

My bowling is more balanced now: Rabbi

SPORTS REPORTER



With Bangladesh engaged in a glut of limited-overs matches since May, players who have featured solely in the longer version have by now receded to the background. But Tests will be in focus when and if the Australians arrive for a two-match series in late August, and even if Australia's contracts dispute prevent the team from coming, the full tour of South Africa to follow in September-October will call upon the breadth of Bangladesh's playing personnel, all of whom are currently engaged in a 29-member preliminary fitness camp going on in Mirpur.

Pacer Kamrul Islam Rabbi is one of those Test specialists currently out of the limelight, but he can be expected to feature prominently when the South Africa Tests roll around. Dating back to the Tests against England last October, Rabbi has played five games and was particularly impressive in the Tests in New Zealand in January this year. With the camp still in its fitness training stages, legendary former West Indies paceman and Bangladesh fast-bowling coach Courtney Walsh was on hand to help the pacers, and Rabbi seems already to have benefited.

"He is now conducting spot-bowling exercises," Rabbi told reporters at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium yesterday. "We haven't started bowling in full rhythm after the conditioning camp. But he [Walsh] is such a big player that just his words help us improve, both technically and mentally. We have a friendly relationship with him, which is why it is easier to work with him."

"For senior players, increasing self-confidence is not that important, but for juniors like myself the belief given by the coach plays a big role when it comes to performing. We have all been playing cricket for many years so everyone knows what they have to do; the biggest role the coach can play is to give the players confidence."

Rabbit, an out-swing specialist, said that there has already been improvements to his bowling. "My bowling is now much more balanced as, technically speaking, I can now bowl the inswinger, which could not before. I want to hone the things I already know now, that is my aim," Rabbi added.

With Test matches on the horizon, the spot-bowling exercises are invaluable as they inculcate the ability to keep bowling at a good spot, and Rabbi appreciated that. "It is important to improve the skill to keep bowling at one spot, and that is what I am trying to do," he said, adding that he wanted to improve his reverse swinging skills, particularly the angle from which the ball should start reversing.

Rabbit did not get a match in the Tigers' most recent two Tests in Sri Lanka, but he was confident of making his way back into the Test team. "I always believe in the strength of my own performances. If I can perform well the selectors will look my way. It is very natural that those who play well will be chosen for the national team."



Bangladesh all-rounder Mahmudullah Riyad (2nd from R), seen here taking part with teammates in a customary drill at the BCB Academy Gym yesterday, injured his waist and was taken to hospital for scans. The scan report will be delivered today and only then can it be understood whether the injury sustained is minor or major.

Riyad picks up muscle strain

SPORTS REPORTER



With the ongoing fitness camp in full flow, senior Bangladeshi batsman Mahmudullah Riyad became the second casualty of the rigorous training regimes as he was taken to hospital with a strained waist muscle yesterday.

It was learnt that Mahmudullah was lifting weights in the gym when the injury occurred and that it was not thought to be a major injury. He underwent preliminary scans, and the reports -- expected to be

delivered by yesterday evening -- will indicate for certain whether the injury sustained is minor or major.

The Bangladesh Cricket Board's (BCB's) medical staff members were not ready to comment on the issue when this report was filed.

This is the second injury in as many weeks in the Tigers' ranks after top-ranked all-rounder Shakib Al Hasan twisted his ankle during the fitness camp that started on July 10.

Shakib is said to have injured his left ankle at home and is now on the road to a swift recovery, but Mahmudullah's injury also served to highlight the thinning of Bangladesh's once-burgeoning backroom

staff. The current fitness camp is being conducted under the auspices of fitness trainer Mario Villavarayan, but the Bangladesh team has started the gruelling and crucial fitness camp without a physio.

Sri Lankan Thihani Chandramohan took over from Dean Conway at the start of the Sri Lanka tour in March, but he has not been with the Tigers since the end of the Champions Trophy.

Bangladesh's current fitness camp is part of the preparations for their two-Test series against Australia in August-September, which will be followed by a full tour of South Africa in September-October.

FARAAZ CHALLENGE CUP Semifinals lineup completed

SPORTS REPORTER

Brac University, City University, Green University and Farest University advanced to the semifinals of Walton Inter-University Football Tournament at the Bishreshtha Shaheed Mostafa Kamal Stadium yesterday.

Brac University handed a massive 6-0 defeat to Daffodil University. Rakin, who struck four goals, was named man of the match.

City University beat Independent University Bangladesh 1-0 with Rezaul being named the best player of the match while Green University defeated University of Liberal Arts Bangladesh 2-1. Suman Reza was adjudged the man of the match.

In the day's other quarterfinal, Farest University beat IUBAT 1-0 with Sohag being named the man of the match.

Both the semifinals will be held today at the same venue. The champion team will be awarded a trophy named Faraz Challenge Cup as well as Tk 2 lakh as prize money.

Sheikh Russel to clear FIFA fine

STAR ONLINE REPORT

Sheikh Russel Krira Chakra is making arrangements through the Bangladesh Football Federation to clear fines of up to 2000 Swiss Francs, imposed by FIFA. The fines were imposed by the disciplinary committee of the game's world governing body on April 20, 2017, in regards to disputes of an employment contract with the club's former player Miroslav Savanovic and a former coach Giorgi Jovanovski.

The complaints, lodged with FIFA over the breach of employment contract by Sheikh Russel in 2015, got the verdict in favour of the player and the coach. The player is supposed to get 1500 Swiss Francs while the coach is supposed to get 1000 Swiss Francs, as per the FIFA verdict.

"Sheikh Russel KC asked us to look after the process of payment of the fine. We have already acquired Bangladesh Bank's permission to remit the amount to the FIFA account. The fine will be cleared in due time," informed BFF general secretary Abu Nayem Shohag.



The English cricketers celebrated with aplomb after defeating India in dramatic fashion in the final to lift the Women's World Cup at Lord's yesterday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

England edge India in final

Win their fourth Women's World Cup title

AFP, London

Anya Shrubsole bowled England to a dramatic nine-run win over India in the Women's World Cup final at Lord's on Sunday.

India, set 229 to win, were well on course for victory at 191 for three in front of a full house of more than 26,000 but the dismissal of opener Punam Raut, who made a fine 86, lbw to Shrubsole, sparked a stunning collapse.

Shrubsole took five wickets for 11 runs in 19 deliveries as India, bidding for a first World Cup title on the ground where their men's side won an inaugural World Cup crown in 1983, slumped to 219 all out with eight balls left.

Pace bowler Shrubsole finished with record-breaking figures of six for 46 in 9.4 overs -- the first five-wicket haul by any bowler in a Women's World Cup final.

Victory gave England a fourth World Cup title and third on home

soil, as they gained revenge for their opening group stage loss to India.

"I'm a little bit lost for words, if I'm honest," Shrubsole told Sky Sports. "It was just an unbelievable game, we looked for a minute like we were out of it, but one of the great things about this team, we never give up. We knew if we got a couple we'd be right in the game and all was well in the end."

England captain Heather Knight added: "I can't stop smiling. I am so proud of this group of girls. We made it hard for ourselves but I couldn't care less."

Her side had a major rethink under coach Mark Robinson after themselves suffering a batting slump when they lost a Women's World Twenty20 semi-final to Australia in India last year.

"Back in Delhi was a long time ago but it was the making of this team," said Knight.

"Any Shrubsole -- what a hero."

India captain Mithali Raj admitted her side had "panicked" towards the finish.

"Credit to them. They kept their nerve. There was a time when the match was in the balance. We panicked and they came out victorious. I would like to tell the girls I am very proud of them. They didn't make any match look easy for the opposition."

India suffered an early setback in their chase when Smriti Mandhana -- who made 90 in their tournament-opening win over England -- was bowled for a duck by Shrubsole.

Meanwhile, Raj, in what was, together with fellow 34-year-old Jhulan Goswami, likely to be her last chance to win a World Cup after being on the losing side in 2005, was in good touch.

SCORES IN BRIEF

ENGLAND: 228 for 7 (Taylor 45, Sciver 51, Brunt 34; Goswami 3-23, Gayakwad 1-49, Yadav 2-36)

INDIA: 219 all out in 48.4 overs (Raut 86, Kaur 51, Krishnamurti 35; Shrubsole 6-46, Hartley 2-58)

Result: England won by nine runs.

Player-of-the-match: Anya Shrubsole.

Player-of-the-tournament: Tammy Beaumont.

Any Shrubsole -- what a hero."

Spieth wins The Open

SPORTS REPORTER

Jordan Spieth won the British Open at Royal Birkdale on Sunday by three shots from fellow American Matt Kuchar after a dramatic final round.

Spieth, 23, shot a 69 to finish on 12 under par, with Kuchar second at nine-under. He is the first man to post four rounds in the 60s in an Open at Birkdale.

It is Spieth's third major title after he won the Masters and US Open in 2015.

"This is a dream come true for me. It feels good to have this in my hands," a beaming Spieth said after receiving the Claret Jug trophy on the 18th green.

"It could have gone to either one of us but I got the good breaks," admitted Spieth, who celebrates his 24th birthday next Thursday and is the youngest Open champion since 1979.

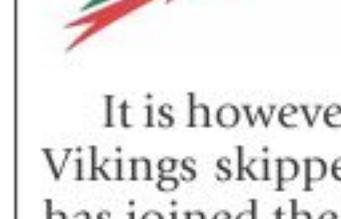
"There is no replacement for Mashrafe, there cannot be," the post said.

"We will miss him among us because of professional changes in the team but we will always remember him fondly and respectfully."

The franchise have retained Imrul Kayes, Liton Das and Mohammad Saifuddin in the team.

Mashrafe joins Rangpur Riders

SPORTS REPORTER



Bangladesh's inspirational ODI captain Mashrafe Bin Mortaza has ended his tenure with Comilla Victorians and will join Rangpur Riders ahead of the fifth edition of the Bangladesh Premier League (BPL).

It is however not all bad news for Comilla, as Chittagong Vikings skipper and star Bangladesh opener Tamim Iqbal has joined the 2015 BPL champions as their icon player for the new season.

Mashrafe worked his magic in 2015, when he led the debutant franchise to a rousing title win, but neither franchise nor the captain could keep up that form in 2016 when the Victorians finished sixth in the seven-team table.

The 2017 edition allows the icon players to choose their franchises, and with reports that all was not well between Mashrafe and the franchise owners, the Narail Express has opted to leave. The Comilla Victorians have said via a Facebook post that Mashrafe's presence will be missed.

"There is no replacement for Mashrafe, there cannot be," the post said.

"We will miss him among us because of professional changes in the team but we will always remember him fondly and respectfully."

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Warda punishes U-23s

SPORTS REPORTER

The Bangladesh U-23 team ended their campaign in the AFC U-23 Championship Qualifiers with a third defeat in as many matches, losing 3-0 to hosts Palestine at the Faisal Al-Hussein Stadium in West Bank, Palestine yesterday.

The Palestinians dominated from the start of the match and were powered by a brilliant hattrick from captain Mahmoud Abu Warda.

Bangladesh, who were already out of contention from the race for qualification, finished bottom of the group. Palestine meanwhile are through as Group E champions with seven points. Jordan, on six points, have a shot at qualifying as best runners-up.

The hosts made their early pressure count as they took the lead from an eighth-minute corner. Bangladesh goalkeeper Anisur Rahman rushed out to meet the cross, whipped in low and hard, but was beaten to the ball by Warda, who headed into an empty net.

Despite taking the lead, Palestine continued bombarding the Bangladesh goal but Anisur dealt with the efforts well, including two great stops in the 14th and 31st minutes.

The 33rd minute produced one of the better chances for Palestine as a floated corner found defender Omar Al Sharif at the far post, but his wild slash went wide from close range.

Immediately afterwards, Bangladesh launched an attack, one of a handful throughout the match, which yielded a corner. The cross in was headed to a Bangladesh player but he gave away possession with a terrible backpass from which the hosts broke, leading to Warda's second.

Striker Mahmoud Yousef led the charge and played a pass to the right-hand edge of the box for Warda, who chipped the goalkeeper with his first touch. Anisur, perhaps in anticipation of a one-on-one, found himself in no man's land as he watched the ball sail over his head.

The Palestinian captain had to wait till added time for the elusive third goal but when it came, it was handed to him on a silver platter.

A few quick passes led to a one-on-one with Anisur, who did well to block Warda's first attempt. The number seven recovered possession and shaped for cross from the byline, but swivelled his body and took a shot at the last second. Anisur, who was off his line, was again let down by his instincts as the ball glided into the post under his outstretched hand.

"Sheikh Russel KC asked us to look after the process of payment of the fine. We have already acquired Bangladesh Bank's permission to remit the amount to the FIFA account. The fine will be cleared in due time," informed BFF general secretary Abu Nayem Shohag.