

# SPORTS



## Is there a solution at number three?

SPORTS REPORTER



Bangladesh's last Test in Sri Lanka was a historic one as the Tigers celebrated their 100th Test match with a victory. The Bangladesh think-tank therefore has a winning combination in their mind as they chalk out a strategy regarding team combination for the first Test against Australia starting from August 27 at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur.

between Imrul and Soumya Sarkar, trying the former on and off at the number three position. It would be unfortunate and will hinder long-term progress in Test cricket if a shoddy experiment is made of a crucial position to establish someone in the opening slot.

Mominul went through bad times in his last two matches – against India and Sri Lanka, but this team management has provided ample evidence of their considerable patience for a player to return to form in the way they kept faith in Soumya. If they have enough reasons and explanations to keep Mominul out of contention, they must think about a genuine (and of course better than Mominul) number three batsman. So it would be interesting to see how the team management solve the number three conundrum when they announce the team for the Test series against Australia.

Many have also been speculating that all-rounder Nasir Hossain may return to the Test squad for the two-Test series and if that proves to be true we want to believe that he will replace another spinning all-rounder, otherwise it would not go with the notion that we want to make a genuine Test team.



MOMINUL HAQUE



Although Mehedi Hasan (C) does not expect to replicate his fantastic debut series against England, the young off-spinner is hoping to put up his best in the upcoming two-match Test series against Australia.

## Matches postponed after rain recedes!

SPORTS REPORTER



The professional football league committee (PFLC) postponed yesterday and today's fixtures of the ongoing Bangladesh Premier League on the pretext of unplayable ground conditions at the Bangabandhu National Stadium.

was the timing of the decision and the manner in which the decision was relayed that raised eyebrows. Ironically, most of the previous 16 matches were played either with rain in the air or the ground absolutely muddy and heavy due to heavy downpour preceding those games. In fact the grounds committee had been terming the ground unplayable for the last one week, but those recommendations had seemed to have fallen into deaf ears.

This reporter, along with the other media men, had witnessed firsthand the shoddy conditions of the ground where the ball got stuck in the mud countless times during matches as the normal flow of play was disrupted severely, but the games continued as per schedule.

But yesterday light rain in the morning was followed by bright sunshine as the skies cleared up, with the met department predicting rain to be receding for the time being. So the decision of deferral of the two scheduled matches was quite odd.

It has been learnt that upon the instructions of the league committee chairman Abdus Salam Murebby, match commissioner R Alam along with other concerned persons inspected the field in the morning and recommended not to hold the matches while the match commissioners, who are under the Referees' Committee, did not find such objections in the previous 16 matches.

Deputy chairman of the Referees' Committee, Ibrahim Nesar, said that the match commissioner usually inspects the ground three hours before

the start of games and does special inspection five to six hours ahead if there are adverse weather conditions.

However, it is widely believed that the match commissioner prepares the report about the ground according to instructions of the league committee.

Grounds committee chairman Fazlur Rahman Babul claimed he relayed his concern about the ground to the league committee chairman on Tuesday.

"We have been repeatedly saying that the ground at the BNS is unplayable for the last six days, but there was no action taken. Meanwhile, on Tuesday I told the chairman of the league committee that the ground is like a paddy field inappropriate for football. He said: 'let's see what happens'."

## '2007 World Cup memories the CPL highlight'

SPORTS REPORTER



A lot will depend on young off-spinner Mehedi Hasan Miraz for the Tigers in the upcoming home Test series against Australia, with pitches expected to tend slow and low.

The 19-year-old however missed the Tigers' training camp in Chittagong as he returned on Tuesday from the Caribbean without playing a game for Trinbago Knight Riders in his maiden stint in the Caribbean Premier League.

"It was the T20 format in the CPL but still I have practised individually on my off days as well and also batted and bowled in the nets. It would have been good if I was here in the training camp, where we played a practice match in Chittagong, and though it was not enough I have done my individual training."

"I have just started working with the red ball from today (yesterday) and still we have 10-12 days before the series and by this time I will try to work on my stock bowling along with a few variations," Mehedi said to the media after the training session at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.

Meanwhile, the Aussies – concluding their own training camp in Darwin – have already chalked out plans to tackle the off-spinner who hounded England with 19 wickets in his debut series less than a year ago, and are practising accordingly.

When asked whether there is any added pressure on him to repeat what he did on his debut against England, Miraz said: "Actually, I will continue to do what I have been doing in the past few series, but what I did against England... maybe that's not possible to do every time, maybe one or two times it can happen. But overall, I try to give my best and will look to provide one or two breakthroughs for my team, I am focusing on that," Mehedi said.

The youngster also shared his experience of the Queen's Park Oval ground in Port of Spain, a ground of which Miraz has childhood memories of watching Bangladesh's World Cup win over India back in 2007.

"The best thing was when I entered the stadium where Bangladesh beat India in the 2007 World Cup. The moment I walked into the ground I started to look around the ground and recalling that match as I can remember I was around 11 or 12 years old back then and I watched the match on TV. Shakib [Al Hasan], Tamim [Iqbal] and Mushfiqur [Rahim] had scored fifties and [Abdur Razzak] had taken three wickets. Masrafe [Bin Murtaza] bhai was the man of the match, so those things came to my mind instantly and I started thinking that this is the home ground of the franchise I am playing in for the CPL," Mehedi added.

## Warner on the mend

AAP, Darwin

Australian vice-captain David Warner is on the mend after coping a brouncher in the neck during a trial game, coach Darren Lehmann says.

With the Test squad set to depart for Bangladesh on Friday, Lehmann says there's no doubt Warner will be on the flight to Dhaka.

The 30-year-old was rested for Wednesday's conclusion of the three-day intra-squad game in Darwin, despite passing a concussion test after being struck by a Josh Hazlewood ball on Tuesday afternoon.

Lehmann said Warner was nursing a stiff neck and headache after attempting a hook shot but misreading a short-pitched Hazlewood delivery.

"He seems alright, walking around the ground, going to the gym, so fingers crossed he'll be okay and we'll get an update in the next day or two," Lehmann said.

"It's always a scare when that happens, isn't it? The incident threw a major scare into the Australian camp during their final tune-up for the two-Test Bangladesh series."

The Australian squad will enjoy a day off on Thursday after toiling in hot conditions designed to prepare them for the subcontinent.

Australia will play a tour match commencing next Tuesday ahead of the first Test series against England in the West Indies. Lehmann said it would be a valuable chance for his top-order batsmen to spend more time at the crease.

## Bouncer takes life of Pak cricketer

AGENCIES, Lahore

Pakistani cricketer Zubair Ahmed died on Wednesday after being hit by a bouncer on the head during a club match at Mardan District in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province on Monday.

Zubair, who had played four games for the List A and T20 team Quetta Bears, reportedly didn't have his helmet on when he was struck on the head.

The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) took to social media to inform the Premier League's test demise and remind players the need to wear a helmet at all times at a batting crease.



The Australian security team, led by Sean Carroll (3rd from R) and Frank Demasi, inspect the ULAB cricket ground in Mohammadpur yard to see if it is fit for a warm-up game.

## Jones eager to visit Pakistan

DAWN.COM

Islamabad United coach and former Australian cricketer Dean Jones says he is very happy to learn that a World XI team and the Sri Lanka side will be touring Pakistan this year, and has stated that he is ready to visit Pakistan as a commentator for the series.

"I felt so happy after hearing the news of Sri Lanka team's tour to Pakistan. I am ready to visit Lahore again as a commentator if Sri Lanka comes to play T20 (matches there). It will be a great moment," he told DawnNews in a Twitter exchange.

Jones said the success of the World XI team tour and that of the Sri Lanka team could lead to the revival of international cricket in Pakistan.

## Inspections underway

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The two-member Cricket Australia security team led by Sean Carroll and Frank Demasi inspected the ULAB cricket ground in Mohammadpur yard to assess the venue for Australia's two-day practice match slated for August 22.

There were a few other venues that came under consideration such as the BKSAP and also the Sylhet International Stadium, the ULAB cricket ground being the latest. According to Carroll they will assess the suitability of the venues over the next 48 hours.

"First of all, we are happy to be here as we are looking forward to the series to start. Frank Demasi and me are here to look at all the facilities provided by the BCB and looking

forward to inspecting all the venues by the next two days. The weather is one thing we can't control and we will work with the BCB for a suitable venue for the practice match and as I said we will wait and see." Carroll told reporters after inspecting the ULAB venue yesterday.

However, BCB CEO Nizamuddin Chowdhury said that Fattullah can be readied in time, weather permitting.

"It's possible to host the match by that time but for that the weather needs to improve. If the weather permits and the sun shines, then it's possible. I have spoken with the curator and he informed that it's possible to completely prepare the ground within two days," Nizamuddin said.

The two-member security team will inspect the Fattullah stadium today and are also scheduled to travel to Chittagong on the same day to inspect the venue for the second Test – the Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium.

## Law asks WI to 'rewrite history'

Day/Night Test against England starts today



West Indies coach Stuart Law hopes his side can 'rewrite history' during a Test series in England.

The first of a three-match campaign gets underway at Edgbaston on Thursday with the inaugural day/night Test ever staged in England.

Much of the pre-match build-up has focused on how Joe Root's men will cope with their first tasted of pink ball international cricket.

Also, given this is England's last Test series before they tour Australia, there has been much speculation as to what the composition of this side could mean in terms of their Ashes defence 'Down Under'.

"That England, fresh from a 3-1 home success against South Africa, will win their series against the West Indies is almost taken as read, something unthinkable when the men from the Caribbean were dominating Test cricket in the 1970s and 1980s.

Yet a sign of how far the West Indies have slipped from those heights is that they have gone 17 matches without a Test win in England, losing 14 and drawing the other three.

Although an end now appears in sight to a bitter dispute between players and officials, the West Indies have still arrived in England without several star names for a series that is, to the dismay of traditionalists, taking place at the

same time as the lucrative Caribbean Premier League Twenty20 competition.

Yet the West Indies did draw their last Test series against England in the Caribbean two years ago – despite being labelled a "mediocre" side by England and Wales Cricket Board chairman Colin Graves.

Jason Holder, the captain for that series, is still the West Indies skipper and Law is confident the all-rounder remains the right man for the job.

"He takes it with a pinch of salt, the things said about him and this team and uses it to drive him and them forward," Law told reporters at Edgbaston on Tuesday.

Law knows English cricket well from his successful playing stints with county sides Essex and Lancashire.