

SPORT

No shortage of confidence: Fizz

SPORTS REPORTER

A sordid Indian Premier League (IPL) campaign is now a thing of the past for Mustafizur Rahman; the young fast bowler is instead looking forward to the challenge of 50-over cricket in the coming tri-series in Ireland and the ICC Champions Trophy in England that will follow.

The Fizz made a quiet return to Dhaka on Wednesday, experiencing the other side of the coin as last season he had received a warm reception at the airport upon his return from India following an outstanding first season with the Sunrisers Hyderabad.

This time he had to sit in the dugout for most of the matches as the left-arm paceman -- who has recently recovered from shoulder surgery -- after playing his first match against Mumbai Indians soon after reaching India. In that lone match Mustafizur conceded 34 runs in 2.4 overs, far below his usual fare. It was a performance that would have been especially jarring as he had arrived hot on the heels of a four-wicket haul in the last T20I in Sri Lanka.

"There were eight foreign players and team management gave chances to the players who they considered best. They might not have wanted to change the combination that had performed well," said Mustafizur while talk-

ing to reporters at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.

It is always painful for a player to sit idly on the sidelines match after match while his team is in action, but Mustafizur said that he tried to enjoy the time. "Out of nine I played only one match. I didn't play most of the matches and was out of the playing eleven. No doubt it would have been pleasing for me had I played most of the matches, but still I tried to stay like I was in the first season," he added.

It always takes time for a player to regain full rhythm after an injury and Mustafizur was aware of that. The paceman is now looking to give his best to the national side in the coming two tough assignments.

"I will try my best to give my hundred per cent if I get a chance to play in the coming tournaments. There were T20 matches in India but now I am going to play one-day cricket and I will try my best to give my all and learn from past mistakes. But I have full confidence in myself," he said.

Mustafizur is expected to fly for England tonight to join the rest of the squad in Sussex, while it's not yet confirmed when the two other members of the ODI squad currently in Dhaka -- Mashrafe Bin Mortaza and Shakib Al Hasan -- will depart, but they are likely to fly within two days.

Meanwhile, the Tigers will play their second warm-up match against Sussex XI today.



In the land of seam and swing, Bangladesh's pacers will be called upon to fire. The Tigers' pace quartet of (FROM L-R) Shafiul Islam, Rubel Hossain, Taskin Ahmed and Subashis Roy listen intently to the wise words of bowling coach Courtney Walsh (L) during practice at the Brighton College Ground in Sussex yesterday.

PHOTO: BCB

Robi to continue as sponsors

SPORTS REPORTER

Robi will continue as Bangladesh national team's sponsor after the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) awarded them the sponsorship rights for the next two years which will start after the ICC Champions Trophy in England. Last two years they had also been with us. Two companies -- Robi and Pran -- took part in the bid and Robi got the rights as the highest bidder as they exceeded our floor price," said Kazi Inam Ahmed, BCB's marketing and commercial committee chairman, yesterday.

He was however not ready to disclose the exact amount they are going to receive from Robi, who were also awarded the sponsorship rights for the Bangladesh Women's Cricket team, Bangladesh Under-19 team and Bangladesh A team.

This time the floor price was Tk 60 crore -- double that of the last one in 2015. Top of Mind was the highest bidder last time with Tk 41.41 crore and then they sold it to Robi.

Inam said that the increase in price is just a reflection of Bangladesh cricket team's good performance.

Ireland-Eng first ODI today

AFP, London

Ireland begin their first-ever one-day international series against England in Bristol on Friday seeking to cause their hosts fresh embarrassment.

The two-match contest, which concludes with Ireland's first ODI at Lord's on Sunday, comes six years after their stunning World Cup win over England in Bangalore.

That remains Ireland's only win over England in six completed ODIs.

But Ireland are currently struggling to live up to the teams of the recent past.

In March they suffered chastening series losses to fellow Test aspirants Afghanistan.

They now face an England side enjoying an ODI revival and with genuine hope of winning next month's eight-team Champions Trophy tournament on home soil.

Pakistan fall to Gabriel's pace

AFP, Bridgetown

Shannon Gabriel produced an outstanding effort of consistently fast bowling to lead the West Indies to a 106-run victory over Pakistan 80 minutes after lunch on the final day of the second Test at Kensington Oval in Barbados on Thursday.

Set a target of 188 after leg-spinner Yasir Shah's seven for 94 wrapped up the home side's second innings at 268 at the start of the day, the tourists were never in contention after the pace barrage on a deteriorating pitch led by Gabriel, whose innings figures of five for 11 sped Pakistan's demise for just 81 off 34.4 overs.

It equalled the lowest total ever in a Test innings at the venue set by India in 1997 and leaves the series at 1-1 going into the final Test in Dominica starting next Wednesday.

The burly fast bowler ended with overall figures of nine for 92, the third-best by a West Indian against Pakistan.

Only wicketkeeper-batsman Sarfraz Ahmed and fast bowler Mohammad Amir, who put on 42 for the eighth wicket, offered any resistance to Gabriel, Alzarri Joseph and Jason Holder, the West Indies captain taking the final wicket when Ahmed was caught by Roston Chase on the long-on boundary.

Gabriel started the rout with the wicket of Azhar Ali as the opening batsman miscued an attempted pull to Shimron Hetmyer at midwicket.

Joseph struck in the very next over when Babar Azam flicked at a leg-side delivery to wicketkeeper Shane Dowrick. Holder replaced Gabriel and immediately earned the prized scalp of Younis Khan, with the umpire's decision being upheld on review. Gabriel was recalled and he responded with two critical wickets in the space of three deliveries.

Captain Misbah ul Haq was first ruled "not out" to vociferous appeals but replays following a challenge showed an inside-edge that lobbed to Shai Hope at gully.

Asad Shafiq then edged his second delivery for Powell to take the catch at first slip at the third attempt.

Gabriel then broke the eighth-wicket partnership with the wicket of Amir and completed a five-wicket haul when he bowled Shah for the fourth duck of the innings.

SCORES IN BRIEF

WEST INDIES: First innings 312

PAKISTAN: First innings 393

WEST INDIES: Second innings 268 (Brathwaite 43, Hetmyer 22, Hope 90, Chase 23, Vishaul 32, Bishoo 20; Abbas 2-57, Yasir 7-94)

PAKISTAN: Second innings 81 all out (Sarfraz 23, Amir 23, Gabriel 5-11, Holder 3-23, Joseph 2-42)

Player-of-the-match: Shannon Gabriel

Result: West Indies won by 106 runs



West Indies fast bowler Shannon Gabriel produced a performance of sustained aggression for the ages, taking five wickets for just 11 runs as he bullied Pakistan's batsmen into submission to help West Indies level the series by winning the second Test on the fifth day at the Kensington Oval in Barbados yesterday.

Pant blitzes Gujarat in epic chase

STAR SPORT DESK

A six-riddled 97 from Rishabh Pant turned a near-impossible chase into a cakewalk for Delhi Daredevils as they overhauled Gujarat Lions' 208 with 2.3 overs to spare in their Indian Premier League game in Delhi yesterday.

The left-hander's explosive 43-ball knock featured nine sixes, many hit on one leg over the leg side, and was backed up superbly by Sanju Samson's 31-ball 61 as the two put on 143 runs for the second wicket in just 10.3 overs.

At one stage there was a stretch of four consecutive sixes and five in the space of eight balls in the 11th and 12th overs bowled by James Faulkner and Ravindra Jadeja.

Pant departed three runs short of his hundred when he edged to the keeper off Basil Thampi, but Delhi were all but home at that point as the equation had been brought down to 29 off 33 with seven wickets in hand.

Earlier, skipper Suresh Raina (77 off 43) and Dinesh Karthik (65 off 34) put on a 133-run third-wicket partnership to guide Gujarat to 208 for seven.

SCORES IN BRIEF

GUJARAT LIONS: 208 for 7 (Raina 77, Karthik 65, Finch 27; Rabada 2-28, Cummins 2-30)

DELHI DAREDEVILS: 214 for 3 in 17.3 overs (Pant 97, Samson 61, Anderson 18 not out; Jadeja 1-28, Thampi 1-40)

Player-of-the-match: Rishabh Pant

Result: Delhi won by 7 wickets

Form squad immediately: CoA to BCCI

PTI, New Delhi



Irked by the delaying tactics of the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI), the Committee of Administrators (CoA) on Thursday instructed the cricket Board to "immediately announce the Champions Trophy squad".

Having already sent a couple of communications earlier, Thursday's seven-point letter to joint secretary Amitabh Chaudhary is by far the most strongly-worded.

The richest cricket body has deliberately missed the April 25 deadline for submission of the squad in the wake of ICC proposing a new financial model which reduces BCCI's revenues from USD 570 million to USD 293 million.

The CoA has copied the e-mail to all office-bearers about how the delay in team selection is portraying Indian cricket and cricketers in "negative" light.

The point No. 5 of the CoA diktat states: "You are aware that the squad representing India at the ICC Champions Trophy 2017 was to be submitted by 25th April 2017 but the squad has not even been selected as yet. Please convene a meeting of the selection committee for selecting the squad immediately. The squad can then be submitted to the ICC without prejudice to BCCI's legal rights."

The CoA told that the office-bearers should keep in mind while mulling a pull-out that "India are the best team in the world today".

"Team India should be provided with a supportive environment to showcase Indian cricket instead of being surrounded with uncertainty and confusion. There has been more than enough negativity surrounding Team India's participation in the ICC Champions Trophy and the sooner the same is put to rest the better," the letter states.

The CoA reminded the office-bearers and state unit officials that the "players' interest should be paramount".

"The focus should be on enabling our team to achieve even greater heights and further laurels, which will automatically attract higher revenues," the letter further stated.

The CoA pointed out that the officials running the cricket in the country have lost sight of the fact that India's position in global cricket has been achieved by consensus and not by confrontational approach.

"The BCCI appears to have lost sight of the fact that it attained a pre-eminent position in the ICC not by a combative approach but by building consensus and ensuring a positive image including by helping other cricket boards in their time of need."

More power to the light touch

AFP, New Delhi



Big-hitters like Chris Gayle have long hogged the Twenty20 limelight but this season's Indian Premier League has proved that elegant, old-school batting is just as important in cricket's shortest format.

South Africa's Hashim Amla has been delighting cricketing purists by racking up large totals with his conventional style of play while Kane Williamson of New Zealand is also showing there's more to T20 than power.

"T20 is not about sixes... T20 is about making sure that there are no dot balls [deliveries on which no run is scored] and both these batsmen have made sure that there are very few dot balls," Indian batting great Sunil Gavaskar told AFP.

"Playing the ball according to its merit and keep the

scoreboard ticking is the key. That's how they have been more successful this year.

"You look at the entire T20 game and you will see that any time there will be more boundaries than sixes. And you can hit the boundaries along the ground, you can hit them one bounce into the fence," he added.

Amla has amassed 315 runs in eight matches for Kings XI Punjab, including a maiden T20 century -- one of four tons to have been hit so far in the tenth edition of the IPL.

The 34-year-old right-hander, famed for his classic stroke-playing, has also notched two half-centuries and has been instrumental in putting his



HASHIM AMLA



KANE WILLIAMSON

team in contention for a play-off place.

Amla has recorded 12 sixes and 32 fours while maintaining a strike-rate of 140. Williamson has accumulated 228 runs for Sunrisers Hyderabad in just five matches, including a sublime match-winning knock of 89 against Delhi Daredevils.

The 26-year-old New Zealander has hit just 17 fours and nine sixes and has kept his run-rate, which is above 160, topped up by his ability to sneak in quick singles and twos.

"I think it's a big myth that T20 is just for power-hitters. Even players like (India legend) Rahul Dravid and Amla have a fairly impressive white-ball

average," Dileep Premachandran, editor-in-chief of Wisden India, told AFP.

"If you look at Amla's significant innings in this IPL, there have been big hits as well. Most of these batsmen have enhanced their repertoire significantly."

The success of Amla and Williamson this season has overshadowed the performances of West Indies' Gayle and Proteas ODI captain AB de Villiers, who usually dominate coverage of the IPL with their big-hitting antics. The pair have failed to fire for a struggling Royal Challengers Bangalore side this time around with Gayle picking up 152 runs in six matches and de Villiers 196 in seven.

Left-handed Australian David Warner is still flying the flag for the powerful hitters and leads the runs table with 489 but the exploits of Amla and Williamson show that the graceful shot-players can also thrive in T20.