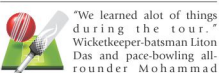




Young hopefuls evolve in Darwin

SPORTS REPORTER



"We learned alot of things during the tour." Wicketkeeper-batsman Liton Das and pace-bowling all-rounder Mohammad Saifuddin echoed the same

sentiment when talking about their experience during the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) High Performance (HP) team's recently concluded tour of Australia.

"We learned a lot of things. I gathered huge experience, including the craft of swing bowling. When we played the first match we maintained line and length with our stock balls. On the other hand when the ball was not swinging on the other surfaces we tried to bring variation in pace. I tried different things there," 20-year old all-rounder Saifuddin, who already made international debut playing two T20i matches, told reporters at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.

The tour was doubly exciting for Liton as he not only did he soak in the experience but also enjoyed the captaincy. "It was a good experience indeed for me. This time I toured not just as a player but there was also the

Both were working hard in the endeavour to earn a national call-up, the ultimate goal for any cricketer. Both admitted that it is in the national team where a cricketer dreams to be but again echoed the sentiment that they were now just concentrating on the job at hand.

"Actually, there is nothing in my mind regarding the national team. I went there with the HP team and tried to learn something," said Liton.

"Every player has a dream to play for the national team and I am no exception. But at this moment I am not too focused on this matter. As I am now in HP squad, my main aim is to develop myself as much as possible and gain fitness as much as possible. I am working on my weak points," said Saifuddin.

While it is a big challenge for Liton to get a place in the national side as it hinges on whether Mushfiquz Rahim gives up the additional duty of keeping, Saifuddin has a big opportunity to impress the selectors.

The Bangladesh team think-tank has been desperately looking forward to a quality pace-bowling all-rounder who can contribute significantly with the bat



Wicketkeeper batsman Liton Das (R) and pacer Mohammad Saifuddin sharing their experiences with the reporters regarding the recently concluded tour to Australia with the BCB HP team in Mirpur yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

additional responsibility of the captaincy. Captaincy is really a fantastic thing and I tried to enjoy it," said Liton.

"We went there [Darwin] to learn something and it was basically a conditioning camp. We learned a lot. The wickets were altogether different to ours. In our conditions, the sweating starts after playing only 10 minutes but it was not the case there [Darwin]. On the other hand you have to face strong winds there and sometimes it will be in your favour and sometimes it will be a disadvantage. These were the issues we tried to get accustomed to," he added.

in the late order as well as put in a decent pace bowling performance. The selectors have been showing their confidence in Saifuddin as a future prospect and that's the reason he was carried with the national team and given the national cap in the T20 format.

The all-rounder from Feni had some good performances during the HP tour to Australia where he made a hundred and also bowled well. It was nice to hear from the all-rounder that while those performances gave him confidence, he is still looking to improve his batting.



Bangladesh's inspirational ODI captain Mashrafe Bin Mortaza is certainly not complaining about any back pain. He was actually running fever for the last couple of days and briefly appeared at BCB headquarters in Mirpur yesterday, where the Tigers are going through a fitness camp for the last one week.

PHOTO: STAR

Wood fit for third Test

AFP, London

England fast bowler Mark Wood has been passed fit for next week's third Test against South Africa at The Oval after scans revealed no serious injury on his left heel.

Wood has been blighted by injuries throughout his career, with ankle problems keeping him out of Test cricket for nearly two years from October 2015, with the seamer only making his comeback at Lord's two weeks ago.

The 27-year-old sat out some of South Africa's second innings after suffering from soreness while bowling during England's humbling 340-run second Test defeat at Trent Bridge.

But the England and Wales Cricket Board confirmed Wednesday that Wood is available for next week - if selected.

Wood's availability provides a timely boost for England with batsman Gary Ballance ruled out of the Third Test with a broken finger.

Progress slow in pay dispute

SMH



Cricket's pay dispute shows few signs of abating, with fears next month's Test tour of Bangladesh could yet be scrapped.

The Australian Cricketers Association (ACA) and Cricket Australia (CA) returned to the negotiating table on Wednesday for the first time since talks broke up on Saturday.

While CA chief James Sutherland and counterpart Alistair Nicholson were in the room, it's understood little progress was made on the key stumbling block - that being the revenue model from which players would be paid.

Players have been paid since 1997 under a gross-revenue scheme; CA now wants to change to a set pool and a share in only surplus revenue.

Players have welcomed Sutherland's participation after months of hankering but progress is said to be slow - at best.

CA said on Wednesday night discussions were progressing steadily and discussions would resume on Thursday.

The talks resumed on a day Australian

Cricketers Association commercial manager Tim Cruickshank was due to arrive in India, where he will explore commercial opportunities for the Test stars and their domestic brethren, who have been unemployed since July 1. Cruickshank is due to meet with brand agencies and even potential broadcasters, with the possibility of deliberating on whether to play in a rival competition.

Australia's Test squad is due to head into camp in Darwin from August 10, ahead of the tour of Bangladesh. While the main game between CA and the ACA is to be a new memorandum of understanding, the more likely option - should any resolution be found - is to sign off on an in-principle agreement. That would allow the tour to go ahead, with the first Test in Dhaka from August 27.

If that tour is cancelled, it's unlikely players would agree to take part in a one-day series in India in October.

The Test players are unwilling to head overseas should they be offered tour-by-tour contracts if it means 200 of their fellow cricketers are at home unemployed. Players have so far also missed a fortnight of pay, with CA declaring that 1.2 million dollars would go into grassroots cricket.

Minhaz held by Shakil

SPORTS REPORTER

IM Minhazuddin Ahmed slipped from the top of category A of Saif Powerlife 2nd International Rating Chess Tournament after drawing against IM Abu Sufian Shakil in the fifth round at the Bangladesh Chess Federation hall room yesterday.

Despite the draw, Sagor was in joint lead along with four other players - GM Ziaur Rahman, GM Enamul Hossain Razib, WIM Shamima Akter Liza and Masum Hossain - with four points each. Zia beat FM Khandokar Aminul Islam, Razib beat Siddiqueur Rahman, Liza beat FM Taibur Rahman while Masum beat FM Mohammad Fahad Rahman in this round.

In category B, five players shared the lead with five points each. They are WIM Rani Hamid, Abdul Momin, Md. Shariatullah, Sonkanal Bharrat of India and Feroz Ahmed.

SL to probe 2011 WC defeat

AFP, Colombo

Sri Lanka's sports minister gave his support

on Wednesday for an investigation into the country's controversial 2011 World Cup loss against India, amid fresh allegations of match-fixing.

The South Asian nation lost the World Cup decider by six wickets at Wankhede Stadium in Mumbai, stunning the cricket-mad island. Then Sri Lanka skipper Kumar Sangakkara resigned soon after the match.

Pressure has since been mounting for an inquiry into the shock defeat, with a former cricket captain and a previous sports minister going public with their suspicions that Sri Lanka deliberately lost the match.

"The allegations merit an investigation," Dayasiri Jayasekera told reporters in Colombo.

"As soon as I get a written complaint, I will start a probe."

Sri Lanka, batting first, scored 274-6 off 50 overs and appeared in a commanding position when Indian superstar Sachin Tendulkar was caught for 18.



With an incredibly technical and rhythmized routine, Russia's Svetlana Kolesnichenko took gold in the women's solo free title yesterday at the 17th FINA World Championships.

PHOTO: AFP

BD swimmers leave for Hungary

SPORTS REPORTER

A five-member contingent, including SA Games double gold medalist Mahfuza Khatun Shila, is scheduled to leave here this morning to take part in the 17th FINA World Swimming Championships, which

has already started in Hungary from July 13.

Shila, along with Jewel Ahmed and Mahfuzur Rahman Sagar, will be accompanied by team official Selim Mia and Bangladesh Swimming Federation general secretary MB Saif, who will also attend the FINA

congress.

Shila will participate in 50m breaststroke and 50m freestyle events. Sagar will take part in 50m and 100m freestyle events while Jewel take part in 50m and 100m backstroke events from July 24 to July 29, said a press release yesterday.

We know what's on the plate: Kohli

AFP, Mumbai



India captain Virat Kohli said Wednesday he wants a good working relationship with new coach Ravi Shastri after the acrimonious departure of Anil Kumble.

And the skipper expressed confidence he can make it work with Shastri. "We know what's expected and what's on the plate," he said ahead of India's departure for a tour of Sri Lanka.

Kohli was accused of forcing out Kumble after the spin legend resigned last month, saying his relationship with the captain had become "untenable".

Kohli kept silent during the selection process that culminated in the return of Shastri, who was team director between 2014-16.

Speaking to media with Shastri at his side, Kohli spoke of the captain-coach relationship and the way ahead for the world number one Test side.

"We have worked together for three years. I don't think I need to understand anything else. We know what's expected and what's on the plate. I don't think it will require any effort," Kohli said.

"A lot of speculations and lot of things fly around, those things are not in my control."

"My job is to try and get the best out of this team along with the management and perform to the best of my abilities which I believe in," the star batsman added.

Shastri, who has been given a two-year contract running up to the 2019 World Cup, also spoke of the need to communicate

better in order for a team to prosper.

"I carry on from where I left. I don't come with any baggage... My job is to put every player in a frame of mind where he is thinking only about his role and the team he is playing for," said the former all-rounder.

Shastri, 55, edged other high-profile names including compatriot Virender



Sehwag and Australia's Tom Moody after a tough selection process.

But Shastri insisted that while coaches may come and go, it is the team which should get the credit for any success.

"The team has done exceedingly well over three years and they are the people who deserve the credit more than anyone else. Ravi Shastri, Anil Kumble will come and go," said Shastri.

"The fabric of Indian cricket will remain and the credit should go to everyone who's participated in this Indian team."