



Despite the harrowing loss against India in the last match, Bangladesh captain Mashrafe Bin Mortaza was in high spirits ahead of their final World Twenty20 match against New Zealand, scheduled to be played at the Eden Gardens in Kolkata today. PHOTO: BC8

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'I'm not fit as captain'

AFP, Mohali

Shahid Afridi said he was no longer up to captaining Pakistan after his team's exit Friday from the World Twenty20 but held back from making an announcement on his possible retirement.

Going into the match against Australia, the 36-year-old had strongly hinted it would be his last appearance for his country after nearly two decades of international cricket.

But Afridi, who quit as Pakistan's Test captain back in 2010 and has also already called time on his ODI career, said he still felt fit enough to carry on playing at the highest level.

"I will announce it in my country. Whatever is better for the country, I will go with that," Afridi said at the post-match ceremony in Mohali when asked if he was going to retire.

"I will see my form. There is pressure, media pressure. As a player, I am fit. As a captain, I am not fit," he added after the 21-run defeat against Australia.

Afridi is highest wicket-taker in the history of Twenty20 cricket with 97.

And the man known as "Boom Boom" for his explosive batting, has also hit a record-breaking number of sixes in all three formats since making his international debut in October 1996.

2 distinct, lethal youths

AL-AMIN from Kolkata

Bangladesh cricket is now blessed with two outstanding pace bowlers. One with near express pace who can bowl deadly yorkers and tease batsmen by bowling at a probing line on that off-stump corridor, while the other possesses lethal cutters.

Both of them are meant to serve their captain Mashrafe Bin Mortaza when he is in need of wickets. Aggression is the motto of the duo. But approach them and they will take you to two extreme points -- one extremely enterprising and the other extremely mundane.

For example, ask right-arm pace bowler Taskin Ahmed how painful it was for him to sit out the two games against India and Australia due to suspension and he will get sentimental.

"They were some of the toughest days in my life," Taskin will tell you.

Ask left-arm pace bowler Mustafizur Rahman how painful it was for him to watch Bangladesh's opening Super Ten game against Pakistan, which he missed due to injury and he will tell you in three words: "It felt bad". And you will be amazed to learn that that soft voice has little or no lift in it. Mustafizur keep on talking that way despite the best efforts to get a livelier response.

Ask him how he enjoyed his World Cup debut and which of the two wickets (Steve Smith and Mitch Marsh) satisfied him most and he will say 'both were good' and that he could hardly find any difference between playing in a World Cup and an international match at home. Ask him what went through his mind when he was running for that single against India, his answer will be "what should I say?"

After a 15 minute struggle, this reporter had to give up the fight to engage a young

pace bowler, who only a few years back, hid his face in his mother's lap whenever a relative visited his home.

A few days ago Bangladesh bowling coach Heath Streak said: "I'm teaching him English and he is teaching me Bangla." So, the learning process is going on. But nobody will mind a non-responsive Mustafizur as long as he is doing all the talking with the ball.

Taskin however is somebody you will love to talk with. He may be a bit emotional like his mentor Mashrafe Bin Mortaza, but when he talks he is assertive. Someone who believes that he doesn't need to read about the legends of the world to overcome adversities, he will tell you: "I have got someone in our team as good as a legend."

He told reporters before attending the

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bowling test in Chennai that he was going there to do something he was supposed to do with his team in training. And the night before he left for Dhaka he repeated the same thing.

"I will take the next correction test the same way I did last time. I have bowled some 43 deliveries and those machines might have found something which was not correct. But that test made me mentally stronger and I feel that I will be a better bowler when I return," Taskin told this reporter the night before his departure for Dhaka.

His last act was even more stunning.

"I was feeling bad for what had happened with me. But to be honest that pain is nothing compared to what I'm going through after our defeat against India."

'India defeat will make us tougher'

Mash to consider retirement after return

SPORTS REPORTER from Kolkata

It was a press briefing meant for Bangladesh captain Mashrafe Bin Mortaza's thoughts on the next game against New Zealand but it was invariably dominated by a discussion centering that heart-breaking one-run defeat against India in Bangalore.

"We have lost many games but we have not lost a game like that [against India]. We understand how painful that defeat was for everybody in our country. We will try not to make the same mistakes again and do something better in tomorrow's [Sunday's] game against New Zealand. Obviously we will try to play our best cricket and if possible win it," was how Mashrafe responded to the first question at the Eden Gardens yesterday.

"I don't have any explanation [behind the defeat to India] and I'm sure nobody can explain that in our team. If you lose by one run you can easily find many faults for that in fielding or in batting. We have never been in such a situation on the big stage; this was something new for us. But I will not say it's because of a lack of experience. We have quite a good number of players with us who have played the last World Cup. The most important thing is that we learn from this so that we can win even tougher games," the Bangladesh captain continued as questions focusing on the Bangalore game continued to be thronged.

Asked when he was going to retire from T20s, he responded briefly.

"I will think over it once I return home," he said.

"Against Pakistan we lost badly, but in the last two games against Australia and India we played well. If we can

take positives from the last two games I think we will be able to get a good result from tomorrow's [today's] game. They [New Zealand] are a good team and have adjusted to these conditions very well. But we have nothing to lose and if we think like that we can do something better," he said while explaining his team's chances against the Kiwis.

But the Bangladesh captain looked a bit uncomfortable when asked if they should be a little less emotional on the field as a team.

"Yes, you are right. But emotion is something which varies from person to person. Emotion does help sometimes and it's been working for us. I don't know how to answer exactly," said Mashrafe.

When asked how they were trying to get to terms with that emotional shockwave, Mashrafe said: "Very simple. It's true that everyone is in a state of shock. No one is blaming anybody and at the same time it is very difficult to accept it. But as a player we should move forward from here. I have told everybody after the match that this is not the end. We might not come across that same situation again but we will have to be alert in the future. My clear message is that we have another international match in hand so let's focus on that."

He said that despite the three defeats the Tigers have performed very well in different Indian conditions.

"If you look at the past records I think we are heading to a good position. T20 is a kind of game where there are particular players who are vital in certain positions in a game. We were missing those players before but some new players coming into the team are now filling those voids. I believe we will be a completely different team before the next World Cup," said a confident Bangladesh captain.

HEAD-TO-HEAD IN WT20

Bangladesh	Played	New Zealand
0	1	1
IN ALL T20s		
0	3	3
LAST MEETING		
November 6 2013 in Dhaka: Bangladesh lost by 15 runs.		

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'Can't take BD lightly'

SPORTS REPORTER from Bangalore

New Zealand spinners Ish Sodhi and Mitchell Santner have proved to be the side's game-changers in the ICC World Twenty20 so far. With one more match remaining the group stages, they will hope to end it with a bang and go through to the semis with an unbeaten record.

Sodhi expects the game against Bangladesh today to be as difficult as the other three encounters and he believes his side will leave no stone unturned in order to win.

"To be honest, most of the time we have played them [Bangladesh] in these conditions, they have been a really good opposition. The last game [India vs Bangladesh] was just a highlight of how strong they can be in these conditions and for them to take it so close against a team like India, I don't think anyone can take them lightly."

"We have to start again, adapt to the conditions and try to gauge the players we are playing against because there are fantastic players over here," said Sodhi during the pre-match press conference in Kolkata yesterday.

"We're just going to treat it like any other game and play the same way that we have been playing -- adapt to conditions, adapt to the players we are up against and try to combat what we can on the ground," he added.

The leg-spinner who scalped five wickets at an average of 11.40 has extracted plenty of turn in each of the matches and troubled the batsmen quite a bit. It was something which he admitted he didn't expect.

"To be completely honest I didn't expect it to turn as much as it has. Most of the tournaments that I've watched over here [India] in the past few years have been pretty decent batting surfaces and for them to turn as much was unexpected. We've had to adapt and I think we've done that pretty well so far," said Sodhi.

Root shrugs off pressure

AFP, New Delhi

Fresh from visiting the Taj Mahal along with teammates David Willey, Jos Buttler and Liam Plunkett, Joe Root said he would be happy for England to win ugly in Saturday's crunch World Twenty20 showdown against Sri Lanka.

Speaking to reporters on the eve of the match, England's premier batsman said dealing with pressure was part of the job and the team knew it couldn't afford any slip-ups against the title holders.

"There is always pressure. It's a must win game, but it's always been like that since we got here," he said.

"The pressure is no more than it has been throughout the whole thing." Root admitted that England's batsmen and bowlers had yet to perform but said results rather than quality was the main thing.



New Zealand's shrewd captain Kane Williamson will be sure to have some tricks up his sleeve when the Kiwis meet Bangladesh today. PHOTO: AFP

SL fight to avoid exit

Take on under-pressure England today

AFP, New Delhi

Holders Sri Lanka face being dumped out of cricket's World Twenty20 on Saturday unless they can overcome an England team desperate for runs to clinch their own spot in the semifinals.

After a stuttering start to their title defence, the islanders will have next to no chance of reaching next week's semis if they lose in New Delhi even though they still have one more game to go.

England will be hoping the failure by their top-order batsmen in Wednesday's tie against Afghanistan was a blip and they can reproduce the swashbuckling form that helped them to a record-breaking victory over South Africa last weekend.

Little has gone right for Sri Lanka of late and they were left reeling by the withdrawal of leading paceman Lasith Malinga at the start of the tournament with injury problems.

Their first two matches have included a defeat to the West Indies and a less than

convincing victory over Afghanistan. Only one batsman has passed 40 and their fielding has been a shambles.

Skipper Angelo Mathews said after the West Indies match that "the top order let us down" and the team would work hard on their fielding as it had been "so sloppy".

After the West Indies' win against South Africa, a defeat for Sri Lanka will automatically spell their departure from the tournament.

Since South Africa lost, the Lankans will no longer have to bank on Afghanistan pulling off a victory over the Proteas in their final match.

The complicated mathematics mean victory is not only vital for England but they also need to sharply increase

their run-rate. England captain Eoin Morgan said he had no particular concerns about his top order, which sparked against South Africa, but said the team would seek to regain their focus after their stuttering win over the Afghans.

The opener missed Wednesday's match but Morgan was "confident he will be fit" for Saturday.

HEAD-TO-HEAD IN WT20

Sri Lanka	Played	England
1	3	2
IN ALL T20s		
4	6	2
LAST MEETING		
May 20 2014 in London: Sri Lanka won by 9 runs.		

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PERFORMER OF THE DAY

FAULKNER THE FINISHER

Player of the match James Peter Faulkner is an all-rounder and has earned the nickname of "The Finisher" due to his ability to close out the innings or to seal victories as a batsman as well as bowling late in the innings. Faulkner did not bat yesterday, however he yet again proved his bowling prowess. Australia posted 194 prompting Pakistan to work hard. Faulkner though had other ideas as he deftly bowled out Sharjeel Khan in the sixth over. He then came back towards the end to scalp four more wickets to put an end to Pakistan's hopes. He removed the dangerous Khaled Latif and Imad Wasim in the 18th and got the better of Wahab Riaz and Sarfraz Ahmed in the 20th to end up with figures of 5 for 28.

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