



Tamim Iqbal, who captained Bangladesh in the second Test against New Zealand, replies to reporters' questions while (R) wicketkeeper Nurul Hasan, spinner Tajul Islam and pacer Mustafizur Rahman look out the car's window as the team leaves the Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport after arriving in Dhaka last night.

PHOTOS: FIROZ AHMED

Injuries the main concern

SPORTS REPORTER

The Bangladesh national cricket team barely have any time to take a breather following the New Zealand series. They returned home yesterday after a comprehensive whitewash, losing all their matches in the three ODIs, as many T20Is and two Tests against the Black Caps. And now, they not only have to recover from the Kiwi blues, but also have to get set for a sterner test: their tour of India.

Although Bangladesh were drubbed by New Zealand, it does not mean that conditions were very difficult there. The wickets barely had any movement and were in fact quite good for batting throughout the tour. In India, they are likely to be tested with pitches that may have uneven bounce and a few that may stay low. In short, they will be tested with wickets that support the bowlers.

For now, the Bangladesh team management will have two things in mind. They first need to brush aside the disastrous tour and secondly, they will hope their key batsmen recover in time for the Test series.

All the injured players from the tour -- Mashrafe Bin Mortaza, Mushfiqur Rahim, Imrul Kayes and Mominul Haque -- will undergo a fitness test on January 31. It is a test that could decide the fate of the players, those in the Test team, for the upcoming series.



The New Zealand tour saw a list of injuries to key players. (L) Test skipper Mushfiqur Rahim was hit on the thumb multiple times during the first innings of the first Test while Mominul Haque suffered from a bruised ribcage in the same Test. PHOTOS: STAR FILE

Mushfiqur did not play the second Test in New Zealand because of pain in his thumb after enduring multiple blows in the first Test while scoring 159. A scan done there did not show any fracture and as such Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) sports

physician, Debasish Chowdhury, is confident that the Test skipper will recover in time for the Test against India.

"Since there is no fracture, it's not much of a concern. But there is still pain and we are waiting for that to decrease," said Debasish.

Both Imrul and Mominul underwent scans in Bangladesh upon their return and the results seemed positive.

"Imrul seems to be recovering quite smoothly from his grade one thigh strain. He has gone to his hometown now. Once he returns, he will give the fitness test and that's when we will have a better idea regarding him. He has been given his rehab plans and he also may need a bit of massaging. The main issue here is that we should not field a player when he hasn't completely recovered and so, we are extra focused," said Debasish.

Mominul, who did not play the second Test due to a bruise in the ribcage, has also been asked to take rest.

"We taught him a few breathing exercises. That's the norm when you have a rib issue. Again, his problem is not serious since there's no fracture. Hopefully he can be ready in time for the next Test," said Debasish.

Bangladesh's limited-overs skipper Mashrafe, however, will take a relatively longer time to recover. He still has his plaster on the right hand which he fractured while trying to stop a shot in the third T20I and is not likely to hit the nets before the third week of February. Bangladesh's next limited-overs assignment is scheduled in March against Sri Lanka and the team management has created a rehabilitation plan to get Mashrafe fit before that series.

SEMIFINAL LINEUP

Roger Federer	v	Stan Wawrinka
Rafael Nadal	v	Grigor Dimitrov
Serena Williams	v	Mirjana Lucic-Baroni
Venus Williams	v	Coco Vandeweghe

Nadal roars again

AFP, Melbourne

A resurgent Rafael Nadal beat Milos Raonic to reach his first Grand Slam semi in three years at the Australian Open on Wednesday, as Serena Williams eyed a final with her sister Venus.

Nadal hasn't contested a major semifinal since he won the last of his 14 Grand Slam titles at the 2014 French Open, but he never looked like losing to Raonic, the Canadian world number three.

Spain's Nadal yelled in delight as he completed a 6-4, 7-6 (9/7), 6-4 win which set up a semifinal with Grigor Dimitrov - with old rival Roger Federer potentially waiting in the final.

"Even though I had a great career, I had a lot of tough moments," said Nadal, who struggled with injury last year and failed to reach any of the Grand Slam quarterfinals. "That makes me enjoy this even more."

Nadal has a 7-1 head-to-head record with Dimitrov, the Bulgarian 15th seed dubbed 'Baby Fed' for his Federer-like playing style who earlier ousted Belgium's David Goffin.

Federer will play fellow Swiss Stan Wawrinka in Thursday's semifinal with the very real prospect of a ninth Grand Slam final against Nadal, and the first since the 2011 French Open.

The women's competition also has a retro feel after Serena Williams beat Britain's Johanna Konta 6-2, 6-3 to set up a semifinal with an emotional Mirjana Lucic-Baroni - 19 years after they last met as fellow teenage prodigies.

Williams, 35, has come a long way since her last meeting with Lucic-Baroni in the second round at Wimbledon in 1998, when they were both 16 and without a trophy to their names.

While Williams is now eyeing an Open-era record 23rd Grand Slam title and a return to world number one, the Croatian is into her first major semi since 1999 after her career was derailed by personal trauma.

Unseeded Lucic-Baroni wept freely and gasped, "This has truly made my life," after she upset Czech world number five Karolina Pliskova 6-4, 3-6, 6-4. "I can't believe this. This is crazy," said the 34-year-old, who disappeared from the tennis scene after being forced to flee her abusive father in Croatia.

"The only thing I can say is, God is good. That's all I can say. I can't believe it. I feel a little bit in shock."

Williams, whose sister Venus plays Coco Vandeweghe in Thursday's other women's semi, said she could take inspiration from Lucic-Baroni.

"I'm really happy for Mirjana. I was there when she first started. To see her be able to never give up actually is super-inspiring to me. It's a wonderful story," she said.

Williams added: "We both have survived, and here we are, which I think is a really remarkable story."

"I think it was probably one of the best experiences of my life," said Konta, 25, who idolised Williams as a child.

Bolt loses '08 Olympic gold

AFP, Lausanne

Usain Bolt lost one of his nine Olympic gold medals Wednesday when the International Olympic Committee stripped Jamaica of their 4x100m relay win at the 2008 Beijing Games after a teammate was caught doping.

The decision which follows the re-testing of hundreds of samples from the Beijing Games, means that Bolt loses one of the three gold medals he won at that Olympics.

Bolt's relay teammate Nestor Carter, who ran the first leg of the race, was found to have tested positive for banned substance Methylhexanamine, which was once used in nasal decon-



gestants but now is more commonly found as an ingredient in dietary supplements.

The loss of the relay gold deprives Bolt of one of his 'triple triples' -- he won gold in the 100m, 200 and the 4x100m at Beijing and then went on to

repeat the feat in London in 2012 and again in Rio last year.

Last year, when he was warned of the doping case targeting Carter which could result in him losing an Olympic gold, Bolt said the circumstances were heartbreaking.

"It's heartbreaking because over the years you've worked hard to accumulate gold medals and work hard to be a champion -- but it's just one of those things," he said.

"Things happen in life, so when it's confirmed or whatever, if I need to give back my gold medal I'd have to give it back, it's not a problem for me."

The IOC said in a statement that in the case of Carter, 31, re-analysis of his 2008 samples "resulted in a positive test for the prohibited substance methylhexanamine."

Tharanga to lead SL in SA ODIs

APP, Colombo

Sri Lanka on Wednesday named batsman Upul Tharanga as captain in place of the injured Angelo Mathews for the ODI series against South Africa starting this weekend.

The left-hander's appointment was announced in a statement from Sri Lanka Cricket.

Sri Lanka will play five ODIs against South Africa, beginning in Port Elizabeth on Saturday, after a Twenty20 series which wraps up later Wednesday.



Spain's tennis great Rafael Nadal rolled back the years to produce a display of sustained brilliance that left Canada's Milos Raonic defeated in straight sets in their Australian Open quarterfinal in Melbourne yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

Rakib ton fires Old DOHS

SPORTS REPORTER

An unbeaten century from Mohammad Rakib helped Old DOHS Sports Club beat BKSP by 52 runs at the outer ground of the Khan Shaheb Osman Ali Stadium (KSOAS) yesterday in the First Division Cricket League.

Batting first, Old DOHS finished on 253 for five as Rakib smashed 116 off just 93 balls. He hit six sixes and seven fours during the innings. He was ably supported by Nahidul Islam's 46.

Together the duo rescued DOHS from 60 for three in 20 overs.

After the exchange, BKSP were bundled out for 201 runs in 48 overs. Humayun Kabir, Anisul Islam and Nasiruddin took two wickets each while Hamidul Islam scalped three.

Habibur Rahman was BKSP's top-scorer with 70 off 92 balls.

In the day's other games, Kakrail Boys Club beat Baridhara Dazzlers by seven wickets at the main ground of the KSOAS and Rupganj Tigers beat Talent Hunt CA at the BKSP by three runs, while Bangladesh Boys Club beat Sheikh Jamal Cricketers by 55 runs.

Uncertainty over Ind-BD venue

PALLAB BHATTACHARYA from New Delhi

Could the one-off Test match between Bangladesh and India be shifted from the southern Indian city of Hyderabad, whose cricket association is facing a cash crunch, to Kolkata?

This question is being asked following reports in Indian media that the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) has put Kolkata on standby for the Test, set to begin on February 9.

However, Cricket Association of Bengal (CAB) president and former India captain Sourav Ganguly today said he was not aware of any such developments.

"I've got no idea. If it goes till the last minute, we cannot host it."

There is a lot of work that needs to be done, like printing tickets. We will see," he told reporters in Kolkata.

The media reports about the possible shift in venue gained traction a day after the board's general manager of game development, Ratnakar Shetty, said he had been entrusted by CEO Rahul Johri to ensure the Test went smoothly even if it meant shifting the venue from Hyderabad.

A cloud of uncertainty currently hangs over Hyderabad because there is no recognised governance of the Hyderabad Cricket Association (HCA). Elections to HCA had been held but results have not been declared due to a court order. Besides that, there is the shortage of funds plaguing the HCA.

A bowler's dream

BBC ONLINE

It is every bowler's dream. Six deliveries, six wickets. The perfect over.

And for Aled Carey, the dream became reality while playing for Golden Point Cricket Club in Australia.

Carey, 29, went wicketless in his first eight overs against East Ballarat in the Ballarat Cricket Association fourth-team fixture in Victoria.

That all changed as the first three deliveries of his ninth over produced a catch at first slip, a catch by the wicketkeeper and an lbw.

Yet there was more to come from Carey. His last three victims were clean bowled as the opposition were all out for just 40.

"We've got the ball in the safe and will make a trophy to present to Aled at our awards night," John Ogilvie, secretary of Golden Point said.

Young India ready for England T20s

PTI, Kanpur

India's young guns will get an opportunity to fire on the big stage and carry forward the exceptional dominance over England when they clash with the visitors in the three-match Twenty20 series, starting on Thursday.

India have a different squad for the T20s compared to the one that was picked for the preceding ODI series. The six players who were not part of the 50-over squad are Rishabh Pant, Mandeep Singh, Yuzvendra Chahal, Parvez Rasool, Suresh Raina and Ashish Nehra.

Frontline spinners Ravichandran Ashwin and Ravindra Jadeja have been rested, making way for off-spinner Rasool and the experienced Amit Mishra.

Among the unestablished names, the one attracting the most attention is 19-year-old sensation Rishabh Pant, who earned his maiden call-up following a prolific domestic season.

The Delhi-based wicketkeeper batsman rose to prominence with his exploits in the Under-19 World Cup last year and since then, his career graph is only rising.

The southpaw trained under coach Anil Kumble in the first net session on Tuesday and there is a good chance he might be handed the India cap. With no Shikhar Dhawan in the squad, it will be between Pant and Mandeep for the opener's slot.

Kohli named for Padma Shri award

AGENCIES, New Delhi

Indian cricket captain Virat Kohli was among the eight sportspersons who were picked for the prestigious Padma Shri on Wednesday.

Kohli celebrated his 'full-time' appointment as captain after being handed the reins to the limited-overs side by MS Dhoni by defeating England 2-1 in his first ODI series.

And the name on the list of awardees will be the icing on the cake for India's most prolific sportsperson.

The Padma Shri is the fourth highest civilian award in the country after the Bharat Ratna, the Padma Vibhushan and the Padma Bhushan.

Kohli was awarded the Arjuna Award in recognition of his achievements in 2013.