

SPORT

180-plus a must: Shakib

AL-AMIN from Napier



Bangladesh's premier all-rounder Shakib Al Hasan did not speak to the press since his arrival in New Zealand. His bat also did not talk that much except for a fifty in the three ODIs. He bowled well in patches but he was a bit disappointing in the last ODI at the Saxton Oval. He is Bangladesh's lone globe-trotter when it comes to the shortest format of the game. So, when he spoke to reporters before the start of the T20 leg of Tigers' long tour of New Zealand, he was pragmatic about the prospect of his team.

His first observation was that if Bangladesh are to win games in different conditions they would have to score close to 200.

"If we bat first we will have to post a big total. We have to defend at least 180 to 190 maybe but it will depend on the weather and the wicket. In the T20 tournament now going on here this is the average total. So our effort will be to contain them below this kind of total and score something like that if we bat first," said Shakib while referring to the ongoing McDonald's Super Smash League.

"We have seen a few T20 games and almost all are very high scoring. Even 200 plus runs are chased here. The one-day wicket was very good here. We could not do well in the ODIs and if we get this kind of wicket, which is a possibility, then it will be a high-scoring game," he added.

To attain that goal he said: "The important thing in the shorter version of the game is that you can't lose the momentum. If we get the momentum we need to make sure we keep on going with that."

He also said that power-hitting is not necessary to score big on this kind of wicket.

"We don't need the firepower considering the grounds in New Zealand. These are not big grounds. The power we have, I think it will be no problem to clear the boundary because the boundaries here are not big. What we need is to play big innings whenever we get the opportunity," observed Shakib.

Reflecting on the ODI series he said that they had a big opportunity in the context of the wicket they had played on and the chances they created.

"Obviously, it was a big opportunity lost for us. This is something negative but from that experience the positive thing is that we have realised that we have got that capability of winning in these conditions. So if that belief is with us I think it will help us in our next game," the champion Bangladesh all-rounder said.

He was also against the popular sentiment of difficult conditions coming into play.

"We reached Australia early and I think we are not in a state to complain about the conditions. I think we have got the best weather compared to our previous visits. We could not perform to the best of our ability and this is where we will have to do well," added a forceful Bangladesh vice-captain.

Exciting New Zealand all-rounder Corey Anderson will return from a back injury in the T20Is and when a reporter tried to highlight his importance, Shakib said: "Not only him, the whole New Zealand team is a very good T20 side. They have a good batting line-up and they have some very good batsmen. So we have to be at our best if we are to compete against them."



Bangladesh coach Chandika Hathurusingha (R) has a few words for key batsman Mahmudullah Riyad during practice in Napier yesterday, ahead of the first T20I against New Zealand at McLean Park today. After the disappointment in the ODIs, the Tigers will be looking for the seniors to step up.

PHOTO: BCB

'Seniors, juniors all the same'

SPORTS REPORTER from Napier



The role of the senior players in a team is well defined. They are not only classified in the top category in the payroll, it is also an unwritten obligation on the part of the senior players to take care of additional responsibilities both on and off the field.

But ask Shakib Al Hasan, his first reaction is reactive rather than proactive. His argument was that the junior players are not in the side just to fill in the blanks but to play definitive roles.

"When a team has got 11 players every member has the responsibility. There is no difference between senior and junior. At the end of the day it's the Bangladesh team and if we win it is everybody's credit and if we lose it is everyone's failure. To me the issue of senior and junior is not that big an issue; everyone has a responsibility and I think everyone should take

that responsibility," said the Bangladesh ODI and T20I vice-captain during a pre-match briefing at McLean Park yesterday.

"We all believe that someone is coming into the side because he deserves to be in the team. He has a particular responsibility," he added.

But when asked whether a senior player deserves more responsibility than a youngster by virtue of his greater experience, Shakib agreed, but conditionally.

"Yes, that is there. But if you think that the senior players will do everything then it's not going to happen. In that case you can play with five players. It is not fair to say that you have six junior players playing with five senior players and the junior players do not have a role to play in the team," Shakib said a bit acridly.

He also said that he is more focused on contributing for the team than looking at personal goals.

"Definitely my role in the team is not to take five wickets and score hundred, and all that. Everyone has a role in the team and if

everyone plays his role then we play good cricket. If you look down the years you will see whenever Bangladesh have won at least four to five players contributed -- in bowling two or three players and in batting three or four players. So when we all could play our role we can win. We are not a kind of team that has someone who has the ability to win a game all alone. Maybe we have got one or two like Mustafizur [Rahman] who has the ability to turn the game with his bowling. But as far as I'm concerned we have won with collective contributions rather than individual performance," observed the premier all-rounder.

"Mushfiqur [Rahim] bhai has been playing for the national team for the last 10 years. He has got a different place and role in the team and he has established that faith over the years. Understandably when a new player comes in place of him that faith (assurance) will not be there. It is very natural. But we believe that whoever is playing for the team as a replacement, if he fulfils his role we can win games."

HEAD TO HEAD

BANGLADESH	ALL T20IS	NEW ZEALAND
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T20IS IN NEW ZEALAND		
0	1	1

KEY PLAYERS



Mustafizur Rahman	Colin Munro
Matches: 13	Matches: 28
Wickets: 22	Runs: 500
Econ. Rate: 5.98	Strike Rate: 145.77
Bowling Avg: 13.95	Batting Avg: 25
Best bowling: 5/22	High Score: 73*
Sw/4w: 1/0	100s/50s: 0/3

Soumya set for return

AL-AMIN from Napier

After being dropped in the last two ODIs in Nelson, left-handed batsman Soumya Sarkar is likely to return in the first T20I against New Zealand at McLean Park in Napier tomorrow.

The top-order batsman, who has been struggling for runs and scored only one in the opening game at Christchurch, was dropped from the next two games. But while speaking to reporters on Sunday coach Chandika Hathurusingha admitted that it was a bit harsh on Soumya not to get a few games in conditions that suited his batting.

The team management is intent on packing the bowling attack with more medium pacers than spinners. In that case Shakib Al Hasan might play as the lone recognised spinner with Mosaddek Hossain as an off-spinning all-rounder.

It will not be surprising if pace bowler Rubel Hossain comes in for Taskin Ahmed. But this is something the team management will decide after having a look at the wicket.



A part of his immense value as captain is that Mashrafe Bin Mortaza (L) can keep the team on an even keel in both victory and defeat, and he will be integral in enduring that Bangladesh enter today's first T20I against New Zealand in a relaxed frame of mind.

PHOTO: BCB

Thakur removed as BCCI chief

AFP, New Delhi



Judges ordered the dismissal Monday of the Indian cricket board's president over the failure to enact a series of recommended reforms, plunging the game's most powerful body into turmoil.

In a shock ruling, a panel of Supreme Court judges said Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) president Anurag Thakur and its number two Ajay Shirke must stand down immediately.

"The Supreme Court passes an order directing the BCCI president and secretary to desist from any board functions from here on," said the ruling.

The order comes after judges slapped restrictions on the BCCI's accounts last year over its failure to implement a series of reforms recommended by a panel headed by a former top judge, Rajendra Mal Lodha.

Cricket's massive popularity in India has helped the BCCI become by far the wealthiest of all of the sport's national boards. But it has also been embroiled in a series of scandals, including accusations of corruption and match-fixing that tarnished the Indian Premier League.

A corruption and match-fixing scandal in the sixth edition of the IPL brought about the downfall of the board's

then-president Narayanaswami Srinivasan after his son-in-law was accused of betting on matches.

The elevation of Thakur, who only took over as head of the BCCI in May 2016, and Shirke had been seen as representing a break with the past.

But the board's reluctance to implement Lodha's recommendations, which included age limits and term limits on office-bearers, had triggered a number of legal battles.

The recent series against England was nearly cancelled on the eve of the first Test as a result of the funding restrictions.

"I respect the Supreme Court as any citizen should. Supreme Court judges feel that BCCI could do better under retired judges, I wish them all the best. I am sure Indian cricket will do well under their guidance," Thakur, the lawmaker for India's ruling Bharatiya Janata Party, said in a video message posted on social media.

Lodha said Thakur's removal was an inevitable consequence of the board's foot-

dragging.

The judges also ordered Thakur to explain why he allegedly lied on oath about seeking a letter from the International Cricket Council stating that Lodha's recommendations amounted to government interference. They threatened to charge him with perjury and contempt of court.

Thakur has until January 19 to reply to the contempt notice.



ANURAG THAKUR

Elgar best drives SA

AFP, Cape Town



Dean Elgar hit a career-best century to guide South Africa out of trouble on the first day of the second Test against Sri Lanka at Newlands on Monday.

Elgar made 129 before falling to the second new ball. South Africa were 297 for six at the close after being sent in to bat.

The left-handed Elgar batted imperiously while wickets fell at the other end, with Sri Lanka's seam bowlers taking advantage of a well-grassed pitch and overcast sky.

Stephen Cook was out to the fourth ball of the match before a run had been scored.

Two more wickets fell to teenage fast bowler Lahiru Kumara with the total on 66 and South Africa were still struggling at 169 for five when Elgar was joined by Quinton de Kock.

Elgar and De Kock shared a 103-run partnership for the sixth wicket. With the

sun coming out during the afternoon, South Africa were getting on top when Elgar pushed at a ball from Suranga Lakmal and was caught behind.

It was a rare false stroke in a 230-ball innings which included 15 fours. It was Elgar's sixth Test century and two runs better than his previous highest Test score, made against Australia in Perth in November.

De Kock was unbeaten on 68 at the close. On 41, he reached 1000 Test runs in 23 innings.

Kumara, 19, took three for 86 and bowled with pace and aggression.

Playing in only his third Test and sixth first-class game,

His first victim was Hashim Amla, bowled between bat and pad by an inswinger for 29. Five balls later JP Duminy gloved a legside catch to a diving wicketkeeper Kusal Mendis. Later he had Temba Bavuma caught at deep square leg.

SCORES IN BRIEF

SOUTH AFRICA: 297 for 6 (Elgar 129, De Kock 68; Kumara 3-86)

Momentum with the Kiwis

ICC



New Zealand begins 2017 high on confidence after whitewashing their opponents Bangladesh 3-0 in the One-Day International series late last month. Their form, coupled with familiarity with conditions, makes them the favourite for the T20I leg of the tour as well.

What will make the series interesting is that both teams are returning to the T20 format for the first time since the ICC World T20 in India in March-April 2016. While Bangladesh had a forgettable tournament and exited in the league stage, New Zealand was impressive despite a semi-final loss to England.

New Zealand received a blow when Martin Guptill was ruled out of the series after sustaining a hamstring injury while running between the wickets in the third ODI in Nelson. Guptill was forced to retire hurt on six, and will take up to four weeks to recover completely.

The hosts, however, have form and firepower in their ranks. Guptill has been replaced by Neil Broom, who made scores of 109 and 97 respectively in the second and third ODIs. Kane Williamson, the captain, struck form in the last game as well, making an unbeaten 95 to help New Zealand seal a chase of 237 along with Broom.

New Zealand also has fresh faces in Tom Bruce and Ben Wheeler, who have got maiden T20I call-ups. Bruce, the batsman, has been selected for New Zealand for the first time while Wheeler, an all-rounder, has already played six ODIs.

On the bowling front, Tim Southee has been rested for the entire series while Trent Boult will take a break for the first game. Corey Anderson, making a comeback from injury, will continue to play as a specialist batsman, given his dodgy back.



New Zealand's Corey Anderson started off 2014 with the then fastest ODI hundred, and will be looking to have a similar impact upon his comeback from injury today.

PHOTO: BCB

NATIONAL HANDBALL

Big win for Faridpur

SPORTS REPORTER

Faridpur registered a massive 20-9 goal win over Bagerhat in the Exim Bank 26th National Men's Handball Championship at the Shaheed captain Mansur Ali National Handball Stadium yesterday.

In the day's other matches, Barisal thrashed Lalmonirhat 18-4, Chuadanga defeated Satkhira 18-13, Rajshahi outplayed Meherpur 25-9, Dinajpur beat Bandarban 12-10, Feni defeated Mymensingh 18-15, Sunamganj beat Gopalganj 14-13, Narayanganj routed Jhalakathi 17-10, Joypurhat crushed Natore 12-5, Dhaka beat Chapainawabganj 18-16, Jessore defeated Barisal 19-14 and Madaripur trounced Habiganj 23-5.