

SPORT

'Mental preparation the deciding factor'

SPORTS REPORTER

There are probably very few stones that Bangladesh have left unturned ahead of the Champions Trophy. Having played the early rounds of the Dhaka Premier League, tonight they will leave for Sussex to take part in a ten-day conditioning camp. From there they will travel to Ireland to play a tri-nation series including New Zealand. Then they will play Champions Trophy warm-up games against heavyweights India and Pakistan.

Despite a nearly foolproof preparatory schedule, Bangladesh captain Mashrafe Bin Mortaza kept his focus on just one aspect during the pre-tour press conference in Mirpur yesterday: the mental preparation.

"Honestly speaking, the training that we get in the next 10 to 20 days won't make us win the Champions Trophy. What's more important is to be mentally ready for this competition. This is a big tournament and there will be big teams. The conditions are different from home so it will be twice as difficult for us.

"Realistically, it is going to be a very difficult tournament for us because we are in a very tough group. We did beat England in similar conditions in Australia, we beat Australia in Cardiff [in 2005] and anything is possible. But it all depends on how prepared we are mentally. I don't think the camp will make much of a difference if we are not mentally ready," explained Mashrafe.

And the key to being mentally ready, according to the captain, is to spend the next couple of months like a family. Prior to the 2015 World Cup, Bangladesh were in a worse



position, having lost most of their games except for a lone series against Zimbabwe. However, the captain believes that the team had confidence because they stuck together.

"In Australia [during the 2015 World Cup] we managed to do well because we were in a good position throughout. We beat Afghanistan and then Scotland and we just needed to win one more game.

"Early wins can help overcome the fatigue that players get when they go on long tours. Your mood is always good when you win. The other thing is that we need to stay together as a family. Not everyone is going to have a good time, but we need to stay together," said Mashrafe.

With all the talk about the Champions Trophy, the tri-nation

series in Ireland has not received as much coverage. In fact, one reporter actually asked the captain if they were looking at that series as a mere warm-up ahead of the Champions Trophy.

To that Mashrafe replied: "We are going there to win. There are plenty of calculations involved here. Only if we do well in Ireland can we do well in the Champions Trophy. If we do badly in Ireland there will be a lot more pressure on us [in the Champions Trophy]."

If Bangladesh do lose to Ireland in the tri-nation series, there is a chance that they may slip below Pakistan in the ODI rankings.

While Bangladesh have fared well in Test cricket in the past year, beating England and Sri Lanka, their one-day record has not been as impressive as

it was in 2015. They lost an ODI against Afghanistan and were also beaten in a home series by England. They were then whitewashed in New Zealand.

Mashrafe admitted that the defeats against Afghanistan and England at home hurt, but believed that the team was doing well as far as away games are concerned.

"We entered a new phase from the New Zealand series. We entered the away zone. I feel that that graph is fine. If you look at other national teams, they lose most of their away games. But I believe that our team will progress faster than the others. We can adjust to away conditions faster than the others," said Mashrafe.

A dual challenge for MASHRAFE

BISHWAJIT ROY

When Bangladesh ODI skipper Mashrafe Bin Mortaza departs with his team for two tough battles, will it be like any another challenge for the inspirational leader to overcome on the field, or will it be more than that?

Mashrafe adopted a guarded approach while talking to the media in Mirpur about the Tigers' chances and challenges in the upcoming tri-series in Ireland and the ICC Champions Trophy on the eve of their departure for England yesterday.

He was practical while pointing out the difficulties in the demanding conditions and against tough opponents in Ireland and England but also expressed his confidence; a trademark trait of the man from Narail. And there was no change in posture when his attention was drawn to his personal challenges in the coming tours.

"Personally I don't have any target as a captain and there is no point taking pressure. I have to move from this place at some point of time as well," was the simple reply from Bangladesh's most successful limited-overs skipper, who had made a dramatic announcement regarding his retirement from T20I cricket during the recently concluded Sri Lanka tour, which brought a kind of tension in the team regarding the positions of the senior cricketers.

It is believed by most that no one

can be more suitable than Mashrafe Bin Mortaza to lead the team in the ICC World Cup in 2019 in England if he is fit and in form, but his retirement from T20Is made it clear that things are not as straightforward as people believe; instead he was apparently walking on thin ice.

After the much-talked about retirement Mashrafe said time and again that he has been enjoying ODI cricket and he wants to continue in the format. But he knows very well that if anything goes wrong in one or two matches there will be whispers in his ear asking him to think about his ODI career.

The last tour in Sri Lanka has significance in many aspects; it was not only because Bangladesh had tremendous achievements in all three formats but also for the off-field controversies that punctuated the tour, especially the case of Mahmudullah Riyad.

Many have forecast that like in Sri Lanka, much will happen off the field during the coming tours of Ireland and England that will stretch to more than a month and a half.

Whether it is admitted or not, circumstances played a big part behind Mashrafe's decision to call it a day from T20Is and all those factors have not magically vanished with his T20I career. So it will not only be a challenge for Mashrafe to lead the team in the new assignments successfully but also to ensure his share of the dividends.

ICC BOARD MEETING

BCB's objections revealed

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) president Nazmul Hassan made it abundantly clear that the BCB did not agree with two things on the International Cricket Council's (ICC's) docket during the ongoing board meeting.

"Three days before we came here, we informed the ICC that we do not agree with two specific things. One of them is relegation; we said that we don't agree with a Full Member going down," Hassan told reporters in Colombo on March 15. "The second is voting rights -- we said that we don't agree with it as it is 75/25 now."

What they had informed the ICC remained a mystery -- until now. ESPNcricinfo has obtained the letter sent by the BCB, which spells out that Full

Membership must be 'irrevocable'.

"After reviewing the draft, the Board's stand is that Full Membership status of the 10 current Test nations must not be compromised under any circumstances and should be made irrevocable," the letter reads. "The new proposal should only be applicable for the current Associate Members when they become Temporary / Provisional Full Member of the ICC. However, once a Temporary / Provisional Full Member gains Full Member status, then that status should become irrevocable."

Another concern voiced in the letter was Full Membership being linked to the performance of a nation's women's cricket team.

"Women's cricket should not be a determining factor for Full Membership criteria as most countries are still in the process of structuring and developing the women's game."

India's Champions Trophy in doubt

BCCI rejects \$100 million ICC offer

AGENCIES, New Delhi

India's participation in the forthcoming Champions Trophy 2017 remains in doubt after Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) rejected International Cricket Council's (ICC) additional 'USD 100 million' offer in the ongoing tussle between the two bodies regarding the new revenue model.

A senior BCCI official was quoted as saying by PTI that ICC Chairman Shashank Manohar made an offer to the Indian cricket board which has been outright rejected by the BCCI.

"Yes, ICC chairman Shashank Manohar gave us an offer of an additional USD 100 million in the new financial model. In fact, he gave us a deadline to get back to him. From our end, we won't get back to him as we don't even consider it an offer," the BCCI official said.

The official also said that there are 'trust issues' between the two parties which is stopping the BCCI from even considering the offer.

"The offer came from Manohar. He is the chairman but ICC is a members' body and the chairman doesn't decide who gets what share of the pie. It's the members who decide. We are still working on the formula with all nations. They are receptive. Mr Manohar doesn't decide what should be BCCI's share," the official said.

In the existing revenue distribution model, BCCI gets USD 579 million from the ICC. However, if Manohar's proposal is passed, then BCCI's share comes down to

USD 290 million, which even the Committee of Administrators (COA) had found unacceptable.

"Let us take the example that BCCI were being paid Rs 500 and others are being paid Rs 100. Now these member nations have been promised Rs 175 or let's say Rs 200. What Mr Manohar is trying to do is to reduce BCCI's share to Rs 300 in order to increase their share," the BCCI official said.

Asked what the solution is, he said, "We are assuring the member nations that even if our share remains Rs 500, we promise to create a model to increase their share to Rs 200. But please have faith that we can propose a revenue generation model."

The BCCI is also not announcing the squad for Champions Trophy on Tuesday, which is the ICC deadline. However, the ICC constitution allows countries to name their squads post the deadline under certain circumstances.

"Tell me one thing, if we name the squad, say for example on May 5, will ICC bar us from participation. We have a settled squad and naming it is a mere formality," he concluded.

Earlier, speaking to Cricknext, BCCI joint secretary Amitabh Choudhary had said that ideally the BCCI would hope that the ICC agrees to carry on with the current model till the Annual General Meeting in June. But if that does not happen, then necessary steps will be taken to safeguard India's interest.

Fizz's struggles are normal: Mash

SPORTS REPORTER

Lately, there has been talk about how Mustafizur Rahman's performance has not been as effective as it was prior to his shoulder surgery.

The youngster caught the world's attention when he ran through a powerful Indian batting line-up in 2015 and he followed that with a brilliant campaign in the Indian Premier League, which got him the Emerging Player award. He also received accolades from the International Cricket Council.

However, since his surgery for a shoulder injury in August 2016 the left-arm pacer has not been nearly as effective. Batsmen have been reading him with a lot more ease, especially in the shortest format of the game.

It is not as if Mustafizur is completely down and out though. He bowled magnificently against Sri Lanka in the recently-concluded Test series and had a significant role behind Bangladesh's win in the second Test, the country's 100th.

Still, he has struggled to find a place in the playing eleven for the Sunrisers Hyderabad in the ongoing IPL.

Responding to a question regarding Mustafizur's form, Bangladesh captain Mashrafe Bin Mortaza told a press conference at Mirpur that he was not at all worried.

"Look, what's happening to Mustafizur right now is normal. What happened earlier was abnormal. It's unbelievable when a bowler gets 30-odd wickets in his first five games. Now he has to work harder to get his wickets. There are many good analysts in the world who have analysed his strong points.



"He is just recovering from an injury and he is around 19 or 20. The situation that he is in right now is difficult. And if we keep pressuring him, it will become even more difficult," explained Mashrafe.

"He has proved his worth to Bangladesh. I feel that we shouldn't expect the unthinkable from him all the time. If we have practical expectations, then I am sure he will go on to play for Bangladesh for more than 10 years," he added.

The left-arm bowler will return to Bangladesh in the first week of May and then catch a flight to Sussex to join the team in their conditioning camp.

Just doing my job: Chandika

STAR SPORT DESK

There is a notion that Bangladesh coach Chandika Hathurusingha has become an all-powerful figure in Bangladesh cricket. However, the Sri Lankan dismissed that belief, saying that he was only doing his job and that means at times being authoritative.

"I don't feel powerful or authoritative. I don't know how people are saying... I sometimes may sound authoritative, but it comes with my job," Hathurusingha told ESPNcricinfo in an interview yesterday. "I have to make decisions and I have to be responsible for my decisions."

"I have strong views of how I want to do my job and bring the best out of the Bangladesh team. Going about doing this kind of thing, if I come across as authoritative, I am not half bothered because I am doing my job," he continued.

The 48-year-old also spoke about the Tigers' camp in Sussex and the upcoming tri-series in Ireland, featuring the hosts and New Zealand.

"The Sussex camp is all about getting used to the conditions. I mentioned earlier, we really want to get hold of our game, how we approach. We want to go and see how we want to play in the English summer. We know that it can be different every year. We want to find our best game plan that is suited to our ability and skillset."

"In Ireland, it will be all about winning. We want to win the series. We want to improve our ODI position in the rankings and, of course, it is a big challenge. And we want to be prepared for the Champions Trophy in the best possible way."

Expanding on the aforementioned English summer, Hathurusingha said that it could possibly help the side.

"It is going to be a bit unknown for us. We haven't played in England for a long time. A lot of it will depend on the English summer. If it is going to be a dry summer, it will help us. Even if it is not, we are going early to prepare so we have equal chance with others. Having said that, we are playing against three of the best sides in the world [Bangladesh have been pitted against England, Australia and New Zealand in the group stage]. I can't predict what we are going to do, but whatever we achieve in any of those games is going to be a big achievement."

Yasir spins Pakistan to win

AFP, Kingston

Pakistan captain Misbahul Haq hit successive sixes off Devendra Bishoo to give Pakistan victory by seven wickets in the first Test against West Indies in Jamaica on Tuesday.

The tourists had bowled West Indies out for 152 in the second innings leaving them a target of 32 to win on the final day, which was reached in less than 11 overs.

Earlier, Yasir Shah completed a six-wicket haul to spearhead a second innings rout of the West Indies and put Pakistan on the verge of a comfortable victory on the final day of the first Test.

Trailing on the first innings by 121 runs and resuming at the overnight position of 93 for four, the home side were dismissed for 152 after less

than two hours' play at Sabina Park in Jamaica. Needing just 32 runs for a 1-0 lead in the three-Test series, the tourists lost both openers and will resume after lunch at 13 for two with Babar Azam and Younis Khan at the crease.

Having taken the first four wickets late on the fourth evening, leg-spinner Shah was kept waiting for more success at the start of play on the fifth day as the visitors' faster bowlers continued the demolition job by taking the next four wickets.

However, Shah, who bowled unchanged from one end throughout the morning's play, was not to be denied another five-wicket innings haul. He wrapped up the innings with the wickets of tailenders Alzarri Joseph and Shannon Gabriel in the space of four deliveries in his 22nd over, finishing with the excellent innings figures of six for 63 and a match haul of eight for 154.

Shah was expected to pose an immediate threat at the start of Tuesday's play but it was Mohammad Amir who initiated the final tumble of wickets, inducing an error of judgement from Vishal Singh, who was bowled offering no shot to the left-arm fast bowler.

SCORES IN BRIEF

WEST INDIES: First innings 286
PAKISTAN: First innings 407 (Shehzad 31, Azam 72, Younis 58, Misbah 99 not out, Sarfraz 54; Gabriel 3-92, Joseph 3-71)
WEST INDIES: Second innings 152 (Powell 49, Hetmyer 20, Bishoo 18; Abbas 2-35, Yasir 6-63)
PAKISTAN: Second innings 36 for 3 (Azam 9 not out, Misbah 12 not out; Gabriel 1-7, Joseph 1-6)
Result: Pakistan won by 7 wickets.
Player-of-the-match: Yasir Shah.