

SPORT



When the Australia series gets underway in late August Imrul Kayes (R) will continue to be unsure about his place in the team as well as his position in the batting order, but that hardly deterred him as he turned up to Mirpur yesterday along with Test skipper Mushfiquur Rahim for practice even though the training camp starts from July 10.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

Uncertainty is always uncomfortable: Imrul

SPORTS REPORTER



Who wants to live under a cloud of uncertainty? The Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB), cricketers and fans are in an uncomfortable situation as the pay dispute between Cricket Australia and its players have left the two-match Test series between Bangladesh and Australia next month shrouded in uncertainty.

Similarly, left-handed batsman Imrul Kayes does not like the uncertainty surrounding his batting position. Imrul is not always sure whether he will get a chance to play a match regardless of form, and if it does happen then he is unsure which position he will need to bat in.

The southpaw is an opener but he has often batted at number three. He batted one-down in the last Test against Sri Lanka after playing as an opener against England at home and New Zealand at Wellington.

"It happens to everybody, not just me. I just want to give you an example. Say, you go to your office and find that your desk has been changed, how does it feel? You feel uncomfortable. It's not only in cricket but it happens everywhere," said Imrul while speaking to reporters at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.

However, rather than thinking about his batting position, 28-Test veteran Imrul was looking forward to a good showing against Australia.

There has been talk about whether the pay dispute in Australian cricket will be resolved before Australia's scheduled tour to Bangladesh but the common notion

among cricket players and officials is that it is too early to think about the postponement of the series.

That is why many players started their preparations well before the start of the official camp from July 10.

Currently, the players are eagerly anticipating taking on the Aussies at home and Imrul believes that it is always a big opportunity for any player when he plays against a team like Australia.

"It's always a big opportunity for a player to play against Australia; we hardly get the opportunity to play against them. So, if we get the chance we will try to capitalise on this opportunity," said Imrul.

"We have a three-week camp before the Australia series which will be important for fitness. Our main aim is to achieve the best fitness and everybody is looking forward to doing well against Australia. At this moment I am not working on my batting because I did a lot with my batting; I will work on my fitness instead," he added.

Imrul also said that this team had no fear of pace bowling. "Every international team has a good pace attack and Australia is no exception. Nobody is thinking about it because Bangladesh are good against pace attacks and everybody can handle [pace] well."

"Rather than thinking about opponents, our main objective will be to play our best cricket. We thought that England were a tough team but we gained a better understanding when we started to play against them in the last series, so the more important thing is to play according to your own plan rather than thinking about the opponents," he said, adding that a good start will be the key.

C'WEALTH CHESS C'SHIP Fahad, Jannatul share leads

SPORTS REPORTER

FIDE Master Mohammad Fahad Rahman and Jannatul Ferdous shared the leads in their respective age groups at the close of the second round of the Commonwealth Chess Championship in New Delhi yesterday.

Fahad beat Indian Aan Sikka in the U-14 group and Jannat beat Sri Lankan Wickramasinghe Thesandi in the U-12 girls' group and secured the full two points from as many matches while Nayem Haque, Tahsin Tajwar Zia and Md. Sajidul Haque earned 1.5 points each from two matches in their respective groups.

Meanwhile, GM Mollah Abdullah Al Rakib, GM Niaz Murshed, FM Md Taibur Rahman and WIM Shamima Akter Liza won their first round games while GM Ziaur Rahman, GM Enamul Hossain Razib, WIM Rani Hamid, WFM Sharmin Sultana lost their first-round matches in the Open Section on Monday. They were scheduled to play their second-round matches last night.

GM Rakib beat Indian Sumit Grover, GM Niaz beat Indian WCM Isha Sharma, FM Taibur defeated Indian Harikrishnan Kottayam, WIM Liza thumped Indian Lakshaya Arora. On the other hand, GM Ziaur lost to Indian Kumar Gaurav, GM Enamul lost to Indian Rohit Vassan, WIM Rani was defeated by Indian GM Abhijit Kunte and WFM Sharmin lost to Indian GM Swapnil Dhopade.

Sarfraz to lead Pak in all formats

AFP, Islamabad



Pakistan Tuesday rewarded Sarfraz Ahmed with the country's Test captaincy, a fortnight after he led the national team to an elusive Champions Trophy title in England.

Underdogs Pakistan trounced India by a record 180-run margin in the final in London on June 18 to lift the Champions Trophy, to the shock and ecstasy of the cricket-mad country.

Pakistan Cricket Board chairman Shaharyar Khan named Sarfraz Test captain at a ceremony honouring the winning team hosted by Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif in Islamabad on Tuesday.

"I take this opportunity to announce Ahmed as our Test captain in addition to one-day and Twenty20 captain," Khan said.

The 30-year-old will lead Pakistan in the three-match Test series against Sri Lanka, likely to be held on the neutral venue of the United Arab Emirates in October.

Ahmed has already led Pakistan in nine one-day internationals since last year, winning seven and losing two. He has also led in eight Twenty20s, winning seven and losing just one.

The Test captaincy has been vacant since Misbahul Haq retired after winning a three-match Test series 2-1 in the West Indies in May this year.

Ahmed said leading Pakistan in all three formats is a great honour.

"I am honoured to be appointed Test captain," he said during the ceremony. "I will do my best to lift the team in all three formats and will not rest on Champions Trophy laurels."



Younis under fire for sexist remark

SMH

Australia's female cricketers have hit back at Waqar Younis's suggestion that 50-over matches are too long for the women's game, with all-rounder Jess Jonassen labelling the remarks "offensive" and "misguided".

Younis last week tweeted the ICC, proposing women's ODI games be reduced to 30 overs apiece, likening his alternative format to a tennis grand slam where women only play a best of three sets as opposed to the five played by their male counterparts.

Wicketkeeper Alyssa Healy was quick to rebut the retired Pakistan paceman, and replied "So what you're saying is that 530 runs in a 50-over game isn't entertaining?! With two of the best innings anyone has seen...."

Healy was referring to Australia's win over Sri Lanka in Bristol where Chamari Atapattu crunched an unbeaten 178 only for Meg Lanning to produce 152 not out as her side chased down 9-257.

Younis, 45, has since clarified his original comments, saying "Lesser overs mean faster pace, more audience, competitive cricket, no discrimination or prejudice toward women."

"It is a little bit offensive, what's T20 cricket for," Jonassen said. "It's quite interesting that he said it the day after our match against Sri Lanka that was one of the highest scoring games of the World Cup so far. Five hundred odd runs scored and two of the best innings of the women's game ever."

"I think [it's] maybe a little bit misguided. The interest level [in women's cricket] grown immensely over the last 12 to 18 months especially."

AUSTRALIA PAY DISPUTE

'Extend MoU by a year'

REUTERS, Sydney



Australia's cricketers and board should extend their previous agreement by 12 months while they attempt to find a solution to a bitter pay dispute, former captain Michael Clarke said on Tuesday.

The previous Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) expired at midnight on Friday with no sign of a deal in place, leaving around 230 leading cricketers without contracts and the fate of future tours in limbo.

Once the deadline passed, Australia's players threatened to boycott an "A" team tour of South Africa later this month unless a new agreement was struck with Cricket Australia beforehand.

"What needs to happen is keep the current MoU for the next 12 months and allow the players to get back to what they do best," Clarke told reporters at Nine Network's marketing launch for the Ashes.

"Cricket Australia, the ACA (Australian Cricketers' Association), please go behind closed doors and sort this in private."

"The players want to play... let's allow them to play while this stuff gets sorted out in the background."

At the heart of the acrimonious dispute is Cricket Australia's (CA) insistence that the two-decade-old model, under which players get a fixed percentage of revenue, should be jettisoned.

CA believes the revenue-share model is unfit for modern times and is starving grass-roots cricket of funding, while players say it has underpinned the game's growth and prosperity over the past 20 years.

"I don't want the Australian players

to be unprepared because they have been concentrating on something else; give them 12 months and let them concentrate on the cricket," Clarke said. "I don't want to see any cricket missed."

"There will be a compromise. The ACA and Cricket Australia will find a way to make this work."

The ACA has called on CA chief executive James Sutherland to come to the negotiating table but he has remained silent since emailing players in May, informing them they would be unemployed if they failed to agree to a new MoU by the June 30 deadline.

"It does seem very strange. You've got to wonder what the hell is going on," former Australia captain Ian Chappell said.



MICHAEL CLARKE

"They've done a few strange things and Sutherland not being involved is one of them."

"I don't see a really good reason for him not to be."

Further tournaments, including a two-Test tour of Bangladesh and a one-day international series in India also remain in doubt if the dispute continues to linger on.

"I can't believe they (CA) will want to upset India, so I would have thought that something will happen before," he said.

"Because they won't want to cancel that. If they get something done then, people will have probably forgotten by (the time the Ashes start in) November."



Australia A captain Usman Khawaja takes part in a training session at Allan Border Field in Brisbane yesterday ahead of their tour of South Africa, despite the threat to boycott the trip because of a bitter pay dispute.

PHOTO: AFP

Progress needed by Friday: ACA

AFP, Brisbane

Players turned up for training Tuesday ahead of the Australia A tour of South Africa, despite the threat to boycott the trip because of a bitter pay dispute.

The Australian Cricketers' Association (ACA) executive Alistair Nicholson said a "significant breakthrough" in the stand-off was needed by Friday for the South Africa tour to proceed.

Nevertheless, players were sticking to their schedule and reported for training with coach Jason Gillespie in Brisbane for the tour which is due to start on July 12.

"As a coach, I'll help the players prepare as well as we can," Australia A coach Gillespie told reporters.

"We have to have the attitude as if we are going to be travelling."

The pay row also threatens to derail upcoming Australia tours to Bangladesh and India as well as this year's prestige home Ashes series against England.

Cricket Australia's national talent manager Greg Chappell told reporters that he remained optimistic that a swift solution could be found.

"I'm expecting that we will see a positive resolution in the not too distant future and we will get back to focusing on the cricket," he said Tuesday.

SL selectors given 6-month extension

CRICINFO, Colombo

The selection committee headed by Sanath Jayasuriya will remain in position for a further six months, SLC has confirmed. This means that by the end of 2017, Jayasuriya will have served as chief selector for more than three-and-a-half of the previous five years.

Asanka Gurusinha, SLC's cricket manager, continues in the committee, with former players Romesh Kaluwitharana, Ranjith Madurasinghe and Eric Upashantha also staying.

The panel's reappointment comes despite recent criticism that its selection policy has been inconsistent. 38 players have been fielded in Sri Lanka's 30 ODIs since the panel's appointment in May last year, and the team has only won nine of those games, losing 17.

Proteas look for gutsy attitude from Elgar

REUTERS, London



South Africa are backing Dean Elgar to bring a 'gusty attitude' with him when he stands in as captain for the first Test against England, starting at Lord's on Thursday.

"Dean is an aggressive type of personality and he will play an aggressive brand of cricket. He is an experienced player in the Test side and has had good success as a Test opener. That is a tough job in this game," coach Russell Domingo told a news conference on Monday.

"He is a gutsy player. He epitomises South African cricket to the tee. I'm excited about working with him for the next couple of days as captain."

Elgar, who becomes the 12th player to captain

South Africa since their readmission to international cricket 25 years ago, stands in for Faf du Plessis, who misses the first Test to be with his wife Imari after the birth of their first child.

"He is going to try and take over and run with a lot of what Faf has instilled in the side, but be his own man," added Domingo.

"I'm excited to see what he brings. It's a big plus for us that we can have another prospective captain in the group."

"We want to win, that is the bottom line. We set ourselves certain goals a year ago that we want to achieve in test cricket and we are determined to tick those boxes."



DEAN ELGAR

'Captaincy will lift Root to new level'

AFP, London



England fast bowler Stuart Broad believes captaincy will take star batsman Joe Root's game to the "next level".

Root was named as the successor to Alastair Cook in February, but Thursday's series opener against South Africa at Lord's will be the Yorkshireman's first match as England Test captain.

Test captaincy appears to have boosted the performances of such leading current batsmen as India's Virat Kohli, Australia's Steve Smith and New Zealand's Kane Williamson, with Broad confident it will inspire Root to greater heights rather be too heavy a burden for the 26-year-old.

"Joe's not had a huge amount of captaincy experience because he played for England from a young age but he's learned the game at the top level," Broad told Sky Sports News at Lord's on Tuesday. "I think it will take his game to the next level, if he can go any higher. He'll really thrive off the extra responsibility."

"He's an attacking cricketer, quite aggressive in the way he plays, so I think the team will take that sort of shape," added Broad. "He was announced a long time ago and now he has the chance to put things into place."