



Before Bangladesh's match against Ireland today, the centre of every conversation was regarding the questions raised about the legality of the bowling actions of Arafat Sunny and Taskin Ahmed (R). Taskin being flagged especially came as a big surprise, but here he is standing beside the person who perhaps knows best how to overcome adversity, Tigers' captain Mashrafe Bin Mortaza.

Chandika livid with ICC

AL-AMIN from Dharamsala



Bangladesh normally presents a cricketer, if not the captain, for a pre-match press briefing in the middle of a tournament. But when team manager Khaled Mahmud said that coach Chandika Hathurusingha would attend the briefing on Thursday evening ahead of today's crucial ICC World T20 qualifier against Ireland at Dharamsala, it carried special significance.

Although it was supposed to be a day for the Tigers to relax a bit after their eight-run win against the Netherlands, they were actually going through a kind of storm following Wednesday night's leaked news that two Bangladesh bowlers -- pacer Taskin Ahmed and left-arm spinner Arafat Sunny -- were reported to Zimbabwean match referee Andy Pycroft by the on-field umpires, Australian Rod Tucker and Indian S Ravi, for suspect actions.

And when Hathurusingha took his seat at the Dharamsala Media Centre on Thursday afternoon he was confronted with the obvious question regarding the allegedly suspect actions of Taskin and Sunny.

He first acknowledged it and then gave a piece of his mind about the ruling, centring especially on Taskin.

"They have some concerns over two of our bowlers, they were reported. So at this stage whatever the procedure the ICC has to do, we are following that procedure."

An International Cricket Council (ICC) press release on the matter stated that the ICC is working with the Bangladesh team management to confirm times for the independent testing of the bowlers at the ICC-accredited testing centre in Chennai. According to ICC regulations, "...every reasonable effort shall be made for the Independent Assessment to be carried out and the Independent Assessment Report furnished within a period of 7 days from the date of receipt of the Match Officials' Report."

It also stated that the players can continue playing within that period.

Hathurusingha, who appeared absolutely furious at the developments, said that it would not disturb the mindset of the team.

"They can play; they can bowl, bat and field. It's about how you take it. I think the bowlers are strong enough to understand that they are doing it right. We also think we have no concerns. They played so much cricket recently as well. It's a surprise for us... I don't think it's going to affect the way we are playing," said a stone-faced Hathurusingha.

Although cricketing circles in Bangladesh were aware that Sunny's action might be a case for doubt, there were not the slightest of doubts regarding young Taskin. Having played a lot of cricket recently and suffered a lot of injuries, Bangladesh can ill afford to lose more players.

Hathurusingha expressed grave concerns about this official action, which is certainly a bolt from the blue for the Tigers.

"I have not spoken to them [match officials]. But that's a



concern as well. If they have a concern about my bowlers, I have a concern about their [ICC's] actions as well," he said acidly.

Regarding Bangladesh's next game against Ireland, the Bangladesh coach said that he was not worried about his misfiring batting line-up.

"Not really, I would love them to score more runs. There are concerns with some senior players. We know that they are capable of more than what they are doing now. The good thing is that we are putting a score that can be competitive. Besides, the guys who are getting in are making a good contribution and that takes the pressure off from some of the guys who are not doing well. I hope very soon these guys will also come into form and contribute," said Hathurusingha without mentioning the names of two non-firing batsmen -- Shakib Al Hasan and Mushfiqur Rahim.



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INDIAN RHYTHMS

The Tigers from a different perspective

AL-AMIN from Dharamsala

The Pavilion Hotel resort, now the temporary home of the Bangladesh cricket team, is unique in every sense. It's not owned by a private company but is a property of the Himachal Pradesh Cricket Association (HPCA), the proud owners of the picturesque venue too.

It took this reporter nearly half an hour and a six-kilometer taxi drive up the hill to reach that beautiful structure on the foot of a hill surrounded by cedar trees and a magnificent view of the Dharamsala valley beneath. The most significant facets of the hotel, which is divided into four blocks, are named after four magnificent venues -- Lord's, Wanderers, SCG and Eden Gardens. Bangladesh captain Mashrafe Bin Mortaza lives in the Wanderers and Tamim Iqbal resides at the Eden Gardens. A beautiful cafeteria, backed up by a lush lawn and a small but tidy swimming pool by the edge, is every tourist's envy.

Since it was an optional practice day yesterday,



most of the senior players except Mushfiqur Rahim -- no prizes if you guessed that -- and two bowlers, Taskin Ahmed and Arafat Sunny, stayed back at the hotel to have fun.

However, Tamim's logic as a practice absentee was absolutely spot on when he said the practice wickets at Dharamsala were completely deceiving and hardly match the nature of the wickets inside the venue. Mashrafe was playing the role of a professional cameraperson for family back home. He was actually sharing the hotel and its surroundings with his family members through his smart phone. Tamim was first to start his lunch, Shakib joined soon after. Sunny took his lunch silently and left in the same fashion. On strode Mashrafe and it took on a festive look. It was real fun out there and for someone who wonders how they actually behave, just reflect on how you are having fun with your friends.

There were so many things going on that were very tempting for any reporter looking for news. It was actually getting very late for us to rush to the venue and catch the pre-match briefing. So we had to quit that pure 'adda' for professional commitments with an understanding that there are many things we need to keep close to our chest.

While Sabbir Rahman (R) will look to put an off-day against Netherlands behind him, Mushfiqur Rahim's problems run much deeper, with the diminutive batsman going through an extended lean patch which he is finding hard to come out of.

PHOTO: BCB



Scotland, Hong Kong eliminated

AFP, Nagpur



Spinners Mohammad Nabi and Wellington Masakadza helped Afghanistan and Zimbabwe register contrasting wins in the World Twenty20 on Thursday as the two teams set up a Group B decider to make the Super 10s.

Off-spinner Nabi bagged four wickets to help Afghanistan canter to their second straight win in the group stage after humbling Hong Kong by six wickets.

Rocked by a fixing controversy prior to the start of the tournament, Hong Kong's campaign has ended after two consecutive losses.

Electing to bat, Hong Kong stumbled to 116 for six in their 20 overs, a score

which Afghanistan were able to surpass in 18 overs.

In-form Mohammad Shahzad and Noor Ali Zadran provided a solid start for Afghanistan the Asghar Stanikzai-led side still looked like favourites to make it to the next round.

Earlier, Sean Williams stroked a brisk fifty before left-arm spinner Wellington Masakadza helped Zimbabwe shut the door on Scotland after securing an 11-run win.

Choosing to bat, Zimbabwe suffered from regular dismissals but Williams' 36-ball 53 enabled the side to post 147 for seven, a score which proved enough against a brittle Scotland batting.

Skipper Hamilton Masakadza gave the new ball to his brother Wellington, who combined with medium-pacer Tendai Chatara to help dismiss Scotland, who slipped to their second loss, for 136 in 19.4 overs.

IPL 9 begins on April 9

PTI, Mumbai

Mumbai Indians (MI), the Indian Premier League 2015 winners, will commence their title defence on home turf on April 9, 2016. The opening encounter of the VIVO IPL 2016 will see them play Rising Pune Supergiants (RPS), the new entrants in the league, at the historic Wankhede Stadium.

In the tournament's ninth edition, a total of 60 matches will be played over a period of 51 days.

The VIVO IPL 2016 Final will be played at the Wankhede Stadium, Mumbai on May 29, 2016.

Pak govt wants assured security

AFP, Islamabad

Pakistan's interior minister Thursday ruled out sending the national team to India for the World Twenty20 until security assurances come from New Delhi, saying the threats from extremists are concerning.

Pakistan were due to fly out on Wednesday but their departure was put on hold by the government.

"Until and unless clear guarantees on security come from the Indian government, unfortunately we are not in a position to decide sending the team," Interior Minister Chaudhry Nisar Ali Khan told the media.

"Despite a lot of apprehensions and the fact that India do not want to play Pakistan [in bilateral series] on one or other pretext, the government and every Pakistani fan want to see our team, who are former champions, to go and play," he said.

"This is a world event, but can cricket be played under the shadow of threats? It is the government's responsibility to ensure security of our players and that we are doing."

Central increase lead at top

SPORTS REPORTER



Alok Kapali returned with a five-wicket haul after a magnificent first innings hundred as East Zone beat North Zone by four wickets after a dramatic last session on the final day of the fifth round Bangladesh Cricket League (BCL) match at the Academy Ground of the Sheikh Kamal International Cricket Stadium in Cox's Bazar yesterday.

East Zone reached the target of 139 in 22.1 overs in the extended session as 13 minutes were added after the mandatory last hour ended at 4.43pm. The winners were in trouble after losing four wickets for 37 in chase of the paltry target, but Zakir Hasan launched a counter attack and made 57 off 43 balls, a knock that featured six fours and three sixes. After his dismissal East still required 29 runs, which Rahatul Ferdous and Mohammad Saifuddin put on to clinch the win.

Earlier, despite Kapali's five-wicket haul, Myszukur hit a hundred to help North Zone score 357 runs in their second innings.

points but Central Zone consolidated their top position with 55 points after a draw against South Zone in the adjacent ground yesterday. The crucial final round will start from March 14 with Central Zone taking on North Zone at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur and South Zone facing off against East Zone at the Khan Shaheb Osman Ali Stadium in Fatullah.

Central Zone declared their second innings at 292 for six to set a 406-run winning target for their opponents. South Zone were in trouble after losing two wickets for seven runs, but Tushar Imran held his nerve during his unbeaten 54 and got good support from Farhad Reza as the spoils were shared.

SCORES IN BRIEF

EAST ZONE: 392 and 139-6 in 22.1 overs (Zakir 56; Sajib 3-23) v NORTH ZONE: 173 and 357 all out in 144.1 overs (Myszukur 131, Farhad 75; Kapali 5-70)
Result: East Zone won by four wickets.

CENTRAL ZONE: 425 and 292-6dec in 71.2 overs (Shuvagata 63 not out, Sharifullah 59; Razzak 3-115) v SOUTH ZONE: 312 and 109-4 in 35 overs (Farhad 40, Tushar 54 not out)
Result: Match Drawn.



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PERFORMER OF THE DAY

WICKED WELLINGTON



Wellington Masakadza, Zimbabwe's left-arm spinner, spun a sticky web around the Scotland batsman as they tried to overhaul Zimbabwe's 147. Opening the bowling, he stung immediately by removing opener George Munsey in the first over, before claiming Matt Machan in his second over. He then came back to remove a dangerous-looking Preston Mommsen and Safyaan Sharif in the same over to break Scotland's back. He ended up with four wickets for 28 runs in four overs and the player of the match trophy.