

SPORT

'I'll try to be as positive as I can' Little choice after injury glut

AL-AMIN from Christchurch

Tamim Iqbal played the role as deputy to Test captain Mushfiqur Rahim for over two years. During that period he led the team in patches in a few games including the last Test against New Zealand at the Basin Reserve. But those were more about filling in the blanks rather than showing his credential to be a serious contender for the demanding post.

The left-hander will get his first opportunity to lead the team for an entire Test match when Bangladesh play the second and final five-day game against New Zealand, starting at the Hagley Oval today.

So, how he looked at this opportunity was something that dominated his bout with the reporters yesterday. Although he got the job by default after Mushfiqur was ruled out of the game due to injury, the opening batsman said that he was relishing the challenge.

"It's an opportunity of course. The kind of individual I am, I like to take challenges. It is very new for me in international cricket. My mentality is attacking, I like to bat that way and as captain I will try to be as positive as I can," said Tamim, adding that it is a bit easier to execute a plan when 'you know that you will captain the team in the next game'.

But he also said that a collective execution of the plan is important for a captain to be successful.

"We have one more important Test to go and everyone is ready to put in the hard work and if we can get a positive result, that will be great," he remarked.

He said that the attitude of the team was fantastic throughout the series and they were on the losing side because of the mistakes they have committed from the first ODI



PHOTO: AFP FILE

Tamim Iqbal has had limited experience of leading the team in scattered spells in Tests where regular skipper Mushfiqur Rahim was off the field, such as during the Khulna Test against Pakistan in April 2015 pictured above. But today he will need to go the whole nine yards as the genuine captain when leading a depleted Bangladesh side in the second Test against New Zealand at the Hagley Oval in Christchurch.

Where is the captain's suit?

AL-AMIN from Christchurch

Tamim Iqbal will become Bangladesh's seventh Test captain when he walks along with his New Zealand counterpart Kane Williamson for the toss on Friday morning to mark the start of the second and final Test at the Hagley Oval.

The opening batsman, who led the team for a good part of the opening Test at the Basin Reserve following a thumb injury to skipper Mushfiqur Rahim, however could not think of a worse possible scenario to mark his debut in a more accomplished role. With three key batsmen out due to injury, the dashing left-hander is left with an uphill task to make his mark with a depleted

batting line-up. Although Tamim said that his aggressive intent in his batting would help him do well as captain, the sudden elevation however put the left-handed opener in a spot of bother as far as the dress code is concerned.

And as it stood till yesterday evening, Tamim is set not to don the trademark captain's suit -- a conventional dress code for the two captains going for the toss. The immediate option for him to go for the toss would be to sport a white full-sleeve sweater, breaking the standard protocol. He might try to fit in Mushfiqur's one, which will be a troublesome venture considering the respective sizes of the two players.

to the opening Test.

"The results don't show how competitive we were in ODIs, T20s

and in the first Test. But those who were in the ground they have watched how close we were. We

had our moments. We could not capitalise on that. I'm proud of the way we played, the character we

have showed. We just need to minimise those mistakes and I hope in this Test we will try to do that. And if we can do that better, things will happen," observed the Bangladesh captain.

He admitted that it will be very difficult, especially following the injuries to three key batsmen in the team.

"They are two [Mushfiqur Rahim and Imrul Kayes] very important players in the team. But you can't control injury. But the guys who are coming in are very confident. Soumya played well in the T20s and if he gets a game tomorrow he will do well. We have also seen enough of [Nurul Hasan] Sohan in the ODIs and T20s. I'm sure they will be up for the job," Tamim said before yesterday's training. He however got another shock after attending the briefing when Mominul Haque was also ruled out due to injury.

He said that wicket is the last thing they were concerned about and he had no complaint against the short-pitched deliveries.

"Whatever the wicket is we need to apply ourselves and that's what we are looking at. I think the short ball is part of the game and I can't complain about that. If we feel that a batsman is not comfortable against short-pitched deliveries we might use that as a tactic. If some of our boys do not feel comfortable they will use it. It's fair game. When they go to our place they face a lot of spin. And when they don't complain about that why should we complain about the bouncers?" Tamim retorted.

When asked how influential a role he played in the selection of the final eleven, he said: "I was not involved in many discussions regarding the composition of the team. I had a discussion five minutes ago where I gave my opinion."

AL-AMIN from Christchurch



Bangladesh will need a hospital very close to the Hagley Oval when they start the second and final Test against New Zealand today. With three key players including

skipper Mushfiqur Rahim ruled out, a seriously handicapped Tigers will desperately try to avoid any further injury blow since they are already running short of men.

The BCB has announced a 14-member squad for what will be their last game of a demanding tour. Actually, they have got only 14 players available for selection in the tour party after Mushfiqur, opener Imrul Kayes and first-down batsman Mominul Haque were ruled out due to injury.

Interestingly the team management was compelled to draft in left-arm pace bowler Mustafizur Rahman, who is nursing a back injury, and young batsman Nazmul Hasan Shanto, who is touring with the team as a member of the development squad, as back-up players most importantly for possible fielding duties over the next five days.

When Mushfiqur and Imrul were ruled out in the morning before the training session on Thursday, it confirmed the debut of reserve wicketkeeper Nurul Hasan and the return of left-handed batsman Soumya Sarker in the Test team.

Both players were seen involved in intense batting sessions in the nets at the Hagley Oval.

Bangladesh were served with another shattering blow when Mominul, who was earlier cleared to play despite having pain in his chest, complained of being unable to move his body comfortably while batting in the nets. And his injury prompted the board to announce a fresh squad for the second Test in the evening. The board had earlier announced an unchanged squad for the second Test, keeping Mustafizur and Shanto out of it.

The injury to Mominul, the key one-down batsman of the team, actually left Bangladesh with one batsman short. They have got two additional pacers in Rubel Hossain and Mustafizur but no batsman to fill the void left by Mominul.

And it will not be a surprise if young Shanto, a member of the Bangladesh Under-19 team, makes an unlikely Test debut unless the team management considers an additional pacer to bolster the current three-pronged seam attack.

The acute injury scenario is something Bangladesh have hardly faced away from home. With so many injuries in the team after that bouncer-filled first Test at Wellington, the popular jibe that dominated the mood going into the second Test was: "Sorry, I won't be available for selection. I think the manager or the media manager of the team should be next in line for selection."

No let-up in bouncer barrage

AFP, Christchurch



Bangladesh have been warned to expect a fresh barrage of short-pitched deliveries when the second Test against New Zealand starts in Christchurch on Friday.

While there were regrets Bangladesh captain Mushfiqur Rahim was struck on the head and rushed to hospital during the first Test, New Zealand pace spearhead Trent Boult described the intimidating bouncer as a valuable part of their armoury.

"I'm sure there'll still be some short-pitched bowling," Boult said on the eve of the second Test as New Zealand look to wrap up a sweep in all formats against the injury-hit tourists.

"People have to realise why

people are bowling short in the first place and that's to upset the batsmen and get them stuck on the crease to make the fuller ball more effective.

"You're not going in there with the intention of trying to hurt



TRENT BOULT

anyone -- it's to make your other skills more effective and have a bit more purpose."

There were anxious moments when Mushfiqur lay prone on the pitch after he was hit in the first Test in Wellington, with memories still

fresh of how Australian opener Phil Hughes suffered a fatal blow from a similar delivery in November 2014.

Former New Zealand medium pacer Ewen Chatfield's heart stopped and he required mouth-to-mouth resuscitation after being hit on the forehead in a Test against England in 1975.

Mushfiqur has been advised not to play for up to three weeks, but Boult said that was not a reason to stop using legitimate short deliveries and most of the Bangladesh batsmen proved they could handle it.

"It's a valuable skill as a fast bowler," Boult said.

"It's always intimidating coming out and facing a barrage of short-pitched bowling but I think they played it nicely (in Wellington).

"They looked to be aggressive to it, picked their times down wind and into the wind when to play the short ball."

Bangladesh also made liberal use

of the tactic in the first Test, targeting New Zealand's short-ball bowling specialist Neil Wagner who was struck on the helmet three times and suffered a cut chin when the protective grille was slammed into his face.

New Zealand coach Mike Hesson said he believed there were sufficient rules in place to aid the batsmen which included a requirement to wear a safety compliant helmet.

"You're trying to create wicket-taking opportunities, you're certainly not trying to hurt anybody," he said.

"You play within the rules. Guys are really aware of sticking to that."

Mushfiqur will not play in the second Test although Tamim Iqbal said a fractured thumb was the main reason, not the concussion.

Opener Imrul Kayes has also been ruled out with a thigh injury while top-order batsman Mominul Haque failed a fitness test on Thursday after bruising his ribcage.



Yuvraj Singh made his first century since 2011 with a 127-ball 156, while MS Dhoni scored 134 as the pair put on 256 runs in 38.2 overs for the fourth wicket against England in the second ODI in Cuttack yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

Yuvraj, Dhoni power India to series win

AFP, Cuttack



Veterans Yuvraj Singh and Mahendra Singh Dhoni turned back the clock with blistering centuries to set up India's series clinching 15-run win against England in the second one-day international in Cuttack on Thursday.

England skipper Eoin Morgan struck a valiant 102 as the visitors, who were chasing 382 for victory, gave the hosts a scare after they ended the reply on 366-8.

With England requiring 46 off the final three overs the visitors stood an outside chance but Morgan's unfortunate run out in the penultimate over ended their hopes.

The left-handed batsman hit 6 fours and 5 sixes during his 81-ball blitz.

But it was the 256-run fourth-wicket partnership between Yuvraj (150) and Dhoni (134) that handed India an unassailable 2-0 lead in the three-match series.

The left-handed Yuvraj, who is making a comeback in the ODI side after a gap of three years, counterattacked after India were in early trouble at 25 for three.

Yuvraj, who last scored a hundred against West Indies in the 2011 World Cup, recorded his 14th ODI century as he smacked 21 fours and three sixes in a 127-

ball knock.

Dhoni, who survived a dropped catch on 43, made the most of the reprieve to post his 10th ODI hundred as he hit 10 fours and 6 sixes.

Yuvraj was caught behind off Woakes while Dhoni fell to Liam Plunkett but their departure was scant consolation to the England bowlers who were all carted around the park.

In England's innings, Jason Roy (82) and Joe Root (54) put on 100 runs for the second wicket to try and set up the chase but the Indian spinners struck back to dent the opposition's hopes.

It was then that Morgan rose to the occasion with an exemplary showing as he put on 93 runs for the sixth wicket with Moeen Ali (55) to keep the chase alive.

But the pressure of keeping pace with the ever-increasing run rate finally got to the visiting side as Plunkett remained unbeaten on 27.

SCORES IN BRIEF

INDIA: 381 for 6 (Yuvraj 150, Dhoni 134, Jadhav 22; Woakes 4-60, Plunkett 2-91)

ENGLAND: 366 for 8 (Morgan 102, Roy 82, Moeen 55; Ashwin 3-65, Bumrah 2-81, Jadeja 1-45)

Result: India won by 15 runs
Player-of-the-match: Yuvraj Singh

Smith century makes Pakistan pay

AFP, Perth



Australia capitalised on Pakistan's errors to win the ODI in Perth on Thursday by seven wickets, with skipper Steven Smith scoring a century.

Pakistan made 263 for seven after being sent to bat, having looked set to post a much bigger score at several stages. But the home side replied with 265 for three, winning with 30 balls to spare.

After Josh Hazlewood applied the brakes to a promising Pakistan innings with three wickets, skipper Smith and ODI debutant Peter Handscomb put on 183 for the third wicket in chase to set the Aussies on the path to victory.

Australia lead the five-match series 2-1. Pakistan had chances to seize control of the match, but paid the price for basic errors.

When they claimed openers David Warner and Usman Khawaja in five balls they had Australia wobbling at 45 for two.

One run later Handscomb was on his way back to the pavilion for a duck on debut, caught at first slip from the bowling of Junaid Khan.

Australia should have been 46 for three, but Handscomb was recalled to



Australia skipper Steve Smith became the fastest Australian batsman to 3,000 career runs in ODIs as he blitzed Pakistan with an unbeaten 104-ball 108 in the third ODI at the WACA yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

the centre due to a front foot no-ball.

To make matters worse, Handscomb had another life on 10 when a simple catch was dropped at point. That proved to be Pakistan's undoing.

Handscomb eventually fell for 82 from 84 balls, but the game was safely in Australia's hands by then.

SCORES IN BRIEF

PAKISTAN: 263 for 7 in 50 overs (Sharjeel 50, Babar 84; Hazlewood 3-32, Head 2-65)

AUSTRALIA: 265 for 3 in 45 overs (Smith 108 not out, Handscomb 82; Amir 1-36)

Result: Australia won by seven wickets.
Player-of-the-match: Steve Smith.

With a second loss from three games, Pakistan are still below Bangladesh in the ICC ODI Rankings. Bangladesh have 91 points compared to Pakistan's 90. However, if Pakistan, who are currently 8th, can secure one more win from their next two ODIs, they will overtake Bangladesh and become 7th with 92 points. Two wins would see them move to 93 points.