

'Taskin's exclusion not the end of the world'

AL-AMIN from Bangalore

What is the difference between Bangladesh captain Mashrafe Bin Mortaza and his deputy Shakib Al Hasan? Love it or loathe it, Shakib is a bit pragmatic, outspoken, devoid of emotion and less diplomatic, and like someone who could not care less.

If you want to have the first glimpse of that, ask him if he was as emotionally distressed as the other members of the team -- including Mashrafe -- over the loss of Taskin Ahmed and Arafat Sunny, and he will tell you: "I can't read others' minds. But from my point of view I was not."

"Obviously he was bowling well for us for the past six months or so. Yes, he was an important part of the team but it's not that everything is at an end because he can't play for the next few games or so. I believe we have a team that can play well in tomorrow's game," he responded with a squinting smile on his face.

The ace Bangladesh all-rounder will also tell you that 'inspiring the team as a senior player and vice-captain' has a different meaning to him.

"We are all grown-up people here. We all are mature. I don't think there is anything to inspire them. The biggest inspiration is that you are playing for your country. If you get the opportunity to get to the ground, you get the opportunity to serve your country," added Shakib.

When asked if Mahmudullah Riyad

should bat up the order or whether he felt he himself should bat at number three so that he could contribute to the team more, Shakib played a straight-batted shot.

"If I'm given an option, I will bat at number three. I have done well in that position. I don't mind batting at any number for the cause of the team. I think he [Riyad] batted at number five in a few games. It depends on the situation and the team combination. I think what is required from that player on that day is more important. This is how we

HEAD-TO-HEAD IN WT20

Bangladesh	Played	India
0	2	2
IN ALL T20is		
0	4	4
LAST MEETING		
March 6, 2016 in Dhaka: India won by 8 wickets.		



are approaching things at the moment." He was also critical about the lapses in the field against Australia.

"Fielding is very important in a T20 game. We will have to take all the catches and save runs. We could not do it yesterday [Monday]. It was disappointing because we have some young and outstanding fielders. Hopefully, we will not repeat the mistakes we made yesterday. However, I don't want to make that an excuse for the loss," he said.

A member of the new breed that knows no fear, Shakib said that that attitude augured well for Bangladesh.

"[Our] Mindset has certainly changed a lot in the last three to four years. Now we know how we can win games, we have more contributors in our side. Previously it was two or three guys and now there are four or five guys who contribute regularly. So, a big change has happened. Obviously we were playing at home [during their recent successes such as the Asia Cup runners-up finish] and that confidence gave us a chance to show that we can do well in different conditions," said Shakib, adding that the Chin nas was a very good to bat on and the toss might play a vital role.

He said that his team needed to exploit the first six overs, which was

something they failed to do in the first two games, but refuted claims that they committed a lot of big mistakes which cost them dearly against Australia.

"It might be misleading a statement if we say that we have committed big mistakes. We have made some small mistakes and if we correct those we can

be a more improved team tomorrow. I think our overall bowling was good although we made some mistakes while fielding."



Ahead of the match against India, Bangladesh vice-captain Shakib Al Hasan attended the pre-match press conference in Bangalore yesterday, spicing things up with his mix of humour and brutal honesty. PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED



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'I am not on social media'

SPORTS REPORTER from Bangalore

It is true that the Bangladesh-India match of late has been blown out of proportion in the social media, especially after the World Cup quarterfinal at the MCG last year.

But both Bangladesh all-rounder Shakib Al Hasan and a reborn Indian left-arm pace bowler Ashish Nehra have played down the hype when confronted with the question of whether that 'social media war' was affecting them.

"I don't think any player thinks of that. It's in the social media or in the news. I don't believe anyone thinks that way in our team and I'm sure the sentiment is the same in the Indian team," said Shakib.

Nehra was more animated. "You are asking this question to a wrong person because I'm somebody who is not on social media. I'm still using my old Nokia. So, I'm not on Facebook, Twitter or Instagram. May be I'm from the old school. But Bangladesh is doing very well, especially in this format. You name it, like Tamim Iqbal, Mustafizur Rahman. So, there are so many good cricketers coming up and they are being part of the IPL [Indian Premier League], Big Bash [League] or the Caribbean Cricket League", said Nehra to much laughter in the audience.

He also said that the way Bangladesh cricket is going is good for world cricket.

He admitted that Taskin Ahmed has been doing very well for Bangladesh, but said his absence would not greatly affect their bowling especially with the return of Mustafizur Rahman from injury.

"Taskin was a good bowler for Bangladesh. But Mustafizur is back after not playing the last few

games due to injury. And with Al-Amin [Hossain] they have got the bowling depth, Shakib is a very good all-rounder," Nehra added.

He was also very excited to have Mustafizur in his IPL team, Sunrisers Hyderabad.

"In this format he is very good. He has got a god-gifted slower ball with a very good action and he is a very good future prospect, especially in one-day [cricket], and the good thing is that in the IPL he is in my team. He is a great prospect," said Nehra.



Virat Kohli (L) and skipper Mahendra Singh Dhoni (R), who recently broke Bangladesh hearts in the Asia Cup final, will be looking to repeat their feat in Bangalore today. PHOTO: STAR



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SCORES IN BRIEF

NEW ZEALAND: 180 for 5 in 20 overs (Guptill 80, Williamson 17, Munro 7, Anderson 21, Taylor 36 not out, Ronchi 11; Irfan 1-46, Sami 2-23, Afridi 2-40).

PAKISTAN: 158 for 5 in 20 overs (Sharjeel 47, Shehzad 30, Akmal 24, Afridi 19, Malik 15 not out, Sarfraz 11 not out; Santner 2-29, Milne 2-26)

Result: New Zealand won by 22 runs.

Player-of-the-match: Martin Guptill.

Duminy out of WI clash

REUTERS, Nagpur

South Africa will play Friday's vital World Twenty20 Group 1 match against West Indies without all-rounder JP Duminy who has been ruled out with a hamstring strain.

Duminy picked up the injury while fielding in Sunday's 37-run victory over Afghanistan and will be a loss for the side with bat and ball.

"The scans which were done yesterday (Monday) confirmed our clinical suspicion of a hamstring strain which means that he will be ruled out of Friday's game against the West Indies in Nagpur," team manager Mohammed Moosaee said in a Cricket South Africa statement on Tuesday.

"The plan is to try and get him ready for our last round-robin match against Sri Lanka in Delhi on Sunday."

Duminy has scored 83 runs from 48 balls in the competition without being dismissed and took 1-31 in three overs in the two-wicket defeat by England in South Africa's opening game.

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Eng prepared for battle

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AFP, New Delhi

Skipper Eoin Morgan vowed that England would not take lightly Afghanistan lightly in a must-win World Twenty20 tie on Wednesday after exiting their last two major tournaments with egg on their face.

England's 2014 World T20 campaign ended in an embarrassing 45-run defeat against the Netherlands while a disastrous showing at last year's 50 over World Cup was capped by a loss to Bangladesh.

Morgan's side will hope to record a resounding win against Afghanistan on Wednesday in New Delhi as they seek to up their run-rate in a tight group but the captain said there would be no taking victory for granted.

Speaking to reporters on the eve of the match, Morgan recalled the "horrific" feeling in the dressing-room at the time of the Dutch debacle but said the atmosphere was totally different after Friday's morale-boosting victory over South Africa.

"Our priority is on winning. Tomorrow is a big game and we are certainly not taking Afghanistan for granted. First and foremost we need to get into that game with the right mindset," he said.

"I think Holland was a unique set of circumstances, I think we were already out of the tournament. We went into the game with the wrong mindset," he added.

"I think they are a dangerous side. They have played a really exciting brand of cricket," said Morgan. "We watched the early stages of the tournament when qualified, and they played some really good cricket. We also saw both games, South Africa and Sri Lanka."

"I think it will be rude of me to single out any batsman... I think as a side they can be quite strong and very destructive."

Although Afghanistan are effectively out of the tournament, skipper Asghar Stanikzai said his side was determined to leave India with victory against a major team under their belt.

"We have played good cricket and looking to play well against England as well," he said.

"There will definitely be pressure on England... We are eager to win at least one match in next two. The guys are playing to win."

HEAD-TO-HEAD IN WT20

England	Played	Afghanistan
1	0	0

The teams have never met outside the World Twenty20.

LAST MEETING
21 September 2012 in Colombo: England won by 116 runs.

Afghanistan want more exposure

AFP, New Delhi

Afghanistan's cricketers must have more exposure to top-flight opposition if they are to do justice to their undoubted talent, Pakistan batting legend Inzamamul Haq said on Tuesday.

After defeats against Sri Lanka and South Africa in their first two group matches in the World Twenty20, Afghanistan's latest adventure with cricket's big guns is drawing to a close.

But even if qualification for the semifinals is now all but impossible, they have won new fans by giving South Africa a fright and still have an opportunity to spring an upset against England on Wednesday night.

The Afghan team's progress in the last few years has been one of cricket's feel-good stories but after the highs of competing in last year's 50 over World Cup and the World T20, they have no immediate fixtures against major teams on the horizon once they leave India.

Inzamam, who was appointed Afghanistan's coach last October, said his charges had done themselves proud after qualifying for the group stages by seeing off more established teams such as Zimbabwe and Scotland.

"It feels good that people are appreciating Afghanistan. Boys have worked hard. We have qualified for the world cup and played good cricket," said the former Pakistani skipper in a press conference.

"Okay, we have not been able to win a single game, but have played good game. So if we improve a level, we can win."

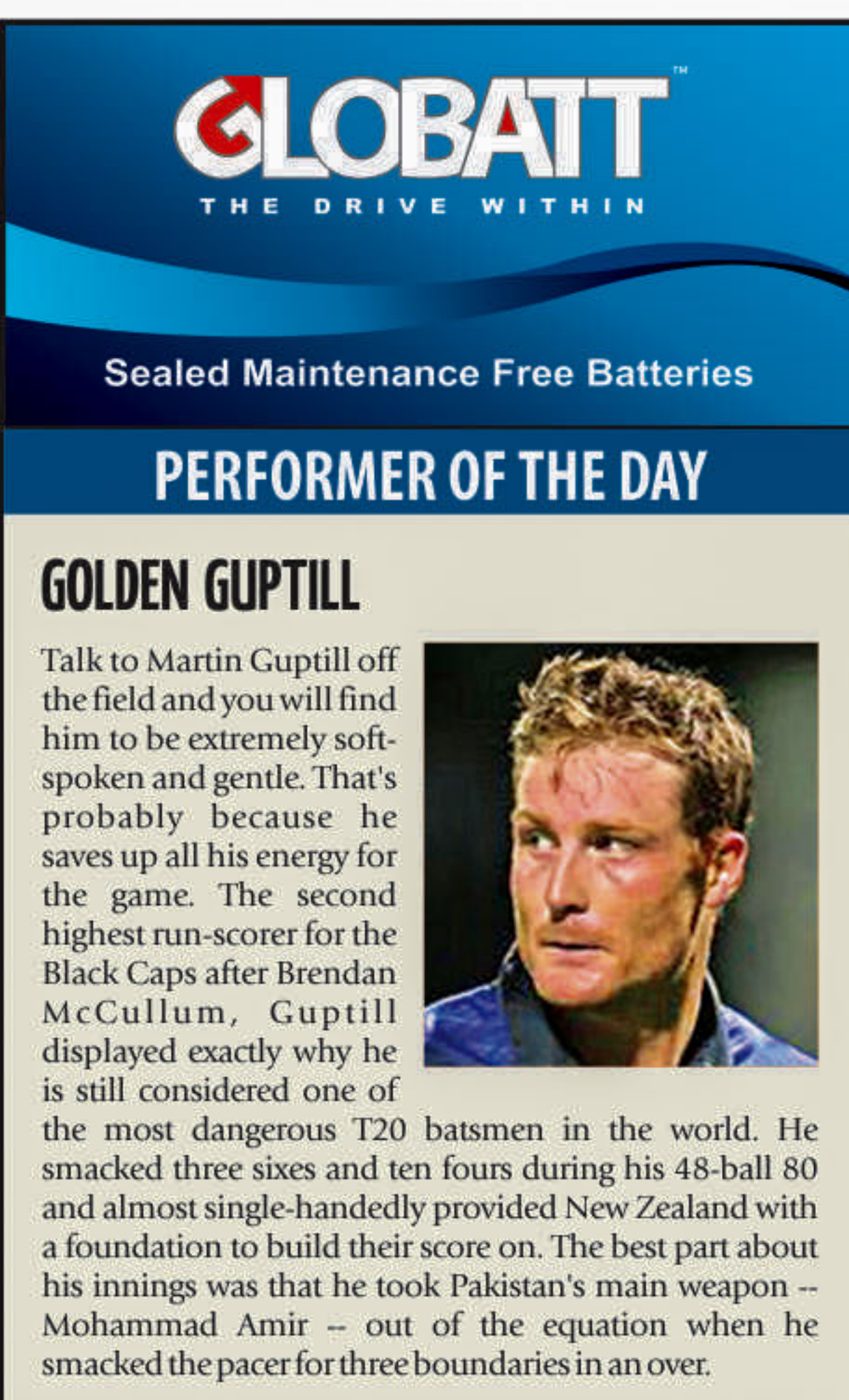
"This Afghanistan team has got all the talent, they just need more exposure. The more they play international cricket, the more their talent will improve."

In Sunday's match against South Africa, Afghanistan were 105 for two at one stage in pursuit of the Proteas' total of 210 although they were ultimately comfortably beaten after a flurry of wickets.

Burly wicket-keeper Mohammad Shahzad once again caught the eye by smacking five sixes as he raced to 44 in just 19 balls.

Indian legends Sachin Tendulkar and Rahul Dravid are among those who have expressed their admiration for the exploits of a team which has to play all its matches abroad because of the security situation back home.

Their captain Asghar Stanikzai said he was "proud" to hear such praise but also urged the International Cricket Council to ensure the team, which is now based in India, can build on their progress.



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PERFORMER OF THE DAY

GOLDEN GUPTILL

Talk to Martin Guptill off the field and you will find him to be extremely soft-spoken and gentle. That's probably because he saves up all his energy for the game. The second highest run-scorer for the Black Caps after Brendon McCullum, Guptill displayed exactly why he is still considered one of the most dangerous T20 batsmen in the world. He smacked three sixes and ten fours during his 48-ball 80 and almost single-handedly provided New Zealand with a foundation to build their score on. The best part about his innings was that he took Pakistan's main weapon -- Mohammad Amir -- out of the equation when he smacked the pacer for three boundaries in an over.



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