

SPORT

Taskin set for red-ball bow

BISHWAJIT ROY

Pacer Taskin Ahmed's dream of playing longer-version cricket is set to be realised as the national selectors have decided to draft the right-arm paceman in the team for the second two-day practice match at the MA Aziz Stadium in Chittagong starting from October 16.

"We have decided to include Taskin in the squad for the second practice match as we want to see how his body responds to longer-version cricket. We had initially planned to see him in the fourth round of the National Cricket League but as it's been deferred we changed our plans," informed chief selector Minhajul Abedin yesterday.

There was never a question about his Test credentials as there has hardly been any doubt about his ability; rather it is a matter of when he will get the green signal from the physio and other concerned people regarding his fitness and strength that has held back his chance of donning the whites?

"We need a bowler like Taskin for our Test team but you all know there was concern with the strength of his body and fitness was a big issue. But he bowled brilliantly after coming back from suspension and looked good. He has no complaints about his fitness, so we have decided to take the first step of bringing him into the fold of longer-version cricket," added Minhajul.

Former national captain Khaled Mahmud, who has been watching the 21-year old paceman very closely as a team manager, echoed that sentiment. "You saw he bowled brilliantly after coming back from suspension and he is real quick. We need such a bowler for longer-version cricket but it's too early to say about his chance in the Test side. We have to see how he take the load in the two-day match. I am not the right person to talk about the issue of his fitness or his body strength but what I can say is that he looks better than before."

If Taskin passes the first test in the two-day match, will he be considered for the Test series against England? There is no chance for the Chittagong Test but one cannot com-



Sometimes pictures are more powerful than a thousand words. And this particular picture (from R to L Mashrafe Bin Mortaza, Ben Stokes and Chris Woakes) after Wednesday's third and final ODI between Bangladesh and England gives enough evidence of who the winner is.

PHOTO: ANURUP KANTI DAS



pletely rule out a debut in the Dhaka Test.

Minhajul however said: "We have a Test series in New Zealand, so it would be fantastic for us if he shows positive signs."

The bowler however was excited with the fact that he was going to wear the whites for the first time. "It's just a two-day match but still I am excited because after three and a half years I am going to wear the white dress -- a dream which I have kept in my heart for long. Now let's see how things go," Taskin told The Daily Star over phone from Chittagong.

"I am working hard and my body is also responding well. Yes, I have to manage a few things and for that we need to work hard but I know I have to manage those things to fulfill my dream of playing Test cricket. I am happy with the way I bowled in the ODI series after returning from the suspension and I hope things will be better in the coming days."

Mashrafe has no complaints

SPORTS REPORTER from Chittagong



A number of streaks came to an end on Wednesday as England overcame Bangladesh at the Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium in Chittagong on Wednesday.

By winning the series decider England inflicted the first ODI series defeat for the Tigers at home since June 2014 when they were beaten 2-0 by India.

After a series that ebbed and flowed from Bangladesh's abject surrender in the first match, through the skipper's rousing all-round display in the second to England's superiority in helpful conditions in the decider settled the issue.

The margins of victory in each match -- 21 runs, 34 runs and four wickets -- revealed how closely the sides were matched. In the end, though both sides said that England got the better of the conditions having won a crucial toss, the picture emerged that England's batting and overall balance were slightly superior to their hosts. More players, both young and experienced, through the series stepped up for them, such as player-of-the-series Ben Stokes; newcomers Ben Duckett, Sam Billings and Jake Ball; leg-spinner Adil Rashid and skipper Jos Buttler.

This was also the first ODI series that Bangladesh lost under captain Mashrafe Bin Mortaza's latest reign. The pacer was given the captaincy in September 2014 -- ahead of the Zimbabwe series -- and his side went on to win six series on the trot.

However, ask Mashrafe and he will tell you that he does not really care about records. He has already started to look ahead towards the



New Zealand series in December, Bangladesh's first away tour since August 2015.

"Honestly, I have no complaints about the way we played the third ODI. I just think that England's spinners were able to reap the benefits from the pitch by 110 per cent, whereas we couldn't even use it by ten percent because of the dew.

"Congratulations to England. They played

really well. But yes the dew in the night did make it difficult for us. When we first saw the turn, we were happy with the score of 277. This could have been the perfect match for us had it not been for the dew," Mashrafe had said after the match.

"But I am sure a series defeat like this won't affect our future games. And I also think we can start afresh for the New Zealand series. It's painful to stay in the losing side, but that's the reality. That's how life goes," he added.

The captain further said that with the away tour of New Zealand coming up, Bangladesh would have to get set for a new challenge.

"I think our main challenge will start now. We have won almost 90 percent of our home series. We have been successful at home. But the next challenge is to do well away from home in New Zealand," said Mashrafe.

When asked how he felt after having lost his first series since being appointed captain for the second time, he said: "Actually, there's no difference. My thought processes are the same. I don't really think too far ahead and so I can't tell you if my thought process will change because of this defeat."

"I will prepare for the New Zealand series the same way I have been doing so far," he added.

Mash cracks bowlers' top 10

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh limited-overs skipper Mashrafe Bin Mortaza matched his best-ever place on the ICC ODI Bowlers' rankings as he jumped to ninth place at the conclusion of the ODI series against England.

Mashrafe started the series in 16th position in the rankings but his haul of eight wickets, which made him Bangladesh's highest wicket-taker in the series, saw him jump up seven places.

The inspirational captain was at his very best in the second ODI, where he scored a quickfire 44 before returning to take four for 29 with the ball.

Mashrafe also became the joint-top wicket-taker for Bangladesh in ODIs alongside ace all-rounder Shakib Al Hasan, with both now on 215 wickets.

Meanwhile, Shakib fell down two places to sixth, while England spinner Adil Rashid -- with a series haul of 10 wickets -- climbed three places and is now seventh.

TAMIM HALFWAY THERE WITH 5,000

NAIMUL KARIM from Chittagong



A powerful pull off Chris Woakes in the 22nd over made Tamim Iqbal the first ever Bangladeshi to score 5,000 ODI runs. Following that boundary, he stopped for a second, breathed a sigh of relief and raised his bat amidst the cheers of the fans of his hometown.

It may not have been a very big celebration, but that little display during the third ODI, suggested that he enjoyed surpassing this milestone.

However, Tamim admitted that the defeat at the hands of England, which eventually led to a series loss, curtailed the post-match celebrations to a certain extent.

"Scoring 5,000 runs is a big milestone and it obviously feels great. I would like to dedicate this feat to my father. There is no doubt that I am really happy. But had we won that game, I would have been a much happier person. But on the whole, it feels good that I am meeting the goals that I have set for my career," Tamim told The Daily Star yesterday.

"Everyone has many goals and one of my goals is to score 10,000 runs. But then again I have said this in the past, that it's not just about talking or saying these things, I have to work hard to achieve that as well. I have to hold on to my fitness levels and play really well for the next few years. That [scoring 10,000 runs] is the ultimate goal for the time being," he added.

Fortunately for Tamim's fans in Chittagong, he reached the milestone in his hometown yesterday. While the left-hander was happy about that, it was not something he had expected, considering that he needed just 69 runs to reach the landmark prior to the England series.

"I wanted to do it in the first match but unfortunately I couldn't in the first two matches. I was telling myself that maybe it was destined to happen in Chittagong," laughed Tamim.

The left-hander believes that had the hosts won the toss, the fate of the match would have been different.

"It was very difficult in the first 10 overs. Imrul [Kayes] and I batted exceptionally well and that's why we scored 80 runs. The wicket didn't see the sun for two days because of the rain and they [England] got a huge advantage.

But they couldn't utilise that because Imrul and I batted very well.

"We also tackled the spin well. Yes, the way we got out, on any other days those could have been boundaries, but still I believe that we had done extremely well to reach 277 on that wicket and in those conditions," explained Tamim.

Having lost the third ODI, Tamim admitted that a number of players in the team regret to have not been able to win the first ODI, which the hosts should have won with ease considering that they had six wickets in hand and needed just 54 in the last nine overs.

"I feel that everyone regrets losing the first ODI. This is a lesson for us. It taught us that if you do small mistakes you have to pay for it. Maybe we did. Hopefully when such a situation comes up again, we will handle it better," said Tamim.

With ODIs done, the focus has moved to Test cricket. A lot will depend on Tamim and the kind of start that he gives the hosts during the two-match Test series against England.

The left-hander believes that playing against England is the 'perfect opportunity' for Bangladesh to

improve their game in Tests.

"In ODIs, we are in a position where we can consider ourselves as one of the strongest in home conditions in the world. We are playing exceptional cricket.

"Test is a game where we need to

FIRST TIGER TO 5K						
Matches	Runs	HS	Ave	S/R	100s	50s
159	5007	154	32.30	78.10	7	33

YEARLY BREAKDOWN						
Year	Matches	Runs	HS	Ave	100s	50s
2007	21	455	54	21.66	0	3
2008	26	807	129	31.03	1	5
2009	19	602	154	31.68	1	3
2010	23	776	125	33.73	1	5
2011	20	475	70	25.00	0	3
2012	9	347	70	38.55	0	5
2013	6	240	112	40.00	1	1
2014	11	269	76	26.9	0	2
2015	18	742	132	46.37	2	5

improve a lot and for this challenge, the 15 players are up for it. England are a good Test team and this is the perfect opportunity for us to improve in Test cricket," said Tamim.

