

SPORT

A weight off Mashrafe's shoulders?

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh captain Mashrafe Bin Mortaza can now cast aside all the uneasiness and move forward with his mission for the 2019 World Cup to be held in England after Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) president Nazmul Hassan yesterday buried all the questions about his chances of leading the team.

"He will play as long as he can and there will be no question of dropping him because he is not there only as a player, he is there as a captain. And it is nearly impossible to find a captain like him in Bangladesh," said Hassan while speaking to reporters at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.

With this statement, the BCB boss has apparently given in to the notion that it will be better that the decision regarding his future plans rest with Mashrafe; who many believe will not stay in the team if he feels that he has become a burden.

Since he started his stint as captain in 2014, Mashrafe has not only been doing a wonderful job on the field, but also off it. As a bowler he has been doing his part in overcoming the shortcomings born of a long string of injuries, but he still had to wrestle with the insecurity of knowing that failure in one or two matches could bring up that uneasy question: what do you think about your future?

Questions were raised about whether the board had any new plan for the 2019



Mashrafe Bin Mortaza had been walking around with an unspoken burden weighing heavily on his mind, but have the gleaming reassurances from BCB president Nazmul Hassan yesterday relieved him of that load?

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

World Cup since Hassan spoke about the issue of captaincy last week. However, the BCB president claimed he had been misunderstood and added that there was no scope to drop Mashrafe.

These questions should not arise at this time. We have more games ahead of us and until and unless we find a substan-

tute because it affects the player. I am in regular contact with him and he has not said anything, but if I was in his place then I would have feelings about whether I would be in the team and why anyone hasn't spoken to me. Whatever I do, the players are always the first to know. I have never had any such talks with them about

ODIs.

There is nothing more to say about Mashrafe's captaincy. I have already said it before and it was clear-cut. I was asked with the example of India's MS Dhoni. As he [Dhoni] will not play the 2019 World Cup, India had changed their captain and the question was whether we have any

such thoughts. I responded that we have those thoughts.

"However, there is no connection to ODIs. We have not talked about Mashrafe being or not being captain in ODIs, but it is being sensationalised like Mashrafe will be dropped immediately and we will look for a new captain. There have been no such talks and there is no reason for such talks," he explained, referring to last week's comments.

He gave two reasons for why one should not raise these kinds of questions now.

"The first is that Mashrafe is not only in the team as a player. He is in the team as a captain and to fulfil particular duties a particular role. The way he has been doing that it is impossible to find a substitute for him in Bangladesh and at the moment there is nobody who can fulfil his role," Hassan said.

"Secondly, if you look at his performances as a pacer then his performances are really, really good. At the moment, there are no thoughts, but there are always thoughts about what will happen when Shabir [Al Hasan] or when Mustafiq [Rahim] leaves. We will always have these thoughts and we have to think about that, but the perception is that we are dropping Mashrafe today, which is a hostile environment for both him and us," he continued.

In the end, only time will tell whether Mashrafe can play without any burden or whether these questions will once again come to the fore after another series.

BCB to be stricter on indiscretions

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) president Nazmul Hassan said that the board will be stricter in bringing cricketers to task if they are accused of misconduct or bringing the game into disrepute.

This declaration, made yesterday at the BCB headquarters in Mirpur, comes after Farzana Akhter, the wife of out-of-favour national fast bowler Mohammad Shahid, filed a complaint with the BCB against her husband, accusing him of torturing her.

"This is a difficult question, in the sense that if you ask me as the president of the BCB then I think it is not enough to be a good player, you also have to be a good person," Shahid told reporters.

Shahid's alleged indiscretions, which also include hiding the fact that he is married from other women, is the latest in a line of indiscretions by national cricketers.

"If you look at the incidents one by one, they never got any support from us. We were suspended from games while the cases were pending. Forget support, we took action against them. We will do the same."

"From the BCB's perspective, we will be stricter and we will speak to them and instruct them."

>Contacted by AFP, Shahid denied the allegations.

"The allegation of torture is not true. Somebody is provoking her to raise complaint against me."

PAY DISPUTE CA director calls for compromise

SMH

Cricit Australia (CA) director Mark Taylor has called on both sides in the bitter pay war to reach a compromise as another former Test great declared the ongoing dispute as a "plague on both their houses".

The consultancy tone taken by Taylor, the former CA figure to speak publicly about the issue in more than six weeks, will raise hopes a deal is done. However, the players remain committed to the revenue sharing model which the governing body wants disbanded.

Talks between CA and the Australian Cricketers Association (ACA) continued on Tuesday in a bid to break the deadlock, which has left more than 200 of the country's best cricketers unemployed and jeopardised the upcoming Tests. Sources have indicated a breakthrough remains some distance away.

The pay fight has cast much uncertainty over the game heading into the Ashes summer, with the game's corporate partners unable to use the nation's star players to promote their brands.

The stalled talks have implications for Channel Nine, which has launched its Ashes coverage in Sydney and Melbourne in the past week. A source has told Fairfax Media it's business as usual on the network, but concern grows for fight continues.

Former captain Taylor, who in 1997 led the players' fight for the revenue-sharing model the board he is now part of wants removed, told patrons at Channel Nine's Melbourne Ashes launch the dispute was not harming just the game's governing body but the players.

"I think there's got to be compromise on both sides, any negotiation you give and you take and when you get to that situation - which I hope we are getting very close to - then when you get there, a resolution," Taylor said.

Shakib continues tenure at the top

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh all-rounder Shakib Al Hasan has retained top spot as the best all-rounder in the ICC Test Rankings.

The ICC released a revised ranking table after the conclusion of the first Test between England and South Africa.

Shakib reached his highest rating, 443, during the recent Test against New Zealand in Christchurch. The Magura cricketer is currently rated the best all-rounder in all three formats of the game.

Moeen Ali overtook England all-rounder Ben Stokes after his brilliant performances with the bat and ball game



England a victory in the First Test against South Africa.

Moeen leapfrogged Stokes into fourth spot from his 10-wicket haul and a first innings score of 87 at Lord's against South Africa. He also became the fifth fastest to reach double of 2000 runs and 100 wickets in Test Matches. Shakib is the fastest to reach that landmark and he was also the fastest to the double of 100 wickets and 1000 runs.

Shakib's latest Test exploit saw him score a century in Bangladesh's 100th Test, which was also the occasion of their first Test victory over Sri Lanka at the P Sara Oval in Colombo in March this year. He also picked up six wickets in the game.

BCB coach lands in jail

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

A Dinajpur court sentenced Abu Samad Mithu, who had been accused of sexually harassing a 15-year-old female cricketer inside the Dinajpur Sports Village, to jail yesterday.

30-year-old Mithu, a BCB coach who is also a member of the District Sports Association (DSA), appeared before Additional Chief Judicial Magistrate Biswanath Mondal at around 12:00pm yesterday to plea for bail, but his appeal was rejected.

Rabul Islam, Dinajpur's Court Inspector, confirmed soon after that Mithu was incarcerated.



PHOTO: STAR

Focus only on fitness: Mehedi

SPORTS REPORTER



Bangladesh all-rounder Mehedi Hasan was hopeful that he would be able to fly out to the West Indies in the last week of this month to take part in the Caribbean Premier League (CPL). The 19-year-old's team, Trinbago Knight Riders (TKR), are scheduled to play their opening match against St. Lucia Stars on August 4 and the young off-spinner expressed his desire to be available for his side from their opener.

"I need a letter from the board [no objection certificate] and am hopeful that I will get it soon. I informed everybody and got the suggestion that I would be able to go after the conditioning camp. I am hopeful that I can go later this month," Mehedi said while speaking to reporters at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.

Mehedi will be the third Bangladesh cricketer to take part in the CPL after Shakib Al Hasan and Tamim Iqbal.

However, the youngster emphasised the importance of the current fitness camp as he believes it will play a big role in terms of fitness ahead of a busy schedule for the next year, which is why he gave more emphasis to the fitness drills rather

than focusing on the challenge against Australia in the two-match Test series.

"We have a busy schedule in the next year and we believe this fitness camp is very important for the coming series. And we hardly get the chance to attend this kind of fitness camp due to our busy international

schedule, so it's very important," stressed Mehedi.

Speaking about next month's Test series against Australia, the teenager, who earned 19 wickets in his debut Test series against England in 2016, exuded confidence.

"We are not only playing good cricket in ODIs but also in Tests,



Mehedi Hasan (C) said that the Tigers were only looking to enjoy their fitness camp and they certainly enjoyed their game of football in the rain at the BCB Academy Ground in Mirpur yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

HP complete whitewash

SPORTS REPORTER



Abul Hasan and Mohammad Saifuddin scalped three wickets each as the BCB High Performance team posted a massive 151-run victory over a Northern Territory Invitational XI in the fifth and final one-day match at the Marana Cricket Ground in Darwin yesterday.

The touring side whitewashed the local selections which mainly consisted of Under-19 players.

The HP team scored 269 runs in 49.3 overs, with Anamul Haque making a tail-end 53. Irfan Shukur added a 40 and Tamim Haque also scored 46. Abu Hider (35) and Imtiaz Ahmed (31) were the other notable scorers. In reply, the local side were bundled out for 118 in the 30.4 overs. Hasan and Saifuddin gave away 20 runs for their three wickets.

The touring side will play a three-day match starting from tomorrow at the same venue.

Shastri named head coach

AGENCIES, New Delhi



The mystery over the next coach of the Indian cricket team has finally ended as Ravi Shastri has been named as the head coach of the team.

While former pacer Zaheer Khan has been named the bowling coach. Also, India coach Rahul Dravid will be the bowling consultant on overseas tours.

While BCCI President CK Khanna made the news official, a senior BCCI official said that it was Shastri's presentation that sealed the deal for the former team director.

"After a lot of deliberation, it was decided that Ravi Shastri is the coach and he will be assisted by Zaheer Khan as the bowling coach. Shastri's presentation and vision towards the 2019 World Cup was really impressive. He will be the coach till the 2019 World Cup. While Zaheer Khan will be the bowling coach, Dravid will help the batsmen on foreign tours. He will work as a consultant and his job as India A coach continues," a senior BCCI official said.

Having interviewed five candidates on Monday, the Cricket Advisory Committee (CAC) — comprising of Sourav Ganguly, Tendulkar and VVS Laxman — had made it clear that the team will be announced from America after Virat Kohli's return from America. But the SC-appointed

Committee of Administrators stood ground and ensured that the announcement took place on Tuesday itself.

The Cricket Advisory Committee interviewed five candidates — Shastri, Virender Sehwag, Tom Moody, Richard Pybus and Lalchand Rajput. Former West Indies coach Phil Simmons wasn't available for the interview process. A BCCI official said that while the initial

committee of Administrators stood ground and ensured that the announcement took place on Tuesday itself.

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decision was set to be taken after Kohli's return from America next week, things took a turn late on Monday night after discussions between the CAC and BCCI CEO Rahul Johri.

Shastri, who was the Team Director between 2014 and 2016, had lost out to Anil Kumble for the top job after last year.

"I think there's got to be compromise on both sides, any negotiation you give and you take and when you get to that situation — which I hope we are getting very close to — then when you get there, a resolution," Taylor said.