



With torrential rainfall in Chittagong yesterday, the Tigers were forced to train at the Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium's indoor facilities. While the forecast for the game is gloomy as well, hometown hero Tamim Iqbal will be hoping that he will be the one making a splash in the third and final ODI against England today.

PHOTO: ANURUP KANTI DAS

All about focus, no apologies

NAIMUL KARIM from Chittagong



Bangladesh skipper Mashrafe Bin Mortaza has said that his team does not need to apologise to Jos Buttler

for the heated exchanges that took place between the two teams during the second ODI.

Elaborating on the incident, which led to the skipper and Sabbir Rahman receiving fines and demerit points, he said: "After getting that wicket [of Jos Buttler], we just had a celebration and I think you can look at it as a normal thing that every team does. But, there's a law and the match referee thought that it went outside the code of conduct. We did not mean it [to hurt Buttler]. But whatever happened is done and we are trying to play a good match tomorrow."

When a journalist from Sky Sports asked Mashrafe if he would apologise to Buttler, Mashrafe replied: "Actually we didn't do anything wrong and so we shouldn't. We feel that we just celebrated. We don't have to be sorry for that."

Furthermore, Mashrafe also said that the events in the last match wouldn't make the final ODI any more tense.

"Actually the discussion and a criticism of the matter has not bothered me at all. I have never thought about these things in my career. I have played for 16 years and we have heard many comments against us and yet we continued playing," said Mashrafe.

"Yes, things happen in the heat of the moment, but we don't need to go overboard with this. Everyone will have to take this easily. The match referee was there. He saw our mistakes and we have been fined. I have accepted this and this is a gentleman's game and we will try to play our best," he added.

"Our team is completely normal and I am hundred per cent sure that my team is not thinking about these things. I am sure all our players will be calm and we will try to do our best in the final ODI."

"Sabbir and I got fined because of our excessive celebration which at this point of time is not allowed in the ICC's code of conduct. You have seen in the past as well that we celebrated in similar ways. Take for instance, the World Cup game

against England. When we won that game, we had celebrated this way. But maybe at that point of time, the law wasn't there. So we have to be cautious," he added.

TAMIM DID NOTHING WRONG!

Apart from the issue related to Buttler, Mashrafe was also asked about the incident that took place after the match, when the players were shaking hands with each other. An argument took place between Ben Stokes and Tamim Iqbal and the video of it has since been widely circulated on social media. Stokes had even tweeted about the incident, saying that he would not shake hands with a player who 'puts a shoulder' to his teammate.

Regarding that issue, Mashrafe said: "I saw the video and I didn't find any fault in Tamim. In fact, I don't want to blame anyone. We had gone to shake hands normally when we lost the first ODI and we wanted to do the same when we won the second."



MASHRAFE BIN MORTAZA

"I don't want to blame anyone, but if you speak of Tamim's fault then I will tell you that I have seen the video and I was standing right ahead of him and I didn't hear or see Tamim do anything wrong."

Prior to Mashrafe's press conference, Moeen Ali had said that some of their players, especially their captain Jos Buttler would be desperate to win the final ODI.

When asked for a response, Mashrafe said: "Look, our target here is to win the series. And we are focused on that. Now, if you want to win the game just for the sake of certain things that happened in the last game, then that will create unnecessary pressure. We are just thinking of playing our game normally and nothing else."

Tigers return to hunting ground

SPORTS REPORTER from Chittagong



There is a reason why the Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium (ZACS) in Chittagong is often referred to as the Bangladesh national team's lucky ground.

Have a glance at the stats and they will tell you that the Tigers have won nine out of their last 11 ODIs here. Those are impressive numbers, but then again, the positive sentiment relating to the port city are more than numbers can show.

From crushing wins to brilliant comebacks, from surpassing mental barriers to some fine Test performances as well, the memories that the Tigers have created here in the few matches they have played go beyond the realm of statistics.

And one does not need to look too far back. The last time Bangladesh played here, they beat South Africa in a series for the first time. The turnaround in the series, which began in Dhaka -- where Bangladesh levelled the series after losing the first match -- was completed in Chittagong.

It was a merciless performance. After restricting the visitors to 168, Soumya Sarkar's whirlwind 90 took the Tigers home in just 26.1 overs and with nine wickets hand. Till date, that is the only nine-wicket win that Bangladesh have against a Test nation.

Travel a little further down memory lane and you will recall the game between Bangladesh and the West Indies in October 2011. The Tigers had already lost the series, but they needed something to end on a high. On a slow, turning track, the men from the Caribbean were bundled out for just 61 runs with Shakib Al

Of all the memories however, Bangladesh's thrilling win against England during the World Cup in 2011 stands out. Chasing 225, the hosts were reduced to 169 for eight. The game was supposed to be done and dusted and the stands were clearing.

However, right at that moment, an unlikely hero -- Shafiqul Islam -- stepped up and scored a handsome 24 off 24 and along with Mahmudullah Riyad took Bangladesh over the line with just one over to go.

When asked if the team members discussed the win in 2011 yesterday, Mashrafe Bin Mortaza provided an answer expected of him: "Our record here is good. But we can't think of that and play every game. That was a different England team, and this is a different England team. And that match took place five years ago. For now, we are focusing on minimising the mistakes that we committed in the last two games because that's the only way we can win the decider."

It rained throughout the afternoon yesterday and Mashrafe and co did not get a chance to see the wicket. But with the covers on for the last two days, and going by the traditional slow and low characteristic of the ZACS, the players could well be playing on a similar track as that of the second ODI today. In fact, it might be even slower.

Regardless of how the wicket behaves, Mashrafe and co will hope they can continue the good run and win their seventh successive series today.

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Hasan scalping a four-wicket haul. That remains the second-lowest total scored by any team against the Tigers. In fact, the lowest ever total was also posted at the ZACS. The Zimbabweans, in 2009, were bundled out for just 44.

Fatullah witnesses thrilling stalemate

SPORTS REPORTER



A resolute ninth-wicket stand between I f t e k h a r

Ahmed and Arif Sajjad eked out a dramatic draw for Chittagong from the jaws of defeat against Sylhet in the Tier 2 National Cricket League match yesterday.

The pair plodded away the Sylhet attack for 32 minutes under fading lights at the Khan Shaheb Osman Ali Stadium in Fatullah and added just eight runs in a mind-boggling 11.2 overs before Arif was bowled by left-arm spinner Rajatul Ferdous -- Sylhet's most successful bowler with five for 48. But the dismissal drew the curtains on an exciting end after the umpires called it a day due to bad light, leaving Sylhet granting after that near miss.

Earlier Sylhet, resuming the fourth and final day at 74 for two, raced to 243 for five before declaring their second innings with a massive lead of 372 runs. Overnight batsman Zakir Hossain hit a fluent 86 off 104 balls with eight fours and a six while first-innings centurion Alok Kapali hit a brisk 58 off 31 balls that contained four sixes.

Chittagong wobbled in their chase, losing wickets at regular intervals and were staring at defeat when they lost their eighth wicket at 138 in 46.1 overs. Sylhet won nine points while Chittagong grabbed seven from the drawn encounter.

The other three games also ended in draws with the two Tier 1 games involving Dhaka against

Barisal and Khulna against Dhaka Metro being washed out without a ball being bowled for a second successive day at the Sheikh Kamal International Cricket Stadium and its Academy ground in Cox's Bazar.

At the BKSP in Savar, Rangpur had some much-needed batting practice against Rajshahi with their opening pair of Saymon Ahmed (95) and Jahid putting on 135 runs in a second innings total of 233 for seven. Rajshahi however got 8 points against Rangpur's 6 by virtue of having a first-innings lead courtesy of a fine century from former national opener Junaid Siddiqui.

SCORES IN BRIEF

SYLHET: 444 all out in 139.2 overs and 234-5 dec (Zakir 86, Kapali 58) v **CHITTAGONG:** 315 and 146-9 in 57.3 overs (Saeed 68, Yasir 23; Rahatul Ferdous 5-48)
Result: Match drawn

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)
Result: Match drawn

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
Result: Match drawn

RANGPUR: 234 and 233-7 dec in 79 overs (Saymon 94, Jahid 54; Sunjamul 4-106) v **RAJSHAH:** 268 all out in 82.4 overs (Junaid 126, Sunjamul 40; Saddam 3-46, Ariful 3-49)
Result: Match drawn

No reserve day: ECB

SPORTS REPORTER

The England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) rejected a request from the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) to add a reserve day to the ongoing ODI series. The request was made yesterday ahead of the third and final ODI between the two teams, set to take place at the Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium in Chittagong.

Director of BCB's cricket operations Akram Khan confirmed that the request was made. "Considering the unseasonal rains, we requested them for the reserve day. This was not in the MoU (Memorandum of Understanding). They told us that they can't change the schedule as they would face problems," said Akram.

A report published on ESPNcricinfo quoted an unnamed ECB official, who said that while they considered the request they could not allow it because of logistical issues. A number of England's ODI players are scheduled to leave for the UK on Thursday and the compactness of the tour has not allowed them to comply with the BCB's request.

The port city has been witnessing rains for the last two days. While it rained nearly the entire day on Monday, it rained throughout the afternoon on Tuesday. There is a good chance for the third ODI today to be affected as well.

Heated exchanges will fire up both teams: Moeen

SPORTS REPORTER from Chittagong



England all-rounder Moeen Ali has said that the heated exchanges between the Bangladesh and England players in the second ODI will fire up both the teams for the decider tomorrow.

While he did say that the matter had been put to bed by both teams and that everyone was looking forward to some good cricket, he admitted that it would also make both sides more desperate to win the third and final ODI at the Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium (ZACS) in Chittagong.

"Regarding the [last] game, some of the guys got heated up and that can happen in a competitive game. I think we have players who can get heated up and Bangladesh also have players who can get heated up and that's what it was really. That has sort of been put to bed now and we can concentrate on the game," said Ali during the pre-match press conference at the ZACS today afternoon.

"I think it [the heated exchange] will just fire both teams up. I think both teams will want to win more than before. Bangladesh have not lost a home series for six series now and we want to win. And I know some of our players, especially our captain, will desperately want to win this game," he added.

When asked if the whole issue was blown out of proportion by the media, considering that the players involved in the exchange were just booked for a level 1 offence, he said: "Maybe a little bit. I know from Bangladesh's point of view it [Jos Buttler's] was a big wicket. They celebrated. But there is also a way you celebrate sometimes. But things can happen before and after a match, it will just fire up everybody and it makes for a good series now."



Getting a head start on their training, the English cricketers managed to get some practice out in the open and have an enjoyable session early in the morning in the port city of Chittagong yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

"Hopefully both teams will behave well in this game and according to the rules of the game and we can look back at the series and say this was a very good cricketing series," said Ali.

The 29-year-old said that England's performance in the last game did not represent the aggressive brand that they have been following for the last one year or so.

"I think the most disappointing thing was we batted a little bit like the old England for the first time in a couple of years. That's more disappointing than the way we lost. We would rather lose the game playing the way we have played in the past two years. So hopefully tomorrow we can play the way we have been batting and not just throw our

wickets away," said Ali.

THE BEST SECURITY I HAVE EVER SEEN!

The first leg of the series will come to an end tomorrow and it will see a number of England's ODI players leave Bangladesh. And so, Ali was asked how he felt regarding the entire tour so far with regards to security arrangements and other issues.

To that he replied: "I have never seen security like this. It's been the best. In other words another country will do well to beat the security that's been provided and I think it's a big thing. I will definitely encourage other teams to come. So far it has been amazing and I will really encourage other teams to come."