

SPORT



Instant reward for Liton

Shafiu also finds place in Test squad

SPORTS REPORTER
You don't often get to see players getting an immediate result for their positive performance in domestic cricket in Bangladesh. It generally takes months of consistent performance before a player is promoted to the national team. And so, when Liton Das was catapulted into the national team yesterday following his game-changing 219 for Islami Bank East Zone in the Bangladesh Cricket League, it led to a few raised eyebrows. After all, a few weeks ago Nurul Hasan was considered Mushfiqur Rahim's back-up, but since yesterday it

also been included in the squad. He has replaced Mustafizur Rahman. The three players -- Mushfiqur, Imrul Kayes and Mominul Haque -- who could not play the last Test due to injury have also been included in the team after they passed their respective fitness Tests. The other players who were dropped were Nazmul Hossain Shanto and Rubel Hossain. In all, Bangladesh have included three spinners -- Shakib Al Hasan, Mehedi Hasan Miraz and Taijul Islam -- and four pacers in Taskin Ahmed, Shubhahis Roy, Shafiu Islam and Kamrul Islam Rabbi in their bowling department. The team management do not really know what to expect from Hyderabad as far as conditions are concerned, and as a result the squad has been formed with



SQUAD
Mushfiqur Rahim (capt & wk), Tamim Iqbal, Sabbir Rahman, Mahmudullah, Shakib Al Hasan, Mehedi Hasan, Taijul Islam, Kamrul Islam Rabbi, Soumya Sarkar, Taskin Ahmed, Subashis Roy, Imrul Kayes, Liton Das (wk), Mominul Haque, Shafiu Islam.

Mushfiqur Rahim took a few catches during practice at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium yesterday, but will his team be able to hold on to those opportunities in the one-off Test against India starting from February 9?

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

Just another Test: Mushfiqur

SPORTS REPORTER
As a player who played his first Test in 2005, Mushfiqur Rahim should be aware of the way Bangladesh's fans have, time and again over the last 15 years, criticised the Indian cricket board for being the only nation not to have invited Bangladesh for a bilateral series. It took India 16 years to invite Bangladesh and that is a reason why many sports journalists in Bangladesh have already termed this tour as a historic one. One of the aspects that this tour amplifies, they say, is Bangladesh's progress in international cricket. That, in short, has been the buzz prior to the Bangladesh team's departure for India. However, ask the Test skipper regarding this issue and he will shoot you down. "Actually, I am a little surprised [with the reaction]. I don't believe that this is a historic Test.

To me, this is just another Test. Yes, we are happy and excited to show the world what our team is capable of doing in India but I am not really thinking about the number of years after which we are going to play a Test in India. Compared to five years ago, we have got a good team and we are excited," said Mushfiqur during a press conference at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium yesterday. The New Zealand tour was one in which Bangladesh ended up losing every game despite getting into winning positions. The way Shakib Al Hasan and Mushfiqur battled in the first Test depicted plenty of courage and yet they ended up losing that game. That is one aspect Mushfiqur wants his team to learn from. "The target is obviously to do well. We want to improve with every match. And in Test cricket, we haven't been playing well in the last two years, but in the last series we did well. There were moments of individual brilliance. But the thing that we have learnt from the last series is that despite the individ-

ual brilliance you may lose a match. This is our aim, everyone has to pitch in; our target is that everyone plays well. India has fielded their best team. We will try to compete on all five days," said Mushfiqur. Mushfiqur, like the rest of the team management, does not really know what kind of a wicket they will be playing on in Hyderabad. However, he believes that they have done enough simulation in the last few days to be prepared. "The last time I played in Hyderabad was a long time ago. [Bangladesh assistant coach] Richard [Halsall] said that they [England] played their four years ago. No matter what condition they offer, we are balanced that way. We have enough pacers and spinners and depth in the batting order as well. "We have prepared for the conditions well. We batted on day 4, day 5 wickets and then again on other wickets. The pace and bounce will be true there, and I think for our batsmen it will be hard because their bowling is world class," said Mushfiqur.

Twin tons lead Proteas

REUTERS, Durban
Faf du Plessis and David Miller struck centuries as South Africa cruised to an emphatic 121-run victory over wilting Sri Lanka in the second one-day International in Durban on Wednesday. Sent in to bat by the touring side, South Africa posted 307 for six in their 50 overs before restricting Sri Lanka to 186 all out from 37.5 overs to take a 2-0 lead in the five-match series. It was an eighth ODI victory in a row for South Africa and an 11th win in succession at home as they showed form in the build-up to the Champions Trophy in England in June. Their innings was built around tons for Du Plessis and the more explosive Miller as the pair put on 117 for the fifth wicket having come together with the home side teetering at 108 for four. Sri Lanka made a spirited start to their chase, but when they lost openers Niroshan Dickwella and Upul Tharanga to brilliant catches by Du Plessis and AB de Villiers respectively, it became a procession of wickets. Du Plessis leapt at cover to grab the ball one-handed well above his head while De Villiers sprinted towards the boundary and dived to grab the ball out of the warm Durban sky as it threatened to fall to safety.

'Fizz needs more time'

SPORTS REPORTER
It's a tour that has been described as a historic one by various sporting pundits of the nation. It will only last for around 10 days, but the implication of this series could last for a longer period. A good performance here and tours to India could become more frequent. In situations like these, you want your best team at the forefront. However, Bangladesh will be playing this Test without their best pacer: Mustafizur Rahman. Now, cricket is not a one-man sport, but there is no doubt the Indians will be breathing a lot easier with Mustafizur out of the picture. He is a bowler who bamboozled them in his debut series with two five-wicket hauls. He also has a good knowledge of the wickets in Hyderabad, having played in the Indian Premier League for the Sunrisers Hyderabad. There were a number of reasons provided behind the exclusion of Mustafizur. One of them had to do with the bowler's confidence. Head coach Chandika Hathurusingha indicated that a final decision had been taken with consideration of Mustafizur's own views.

"We have got the medical clearance but it is a totally different thing when you are under pressure in the middle and you have to go bowl and execute your skills. So we had to go by the player, how he feels and what feedback he gives, because medically we can't find anything. So we had to go by his words. "Most players, well not just players,



even normal people when they break something, even a leg, and they are not walking for a long time... you need some time to get used to it. We have to give him more time, probably match-time so that he gets confidence," he explained. "When he bowled in New Zealand, he was between 120 to 127 kilometers

per hour and he used to bowl at 140. We are planning for him to return to peak fitness for the Sri Lanka Tests." Bangladesh skipper Mushfiqur Rahim was of the opinion that it was better not to risk him just for one Test if he was not comfortable. After all, Bangladesh has a number of series this year. "We all want Mustafizur to play all three formats always but at the same time, he returned from injury and although everyone says he is fit, only a player can say what the problem really is. I will always want him in the Test team, but we have to keep in mind that we have the Sri Lanka series and the Champions Trophy and the Pakistan series coming up. "We want a fit Mustafizur to play for us in the long term. It's difficult for any player to play a five-day match right after an operation. I don't remember when he last bowled 10 to 15 overs in the nets. So no matter how good a player is, if he can't bowl at full strength against a number one team then there is no point," said Mushfiqur. Chief selector Minhajul Abedin has said the left-artermer will be playing a few matches in the ongoing Bangladesh Cricket League, the premier four-day domestic competition of the country.

Chahal six-for destroys England

AFP, Bangalore
Leg-spinner Yuzvendra Chahal claimed six wickets to demolish England and hand India a 75-run series-clinching win in the third and final Twenty20I in Bangalore on Wednesday. Chahal recorded his T20 best of 6-25 to help skittle out England for 127 in 16.3 overs. The visitors, chasing 203, lost eight wickets for eight runs in the space of 18 deliveries. 23-year-old Chahal became only the second bowler in T20 cricket to get six wickets in an innings after Sri Lanka's Angelo Mathews achieved the feat twice. The attacking spinner started England's batting rot in the 14th over of the innings, getting dangermen Joe Root (42) and skipper Eoin Morgan (40) on consecutive deliveries to derail the tourists' chase. Root and Morgan had kept the chase alive with their 64-run third-wicket stand but the innings fell apart after their departure. Chahal got three wickets in his fourth over to rip through the England middle and lower order as India won the series 2-1. Earlier scintillating half-centuries from Suresh Raina and MS Dhoni helped set up the win as India posted 202 for six after being put into bat. **SCORES IN BRIEF** INDIA: 202 for 6 in 20 overs (Raina 63, Dhoni 56; Plunkett 1-22) ENGLAND: 127 all out in 16.3 overs (Roy 32, Root 42, Morgan 40; Chahal 6-25) **Result:** India won by 75 runs and clinch the 3-match series 2-1. **Player-of-the-match:** YS Chahal **Player-of-the-series:** YS Chahal

BLIND WORLD CUP BD notch up second win

SPORTS REPORTER
Bangladesh eased to a 59-run win over Nepal in their third match of the 2nd T20 World Cup Cricket Tournament for the Blind in New Delhi yesterday. Bangladesh were put in to bat first and were given a brilliant start by Abdul Malek and Mohsin Hosen Joy, who shared a 182-run opening partnership. Malek scored 83 off 54 balls before being run out, while Joy remained unbeaten after a 70-ball 88 as Bangladesh posted 203 for the loss of two wickets. After the exchange, Nepal reached 144 for eight at the end of their allotted overs. Kritan Shrestha Duwal top-scored with an unbeaten 55. Bangladesh are now fifth in the standings with six points from three matches. **Santner wants repeat 2nd ODI against Australia today** **REUTERS, Napier**

HOCKEY WORLD LEAGUE BD aim for top spot

SPORTS REPORTER
Following the withdrawal of favourites Canada from the Hockey World League Round-2, hosts Bangladesh now dream of moving into the 20-team third round by topping their group when the round begins from March 4. Canada secured automatic qualification and were tipped to finish top among the eight teams in Round-2, with Bangladesh setting their target to finish in second place, behind Canada but ahead of China. However, Canada's withdrawal has now given the home side hopes of qualifying for Round-3, a phase which they have never played before. Eight further teams from three zones will join the 12 teams in Round-3 for the stage, which will be held in England and South Africa in June and July respectively. "Canada are strong opponents and that is

why we had set our sights to finish second in our group. However, we have decided to try and finish top following their withdrawal," said coach Mahbob Harun. "Our chance of moving into Round-3 has been brightened as Canada and China are ahead of us on paper. Now we are only behind China. However, qualifying for Round-3 depends on who replaces Canada [in Round-2]. I think one of the teams from Round-1 may replace them," informed Harun. In order to prepare ahead of Round-2, Oliver Kurtz's charges are scheduled to travel to South Africa to play eight practice matches. "We have already received government orders to travel to South Africa. We are supposed to play eight matches there against South Africa and other teams from February 11-23. The final squad for Round-2 will be declared after that tour," added Mahbob.



Indian leg-spinner Yuzvendra Chahal took six wickets as England collapsed in dramatic fashion in the third and final T20I in Bangalore yesterday. The visitors lost eight wickets for eight runs in 18 deliveries as they succumbed to a 75-run defeat.

New Zealand need to bowl as well as they did at the start of Australia's innings in the first one-day international in Auckland if they are to wrap up the series on Thursday, according to all-rounder Mitchell Santner. The hosts reduced Australia to 67 for six inside 19 overs as they chased at Eden Park before all-rounder Marcus Stoinis almost won the game with a blazing 146 not out. "All the bowlers can take some positives out of the game," Santner said on Wednesday. "We bowled really well at the start and to take those early wickets was crucial... it put us ahead. "We have to do more of the same. Be patient on a good length and build pressure that way rather than hope for miracle balls at the start."