

SPORT

Focus is on playing good cricket: Mominul

SPORTS REPORTER

The Bangladesh national team attended their first training session at the Rajiv Gandhi International Cricket Stadium in Hyderabad yesterday. They began training at 2:00pm and the session extended till the evening.

Yesterday was the first time that the entire team joined the camp prior to the India series. While the team did have a two-day training camp in Dhaka prior to their departure to Hyderabad on Thursday, those training sessions were optional and the entire team was not present.

Top-order batsman Mominul Haque, who is yet to play an international game in India, spoke to reporters and talked about how excited Bangladesh were to play in India.

"It's very exciting for our country. We didn't play a Test against India in India before and I think it's been a bit long for this series to take place," said Mominul, adding that he felt that Bangladesh should get more opportunities to play in India in the

near future.

Bangladesh have gone to India following an 8-0 drubbing across formats at the hands of New Zealand. While they failed to win a single game during their tour down under, they did manage to get themselves into winning positions a number of times during the tour. Unfortunately, the Tigers never managed to go for the kill.

"Every series is a new series. We don't think about what happened in New Zealand. For now, we are thinking about this series and then the Sri Lanka series which is ahead of us. There is no point thinking about the past.

"India in these conditions are very strong. Very few have survived here. We look forward to playing good cricket. Let's see what happens," said Mominul.

With a Test average of 51.15 in 20 games, the left-hander is easily one of the best Test batsmen in the team. While he has not fired in recent times, his numbers still remain high due to the brilliant start to his career.

In fact, he is one of five current players to have played at least 20 Tests and boast a slightly higher batting

average than Indian batting legend Virat Kohli, a player Mominul hopes to meet and learn from during this tour.

"He is outstanding. He is the number one player in the world and if I get an opportunity I will go and talk to him. I like his aggressiveness. If you get aggressive, you will never lose to anyone," said Mominul.

The left-hander highlighted players like Ravichandran Ashwin and Ravindra Jadeja as some of the key threats to Bangladesh. However, he also believes that Bangladesh have the ability to take the game to the hosts.

"I personally feel that Ashwin is very quick and more intelligent than the other spinners. We haven't planned anything against him or any other Indian bowler. We are going to try to learn something from this tour.

"We played on turning tracks during the England series in Bangladesh [in October last year]. We hope we can adjust here. At the same time we have got good pacers. We will miss Mustafizur [Rahman] but we have bowlers like Shafiul [Islam], Kamrul Islam Rabbi and Taskin [Ahmed]. Kamrul bowled well in the New Zealand series," said Mominul.



Bangladesh players Shakib Al Hasan (L), Mominul Haque and Tamim Iqbal (R) take a breather at the Rajiv Gandhi International Stadium yesterday after going through their first training session since their arrival in Hyderabad.

PHOTO: BCB

BLIND WORLD T20 Gigantic win for Bangladesh

SPORTS REPORTER

The Bangladesh blind cricket team scored a mind-boggling 330 runs against their New Zealand counterparts as they cruised to a massive 90-run win in the 2nd T20 World Cup Cricket Tournament for the Blind in New Delhi yesterday.

Electing to bat first, Bangladesh scored at 16.50 runs an over to leave the Kiwis in the dust with a mighty display of batting. Opener Abdul Malek scored 180 runs off just 71 balls, plundering an incredible 33 fours. He found support from Abdullah Zobir, who scored 90 off 44 with nine fours.

The next highest run-getter was the extras column, contributing 31 as Bangladesh reached 330 for the loss of two wickets.

After the exchange, the Kiwis tried with all their might to reach the gargantuan target but fell well short, reaching just 240 in their allotted overs for the loss of nine wickets.

The win sees Bangladesh rise to third in the standings, behind India and leaders Pakistan.

BANGABANDHU CUP Dhaka Abahani into semis

SPORTS REPORTER

Dhaka Abahani moved into the semifinals of the Bangabandhu Cup after securing a 1-0 win against Nur Islam Football Academy Jessore at the Muktijoddha Asaduzzaman Stadium in Magura yesterday.

Despite having a number of national team players in their ranks, Abahani failed to threaten in the first half.

Instead, it was Jessore, captained by former national player Kanchon, doing the attacking, although the few opportunities they had to take the lead were squandered and the first half ended goalless.

Abahani's lacklustre performance in the first half drew the ire of the crowd and coach Amlesh Sen, and they came out all guns blazing in the second half in their quest to take the lead.

That lead would come just seven minutes later when Emon Mahmud scored the deciding goal in the 52nd minute which saw Abahani through to the semifinals.



Bangladesh pacer Mustafizur Rahman (top) will be in action today in the BCL, having sat out the India tour because of some lingering discomfort from his shoulder surgery. Here he is seen taking a light-hearted picture with his South Zone teammates at Sylhet International Cricket Stadium yesterday.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

Mustafizur to turn out for South Zone 2nd round of BCL starts today

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh pacer Mustafizur Rahman is likely to feature for Prime Bank South Zone in the second round of the Bangladesh Cricket League, the country's premier four-day cricket competition, which begins today.

While Mustafizur was deemed medically fit, Bangladesh's selectors believed that he was not at his peak as far as match-fitness levels are concerned. They believed that it was too early to make Mustafizur play a Test and that he needed more time to recover from his shoulder surgery.

As a result, they decided to include him in the Bangladesh Cricket League and create a step-by-step process for his comeback into the national team. As of now, the selectors are hoping Mustafizur will have had enough game-time prior to the Sri Lanka series which is set to begin in March.

One of the crucial factors that led to his exclusion was the speed that he was bowling with ever since his return to cricket. The left-arter, prior to the surgery, used to be able to reach the 140 kmph mark. However, ever since his return, he has been bowling between the 120 and 127 kmph.

The inclusion of Mustafizur into the South Zone team could actually create a problem for skipper Abdur Razzak, since he now has a number of ex-national players in his team. Al-Amin Hossain and Rubel Hossain are also a part of this team.

South Zone drew their earlier game against BCB North Zone at the Sylhet International Cricket Stadium and they will be facing league leaders Islami Bank East Zone, who will be without the hero of their first game, Ltton Das. The track at Sylhet is expected to be a batsman's paradise.

At the Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium in Chittagong, Walton Central Zone will take on BCB North Zone.

Don't sledge Kohli: Hussey

REUTERS, Sydney

Australia need a clear strategy to keep India captain Virat Kohli in check and refrain from getting into verbal confrontations with the India captain during the four-Test series starting this month, former batsman Mike Hussey has said.

The captain's form has been key to India's rise to number one in the Test rankings, with the 28-year-old scoring three double hundreds and averaging almost 76 in Tests in 2016.

Kohli, who is often very demonstrative on the field, has said in the past that he does not mind on-field skirmishes and Hussey believes it is that fire in his belly that inspires him to perform better.

"I wouldn't try and fire him up," Hussey told the Cricket Australia website ahead of Australia's tour, which starts in Pune on Feb. 23. "I think he thrives on that and he's a real competitor.

"He loves being in the fight and loves the contest out in the middle. There's no need to get involved in that sort of verbal barrage because I think that fires him up even more.

"I'd make sure we have some very clear plans and we try and stick to them as best as we possibly can," the 41-year-old Hussey added.

"You don't want to get carried away with too much talk and lose your concentration of what's important, which is executing your skills.

BD TEST AGAINST INDIA

HCA to commemorate Test with souvenir

PALLAB BHATTACHARYA from New Delhi



The historic Test match between Bangladesh and India, beginning in Hyderabad from

February 9, will be commemorated in the form of a special souvenir being brought out by the Hyderabad Cricket Association (HCA), reviving an old tradition.

"To revive its old tradition and in association with the Veterans Cricket Association of Hyderabad, HCA is bringing out a souvenir/brochure to commemorate this historical event when the first ever Test match between India and Bangladesh in India is organised by the Hyderabad Cricket Association," the HCA said in a statement.

The practice of publishing a souvenir began when the first Commonwealth

cricket team had first visited India and HCA organised a match.

The practice had been followed till the early nineties but was discontinued for the past couple of decades although Hyderabad hosted several international matches.

The proposed brochure, compiled, designed and produced by former HCA secretary and manager of the 1983 World Cup winning Indian Team, PR Mansingh, will contain articles written by legendary Indian cricketers like Abbas Ali Baig, Mohinder Amarnath, VVS Laxman, S Venkataraghavan, Syed Kirmani, Saad Bin Jung and well-known cricket writers like R Mohan, Harsha Bhogle and Suresh Menon.

The brochure will also have cartoons and statistics of the matches played between Bangladesh and India, the statement added.

HCA Media Manager Vikram Mansingh told The Daily Star that the souvenir would be published on February 7.

CEC proposes two-tier Tests

ESPNCRICINFO



A major revamp of the international cricket calendar, including a two-tiered Test league, is on the cards after the conclusion of the Chief Executive Committee (CEC) meeting of the International Cricket Council (ICC) in Dubai yesterday.

The CEC board agreed on a number of proposals which, if approved by the ICC board will usher in a two-year Test league involving tiers of nine and three teams, a 13-team ODI league and a regional qualification process for the World T20 from 2019.

The ICC board will meet today but it is not clear whether these proposals will be discussed today or at the next board meeting in April. Today's meeting is likely to focus on a new financial model. The changes which the CEC have proposed for each format are as follows:

Test cricket: Nine Full Members excluding Zimbabwe will play each other in Test series either home or away once over a two-year period, at the end of which there will be a play-off between the top two teams. Full Members will retain the power to schedule bilateral series should they wish outside of this league structure.

The details of how the bottom three teams operate within this league are still to be fully worked out. They will play against each other in what will be Test matches, but essentially outside of the league structure and with no points at stake. At the end of a four-year period of two cycles the performances of these three teams will be assessed and, presumably, performances there will be part of a criteria for Test status.

ODI cricket: A 13-team league will be played over three years, one series against each other on a home and away basis. The 13 teams are likely to include the 10 Full Members, Afghanistan and Ireland, and the winner of the World Cricket League. For the World Cup, at the end of the league period, the top seven sides plus the hosts will qualify automatically. The bottom five will play in a qualifying event along with an undecided number of Associate sides, from which two sides will go through to make up a 10-team World Cup.

T20 cricket: The most uncertainty remains over T20 international cricket, mostly because talks are still ongoing over whether two extra World T20s should be played in 2018 and 2022. That is what will determine the length of any cycle for the format. As it stands, the proposal includes one regional qualification event in each of the five ICC regions. Teams enter that event on the basis of points they earn from the bilateral T20s they play in a cycle.

KP opts out of IPL

AGENCIES, London

Former England captain Kevin Pietersen ruled himself out of the lucrative Indian Premier League on Friday, shortly after he was charged with a code of conduct breach in Australia's Big Bash League (BBL) and fined.

Pietersen, who represented the Rising Pune Supergiants in four games in IPL 2016, said that he needed a breather after a packed schedule and recent months.

"FYI - I won't be going into the IPL auction. My winter has been too busy with all my travel & I don't want to spend April/May away too!," Pietersen wrote on Twitter.

Earlier in the day, Pietersen was fined for breaching Cricket Australia's code of conduct in making a comment detrimental to the interests of cricket while playing for Melbourne Stars against the Perth Scorchers on January 24.

The offence occurred during the Scorchers' innings, when batsman Sam Whiteman was given not out and Pietersen commented on the decision while wearing a microphone on-field.

Under the code procedure, match referee David Talalla considered the umpires' report and the proposed sanction was a AUD 5,000 fine. Pietersen accepted the charge but elected to dispute the sanction. The match referee set a hearing for Thursday and announced the decision was upheld Friday.

Pietersen has 48 hours to decide whether to appeal.



The Bangladesh women's cricket team take a group selfie in Mirpur before going to the airport for their flight to Sri Lanka yesterday. The Tigresses will play in the 2017 ICC World Cup Qualifier, beginning on February 7.

PHOTO: STAR