us."

Group C action kicks off from 27 January when England play Fiji in Chittagong. All eyes will be on the England-West Indies encounter which will take place on 29 January also in Chittagong.

'Opening game the most challenging'

U-19s handed new jerseys

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg



Having won their first ICC Under-19 World Cup warm-up match on January 23, the young Tigers had more to smile about yesterday when they were handed their new jerseys during a ceremony in Chittagong, ahead of the global youth tournament that will begin across the country from January 27.

Chittagong city Mayor AJM Nasir Uddin and jersey sponsor Meghna Group's director Tahmina Binte Mostafa handed over the jersey to captain Mehedi Hasan. Former national captain Akram Khan and Meghna Group executive director (marketing) Asif Iqbal were also present.

"We have won the first warm up match and played good cricket. There will be high expectations. Tomorrow (Monday) there is another match. We will get a chance to rectify our mistakes and fully prepare ourselves for the first match of the tournament," said Mehedi during the ceremony.

He said South Africa, against whom they will play the tournament opener, is going to be the most challenging team in their group. "Once we get through that match well it will become easy," said Mehedi.

Bangladesh all rounder Nazmul Hossain, who hit a century in the practice match against Zimbabwe and batted well in the last several series, said, "I would like to rise above my recent performances."

He said they have played with Zimbabwe, West Indies and a practice match in Chittagong and have become quite familiar with the conditions. They will have one more chance to hone their skills today when they take on the England U-19s at the Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium in Chittagong.

Expressing his hope about the current team, BCB selector Akram said, "As we are playing at home and the players are in good form, the atmosphere and audience are in our favour, hopefully something good will happen."

About the failure in the previous tournaments he said, "You need good luck along with good performance. In the last several tournaments matches we lost by one wicket or by one run. One or two small mistakes turned out to be the turning points. But the present team is really working hard. I think this year we have a good chance."

Earlier yesterday Bangladesh practised at the Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium in the morning, followed by England in the afternoon. Zimbabwe and Namibia practised at the M A Aziz Stadium in the morning and afternoon respectively.

NTC expanded

SPORTS REPORTER

The Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) has woken up from the slumber as they yesterday expanded the two-member National Teams' Committee (NTC) to 10 members.

The move has come following the failure of the national team in the SAFF Suzuki Cup and the Bangabandhu Gold Cup, even though there is hardly any international engagement of the team before the existing BFF executive committee expires in April this year. The national team will play their last World Cup and Asian Cup qualifying match against Jordan on March 24 while the Bangladesh Olympic team are set to take part in the SA Games next month.

The previous NTC, comprising BFF vice presidents Kazi Nabil Ahmed and Tabith Awal, ran the show for 45 months but failed to place any concrete proposal to make the team a strong one, which was one of three pledges relayed by BFF president Kazi Salahuddin after his re-election in 2012. "This decision has been taken after discussion between the BFF president and the national teams committee chairman [Nabil]," said BFF general secretary Abu Nayeem Shohag, adding that the committee will sit for a meeting on Wednesday.

The new members of the committee are: BFF vice president Badal Roy, BFF members Amirul Islam Babu, Iliyas Hossain, Satyajit Das Rupu, Azmal Ahmed Tapan and AJM Nasir Uddin, former BFF member Anwarul Haque Helal and BFF general secretary Abu Nayeem Shohag.

Rabada puts SA on top

AFP, Centurion



South African fast bowling prodigy Kagiso Rabada took another step towards stardom when he took seven wickets in England's first innings on the third day of the fourth and final Test at SuperSport Park on Sunday.

Rabada, 20, took seven for 112 as England were bowled out for 342 in reply to South Africa's total of 475. South Africa were 42 for one at the close, an overall lead of 175.

Rabada wrecked what was looking like a solid England response to South Africa's first innings when he took three wickets in 12 balls immediately before lunch.

Batting conditions were tricky under a heavily overcast sky on a pitch with occasional variable bounce but England lost only one wicket in almost two hours before Rabada's burst.

The tourists had advanced to 208 for three when Rabada had Joe Root caught behind by Quinton de Kock for 76, pushing at a ball which left him.

James Taylor swung at a bouncer and edged the ball to De Kock and Jonny Bairstow gloved a ball which lifted and seamed back at him.

Having taken two of the three English wickets that fell on Saturday, it gave Rabada,

in his sixth Test, his second five-wicket haul in successive matches.

He followed up by ending an aggressive innings of 33 by Ben Stokes, who was caught at first slip by Hashim Amla off the second delivery with the second new ball and claimed his seventh when Stuart Broad was caught on the midwicket boundary.

Rabada appears to have all the attributes to become South Africa's first genuine black African cricket star since fellow fast bowler Makhaya Ntini. Unlike Ntini, who was plucked from a rural village, Rabada is from a middle class family. His father is a doctor and he went to a leading private school in upmarket Sandton.

But he made a sensational one-day international debut against Bangladesh in Mirpur last July, taking six for 16, including a hat-trick -- the best figures for South Africa in the format. First innings century-makers Stephen Cook and Amla battled through to the close in fading light before the umpires decided it was too dark to continue, even with England using two slow bowlers.

SCORES IN BRIEF

SOUTH AFRICA: First innings 475
ENGLAND: First innings 342 (A Cook 76, Root 76, Stokes 33, Moeen 61, Woakes 26; Rabada 7-112, Morkel 2-73)

SOUTH AFRICA: Second innings 42 for 1 (S Cook 23 not out, Amla 16 not out; Anderson 1-14)



RABID RABADA: Rookie South Africa speedster Kagiso Rabada celebrates the crucial wicket of England's Joe Root. Rabada ran through England's batting lineup to pick up a career-best haul of 7 for 112 and put his team in the driving seat on the third day of the fourth Test at Centurion yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP



Bangladesh U-19s captain Mehedi Hasan (C) is handed the new team jersey in a ceremony at a Chittagong hotel yesterday where officials of sponsors Meghna Group and BCB selector Akram Khan (R) were present.

Azhar buries hatchet with Amir

AFP, Wellington

The rehabilitation of Pakistan cricketer Mohammad Amir took another step forward Monday with one-day captain Azhar Ali welcoming him into the side for the series against New Zealand.

Ali initially refused to play alongside Amir who is making his return to the international scene after a prison term and five-year ban for spot-fixing. But on the eve of the first ODI against New Zealand in Wellington, Ali said he had talked to Amir and aims to "get the best" out of the 23-year-old quick bowler if he starts.

"We have moved on. We are united and looking forward to the challenge," Ali said on Sunday. "Whatever my stance was, my job is to lead and keep harmony in the dressing room."

"He bowled well in the T20s. My job is to try to get the best out of him," Ali said.

Tickets on sale from Jan 26

SPORTS REPORTER



The tickets for the ICC Under-19 World Cup will go on sale at different venues from this week. Tickets will be available in Chittagong from 26 January while fans in Dhaka, Narayanganj and Sylhet will be able to buy tickets for matches in their corresponding venues from 27 January.

A person will be allowed to purchase a maximum of five tickets for a particular match. None of the tickets will be sold at the match venues but at places close by.

For instance, tickets for the matches to be held at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur can be bought from the Mirpur Indoor Stadium. Similarly, tickets for the matches taking place at the Khan Shaheb Osman Ali Stadium can be bought from the Jubo Unnayan Adidaptor, Jalkori and Fatullah.

In Chittagong a ticket counter will be set at the Bitek Mor beside the city corporation office in Sagorika for the matches that are due to take place at the Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium.

For the games that are scheduled to take place at the MA Aziz Stadium, the tickets will be available at the Almas Cinema Hall in Dampara.

In Sylhet fans will have to visit the ticket counters at Lukkatura on the Airport Road and the Stadium Market Counter at Dargah End to buy tickets for the games at Sylhet International Cricket Stadium and the Sylhet District Cricket Stadium respectively.

For the matches in Dhaka and Fatullah, the cost of tickets will range from Tk 20 to Tk 300 with the Grand Stands costing the highest. A place in the VIP stand will cost Tk 150 while the next best seats, the Shahid Mushtaque and Shahid Jewel stands, will cost Tk 100. The North and South stands will be sold at Tk 40, while the tickets for the Eastern stand will be sold at Tk 20.

Thunder beat Stars in final

AFP, Melbourne

The Sydney Thunder gave captain Michael Hussey the perfect send-off from Australian cricket when they beat the Melbourne Stars by three wickets to win the Big Bash League on Sunday.

After Hussey won the toss and sent the Stars in to bat at the MCG, they side reached 176 for nine thanks largely to a 74 from Kevin Pietersen.

But Thunder's Usman Khawaja played an innings of similar quality to get Sydney's run chase off to a perfect start. He and fellow opener Jacques Kallis put on 86 before he holed out in the deep.

Hussey, playing his final match in Australia, hit a quickfire 18 to get the Thunder back on track, and some useful contributions at the end got them home.

SCORES IN BRIEF:
MELBOURNE STARS: 176 for 9 in 20 overs (Pietersen 74, Wright 23; Watson 2-17)
SYDNEY THUNDER: 181 for 7 in 19.3 overs (Khawaja 70, Kallis 28; Stonis 3-30)
Result: Sydney won by 3 wkts.