

# SPORT

## Tigers seek consistency

Naimul Karim from Hyderabad

Have a glance at Bangladesh's records in the last two Test series and you will find them refreshingly entertaining. Go ahead, compare those Tests to their corresponding ODIs and you will still feel that the Tigers had performed much better in the longer version as opposed to their favourite format.

They had failed to go for the kill on a number of occasions against England in the ODIs and displayed that laidback attitude against New Zealand as well. As a result, they were outclassed by both opponents.

In the Tests though, they managed to put in unique performances and surpass boundaries that they had not before. They beat England in Dhaka and then displayed remarkable patience to make the New Zealand bowlers struggle for more than 150 overs in Wellington.

Yes, they did end up losing both Tests against New Zealand. However, it will not be an overstatement to say that the popular notion that Bangladesh is a team that sides should be concerned about only in the limited-overs format seems to be gradually changing.

And that is an aspect that Bangladesh Test skipper Mushfiqur Rahim wants to continue working on.

It is a big occasion for Mushfiqur and Bangladesh. This is the first time in 16 years as a Test nation that Bangladesh are playing a Test in India and it is often easy for cricketers to get overly excited. Mushfiqur, on the other hand, talked about sticking to the basics and did not want to get carried away.

"If you play consistently in Tests, all the questions we are often asked will be answered. We are working on that. If you play one good Test and then one bad, you have nothing you can talk about.

"Our focus is to play consistent cricket. We can take a lot of positives from our last two Tests and hopefully we can continue our form," said Mushfiqur.

"To me it does not matter whether you play a one-match Test series or a five-match series. You have to be switched on in each and every session. This is a great opportunity for us, and if we do well in each of the sessions, the result will come our way.

"We have a lot to learn and playing against India will help us. The boys are very excited playing against the number one team. Hopefully we can show some character and match the Indian players," he added.



Bangladesh skipper Mushfiqur Rahim does his best to reach the hands of pace bowling coach Courtney Walsh during practice at the Rajiv Gandhi International Stadium in Hyderabad yesterday. Bangladesh's bowlers will have to show similar energy if they are to have a chance of halting the Indian batting juggernaut in the one-off Test beginning here today.

PHOTO: AFP

## 'Not yet the finished product'

Sports Reporter from Hyderabad

Bangladesh are heading into their first ever bilateral series in India on the back of a disappointing 8-0 defeat across formats in New Zealand.

However coach Chandika Hathurusingha believes that this is the ideal time for the Tigers to tour India, a place that has been a menace for visiting nations. One of the reasons behind that, according to Hathurusingha, is the way Bangladesh's players excelled in contrasting conditions against England in Dhaka and against New Zealand.

The Sri Lankan reckons that it was Bangladesh's good performance in the last two years that finally got them an invitation to India.

"The Bangladesh team is competing against

good sides. Playing well against India in one-day cricket is also another factor for us to get a game here. I think this is the ideal time to play. We have played good cricket against England. We had played that series in different conditions. And then we played in different conditions in New Zealand as well. In both conditions, they showed that they can compete," explained Hathurusingha.

"There is no better game than playing against the number one team and seeing where you are at. We are focusing on finding out where we are at in international cricket," he added.

Despite creating chances in New Zealand, the Tigers failed to seal a single win and the main reason behind that was that they collapsed every time they seemed to be on the cusp.

It is a concern that Hathurusingha wants to solve as quickly as possible.

"There is a problem, but I don't think it's

insecurity, it's probably the concentration factor. We have not played five-day cricket for a long time. The more we play, that's the only way we can improve. Batsmen need to concentrate for a long period," said Hathurusingha.

"We need to play more Test matches. Our approach in one-day cricket depends on what we have. It's the same with regards to Test cricket. We need to find the best possible game scenario for us to compete. We are a strong team, but we are not a finished product. We are not even near our finished product. That's why, the more we play, the more we will enjoy," he added.

Bangladesh have quite a number of Tests scheduled this year. After India, they are scheduled to play Tests against Sri Lanka, Pakistan, Australia and South Africa.

It's an aspect that the coach is excited about and he hoped that the Tigers finish the year as a more mature Test unit.

### TEST TRIVIA

Bangladesh are the ninth Test nation to play a Test in India; the previous Full Member Nation to play their first Test in India were South Africa in 1996.

Bangladesh have lost six of eight Tests against India, four of them by an innings. The two drawn Tests were rain-affected.

India are currently undefeated in 18 straight matches at home and need two more undefeated Tests to equal the mark set by the Indian team between 1977 and 1980.

Mushfiqur Rahim needs eight more dismissals to become the first Bangladeshi wicketkeeper to reach 100 dismissals.

Ravichandran Ashwin needs two wickets in the next three Tests to become the fastest to 250 Test wickets.

### HEAD TO HEAD

BANGLADESH TESTS PLAYED INDIA

### KEY PLAYERS



	SHAKIB AL HASAN	R ASHWIN
42	MATCHES	44
3213	RUNS	1816
40.67	AVERAGE	34.92
217	HS	124
4	100S	4
20	50S	10
165	WICKETS	248
32.14	AVERAGE	24.96
7/36	BB1	7/59
10/124	BBM	13/140
15	5W	24

## Rahane's pedigree trumps Nair's triple

Sports Reporter from Hyderabad

How logical is it to drop a batsman after he scores a triple hundred? It does not seem like a move that a team would be compelled to take, does it?

Well, when India take on Bangladesh for the first time at home, it is very likely that Karun Nair, a batsman who scored 303 against England in Chennai in the last series, will not feature in the playing eleven.

And that is because Ajinkya Rahane, who Nair had initially replaced, is fit again and is likely to return to the eleven. It is a move that goes to show just how powerful this Indian batting lineup has been lately.

Skipper Virat Kohli, during the pre-match press conference in Hyderabad yesterday, clearly explained why he favoured Rahane over Nair.

"See, I feel one game does not overshadow two years of hard work from another player. That's my point of view. You have to understand that Jinx [Ajinkya] averages 50 in the last two years and is the most solid batsman in the Test format. We will look at it from that point of view.

"Karun was stepping into his shoes. What he did was remarkable, sealing his spot as far as the squad is concerned, but you can't overlook two years of hard work from Ajinkya. He deserves to walk back into the team whenever he is fit. That's my take on it," said Kohli.

Kohli reckons that chopping and changing the batting order frequently would not

give batsmen the time that they deserve to prove themselves.

"I think bowlers can be switched according to conditions. You might want to play three seamers or three spinners, some guys might have more pace or reverse swing, you can change those.

"I think from a batting point of view you need big runs in Test cricket and to chop and change continuously doesn't let them gain confidence. People who have been regulars in the eleven, they need to be given a chance. If it's about the lack of form, then you are subject to that change, otherwise it's important to back your top 11," he said.

When compared to the England series, India is expected to face a better spin attack from Bangladesh. When asked as to what his thoughts were about that, he said: "The opposition does not matter. I watch the revolutions on the ball and how much turn it has. I am not playing any names."

Furthermore, he stressed on the importance of focusing on their processes.

"We want to focus on our processes and play good cricket. No team is invincible or unbeatable. In cricket there are always opportunities for both sides at different stages of the game, and in Test matches, more so. One hour of good cricket can switch the direction of the game," said Kohli.

"We are not invincible. We feel we can perform and win against any team in the world but that does not make us feel that we are not beatable. You have to understand the weaknesses and strengths of a team and I think this team does that very well," he added.

## A historic moment for both teams: Kohli

Naimul Karim from Hyderabad

India skipper Virat Kohli has termed Bangladesh's first bilateral tour of India as 'historic' and hopes that the Tigers visit India more often.

Speaking to reporters during the pre-match press conference yesterday, he said: "They have not come to India much is what I have really recently found out. We have gone to Bangladesh quite a bit. I don't think they have ever been here for a bilateral before this. So yeah, it is a historic moment for both the teams, and the countries as well. I hope this can happen much more.

"We have gone there way too many times (laughs). I think they should also start coming here and it will be great for them as well to play in India. I think it's a great place to play cricket; big crowds in. They will certainly enjoy."

"They had one game in the world T20. I think it should happen more often. It is a special occasion and I just happen to be the captain at this time. It is indeed going to be a special day," he added.

The Indian mainstay also believes that the Tigers should be given more chances to play Test cricket in order to help them improve.

"I think they have the skill. They just



don't play that many Test matches to gain confidence as a Test squad. It's very basic. They have become a very good one-day side because of the fact that they have played many one-dayers and they know their combination. If you don't play Test cricket too often, you will never understand the mindset. So I think that's where it comes from.

"They have beaten all one-day sides because they know exactly how to play that format. Because they play it regularly. You can practice as much as you want but game time is something different. The more Test cricket they play, ability is going to be there it's just the mindset that changes from format to format," said Kohli.

"I am sure when they play Test

cricket they will become solid Test players, and a solid Test team as well because they have that game time behind them. I think that should be pushed. They certainly have the skill to compete at the Test level," he added.

With regards to the current series, he expects the Tigers to come hard against the hosts.

"It's an equal battle. You can't discount Bangladesh's batting as well. They did outstanding in New Zealand, it was an outstanding effort to score more than 350 runs in one day. It was phenomenal. Going at 4.5 runs an over throughout the day was something very special.

"We can't take any aspect of their team lightly. They have quality cricketers," said Kohli.

## Spin expected to dominate

Sports Reporter from Hyderabad

One of the first things that Mushfiqur Rahim did after reaching the

Rajiv Gandhi International Cricket Stadium yesterday was check out the wicket.

He had a look at it for a few minutes and then headed towards a team shoot. Tamim Iqbal followed next and did the same thing and so did a few other players.

At the end of all the inspection, the team management believed that the wicket is going to end up assisting the spinners.

Speaking to reporters during the pre-match press conference Mushfiqur said: "The wicket seems as though it will turn after a while. At the same time it's very hard and it looks good for batting. The pace bowlers will get something early on and then the spinners will probably get a lot of turn after two days."

"It's a pretty good wicket and now it depends on how we play. The spinners will play a big role here and so will the pacers. There may not be sideways movement, but the ball here tends to reverse," explained Mushfiqur.

From a distance, there was a bit of grass visible on the wicket. However, Bangladesh's pacers like Taskin Ahmed

and Kamrul Islam Rabbi reckon that the wicket would end up helping the spinners.

It therefore will not be a surprise if Bangladesh opts to play all three spinners -- Shakib Al Hasan, Taijul Islam and Mehedi Hasan Miraz -- in the team and include just two pacers.

There have only been three Tests played at this venue -- two against New Zealand and one against Australia.

While New Zealand managed to draw the first Test in 2010, India ambled past both the teams in 2012 and 2013. Ravindra Jadeja and Ravichandran Ashwin played some crucial roles in those wins. New Zealand's former spin great Daniel Vettori also has a five-wicket haul here.



India off-spinner Ravichandran Ashwin (R), with 18 wickets at 10.5 in Tests at the Rajiv Gandhi International Stadium in Hyderabad, will be a key factor in the one-off Test against Bangladesh starting today.

PHOTO: AFP

## Blind World T20 Bangladesh crash out

Sports Reporter

The Bangladesh blind cricket team were dumped out of the 2nd T20 World Cup Cricket Tournament for the Blind after they suffered a six-wicket defeat to Sri Lanka in their final group match in Karnataka yesterday.

Bangladesh had earlier looked in sublime form since a defeat in the opening match to India. They went on a five-game win streak and looked set for the semis, but three defeats in as many matches dashed any such hopes.

After being sent in to bat, Bangladesh could manage just 141 runs for the loss of eight wickets in their allotted overs. Mahbul Hasan Emon scored 33 while opener Abdul Malek made 32.

Sri Lanka chased down the total in just 12 overs with Ruwan Wasantha (33), Dimuthu Ravindra (32 not out) and Kavindu Sahan Kumara Thoma Dura (56 not out) leading the hosts.

## Youth hits 300 off 72 balls

AFP, New Delhi

A little-known batsman made headlines across India on Wednesday after scoring an unbeaten triple century in a Twenty20 match, a knock which included a staggering 39 sixes.

Mohit Ahlawat also smashed 14 fours in his 72-ball 300 -- thought to be the first T20 triple century -- which has earned him a trial with the Delhi Daredevils for next month's glitzy IPL.

Ahlawat hammered the hapless bowlers from Friends XI in east Delhi on Tuesday. The 21-year-old was playing for the Maavi XI, a semi-professional team.

"When I reached 150, I told myself 250 was there for the taking. So I told my partner at the other end that I was going to take most of the strike," Ahlawat told Times of India.

His last 50 runs came off the final two overs, leaving him unbeaten on exactly 300 as his team finished on 416 for two. Friends XI only managed 200 in reply.