

In Nelson via different routes

AL-AMIN from Nelson



Bangladesh cricketers were in a good mood after arriving in Nelson yesterday where they will feature in the double-header of the three-match ODI series against New Zealand.

The home side are leading the series 1-0 after winning the opening match in Christchurch on Monday. But the Tigers have plenty of reason to feel refreshed after landing in a much warmer destination from the cold and windy east coast city in South Island.

While most of the players took the morning flight from Christchurch to reach the tourist city via Wellington, skipper Mashrafe, who never feels comfortable flying and has a special dislike for a Wellington landing, chose a car drive through the beautiful landscape of rainforests, scaling the Top of the South and

through the famous Abel Tasman National Park to reach Trailways, the abode of the Tigers for the next five days.

Mashrafe was happy to learn that those who took the aerial route had gone through bumps, and most of the players shared their experience with their captain when they met in the hotel lobby. Coach Chandika Hathurusingha, along with Shakib Al Hasan and Tamim Iqbal, however was more interested to know Mashrafe's road experience.

A cheerful Mashrafe, during that animated exchange even said that he was ready right then for a training session at the Saxton Oval, where both games will be held on December 29 and 31. The witty coach responded with an option for 'an eight-hour training session' today before whisking off with his family.

Every member of the team then followed their coach in separate groups for outdoor dinner sans Mushfiqur Rahim, who was nursing a hamstring injury he sustained in the opening game at the Hagley Oval.



The young brigade of the Bangladesh national team are in vibrant mood as they head towards the greener, warmer climes of Nelson from Christchurch yesterday, ahead of their second ODI against New Zealand at the Saxton Oval tomorrow.

PHOTO: BCB

'We can beat any team'

SPORTS REPORTER



After getting hammered for 341 runs in Christchurch in alien conditions, it would not have been a surprise to see a dejected Bangladeshi outfit. However, Mashrafe Bin Mortaza and Tamim Iqbal, who spoke to reporters yesterday, seemed anything but dull.

They were laughing, switching roles -- Mashrafe at one point had taken the role of a journalist and even asked Tamim a question.

A confident Tamim believes that Bangladesh can beat New Zealand provided that the visitors rectify their mistakes.

"I think that we have a very good chance to win and I am not necessarily talking about the series, I am talking about the next match. But we need to work properly. We need to execute the batting plans and the other plans that we have in our meetings. If we can execute them in the middle, then we can do well. I have the belief that this Bangladeshi side can beat any team at the moment," said Tamim.

"In the last two years, our top order has been doing well. Even in the last game, there were good individual performances. I just think that there is no point in discussing so many things just after one game. We have more games in the series and we need to focus on that," he added.

Bangladesh played on an extremely batting-friendly

wicket at Christchurch. While they did underperform with the bat, they managed to reach 264 while chasing 341. The batsmen seemed to crumble under the weight of such a huge total. Tamim indicated that that was one of the reasons why they failed in the first game.

"It was definitely chase-able because teams chase totals above 300 quite frequently today. But I think a lot of it comes down to habit. The conditions that we play in back at home don't produce 340-plus totals regularly. We score around 260 or 270 and on good wickets the total goes up to 320. It's about the habit. If we can win a few matches like these, then we can get the confidence," explained Tamim.

"In addition, we will need some time to adjust to conditions here. We are playing here after a gap of six years. Teams that come here every year continue to struggle. The faster we adjust to conditions, the better it will be for us," he added.

If New Zealand win the next game, they will win the three-match series. That will definitely feel good considering that they lost their last two series against Bangladesh away from home.

However, that is not something that Tamim is too concerned about.

"The reason why Bangladesh has been doing well in the last two years is because we have developed an attitude that makes us want to win every game. So it does not really matter if we are playing the first match or the third match, we are going to play to win no matter what," said a confident Tamim.



Bangladesh captain Mashrafe Bin Mortaza (L) and star opener Tamim Iqbal enjoy a light-hearted conversation with each other and with reporters at the team hotel in Nelson yesterday.

Green light for Russell's black bat

AFP, Sydney

West Indies all-rounder Andre Russell was given the all-clear to use his black bat in Australia's Twenty20 Big Bash League on Tuesday after it was initially banned for leaving marks on the ball.

Russell was banned from using the distinctive bat after it discoloured the white ball during the derby between his Sydney Thunder and the Sydney Sixers last week.

Gohel breaks 117-yr-old record

PTI, Jaipur

Gujarat's 26-year-old opening batsman Samit Gohel on Tuesday broke a 117-year-old record in first-class cricket by notching up the highest score while carrying his bat through the innings of 359 not out during his team's Ranji Trophy quarterfinal against Odisha.

While Hanif Mohammed's epic 499 remains the highest score by an opener in first-class cricket, no one has scored more than Gohel while remaining not out in his team's score of 641 here.

Gohel in fact eclipsed the previous best of 357 by Surrey's Bobby Abel against Somerset way back in 1899 at the Kensington Oval ground.

Rakibul shines on batsmen's day

SPORTS REPORTER



Rakibul Hasan hit a hundred as the batsmen enjoyed the first day of the fifth-round National Cricket League (NCL) matches at different venues across the country yesterday.

A 180-run third wicket stand between Bangladesh Under-19 skipper Saif Hassan and Rakibul Hasan gave second-placed Dhaka Division a good start against tier-one leader Khulna at the Fatullah Cricket Stadium as they finished the first day on top with 303 for four.

Rakibul was quick off the blocks at number four and reached three digits with a boundary off his 131st delivery. The right-hander smote 13 four and a six during his 137-ball 111 before he was bowled by left-arm spinner Abdur Razzak while his young partner Saif clung to the crease with an unbeaten 89 off 205 deliveries with four boundaries and three sixes.

In the other tier-one battle at BKSP, a 81-run opening stand between Shadman Islam and Mehedi Maruf provided Dhaka Metro a good start but they lacked a big score from the top order and finished the day at 255-7 against Barisal.

Metro's hopes however were alive as Mehrab Hossain Jr, who played 174 balls, remained not out on 48.

In the second-tier match, a 167-run



RAKIBUL HASAN ... 111

fifth wicket partnership between Tasamul Haque and Irfan Sukkur helped Chittagong score 277 for eight at stumps at the Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium against Rajshahi.

Irfan was dismissed for 90 but Tasamul remained not out on 89.

Left-arm spinner Saqlain Sajib and pacer Forhad Reza took four and three wickets respectively to make sure that the first day's honours were equally shared in the end.

In the other second-tier affair, hosts Sylhet posted 203 for six against Rangpur at the Sylhet International Cricket Stadium. Jaker Ali scored 63 not out.

SCORES IN BRIEF

DHAKA METRO VS BARISAL

DHAKA METRO: 255-7 in 96 overs (Shadman 33, Maruf 56, Mehrab 48 not out; Salman 2-50, Monir 3-51)

DHAKA VS KHULNA

DHAKA: 303-4 in 82 overs (Joyraz 45, Saif 89 not out, Rakibul 111; Razzak 2-90)

CHITTAGONG VS RAJSHAHI

CHITTAGONG: 277-8 in 88.2 overs (Nafis 51, Tasamul 89 not out, Irfan 90, Farhad 3-54, Saqlain 4-44)

SYLHET VS RANGPUR

SYLHET: 203-6 in 86 overs (Imtiaz 30, Jaker 63 not out; Shuvo 3-58)

De Silva keeps SL hopes alive

AFP, Port Elizabeth



Dhananjaya de Silva kept Sri Lanka's hopes alive with a defiant innings on the second day of the first Test against South Africa at St George's Park on Tuesday.

De Silva made 43 not out as Sri Lanka struggled to 181 for seven - still 105 runs behind South Africa's first innings total of 286 - before bad light ended play.

South African new ball bowlers Vernon Philander and Kyle Abbott put the Sri Lankan batsmen under pressure in seam-friendly conditions, with the first three wickets falling for 22 runs.

SCORES IN BRIEF

SOUTH AFRICA: First innings 286 (Cook 59, Elgar 45, Amla 20, Duminy 63, Du Plessis 37, De Kock 37; Lakmal 5-63, Pradeep 2-66, Herath 2-48)

SRI LANKA: First innings 181 for 7 (Mathews 39, Chandimal 28, de Silva 43 not out, Herath 24; Philander 3-35, Abbott 2-49)

It was not a wholly impressive performance by the South African bowlers. Philander and Abbott both bowled well, taking three for 35 and two for 49 respectively, but rising star

Police hold Victoria

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Police FC and Victoria SC played out a goalless draw in their Marcel Bangladesh Championship League fixture at Birshrestha Shaheed Mostafa Kamal Stadium in Kamalapur yesterday.

Had Police FC beaten Victoria SC, who handed them a 2-1 defeat in their first-leg encounter, they would have climbed up to second position.

Instead they must now content themselves with their overall score of 16 points from 11 matches, four of which were draws, leaving them on fourth position of the eight team table.

Meanwhile Victoria, who played the same number of matches, are in the red zone to have nine points, two points more than bottom-placed Chittagong Mohammedan SC.

AL-AMIN

Azhar glimmers in gloom

AFP, Melbourne

Opening batsman Azhar Ali led the way as Pakistan consolidated their first innings on a rain-hit second day of the second Test against Australia in Melbourne on Tuesday.

Only 50.3 overs were possible after 50.5 overs were bowled on Monday's opening day as rain again curtailed play.

At the close after rain forced an early finish, the tourists resuming at 142 for four were 310 for six with Azhar providing the foundations.

Azhar was unbeaten on 139 with Mohammad Amir hitting a breezy 28 off 23 balls with six fours trying to lift the scoring rate after the dismissals of Asad Shafiq and Sarfraz Ahmed.

Australia still believe the weather won't prevent a result in the match.

"Knowing the MCG quite well, it's usually good to bat day three and four so we're still well and truly in the game," Australia bowling coach David Saker said.

"We can't control the weather. There's still a lot of time left in the game."



Pakistan opener Azhar Ali celebrates his century against Australia on the second day of the second Test in Melbourne yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

Azhar, playing in his 56th Test, raised his 12th Test century and third against Australia with two runs behind the wicket to fine leg.

Azhar's hundred came off 218 balls in 338 minutes and consolidated his position as Pakistan's leading runscorer this calendar year.

At the close Azhar had scored 1089 runs for the fifth highest aggregate for the year.

Pakistan will look to push their first innings total on beyond 350.

Shafiq reached 50 before he gave skipper Steve Smith his third catch of the innings ending an 115-run partnership with Azhar.

SCORES IN BRIEF

PAKISTAN: First innings 310 for 6 (Azhar 139 not out, Azam 23, Younis 21, Shafiq 50, Amir 28 not out; Hazlewood 2-33, Bird 3-91)