

# SPORT

## Our impact players need time: Mashrafe

SAKEB SUBHAN from Colombo

The tour of Sri Lanka has saved Bangladesh's weakest format for last. On top of that they enter the two-match T20 series, beginning today with the first match at the R Premadasa International Stadium at 7:30pm (Bangladesh time), with little or no momentum after having been brought down to earth with a crushing 70-run defeat in the third ODI on Saturday, scuppering their chance of creating history with a first-ever series win over the hosts.

Even more worryingly, they displayed very little ability to tackle the moving ball in that match, with Tamim Iqbal, Sabbir Rahman and Mushfiqur Rahim departing within the first four overs to Nuwan Kulasekara and Suranga Lakmal, ceding the momentum decisively in the home side's favour. That problem will only be compounded by the presence of the deadly Lasith Malinga along with swing merchant Kulasekara under lights, and in a format where there is very little time to get one's eye in.

To tackle that, opener Tamim may have to play the role he performed in the first ODI in Dambulla, when he batted till the 48th over to score 127 while the other batsmen attacked around him. "That will actually be beneficial, but we haven't had the team meeting yet, so I don't know for sure if that is the path we will take," skipper Mashrafe Bin Mortaza yesterday said before team practice under lights at the Premadasa. "It will be good if someone stays till the end and the others bat around him.

"Kulasekara depends on swing and Malinga bases it on yorker length deliveries. We have to make mental adjustments to play them," said Mashrafe about the twin but divergent threats of Sri Lanka's pacers.

Mashrafe also seemed to be managing expectations about today's game, which is to be expected given the teams' respective records in the formats, especially recent form. Bangladesh have lost all their last

seven T20Is going back to the World Twenty20 last March, while Sri Lanka have won series in South Africa and Australia coming into this one.

"They have some impact players like [Chamara] Kapugedara, Malinga and [Dilshan] Munaweera. They can turn the game around. This team won in Australia and South Africa. Winning in South Africa especially is very hard for Asian teams."

The last time the two teams met in the format was in the Asia Cup format, a match that Bangladesh won.

"The Asia Cup performance [runner-up] was our best ever T20 performance. We couldn't finish well in the World T20 last year. We are getting better but we haven't reached our desired level. Most of the other teams are doing better than us in T20s. We need some impact players," Mashrafe said before pointing out a pertinent difference between the two teams when asked who Bangladesh's impact players are.

"We have a lot of impact players but they have to settle down first," he said. "We have Sabbir Rahman, Tamim Iqbal, Shakib Al Hasan, Mahmudullah and Mushfiqur Rahim. They have to combine to play well, which is important."

Before the next question was asked Mashrafe added with a smile: "And of course, Mustafizur [Rahman]."

The left-arm quick is perhaps Bangladesh's premier impact player, but he has been off colour in the ODI series during which he was uncharacteristically expensive.

"Other teams will start reading you the more you play at the international level," Mashrafe said, perhaps speaking about Mustafizur's cutters, before moving on to the rest of the bowlers. "Rather than giving excuses, I will say that we didn't play up to the level of expectation placed on us in the last game. You have to try something new when you know the batsman is reading you."

Mashrafe however was very much thinking about a win. "They beat Australia 3-0, but we won the second Test to draw the series. We haven't seen dew in the wicket. If there's no dew, it will be an equal game."



Bangladesh all-rounder Shakib Al Hasan (C) shares a light moment with teammates Nurul Hasan and Mosaddek Hossain (R) during a practice session at R Premadasa Stadium in Colombo yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

## Sri Lanka eye 180

SPORTS REPORTER from Colombo



Before the ODI series against Bangladesh, Sri Lanka had a winless 2017 to look back uneasily upon. In the lead-up to the Tests before that a whitewash in South Africa loomed in the rearview mirror. But ahead of today's first of two T20Is, the picture is quite different; two series wins in South Africa and Australia, against two of the strongest teams in the format.

So it was a quietly confident Upul Tharanga, captaining Sri Lanka in the continued absence of regular skipper Angelo Mathews, who took his place behind the microphone at the pre-match press conference

yesterday. "We beat South Africa in South Africa and Australia in Australia. They were top teams at the moment in the T20 format. We are in good shape in the T20s."

Sri Lanka have a fount of experience to look forward to, especially in the bowling ranks. "With players like Lasith [Malinga] coming back, and [Nuwan] Kulasekara, Thisara [Perera] and [Chamara] Kapugedara there, we have a very good, balanced side."

The four players mentioned have a combined 216 T20I matches between them. There are young players too in the likes of Shehan Jayasuriya, Kusal Perera, Lakshan Sandakan, Dasun Shanaka and Vikum Sanjaya. But the youngest among them is Sanjaya at 25 years of age. While T20Is are a format teams

often use to experiment and blood youngsters, Sri Lanka seem to have gone the other way in an attempt to take the decisive edge on Bangladesh's tour which has so far seen drawn Test and ODI series.

"Both teams want to win this series because the other two series were drawn. We want to win both games, because we've done well in the recent past in T20s," said Tharanga.

The surprise in Sri Lanka's squad is the exclusion of Kusal Mendis, who has been in great form against Bangladesh. His record is sketchy in T20Is, but Bangladesh can be expected to breathe a sigh of relief at his exclusion.

"He's playing Tests and ODIs really well. In T20s though he hasn't been that successful," explained

Tharanga. "The Champions Trophy is coming, and hopefully he'll be in a good mental state for that. If we give him a break here, he can concentrate on the longer formats, and we can get more out of him there."

Tharanga thought that the team's strong finish in the ODIs, winning the third ODI by 70 runs and squaring the series, will give them confidence.

"We have to take strength from the way we played the last ODI, and especially the way we fielded there. On the batting front, we've got to be consistent in getting those runs as well, and that has to carry over to the T20 format. In Australia we've chased 170-odd as well. Even here, if we can get and chase 180 -- scores like that -- that would be the best thing," the Sri Lanka skipper added.



Sri Lanka players celebrate with the Emerging Teams Asia Cup trophy after beating Pakistan in the final at the Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium in Chittagong yesterday.

PHOTO: ANURUP KANTI DAS

## We want CA to honour FTP schedule: BCB CEO

SPORTS REPORTER



The Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) made it clear yesterday that they will not accept any proposal of changing the format for Australia's cricket team's scheduled tour to Bangladesh this year.

The BCB wants Cricket Australia (CA) to honour the FTP commitment for the two-match Test series as per the original 2015 plan, which Australia ducked citing security concerns.

It has been reported that Cricket Australia (CA) suggested changing the tour to an ODI-based visit ahead of the limited-overs tour of India scheduled for October before the home Ashes summer.

"During an ICC scheduled meeting I had a talk with James Sutherland and

on the basis of that discussion I sent them tentative schedules—with the first Test before Eid-ul-Azha (September 2) and the second five days after the Eid vacation. We are yet to get any feedback from them," said BCB CEO Nizamuddin Chowdhury yesterday.

"There is no scope to change the format rather we want them (CA) to honour the FTP commitment," he added.

In the meantime, in between the schedule Bangladesh are set to play Pakistan at home in July and August after returning home from the ICC Champions Trophy to be held in England from June 1. The Tigers will tour South Africa in September, where they will play their first match on September 28.

On the other hand Chowdhury also cleared the BCB's stance regarding the tour of Pakistan.

Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) chairman Shahryar Khan told reporters in Colombo on Sunday that a Bangladesh High Performance team will go to Pakistan to play against the Pakistan High Performance squad, a tour tentatively slated for this July.

BCB president Nazmul Hassan Papon however didn't clear anything up on Sunday while he was talking to reporters in Colombo but said: "The board president in the meeting has categorically said that we are not in a position to send the national team to Pakistan for security concern. And our president said that he will explore the possibility of sending any junior team to Pakistan."

"And it is nothing to do with the Pakistan team's scheduled tour of Bangladesh in July this year," he added.

## Brathwaite dropped

CRICINFO

West Indies have dropped opener Kraigg Brathwaite from their ODI squad to take on Pakistan. Carlos Brathwaite, who led West Indies in the four-match T20 series completed on Sunday but is set to depart for the IPL, also misses out on a series that is crucial to West Indies' chances of automatic World Cup qualification.

Fast bowler Shannon Gabriel was fit to be included, after straining his side during the second ODI against England, while wicketkeeper Chadwick Walton, whose last ODI appearance was in 2014, returned to the squad selected for the first two matches against Pakistan.

**Squad:** Jason Holder (capt), Devendra Bishoo, Jonathan Carter, Miguel Cummins, Shannon Gabriel, Shai Hope, Alzarri Joseph, Evin Lewis, Jason Mohammed, Ashley Nurse, Kieran Powell, Rovman Powell, Chadwick Walton.

## SL destroy Pak in one-sided final

SPORTS REPORTER



The Sri Lanka Under-23s clinched the Max Emerging Teams Asia Cup title with a comprehensive five-wicket win against the Pakistan Under-23s in a one-sided final at the Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium in Chittagong yesterday.

The fate of the final was all but written on the wall when Pakistan were bundled out for 133 runs.

Sri Lanka suffered a middle-order hiccup in reply to the paltry target but eventually sailed to victory at 134 with 157 balls remaining thanks to an unbroken 36-run sixth wicket partnership between Kithuruwan Vithanage and Hasaranga De Silva.

Sri Lanka lost opener Avishka Fernando during the fifth over and then kept losing wickets at regular intervals. At one point they lost four wickets for 89. But with plenty of overs left and a small target to chase, the Lankans were never been in any sort of trouble after opener Sadeera Samarawickrama scored a watchful 45 followed by composed unbeaten knocks by Vithanage (20) and De Silva (22).

Earlier, Pakistan won the toss and elected

### SCORES IN BRIEF

**PAKISTAN:** 133 in 42.1 overs (Mir 26, Rizwan 26, Azam 25, Jayasuriya 3/22, de Silva 2/13, Karunaratne 2/20)  
**SRI LANKA:** 134/5 in 23.5 overs (Samarawickrama 45, de Silva 22\*, Vithanage 20\*, Gul 2/33, Gohar 1/20, Mir 1/22)  
**Result:** Sri Lanka won by five wickets.

to bat but the decision backfired as they lost wickets at regular intervals and failed to put up a decent partnership on a wicket that helped the bowlers.

Sri Lanka's Asitha Fernando, who claimed a hat-trick against the hosts in the first semifinal, delivered the first breakthrough by dismissing Imran Butt for 5. Chamika Karunaratne then struck twice before Shehan Jayasuriya joined the party to take the wickets of Mohammad Rizwan, Khushdil Shah and Zafar Gohar in quick succession, reducing Pakistan to 85 for seven.

Pakistan's Usama Mir and Hammad Azam added 47 runs for the eighth wicket but their efforts proved insufficient to challenge the Lankans. Player-of-the-match Shehan Jayasuriya was the most successful bowler with 3 for 22.

## Maruful roped in by Arambagh

SPORTS REPORTER

Former national coach Maruful Haque has been appointed head coach of Arambagh KS for the upcoming season, confirmed the club's president yesterday.

"We have just signed an agreement with Maruful Haque for a one-year contract," confirmed the club's president Mominul Haque Sayeed last night.

Maruful last coached Sheikh Russel KC till the middle of last season before being sacked due to disastrous results in the Bangladesh Premier Football League.

He had earlier coached the country's top clubs like Mohammedan SC, Sheikh Jamal DC, Muktijoddha Sangsad.

The UEFA A licensed coach guided Sheikh Russel KC to a treble in 2013, but he failed with the national team in the SAFF Championship in 2015 and the Bangabandhu Gold Cup in 2016.

## Carlos calls for more awareness

THE TIMES OF INDIA



Carlos Brathwaite, the West Indies Twenty20 International skipper, has called for more awareness from his teammates in the future post the series loss against Pakistan on Sunday. West Indies were thrashed by seven wickets in the fourth and final T20I in Trinidad by the tourists, who clinched the series 3-1.

After putting up a mini fightback in the series by defeating Pakistan in the third game, the hosts put up a disappointing batting display in the final game. At one stage they were pretty well placed at 52 for 1 after eight overs but then went on to lose wickets at regular intervals to be eventually restricted to just 124. Pakistan chased the target down comfortably with one over to spare. "I wasn't happy with the (batsmen's) execution," a disappointed Brathwaite said.

"When players come off, the same shots go over the boundary for six, you say well played, that was brilliant. As a management team, we want players to express

themselves, but we're just asking for a bit more awareness than we have seen thus far in the series."

He later admitted that the squad will need to have a chat before the three-match ODI series which begins on April 7. Irrespective of the result, there is always 'some good conversation in the team' according to the skipper and he believes that will help them regroup. He also had a word of praise for pacer Keshrick Williams, who impressed once again with figures of 2 for 16.

"Keshrick's performance was excellent," Brathwaite noted. "A young man who played his first game in Abu Dhabi, he showed the world what he could do. The challenge is always to come back and do it again and he did it again and again. His was one of the standout performances of the series and definitely a positive going forward."

Pakistan pacer Wahab Riaz credited bowling coach Azhar Mahmood in particular for his side's recent dominance over the destructive West Indies batting line up. They also blanked the World T20 champions 3-0 recently in the United Arab Emirates.



CARLOS BRATHWAITE