

# SPORT



Bangladesh bowlers are still to master the art of reverse swing and here Tigers' assistant coach Richard Halsall (L) shows pacer Rubel Hossain a couple of red balls with one side shiny and the other side worn out, which is an effective state to reverse the ball. This is a trick the Tigers may have to depend upon if they are to excel in the two Tests in Sri Lanka next month.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

## 'Will keep as long as team want me'

SPORTS REPORTER



Questions regarding Mushfiqur Rahim's keeping have dominated the fore ever since his performance behind the wickets in the India series. One would have thought that things would have calmed down a bit a few weeks after the Hyderabad Test, however the scenario, a day before Bangladesh's departure for Sri Lanka, was nothing different. When asked if he was thinking about his keeping at a press conference yesterday, Mushfiqur gave the example of Wriddhiman Saha. "To me, Saha at the moment is the number one keeper. I try to follow a few things about him because he looks very neat and clean. But even he dropped two to three catches in the England series. Against us, he missed a stumping off Mahmudullah. Had Mahmudullah drawn the game for us, the situation would have been different. "Look this is my bread and butter and I won't betray cricket. We all try to be neat and

clean, but we are human beings and we are bound to do mistakes," added the skipper. He further said that he enjoyed the dual role of keeping and batting and believes that this is the best that he can offer the current team. "I definitely enjoy it. In fact, I would even bowl if my team needed me to, but that won't happen. I try to do the best for my team and the rest is up to the coach and the team management. In the last Asia Cup over here I didn't play as a keeper. So if they think I am not suitable for this role, then they will take a decision," said Mushfiqur. The skipper, who bats at number six at the moment, was also asked if he wanted to move up the order. Mushfiqur is generally tight-lipped when asked about a shift in the batting order, yesterday though he said that he would actually think about a promotion in the batting order if the team combination required him to. "At the moment, this team combination is working well. If the top order would have scored, you would not have asked me this question. In the near future, if the situation arises, and I have to go bat up for the team, I am ready," said Mushfiqur.

## Mushy hopes to make 100th special

SPORTS REPORTER



After losing three Tests away from Home, Bangladesh skipper Mushfiqur Rahim reckons that they have an opportunity to end their rut in Sri Lanka, when they leave for the island nation today, provided that the Tigers are able to give their best on the field. There are a number of reasons as to why the captain is so confident. For one, this will be Bangladesh's fourth Test in three months, which is a significant increase compared to their previous fixtures and that is bound to give the players confidence. Secondly, the Lankans, according to Mushfiqur, could be a little vulnerable with the team still trying to find its foothold ever since the

retirement of a number of their top players. To make it worse, Angelo Mathews isn't playing either. However, the one aspect that the captain seemed the happiest about was the return of Mustafizur Rahman. Until the last series, Mushfiqur described his bowling attack as hardworking but inexperienced. Ahead of the Sri Lanka tour, the skipper sounded a lot more positive. "As a batting unit, Bangladesh has improved, but our bowling is inexperienced. But as a captain, I feel that we have one of Bangladesh's strongest bowling attack going to Sri Lanka. "Mustafizur, [Mehedi Hasan] Miraz and Shakib [Al Hasan] can be difficult for any batting team. They are very excited and hopefully they will be able to give their best. It is very much possible for us to take 20

wickets with this attack," said Mushfiqur during a press conference at Mirpur yesterday. "This series is a good opportunity for us, but it depends on how good we play. If we can give our best, we will get the results. Our coaching staff is Sri Lankan and we have received plenty of information from them," added the wicketkeeper-batsman. The last time Mushfiqur batted at Galle, he scored a double hundred. The captain however, believes that the entire team needs to start all over again in order to do well in Galle and not expect any favours from the wicket or conditions. "The wicket at Galle normally supports spinners. Against us we had received a batting-friendly track and that helped us score a huge total. No matter what wicket we get, we have a very balanced attack," said Mushfiqur.

"Wicket does matter a lot. But what I personally feel is that whenever we score well, we don't get the credit that we deserve. Against India, the wicket was flat, no doubt, but the way they attacked us with the old and the new ball, I must say that I never faced such a strong attack in my Test career. "So, the wicket is important, but we also have to be prepared for everything," he added. Bangladesh will be playing their 100th Test in Sri Lanka and the skipper hopes the Tigers can bring in a result that can help them celebrate the milestone. He also wants the team to do well in Sri Lanka, since it can help the Tigers gain some good rating points. A draw in the Test series can help them gain five rating points, while a win will get them 11 rating points and take them over the West Indies.



Bangladesh Test captain Mushfiqur Rahim happily complies with inquisitive reporters while speaking about his side's prospects in next month's two-Test series in Sri Lanka.

PHOTO: STAR

## TC Sports, Manang to battle for spot in final

SPORTS REPORTER from Chittagong



TC Sports Club and Manang Marshyangdi Club are looking forward to battling it out for a spot in the final of the Sheikh Kamal International Club Cup as the two foreign outfits lock horns in the first semifinal at the MA Aziz Stadium today. The match will get underway at 6:30pm with private satellite channel, Maasranga TV, telecasting live from the venue. TC Sports Club of Maldives have been tipped as favourites against their Nepalese opposition in today's encounter after their impressive performances in the group stage, where they played three matches and notched two successive wins before playing out a 1-1 draw against Pocheon Citizen FC. On the other hand, Manang Marshyangdi Club were a bit lucky in securing the last-four place, going through after Mohammeden's win over Shaheen Asmayee FC which saw Manang's head-to-head record make the difference. "I know it won't be an easy game for us but we are prepared to show the same consistency that we displayed in the last three matches," said TC Sports Club coach Mohammad Nizam at the pre-match press conference yesterday. "Our target is simple: to win the match. They [Manang] are definitely a strong side and should not be underestimated," added the 42-year-old coach. Although TC Sports' squad is comparatively youthful -- they have 12 teenage players -- Nizam is happy with the way his charges implemented the game plan in the three group-stage matches. "Since the confirmation of our participation, I have been providing information to the players and I am lucky to have some experienced players along with younger players and they are all up for the semifinal, so I don't need to make them understand what challenge lies ahead of them. I am really happy that the boys are ready for the semifinal," said the former Maldivian footballer. TC Sports have scored four goals in three games and conceded only once, which is clear evidence of their rock-solid defense as

well as their lethal finishing. "I will rely on each and every part of our squad. If you talk about the players, I have trust and confidence on each and every player," hoped Nizam. On the other hand, Manang coach Chhiring Lopsang Gurung believes that the match between the subcontinent outfits will be a tough one and the spectators will get their money's worth. Although Chhiring seemed less confident than his counterpart, he was optimistic of giving the Islanders a run for their money. "A coach hopes to win every match. I think we will give them good fight because both teams are favourites to win the match," said Chhiring, who has eight national players in his side compared to TC Sports' three. As the Maldivians are more of a physical presence than the Nepalese side, Chhiring may consider capitalising on the break through their striking pair of Olasemi Samson and Afeez Olawale Oladipo, while Rohit Chand is the key player who will play in those long balls to the foreign strikers.



Manang Marshyangdi captain Anil Gurung (L) exchanges pre-match pleasantries with TC Sports striker Nafiu Ali ahead of today's first semifinal of the Sheikh Kamal International Club Cup. PHOTO: STAR

"We are not equal physically with the Maldivian club and everything depends on how the tactics work. So we will do our best to capitalise on the opportunities. We have watched them and are mulling what strategy to play to destroy the Maldivian side's plan," revealed Chhiring.

## 'I am fit and ready'

SPORTS REPORTER



Imrul Kayes has made it a habit of bothering the national selectors, hasn't he? Just when you think he is in the national team for the long run, he either gets injured or gets replaced by someone seemingly more flamboyant. Just when you think he is out, he scores a century in a game that was perhaps the most crucial as far as his immediate international future is concerned. After being left out of the 16-man squad for the Sri Lanka series, Imrul was asked to prove his fitness levels by playing two Bangladesh Cricket League games. He had done enough in the first, by batting and fielding comfortably. While in the second, which began yesterday, he scored a 136 on a difficult pitch. Prior to playing the BCL, the left-hander had injured himself twice in the span of three weeks. Some on the Bangladesh Cricket Board had even advised him against playing the fourth round of the BCL, his first BCL game, and asked him to wait for a while. But



Opener Imrul Kayes put behind the fear of any fitness issues with a fantastic century for Prime Bank South Zone at the Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium in Chittagong yesterday. PHOTO: PRIME BANK

Imrul was desperate. "In the first BCL match, I was actually a bit nervous. I was thinking, what if I get injured again? Actually, if you see my career, I have never been injured for a long period. Many players get injured quite frequently, but I don't know why a

big deal is made when I get injured," Imrul told The Daily Star yesterday. "I probably got the muscle injury because I kept wickets for so long. I don't know. But in general I don't have such a bad record as far as injury is concerned," he added. It was a lot more important for Imrul to perform in the second game in order to prove himself again. Yet, the left-hander claims that he wasn't nervous at all about the crucial fixture. "Look, I have already given four to five exams, I have become used to this now. In fact, I am not thinking about the national team. When I play for South Zone, I think about South Zone. "I have gotten into the team by replacing a player who has scored 70s and 80s on a regular basis. If I don't score, it's going to look very bad on me. Domestic cricket is very competitive today," explained Imrul. "I was fit when I played the last BCL game. I scored 31. Today I wanted to ensure that I score a big knock. Today there was a lot of turn and we lost early wickets. I told myself that I would score something big if I received the opportunity. And I thankfully did," he added.

## Imrul ton drives South Zone

SPORTS REPORTER



Imrul Kayes provided the best possible answer to the national selectors in regards to his fitness issues by scoring a fighting century on the first day of the fifth round of the ongoing Bangladesh Cricket League, the country's premier 4-day cricket competition. He did a marvelous job with the bat to help Prime Bank South Zone move to a relatively strong position against Islami Bank East Zone at the Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium in Chittagong yesterday. On a turning track, the left-hander

scored 136 runs with 18 fours and two sixes and led them to 296. Mohammad Saifuddin and Saqlain Sajib were the key wicket-takers for East Zone, scalping three wickets each. The day's other game between Walton Central Zone and BCB North Zone at the Sylhet International Cricket Stadium, witnessed 13 wickets fall in just one day. Well supported by an unbeaten 40

from Taibur Rahman, under 19 skipper Saif Hassan top-scored for Central with a 136-ball 63. However, the rest of the batsmen got out cheaply. The chief wrecker was Sanjamul Islam, who finished with brilliant figures of 5 for 45 in 24.5 overs. Central were bundled out for 181 in 63.5 overs. After the exchange North finished on 63 for 3 in 21 overs.

### SCORES IN BRIEF

<b>SOUTH ZONE V EAST ZONE</b>	<b>CENTRAL ZONE V NORTH ZONE</b>
<b>SOUTH ZONE:</b> 296 all out in 80 overs (Imrul 136, Anamul 58, Saqlain 3-17, Saifuddin 3-70)	<b>CENTRAL ZONE:</b> 181 all out in 63.5 overs (Saif 63, Taibur 40 not out; Sanjamul 5-45, Forhad 3-41)
<b>EAST ZONE:</b> 4 for no loss (Imtiaj 4)	<b>NORTH ZONE:</b> 63 for 3 (Jahurul 35; Sharifullah 1-5)

## Aus media hail SOK

AFP, Sydney

Steve O'Keefe gave a superhero performance in Australia's stunning three-day first Test win to change the landscape of their series in India, Australia's media said Sunday. Left-arm spinner O'Keefe, known as SOK, captured the identical figures of six for 35 in both innings to spin Australia to a massive 333-run win over Test cricket's top-ranked team on a viciously turning track in Pune on Saturday. It was Australia's first Test win in India since 2004 and ended the hosts' unbeaten streak of 19 Tests in the opening match of the four-Test series. "O'Keefe was hailed a hero along with skipper Steve Smith's fighting first century in India and his 10th as Australia's captain. "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," the Sun-Herald said. The Australian newspaper said it was a triumph India's billion-plus people didn't see coming. The Sunday Telegraph said O'Keefe shattered 84 years of Test history on the sub-continent to pilot Australia to one of their most famous victories. "Written off as the worst Australian team to ever tour cricket's most imposing fortress, a great sporting upset is now firmly on the cards," it said. Former Australia Test fast bowler Mitchell Johnson tweeted: "And the coach of India says Steve O'Keefe is 'Steady.' Well done Steady O'Keefe, keep it up."