



Fizz nearing full fitness

AL-AMIN from Bangalore



Bangladesh bowling coach Heath Streak has learnt quite a few Bangla words for better communication with his charges. The former Zimbabwe all-rounder did not hesitate to show them off while taking guard for an impromptu press briefing after conducting a one-and-a-half-hour practice session for Mustafizur Rahman at the M Chinnaswamy Stadium in Bangalore yesterday.

"Taratai [quickly], cholo, cholo [go, go], asho [come]," he uttered when a TV reporter was getting late to join the briefing.

It sparked quite a humour and Streak was immediately confronted with the question of how he communicated with Mustafizur regarding the technical details while training.

"I'm teaching him [Mustafizur] English and he is teaching me Bangla," said Streak with big smile on his face.

While getting into the business end of the discussion, the Zimbabwean said that the pace bowler was nearing full fitness.

"We are trying to get him ready for the Australia match. He is looking good at the moment. But we can't say anything until the day of the match. You can see that he is close to full pace," Streak said about the progress of the 20-year-old bowler.

"He is such a key player for us. I think just even having him in the Asia Cup final would have given us a good chance of defending the total we had set against India. Of course he had a big success against Pakistan, so that definitely would have been a factor for us if we had him in our side for our first game against Pakistan. But injuries to fast bowlers happen and you can't control that," Streak said while responding to a question of how disappointing it was for Bangladesh not to have Mustafizur against Pakistan at Eden Gardens in their opening match of the World Twenty20.

Streak also defended the decision to carry an injured Mustafizur for a long time despite the fact that it disturbed the team's plan and to some extent might have given a wrong signal to the other members.

"He is such a key bowler for us. So to have him hopefully available for the next three games will be very good for us. You know his preparation before his injury and his lead up to these games. So, hopefully it goes well for us and pays off," said Streak, adding that the team management would have given the same treatment to any other key member of the squad.

About the big challenges for his bowlers against Australia and India on a ground that has a history of producing a lot of runs, he said: "This is a very good batting wicket and you need to adjust to this condition. We know Bangalore is a very high scoring ground. He [Mustafizur] is going to have a big challenge, like all the bowlers and they need to be on top of their game."

Furthermore he also had good words to speak about Taskin Ahmed's performance against Pakistan.

"I thought Taskin had a very good performance against Pakistan and bowled with good speed, given that he had spent two days travelling for the test [of his bowling action] and bowling there. Obviously, it was a very flat wicket and the outfield was very quick and it was pretty tough for the bowlers. But they all know that we could have bowled better."

He said that the onus would be on the batsmen to score runs on such a placid wicket.

"I think it will be good for our batters. Guys like Sabbir [Rahman] had a good game here for the A team and hopefully they can take confidence from that," he said.



PHOTOS: BCB

Bangladesh bowling coach Heath Streak (R) has high hopes of pacer Mustafizur Rahman making a return to the side against Australia on Monday. (INSET) Almost at full fitness, 'Fizz' is in full flow as he bowls a delivery during training at the M Chinnaswamy Stadium in Bangalore yesterday.

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'190 is the par score at Chinnaswamy'

AL-AMIN from Bangalore



The M Chinnaswamy Stadium stands on the edge of the picturesque Cubbon Park in Bangalore. It is one of India's famous cricket grounds known for producing runs in a heap. Be it in Tests or ODIs it has produced plenty of runs. A venue where West Indies great Viv Richards made his India debut in 1974 and India's finest Test batsman Saurav Ganguly scored an imperious 239. It also witnessed the 500th Test wicket of legendary leg-spinner and local boy Anil Kumble.

But ask Prashant Rao, one of the three curators of the ground, and he will almost immediately reflect on the hell of a T20 knock that the ground witnessed from West Indies left-hander Christopher Gayle. The lazy genius struck a mind-boggling 175 off just 66 balls for Royal Challengers Bangalore against Pune Warriors in an IPL game in 2014. And that innings contained only 17 sixes and 13 fours!

"That was right up there", said Prashant while talking to group of Bangladeshi reporters yesterday. He was taking care of the ground along with Jacinta Kalyan, the famous female curator who has been a proven asset to the Karnataka State Cricket Association, when he said that this is a pitch "where 190 is a par score" in a T20 game.

He also said that the nature of the wicket hardly changes, be it a Ranji Trophy, Test, ODI or a T20 match.

Going by Prashant's statement Bangladesh are in for turbulent times against a wounded Australia, who lost their opening game against New Zealand at Dharamsala; and of course against the beleaguered hosts India, who are set to have a mouth-watering face-off against bitter rivals

Pakistan at the Eden Gardens today.

If India lose to Pakistan, all the focus on Group 2 of this ICC World T20 will be centred on Bangladesh's next two games at the M Chinnaswamy Stadium. The Tigers will take on Australia on March 21 before facing India at the same venue two days later.

And Bangladesh captain Mashrafe Bin Mortaza knows better than anybody else what is awaiting them.

"I gave a clear message to our batsmen. Don't expect the bowlers to defend anything less than 175. They will have to score heavily if we are to win a game or two here," said the Bangladesh captain at the Ritz-Carlton Hotel after attending a gym session with Taskin Ahmed.

Batting has remained the biggest headache for the Tigers in the T20 format. A few batsmen like Tamim Iqbal, Mahmudullah Riyad and Sabbir Rahman have scored some good runs leading up to the tournament proper, but they are yet to click as a unit, a feature that has been prominent in the ODIs.

Mushfiqur Rahim is yet to hit form, opener Soumya Sarkar has been struggling for runs. Shakib Al Hasan, the only Bangladesh batsman to have played in every Indian ground because of his association with the Indian Premier League franchise Kolkata Knight Riders, failed to score heavily. He however scored an unbeaten fifty against Pakistan at the Eden Gardens in a match that Pakistan won by a massive 55 runs.

After taking a two-day rest, the Tigers will have their first sight of the M Chinnaswamy Stadium, which has a capacity of 35,000, at their first practice session at this ground. No doubt they will train hard but they have little time to be mentally ready to have a crack at that 190-run barrier if they are to overcome the mighty Australians and a mightier India.

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MASH'S TONIC: The gloom around the Bangladesh team is slowly being lifted, thanks to captain Mashrafe Bin Mortaza (R), whose antics make all the pressure dissipate.

PHOTO: BCB

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INDIAN RHYTHMS

Of Banana leaves & load shedding

SPORTS REPORTER from Bangalore

If you are in Bangalore and staying in a decent hotel, you will have to be meticulous about your breakfast, lunch and dinner schedule. And if you don't follow that set pattern you should be ready to fast. The food shops, grocery stores and even the trendy malls here don't open before 11:30 am.

Want to have a good south Indian meal, better choose 'Nagarjuna Since 1984'. But if you reach there after four in the afternoon, the doors are closed to you. However, it re-opens for the influx of customers at 6:30pm and runs till 10pm.

The most striking feature of this restaurant is that the food is served on banana leaves. Ask the 'captain' of the restaurant and he will tell you those soft, full-grown banana leaves are available in the nearby kitchen market. And then ask him if the elephants of this region have ceased to exist from starvation, he will come up with a naive answer: "You will find the elephant in the zoo," before starting to give a visual of how to reach that zoo.

It's not my first visit to South India. I went to

Chennai, a city that takes just five hours to reach from Bangalore by train, way back in 1995. It's been a long time and things have changed a lot - high-rise buildings, spectacular boulevards, a fast-track living. But one thing has not changed -- the simplicity in their way of life. It might be deceiving when they say yes with a shake of the head that means no to most parts of the world, but they are very caring towards their guests.

A similarity that you can find here with Dhaka is the load shedding. Power failure is frequent here but they hardly complain as long as their pubs, one of the highest in number in Asia, don't get affected. The night is young here but public nuisance is something they never tolerate.

If you are in the spectacular Bangalore airport or at the more imposing Delhi airport you will be amazed to see how big the domestic air traffic has grown over the years. But the most pleasing scenario in both the airports is the level of noise or the lack of it. It shows the maturity of a nation which is growing silently both mentally and economically. Don't blame me if I prefer not to include Kolkata right up there mentally.

Booters lose 6-1 against UAE

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh national football team suffered a 6-1 defeat against United Arab Emirates (UAE) in a close-door international friendly at the Zayed Sports City Stadium in Abu Dhabi last night.

Bangladesh had held their mighty opponents, who are 113 places ahead in the FIFA rankings, to 1-1 in the first half as young striker Nabib Newaj jibon cancelled out a second-minute strike from Ismail Salem Al Hammadi just three minutes later. According to information provided by the Bangladesh Football Federation, goalkeeper Ashrafur Islam Rana put up a brilliant show in the first half to thwart at least five efforts from the opposition.

However after resumption, the game became a one-way traffic as UAE added five more goals, three of which were scored in the last five minutes. Ahmed Khalil Al Junaibi restored the lead in the 49th minute before Ismail struck his second in the 73rd minute. Substitute Salam Saleh struck twice in the 85th and 87th minutes respectively before the sixth goal came in the 90th minute.

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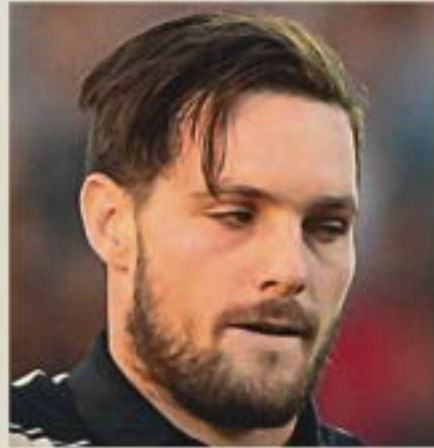
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PERFORMER OF THE DAY

MAGNIFICENT McCLENAGHAN

Playing his first game of the ICC World Twenty20, Mitchell McClenaghan showed exactly why he is one of the most underrated pacers in the world. On a pitch that supported the spinners, he helped keep a lid on the Aussies initially and then came back to bowl a crucial 19th over, in which he scalped two wickets, and helped tilt the game towards in the Black Caps' favour. He finished with figures of 3 for 17 in four overs.



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