



Bangladesh pacer Mustafizur Rahman (L) works on strengthening his shoulder along with teammate Soumya Sarkar during the national training camp for the tour of Sri Lanka at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

'Ready for all formats'

SPORTS REPORTER



Mustafizur Rahman is not exactly a man of few words. But when you put a camera in front of him -- or a dozen cameras in this case -- you will not be able to get much out of the youngster.

You will, at most, get two sentences without a break, before he gives a blank look that suggests that journalists should proceed to the next question.

This has been the case ever since his debut and yesterday, when he came to talk to reporters at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur following Bangladesh's training session, was no different.

The one thing that was certain following the three-minute press conference though, was that the pacer was eager to get back to the international game.

Even before anyone asked him anything officially, he quietly but quite excitedly said: "Bhai, I am fine. Everything is fine. I have no problems now."

If the 21-year-old goes on to play the first Test against Sri Lanka, he will return to the longer format after a gap of more than year. The last time he played Test cricket, he scalped three wickets in one over against

South Africa in July 2015.

Various injuries and the shoulder surgery have however kept him away from the format ever since.

While the left-armer did seem quite unsure about himself following the New Zealand series, he seemed on top of things yesterday.

"I was not well for a long time and I could not play due to the injury. I was yet to get into the habit of bowling. But now I feel good. I could not go to India but then I played two Bangladesh Cricket League (BCL) games and that did me a lot of good," he said.

In his last BCL game he bowled 31 overs and that was what helped him revive his confidence.

"If I get a chance, I will try to do my best. In the BCL games I tried to bowl fast and swing the ball. The cutter, or the slower is not that effective in four-day matches. So I tried to bowl in good areas and get into my rhythm," explained Mustafizur.

From throwing long balls to gradually bowling at a hundred per cent, Mustafizur had to work really hard in order to be finally deemed completely fit for the Sri Lanka series. He now claims to be able to bowl with 100 per cent intensity.

"I am ready for all the formats. If I get the chance in T20s and ODIs, I will do my best there as well," said Mustafizur.

O'Keefe authors India rout

SMH

Steve O'Keefe led Australia to one of its greatest Test victories on Indian soil with a superhero performance that rewrote the record books and humiliated the shellshocked hosts inside three days.

Australia will head to Bangalore for the second Test with genuine belief they can pull off what only a few days ago seemed like mission impossible and win just their second series on these shores since 1969.

India have been an exceptionally difficult team to beat at home, but the crushing nature of Australia's 333-run win in Pune -- only their 13th Test win in India -- has changed the landscape of this series. The hosts showed even less resistance in the second innings, dismissed for a pathetic 107 in 34 overs.

"We kept the foot on the throat; we got ourselves into positions to win in Sri Lanka and we let the opponent get back into the game," Smith said. "In this Test we didn't let India back into the game after the first innings."

Had anyone predicted pre-game this match would be over by the third day, most would have thought it would be the visitors on the receiving end of a hiding, however it was Virat Kohli's team that was destroyed. Never before have India scored fewer runs in a home Test than here.

This was not only Steve Smith's greatest win as captain, but arguably one of the best performances by the men in the baggy green for many years.

The heroics of Cape Town in 2014 have been the pacesetter in the Twenty20 era, but this has come in alien conditions against the world No.1, who were given a lesson in how to play in their own dust bowl.

Perhaps the series-clinching victory in Nagpur in 2004 -- Australia's last win in India -- is the clubhouse leader, which places Smith's young side in rarefied air alongside one of the

greatest teams this country has produced.

"Coming to India we haven't won a game for 4502 days. I've been told those facts, it's been an incredibly long time," Smith said on Saturday night after Australia snapped a nine-game losing

He is the eighth Australian bowler to take 10 wickets in a Test here and only the fifth spinner -- joining an exclusive club which includes the great Richie Benaud.

Two days ago, O'Keefe had never taken a Test five-for. He now has two,

O'Keefe mesmerised India - not with prodigious turn but his lack of it. Ironically, it was the man who spun the ball the least who had the greatest influence on the raging turner.

O'Keefe produced just enough spin to clip the edge of the bat while his straight balls were also dangerous - often skidding into the pads of India's clueless batsmen.

Remarkably, one of those was Kohli, whose mode of dismissal showed how the unlikely scenes of this game have scrambled his thought process. How else can you explain one of the best batsmen shouldering arms to a straight ball from a spinner not known for his turn?

While O'Keefe was the match-winner, Smith was the man who put the game beyond India's reach with one of the most important of his 18 Test centuries.

The skipper could not have picked a more opportune moment to post his maiden Test ton in India and stamp his mark on the series. He arrived at the crease amid a flurry of wickets and rode his luck to not just settle his team's nerves but play them into an unassailable position.

It was Smith's 10th Test ton as captain: only the peerless Don Bradman and Sri Lanka's maestro Mahela Jayawardene have taken fewer innings than Smith's 37 to reach the milestone.

"I was pleased to score a second-innings hundred in India, formulate a different plan to how I normally would and problem solve on the spot," Smith said

SCORES IN BRIEF

AUSTRALIA: First innings 260

INDIA: First innings 105

AUSTRALIA: Second innings 285 (Smith 109, Renshaw 31, Marsh 31; Ashwin 4-119, Jadeja 3-65)

INDIA: Second innings 107 (Pujara 31; O'Keefe 6-35, Lyon 4-53)

Result: Australia won by 333 runs.

Player-of-the-match: Steve O'Keefe.

And the coach of India says Steve O'Keefe is "Steady". Well done Steady O'Keefe... keep it up. Mitchell Johnson

'We showed how not to bat'

STAR SPORT DESK

India captain Virat Kohli was in a sombre mood after suffering his first Test defeat on home soil, and put the blame on the batsmen for their 333-run defeat.

"The batting let us down in both the innings. Our application was not good. There were no partnerships worth mentioning, it's an area which fills us with pride. The batsmen need to pull their socks up. The batting was not up to standards, it showed how we shouldn't bat, that's all I will say," Kohli was quoted as saying by PTI.

Kohli said his own dismissal in the second innings -- shouldering arms to a straight ball from spinner O'Keefe -- was an error in judgement.

"I left the ball too early. I should have waited for a little

more. It was my fault."

The Indian captain also rued the dropped catches that allowed counterpart Steven Smith to score a hundred.

"If you drop five catches off one batsman, if you lose seven wickets for 11 runs, you certainly don't deserve to win. I am sure you would not have asked me this question had we won. Our mindset does not change with the results," he said.

He however added that it was the wake-up call that the team needed.

"The last time we had a performance like this we had an outstanding run from Galle [where they lost to Sri Lanka in August 2015]. I would say that we needed something like this for a reality check and understand what we need to work on and not

streak in India in stunning fashion.

It would not have been possible without O'Keefe's herculean feats with the ball. His haul of 12 for 70 not only places him at the top of the tree for an Australian bowler on these shores but was the best return by an overseas spinner in 84 years in India.

exceeding even his own wildest dreams. After a decade toiling away on the state scene, the 32-year-old has now become Australia's weapon on the subcontinent.

"I didn't think it would turn out like the way it was today," O'Keefe said.

For the second day in a row,



Bangladesh opener Imrul Kayes (R), currently out of the national squad because of fitness issues, talks to his South Zone coach Khaled Masud at the Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium in Chittagong yesterday, ahead of today's fifth-round BCL match against East Zone.

PHOTO: PRIME BANK

Imrul in focus as 5th round begins

SPORTS REPORTER



The focus will be on Imrul Kayes when the fifth round of the Bangladesh Cricket League begins today in Chittagong and Sylhet.

Recovering from a thigh muscle tear, the left-handed opener played the last round of the competition at BKSP but failed to get full marks in terms of fitness and so was not included in the squad for the two-match Test series against Sri Lanka.

But chief selector Minhajul Abedin told reporters while announcing the 16-member Test squad for the upcoming series that the opener may be included for the second Test in Sri Lanka if he is declared fully fit after the

fifth round BCL match.

So the opener will be looking forward to overcome the hurdle when his side Prime Bank South Zone takes on Islami Bank East Zone at the Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium in Chittagong.

"After the fifth round, Imrul will face a fitness test on March 4 and if everything is okay then he will join the team. As he is also in our limited-overs plan, his inclusion in the team for the second Test would not be a problem at all," Minhajul said last week.

Meanwhile, BCB North Zone will face off with Walton Central Zone at the Sylhet International Cricket Stadium in the other match. North Zone and South Zone have 12 points each while Central Zone and East Zone are both on nine points.

NUMBERS GAME

2012 - The last time India lost a Test at home was in 2012, when England defeated them in Kolkata. Since then, they were unbeaten for 20 Tests.

2011 - The last time Australia won a Test in Asia was at Galle in August-September 2011. Since then they have played 11 Tests and lost the last nine in a row. This was also Australia's first win in India since 2004.

333 - India's margin of defeat -- their second biggest in a home Test and fourth largest overall.

212 - Total number of runs scored by India across two innings. It is their lowest in a home Test for the loss of all 20 wickets.

74 - The 74 overs faced by the Indian batsman in the Pune match is the lowest they have faced in any Test at home.

441 - India's target was 441 runs. Only one side has made 400+ in the fourth innings in Asia. Bangladesh had made 413 at Mirpur in chase of 521 against Sri Lanka in 2008.



With a second six-wicket haul on the third day of the first Test against India in Pune yesterday, Australia spinner Steve O'Keefe's match figures of 12 for 70 were the second-best match haul by an overseas bowler in India.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Mathews out of both Tests

APP, Colombo



Sri Lanka skipper Angelo Mathews was Saturday ruled out of next month's two-Test home series against Bangladesh as selectors prepared to field a "formidable team".

The 29-year-old all rounder, however, was "likely to be available" for the three ODIs and the two T20Is of the series which will start with the first Test on March 7 at Galle, the Sri Lanka cricket board said in a statement.

"The National Selections Committee of Sri Lanka Cricket is set to meet on Tuesday to decide on a formidable team that would play the first two Test matches.

"Accordingly, it has been announced that Angelo Mathews will not be able to play the first two test matches," the board said.

It did not say why Mathews was dropped from the Test squad, but he returned home last month half way through the South African tour after twisting his ankle.

Under his leadership, Sri Lanka suffered a 3-0 Test series whitewash against South Africa. He was also left out of the three-match T20 series Sri Lanka won 2-1 against Australia.

"Despite his absence, the selections committee is confident that the lessons learnt from the South African series will help in putting together a formidable young team to take on the first two matches against the Bangladesh team," the board said