

SPORT

Taskin in the thick of things

SPORTS REPORTER



Taskin Ahmed's return to the Bangladesh side, following some time away for an illegal bowling action that was cleared right before the Afghanistan series, has had as many ups and down as possible in the space of five matches.

Things seemed to have settled down after Bangladesh's series-levelling 34-run win on Sunday. Yesterday, before boarding the bus on the way to the airport for the third and final ODI against England in Chittagong tomorrow, he seemed content in his own skin and where the team is at to be able to admit that England are the stronger side.

"England, no doubt, are a stronger side. But if we can play our best, then winning is possible in the series-decider," the 21-year-old fast bowler said. "Actually it is difficult to tag us 'favourites'. But if we can play to our potential, we can then win the series. After winning the last match, the confidence among the team's players has been built up. Hopefully, this confidence will help us win the next match."

In his comeback match against Afghanistan on September 25, he was cheered wildly by the Mirpur faithful, but

his nervous energy resulted in him spraying the ball and carted around the ground by spirited opponents. He came back in that very match to claim four wickets in the last two overs as the Afghans imploded.

In the next match he was expensive during a dispiriting loss, before he played his part in the series-clinching win with two wickets.

But this England series has seen him come to his own. Even during the loss in the first match, he was one of the few who troubled centurion Ben Stokes with his pace, and should have had his wicket but for a dropped catch when the batsman was on 69.

The fruits of his labours were however delivered in the second match, when he found a good length and movement under lights to pick up three for 47, including that of Jos Buttler, which sparked celebrations of an intensity that caught the match referee's notice.

"In the first spell I bowled in the 2nd ODI against England on Sunday, I tried to experiment and bowl too many bouncers. However, in the second spell, I focused on length and pace, and that's why I was successful," Taskin added.

"Buttler is a great batsman. He is a game-changer at that moment. I was very glad to get his wicket. Our celebration was more because of that."



Left-arm spinner Taijul Islam (L) and pacer Taskin Ahmed arrive in Chittagong yesterday to bolster Bangladesh's bowling attack against England in the third and final ODI in the port city tomorrow.

PHOTO: ANURUP KANTI DAS

The end-over conundrum

SAKEB SUBHAN



When Mashrafe Bin Mortaza played his heroic hand to club 44 in 29 deliveries to help Bangladesh score 75 crucial runs in the second ODI against England on Sunday, it was cause for joy for the home fans, not just because it put the Tigers back into the match and the series, but also as it bucked a recent trend of mediocrity.

In their recently concluded series against Afghanistan, a rung below them in international cricket, Bangladesh's last 10-over scores were 69 for seven in 10, 54 for three in 9.2 and 64 for five in 10. In the first ODI against England on Friday, they plunged a rare depth by scoring just 32 runs while surrendering their remaining six wickets in the 47 balls they played after the 40th over.

So Mashrafe's rabble-raising batting did breathe new life into Bangladesh's series as it was instrumental in their win after the first ODI debacle, but Bangladesh's troubles in the slog or 'death' overs is in no way recent. Fans may remember grumbles about Bangladesh's slog-over pedigree at least as early as the build-up to the 2011 50-over World Cup that Bangladesh co-hosted. Then, a player like Mahmudullah Riyad

was being prepared to do an Andrew Symonds -- a course of action that, while expectedly proving fruitless, reflected the think-tank's desperation to find a solution in an area increasingly more important in modern cricket.

For the record, Bangladesh's stats in the last 10 overs of ODIs in 2011 was a run-rate of 6.6. In other words, when the need of the hour was to go all guns blazing in order to get as much runs on the board Bangladesh on average scored 66 for two. The relevance of this statistic will be evident in a paragraph or two.

Five years on, Bangladesh is rightly celebrating a run that, since the end of 2014, has taken in six straight ODI series victories at home, and it may well be a seventh if the Tigers clinch the series in Chittagong on Wednesday. It has also featured a maiden World Cup quarterfinal appearance in March 2015 in Australia and New Zealand. In the eyes of not just their fans but the cricketing world in general, Bangladesh have arrived as far as ODI cricket is concerned.

2011 can be remembered as the last year when Bangladesh could be expected to lose more than they won (14 losses to 6 victories). With the exception of 2014 -- when an almost mystically terrible run of close matches derailed progress -- that expectation has since been reversed and the era since the 2015 World Cup hailed as a golden

era of sorts. But even in the years of 2015 and 2016, in the 17 ODIs Bangladesh have played, the run rate in the last 10 overs has been a 2011-esque 6.9. Put simply, according to the numbers, you can expect golden-era Bangladesh to score 69 for four in the last 10 overs.

To put that in perspective, Australia, the number one team in the world, can be expected to score on average 81 for three in the last 10, based on their numbers from the same period. More pertinently, the corresponding number for fifth-placed England is 80 for two since they were dumped out of the World Cup by the Tigers in March last year.

This poverty of end-over resources has wide-ranging implications, and perhaps we have already seen them in the current series. Chasing 310 and with Imrul Kayes batting beautifully in the first ODI, the rest of Bangladesh's top order, barring Shakib Al Hasan, batted restlessly and got out. Perhaps their restlessness was down to the knowledge that come the last 10, they could not be confident of chasing more than 70 runs.

This should be a sobering reminder of Bangladesh's limits. For all their success, if they keep lagging behind the top teams in the crucial last overs of a match, their rise up the ranks will stall in their current mid-table position.

Taijul included in 3rd ODI squad

SPORTS REPORTER



Bangladesh left-arm spinner Taijul Islam was recalled for the third ODI against England on October 12 at Chittagong at the expense of Mosharraf Hossain.

Taijul was included in the playing eleven during the ODI-series against Afghanistan, and he played two matches. He picked up a wicket but was relatively economical in both the games at Mirpur.

He was replaced by 38-year-old Mosharraf Hossain who picked up three wickets in the third ODI against Afghanistan, his comeback into the national side after eight years. But the ageing cricketer's star ran out of steam in the first ODI against England on Friday, when he conceded 23 runs in three overs, dropped two catches and injured his hand to boot. A combination of those factors seems to

have combined to bring back Taijul into the reckoning. Known as an attacking left-arm spinner, if picked in the playing 11 Taijul should fit right into the equation at the Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium, where the surface is known to be slower and lower, and therefore more spin-friendly.

After the 34-run victory on Sunday, the closely contested Bangladesh-England ODI series is tied at 1-1.

All eyes will be on Chittagong tomorrow when the umpire will call play at 2:30pm local time.

SQUAD

Mashrafe Bin Mortaza (Captain), Shakib Al Hasan, Mushfiqur Rahim (Wicketkeeper), Tamim Iqbal, Mahmudullah Riyad, Imrul Kayes, Shafiul Islam, Soumya Sarkar, Taskin Ahmed, Taijul Islam, Nasir Hossain, Al-Amin Hossain, Sabbir Rahman

Indian held for suspected gambling links

AFP, Dhaka

Bangladesh cricket authorities said Monday they have detained an Indian for suspected links with illegal gambling operations during a cricket series between Bangladesh and England.

The suspect was detained during Friday's first one-day international.

"Our anti-corruption officials found his movements suspicious so they detained him and handed him over to local police," said Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) spokesman Jalal Yunus.

Gambling is illegal in Bangladesh, whose cricket authorities threw out four Indian nationals last year for suspected involvement during a Twenty20 tournament.

Local police official Bhuiyan Mahboob Hossain said the suspect had been handed to the Indian High Commission after being interrogated, and had not been charged.

England agreed to tour Bangladesh only after the Bangladesh authorities promised "unprecedented" security during the month-long tour.

The three-match ODI series is currently locked at 1-1 after England won the first match by 21 runs and Bangladesh levelled with a 34-run win in the second match.

The two teams will head now to Chittagong, where the third and final match of the series will be held on Wednesday. The teams will also play two Tests.



England players arrive at the Shah Amanat International Airport in Chittagong yesterday to play the third and final ODI against Bangladesh which will start tomorrow.

PHOTO: STAR

'Jos wasn't going to take it'

SPORTS REPORTER



England coach Trevor Bayliss has backed his young stand-in skipper Jos Buttler for his part in the incident during the second ODI against Bangladesh in Mirpur on Sunday.

The incident took place in the 28th over of England's chase when Taskin Ahmed trapped Buttler in front, and the batsman reviewed the umpire's decision, only for replays to show that he was struck in front. The Bangladesh team celebrated with intensity and there were a few words exchanged before umpires intervened.

Bangladesh captain Mashrafe Bin Mortaza and middle-order batsman Sabbir Rahman were both fined 20 per cent of their match fees, while Buttler received an official reprimand for breaching Level 1 of the ICC Code of Conduct.

Both the Bangladesh players were found to have breached Article 2.1.7 of the ICC Code of Conduct for Players and Player Support Personnel, which relates to "using language, actions or gestures which disparage or which could provoke an aggressive reaction from a batsman upon his/her dismissal during an international match", while Buttler was guilty of violating Article 2.1.4, which deals with "using lan-

guage or a gesture that is obscene, offensive or insulting during an international match".

While this was the first offence for the rival captains, Sabbir has been sanctioned for the second time since the introduction of the revised Code. He had received two demerit points for breaching Article 2.1.4 in the series against Afghanistan on 26 September. As such, he now has three demerit points against his name.

"I haven't read the match referee's report but they were fined and Jos was warned for retaliating and that in itself tells a bit of a story," said Bayliss yesterday. "I think Jos wearing the captain's hat was not going to take it lying down."

Junaid ton lifts Rajshahi

SPORTS REPORTER



While the two Tier 1 games in the tourist city of Cox's Bazar fell victim to inclement weather there was still plenty of action elsewhere involving the other lower tier National Cricket League games in the country yesterday.

The third day's play involving Dhaka against Barisal and Khulna against Dhaka Metro were washed out without a ball being bowled at the Sheikh Kamal International Cricket Stadium and its Academy ground. And even though one innings has so far been completed, both games are irrevocably heading for draw even if the play resumes on the fourth and final day today.

At the BKSP in Savar, former national opener Junaid Siddiqui scored a fantastic century to give Rajshahi a crucial first-innings lead against Rangpur. Resuming the day on 48, the left-hander struck 126 off 177 balls, of which 14 were boundaries, to dead lift Rajshahi from a precarious 99-6 to 268 against Barisal's first innings total of 234. He shared a vital 120 runs for the seventh wicket with Sunjamul Islam, who made a very useful 40.

Rangpur were 32 for no loss at stumps on the third day. Rajshahi however will miss the service of their key left-arm spinner Taijul Islam, who has been recalled for the third one-day against England, on the final day today.

At the Fattullah cricket stadium on the outskirts of Dhaka, Yasir Ali led a Chittagong fight-back before becoming one of the five victims of off-spinner Shahanur Rahman in the nervous 90s.

Resuming the day on 23 with his side reeling at 115-5, Yasir found an equally

resolute partner in Saifuddin. The pair added 111 runs for the seventh wicket as Chittagong finished on 315 in reply to Sylhet's 444. Yasir scored 95 with the help of eight fours and a six while Saifuddin hit 56 which contained six boundaries before also falling prey to Shahnur who finished with 5-56.

Sylhet however raced to 74-2, an overall lead of 203 in a desperate attempt to enforce a result on the final day today.

SCORES IN BRIEF

SYLHET: 444 all out in 139.2 overs and 74-2 (Zakir 21, Rajin 12) v CHITTAGONG: 315 all out in 101.2 overs (Yasir Ali 95, Saifuddin 56; Shahanur 5-65, Enamul Jnr 3-54) DHAKA: 523 all out in 132 overs (Taibur 147, Majed 96, Rony 84, Nadif 75, Zahiduzzaman 57; Monir 5-152) v BARISAL: 103 for 1 (Fazle 55 not out, Nafees 40 not out; Sharif 1-20) KHULNA: 293 all out in 104.4 overs (Nurul 103 not out, Razzak 45; Sunny 3-113, Shahidul 2-23) v DHAKA METRO: 59 for no loss RANGPUR: 234 all out in 77.4 overs and 32-0 (Saymon 20 not out, Jahid 10 not out) v RAJSHAHI: 268 all out in 82.4 overs (Junaid 126, Sunjamul 40; Saddam 3-46, Ariful 3-49)



JUNAID SIDDIQUI ... 126