

# SPORT

## Can't force Indian batsmen: Mehedi

NAIMUL KARIM from Hyderabad

For a bowler who had taken a total of 19 scalps in his first two Tests, you would expect Mehedi Hasan Miraz to be desperate to add plenty more to the wickets column during the one-off Test against India in Hyderabad.

It would therefore not have been a surprise had he used an aggressive stance during the pre-series interviews and spoken about the specific Indian wickets he targeted.

After all, he is likely to get more help from the wicket in Hyderabad than the ones in New Zealand.

However, Miraz seemed anything but aggressive during a press conference that took place in the team hotel yesterday. The flurry of wickets that he took early in his career has not seemed to change his thought process at all.

When asked what the main focus of the Bangladeshi bowlers should be against a strong Indian batting order, he said: "Because of the practice match, we understand the strategy of the Indian players better. New

Zealand play differently and so do India. Indian batsmen try to dominate the bowlers. They always try to score runs against us. Our target will be to restrict those runs.

"As bowlers we have to be consistent and bowl in the right areas and check those runs. If we can do that, they will automatically commit mistakes while trying to get runs. But you can't really forcefully do something against the Indian batsmen."

"I am going to try to bowl to my strength, which is to bowl in the right areas. I am not going to try and bowl for wickets because when I do that I tend to go off line. I will be focusing on bowling in the right areas," added Miraz.

There have been instances in Bangladesh's past when bowlers ended up fading away following a few good matches. And one of the reasons behind that was that their previous performances became a burden rather than a fillip. It was as though they targeted five-wicket hauls in every game, regardless of the pitch and conditions.

Miraz however seems to be a lot more realistic and practical in his expectations. He knows very well that Bangladesh's bowlers would have to be extremely disciplined in order to challenge this Indian batting line-up in their own conditions.

"It's not as though you will perform well all the time or that you will be able to perform the same way throughout. The spinners may get help here in Hyderabad, but the Indian players are very good players of spin. So we have to use the right mental approach for this Test. If everybody sticks to their plans, then maybe something good will happen," said Miraz, adding that he hopes to get a few top-order Indian wickets.

Following Miraz's first two Tests, Ravichandran Ashwin praised the youngster on twitter. When reminded of that, Miraz said that he hoped to learn from the experienced off-spinner.

"I have not met him yet and I can't talk to him now due to restrictions, but I will obviously meet him after the game. I will always try to learn more. I observe Ashwin quite a bit. I think I will learn more when I see him bowl in the flesh," reckoned the youngster.



The Bangladesh women's cricket team made a flying start to the ICC Women's World Cup Qualifier, defeating their Papua New Guinea counterparts by 118 runs at the Colombo Cricket Ground yesterday.

PHOTO: BCB

## Tigresses start strong

SPORTS REPORTER



The Bangladesh women's team managed a morale-boosting 118-run win in their opening match against Papua New Guinea yesterday before today's tough challenge against Pakistan women's team at the P Sara Oval.

In their ICC Women's World Cup Qualifier opening match at the Colombo Cricket Club ground, Bangladesh lost the first wicket of Sharmin Sultana in the second over after deciding to bat first but

Sharmin Akhter and Sanjida Islam repaired the early damage, sharing 51 runs for the second wicket before the latter was dismissed for 28. Then Sharmin and Fargana Haque put on 69 runs for the third wicket which ultimately helped the team post 215 for six in 50 overs.

Sharmin hit seven boundaries in her 56 off 86 balls while Fargana contributed 51 off 72 and hit the same number of fours. Bangladesh were then in trouble when Sharmin and captain Rumana Ahmed were dismissed in two consecutive deliveries in the 31st over but the experienced Salma Khatun played a vital unbeaten 32-run knock to put up a

### SCORES IN BRIEF

**BANGLADESH WOMEN'S TEAM:** 215-6 in 50 overs (Sharmin 56, Sanjida 28, Fargana 51, Salma 32 not out; Oa 2-23, Tom 2-35, Jimmy 2-32)

**PAPUA NEW GUINEA WOMEN'S TEAM:** 97 all out in 32.1 overs (Siaka 32; Jahanara 2-27, Panna 2-20, Salma 2-14, Rumana 2-13)

**Result:** Bangladesh women's team won by

top-scored with a 41-ball 32 and was the owner of one of just three double-digit scores along with Konio Oala (29) and Tanya Ruma (20) as they were bowled out for 97 runs.

After being reduced to two for two by the Bangladeshi opening pair of Jahanara Alam and Panna Ghosh, the trio of double-digit scores took PNG to 77 for four, but when Venu Frank was trapped in front by Salma Khatun, it set off a collapse of six wickets for 20 runs as NG folded for 97 in 32.1 overs.

Jahanara, Panna, Salma and Rumana Ahmed took two wickets each, while Khadija Tul Kubra took one.

challenging total on the board. Salma smashed four boundaries during her 31-run innings.

Papua New Guinea were never in the game in chase of the 216-run winning target. Skipper Pauke Siaka

## Tigers relax before stern Test

SPORTS REPORTER from Hyderabad



While the Indian cricket team were sweating it out in the afternoon in the Rajiv Gandhi International Cricket Stadium yesterday, Mushfiqur Rahim and Co spent the entire day away from cricket.

There were no official training or media sessions arranged. The closest that they came to cricket was when they had a meeting in the evening where the team management discussed the strategies for the first Test.

Other than that, the players were mostly confined within the team hotel or left to deal with their personal plans. Shakib Al Hasan, who barely gets a chance to roam around freely in Dhaka undisturbed, was seen shopping with his wife.

Tamim Iqbal, who incidentally will

be completing 10 years of international cricket on the first day of the one-off Test against India, was busy trying to pick a hotel for the team dinner yesterday.

The obvious choice of food was Hyderabad biriyani. Unfortunately, it was hard to settle on a restaurant that would serve that and provide an appropriate environment for the entire Bangladeshi team.

These are activities that the team often does in order to improve the team spirit. It goes without saying that Bangladesh will face a tough time in the one-off Test. They did not do well against a second string Indian team during the warm-up and it is bound to get a lot more difficult against the main Indian line-up.

It is still not certain what kind of team Bangladesh will field for the match. One of the questions that still needs to be answered is whether the visitors will field seven or eight bats-

men. With Imrul Kayes out due to injury, Soumya Sarkar is expected to replace him at the top.

Soumya can bowl a bit and that may just encourage the team management to include Liton Das in the team as well as an eighth batsman. If Liton is included in the team, he will most likely don the wicket-keeping gloves instead of Mushfiqur.

If on the other hand Liton does not play and Bangladesh go on to field four bowlers excluding Shakib, then Taijul Islam or Subhshis Roy, each of whom took three wickets in the warm-up game, will find their way into the eleven. For now, Taskin Ahmed, Kamrul Islam Rabbi and Mehedi Hasan Miraz are the three specialist bowlers who are likely to form the bowling unit aside from Shakib.

Kamrul, Taskin and Shakib did not play in the warm-up fixture.

## 222 reasons to smile

SPORTS REPORTER



A little-known batsman by the name of Azmir Ahmed hogged the spotlight yesterday as the right-hander smacked a double-hundred in the Dhaka First Division Super League match at the BKSP-4 ground. The right-hander smashed 16 fours and as many sixes during his unbeaten 168-ball 222 as Agrani Bank Cricket Club (383-5) outplayed Udayachal Club (197-6) by a massive 186 runs.

"My maiden hundred is a double-hundred, so you can understand my excitement. A double-hundred was not in my mind till I reached my 150 in 42 overs. I completed my hundred in 30 overs and then when I reached 150, my teammates and officials advised me to go for the kill and the wicket was also good for batting," an excited Azmir told The Daily Star over phone.



Azmir Ahmed converted his maiden first-division century into a barnstorming 222.

PHOTO: BCB

"I tried last year for a Premier League team but nobody showed interest, even though I scored 500 runs last season for Agrani Bank. So

my immediate dream is to play the Premier League but I will try my best to play at the top level like my friend Taskin Ahmed. It is my coach and mentor Anwar Hossain Chowdhury who has been doing everything for me to be where I am," he added.

As there is no practice of keeping domestic records, it is almost impossible to be certain about where his achievement stands but an organiser informed that a double-century in 50-over domestic competition is nothing new as current national opener Imrul Kayes reached the mark during his first appearance in the third division qualifiers.

In the day's other matches, Rugganj Tigers (321-7) outclassed Kalindi Krira Chakra (116 all out) by 205 runs at JUG, Orient Sporting Club (248-6) defeated Surjo Torun Club (199-9) by 49 runs at Fatullah and Kakrail Boys Club (216-5) beat Shinepukur Cricket Club (215-6) by five wickets at BKSP-3.

## Kohli's passion in practice

SPORTS REPORTER from Hyderabad



Virat Kohli's performance in the last couple of years has led to him getting a number of nicknames. From being described as a run-scoring machine to a champion chaser, Virat tends to surpass one boundary after the other without any hassle.

So classy has been his performance in the recent past that it has often compelled his mesmerised fans to ask the golden question: "How does he do that every single time?"

A mere glance at Kohli's training discipline would answer most aspects of that question.

Yesterday, after a quick football session at the Rajiv Gandhi International Cricket Stadium, the players hit the nets to work on their respective skills. The one aspect that was obviously noticeable was the amount of time Kohli spent at the nets. While players came and left in the neighbouring nets, Kohli kept playing his drives nonchalantly. It did not matter that he had taken almost two hours out of the four-hour practice; it was all about hitting the middle of the bat.

Kohli's determination reflects the brilliant run that India had at home. They have been unbeaten for a long time and at the



India captain Virat Kohli spent two gruelling hours fine-tuning his shots in the nets during practice in Hyderabad yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

moment it seems highly likely that their unbeaten run will continue during the Bangladesh series.

Bangladesh had a rough time in New Zealand and also put in a below-par performance against India A in the warm-up.

The hosts are the clear favourites in this series, but head coach Anil Kumble believed that there was no room for complacency.

"We would like to take every team the same way in terms of what they bring to the table. Bangladesh are a very improved side and they had a good outing in New Zealand. Even though the results are different, Bangladesh, I think, going to New Zealand and doing what they did... we respect the opposition.

"We would like to measure our own performances and then treat every game in that fashion. If we can continue to do that, the results will come our way. Bangladesh have some quality players, good allrounders and it's going to be interesting," said Kumble, adding that he expects both his spinners and pacers to be equally lethal in this series, regardless of how the wicket behaves.

Later in the day, Kumble had to attend a sudden meeting with the team management since his leg-spinner Amit Mishra had injured his knee. Mishra was later replaced by left-arm wrist spinner Kuldeep Yadav.

## 'I remember all 600'

SPORTS REPORTER from Hyderabad



18 years ago today, Test cricket witnessed one of its most magnificent spectacles. At a time when the India-Pakistan rivalry was at its peak, Anil Kumble became only the second player in the history of the game to take a 10-wicket innings haul. His figures of 10 for 74 sent Pakistan crashing to a thumping defeat in Delhi's Ferozeshah Kotla in 1999.

Those who eagerly followed the rivalry between the two sub-continental giants back then, can perhaps detail out the events of that game even today, for it is a match that both Pakistan and Indian fans, albeit for opposing reasons, cannot forget.

Kumble, who is now working as India's head coach, addressed the media in Hyderabad yesterday and recalled that magical performance.

"18 years ago, I don't think I ever thought that I would be able to pick up 10 wickets. It's just one of those things. It's nice to celebrate anniversaries of cricketing milestones.

"If it has to happen again, it can happen either tomorrow, or even 10 years down the line. I don't think anybody gave me a chance to take 10 wickets! It's a very rare occurring



ANIL KUMBLE

and I was blessed to be a part of something so unique. I am glad that people remember anniversaries that are so rare," said a nostalgic Kumble.

As soon as Kumble finished explaining just how special this achievement was to him -- it took him close to five minutes -- a reporter immediately asked him if he remembered how he took all those 10 wickets.

To that, Kumble quickly replied with his typical straight face: "Yeah, of course. I remember all the 600 as well."