

SPORT

Nasir comeback on the cards

SPORTS REPORTER



The selectors are going to announce the 14-member squad today for the first Test against Australia set to start from August 27 at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium and it was learned that allrounder Nasir Hossain and pacer Shafiqul Islam are all set to make comebacks to the squad.

The squad for the series will be named today, with Australia arriving in the capital last night.

Nasir has performed brilliantly in domestic cricket since being left out of the national side and managed to make a comeback in the ODI side during the tri-nation earlier this year against New Zealand. He played the last of his 17 Tests against South Africa two years ago at home.

The 25-year-old also struck a fifty in the Tigers' practice match in Chittagong recently, which has apparently brought him back into contention.

On the other hand pacer Shafiqul Islam, who last played a Test against England last year is also set to make a comeback in the squad after his brilliant five-wicket haul in the practice game where he bowled with pace and impressed the selectors.

However, uncertainty still lurks around Test regulars Mahmudullah Riyad and Mominul Haque's places in the squad, but Mosaddek Hossain who is still under

observation for an eye problem, could well make way for one of the two, neither of whom were in the playing 11 for Bangladesh's last Test against Sri Lanka in mid-March.

Mosaddek, who had a good outing on his Test debut during that prestigious 100th Test for Bangladesh, missed out on the Chittagong phase of the training camp due to his eye problem, and the selectors will be looking to have a back-up for the youngster ahead of the first Test.

On the other hand pacers Subhasish Roy, Rubel Hossain and Kamrul Islam Rabbi are likely to be dropped from the previous Test squad in Sri Lanka.

That means the home team are going with three pacers -- Mustafizur Rahman, Taskin Ahmed and Shafiqul Islam -- in the squad for the first Test.

Liton Das is expected to be included as the wicketkeeping understudy for skipper Mushfiqur Rahim.

Meanwhile, after a lot of confusion and uncertainty, the Australians arrived in Dhaka last night to take part in the two-match Test series.

Steve Smith and his troops are will play a two-day tour game against BCB XI from August 22 still scheduled at the currently water-logged Khan Shaheb Osman Ali Stadium in Fatullah. The visitors will travel to Chittagong on September 1 where they will take part in the second Test from September 4.



The Australian team were in high spirits when they embarked from Darwin towards Dhaka yesterday, and posted pictures on Instagram. "Next stop Bangladesh. We are very excited and looking forward to a great series," posted vice-captain David Warner (L) as he took his seat on the flight in front of captain Steven Smith and veteran off-spinner Nathan Lyon, while youngsters Usman Khawaja (R) and Matt Renshaw were back in Economy class. The Aussies landed in Dhaka last night.

PHOTOS: INSTAGRAM



Khawaja, Agar set for Test returns

CRICINFO



Usman Khawaja and Ashton Agar appear all but certain to make their Test returns when Australia take on Bangladesh in Mirpur later this month, captain Steven Smith has indicated.

Australia landed in Bangladesh on Friday night for their first Test tour of the country since 2006. While they are wary of the threat posed by Bangladesh in their home conditions, Smith's men will also take heart from their own fighting performances in India earlier this year.

During that series, Khawaja was overlooked for Shaun Marsh, while Agar sat out and fellow left-arm spinner Steve O'Keefe was used, and collected 12 wickets in Australia's surprise victory in the first Test in Pune. However, O'Keefe is now out of favour with selectors and Marsh has also been left out of the squad for the Bangladesh series.

Should he win a recall as expected, Khawaja will need to find a more effective way to handle spin than he has on previous tours of Asia. In all, he has played 15 first-class innings in Asia - all in India and Sri Lanka - and has passed fifty only once, when he retired on 101 in a tour game in Colombo on the 2011 tour of Sri Lanka.

"I think Usman's going to be a really big player for us this summer," Smith told reporters in Darwin on Friday, ahead of Australia's departure for Dhaka. "He's done incredibly well in

Australia over the last couple of years. He hasn't played any cricket [since January], so he's chomping at the bit to get out there and I dare say he'll get his opportunity."

"I'd say so, at this point," Smith said when asked if Agar would be the likely second spinner. "He's improved a lot in the last couple of years. He bowled really well up here this week. He's probably going to get his opportunity first up, if that's the way we go."

"For me with Ashton it's when he's consistent

SQUAD

Steve Smith (capt), David Warner, Ashton Agar, Jackson Bird, Hilton Cartwright, Pat Cummins, Peter Handscomb, Josh Hazlewood, Usman Khawaja, Nathan Lyon, Glenn Maxwell, Matthew Renshaw, Mitchell Swepson, Matthew Wade.

and hitting a good length, he's going to be dangerous. I think that's the key to bowling spin, particularly in the subcontinent. I think he's gained a lot of confidence in the last couple of years. He understands what he's trying to do now a lot more. If he can keep being consistent and hitting good lengths, I'm sure he's going to be a big player for us on this tour and in the future as well."

Smith also agreed that Agar, who is now 23 and has two first-class centuries to his name, could even find himself as a top-six Test batsman at some stage in his career.



NASIR HOSSAIN

Siddikur misses the cut in Fiji

SPORTS REPORTER

Siddikur Rahman missed the cut in the Fiji International by three strokes after settling for an even-par second round at the Natadola Bay Championship Golf Course yesterday.

The 32-year-old golfer exchanged one birdie for a single bogey on the day, but had to pay for his wayward first round attempt when he had gone five-over-par. An aggregate score of five-over-par (149) meant the two-time Asian Tour winner ended his campaign at 88th position, with the cut mark set at two-under-par (146).

This is the fourth time in ten events during this Asian Tour season that the Bangladeshi golfer has missed the cut while he has claimed two top-10 finishes so far.

A total of 71 golfers made it to the weekend rounds with overnight leader Daniel Pearce of New Zealand being joined at the top (seven-under-par) by three other golfers.

BRIDGE WORLD CHAMPIONSHIPS

BD team cause an upset

SPORTS REPORTER

Despite causing an upset by beating one of the teams of former champions United States, Bangladesh were lying third from bottom in the 43rd World Bridge Championships in Lyon, France yesterday.

Bangladesh beat USA (team-1) by 38-10 points in their 16th match on Friday, after having suffered a string of losses in the previous games. The six-member team were in 20th position among 22 teams, only above Guadeloupe and Mexico, with 111.68 points from 16 rounds. Hosts France were leading the table with 227.59 points.

Bangladesh were also scheduled to take on Bulgaria and Indonesia in the other two matches on Friday. However, the string of losses meant Bangladesh's chances of reaching the second round, which will be decided after 21 games of the first round, was extinguished.

Bangladesh had made a great start to the event by beating defending champions Italy on the first day and were in sixth position after the first day's play.

Cook's double has WI on the ropes

AFP, Birmingham



Alastair Cook's double-century put England in a commanding position before James Anderson struck with the ball against the West Indies in the inaugural day/night Test in Britain at Edgbaston on Friday.

West Indies were 13 for one in reply to England's imposing 514 for eight declared, a deficit of 501 runs, at tea on the second day.

Cook's 243 was the cornerstone of England's total and the former captain's dismissal prompted current skipper Joe Root to declare.

That was time enough for opener Kraigg Brathwaite to be caught behind for a duck off Anderson.

England resumed in an immensely strong position of 348 for three with Cook 153 not out.

There was a sombre start to Friday's proceedings with players, officials and spectators observing a minute's silence observed in memory of the victims of Thursday's terror attacks in Spain.

David Malan provided steady support to Cook during a century stand that took the total beyond 400.

Cook went to his 200, his fourth Test double century, when a misfield by Kyle Hope on the third man rope -- an error symptomatic of a generally sloppy team display in the field -- allowed the ball to trickle through for the opener's 30th four in 339 balls.

His chances of surpassing his highest Test score of 294 were effectively undone with a rush of wickets at the other end. Cook fell to Roston Chase when he missed an attempted legside flick.

SCORES IN BRIEF

ENGLAND: First innings 514 for 8 dec (Cook 43 not out, Root 136, Malan 65; Chase 4-113, Roach 2-86)

WEST INDIES: First innings 13 for 1 (Powell 5 not out, Hope 7 not out; Anderson 1-9)



England's Alastair Cook celebrates his double-century on the second day of the first Test against West Indies at Edgbaston yesterday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Saif Sporting go third

SPORTS REPORTER



Newcomers Saif Sporting Club extended their winning run in the Bangladesh Premier League with a 2-0 win over Muktiyoddha Sangsad as the country's top league resumed at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday after a two-day break due to 'unplayable ground condition'.

Colombian striker Hember Valencia Olaya broke the deadlock with his maiden strike in Bangladesh before Matin Mia wrapped up the victory to help Saif SC climb to third position with nine points from four matches. The newcomers are three points behind leaders Chittagong Abahani and one point adrift of Sheikh Jamal DC.

Muktiyoddha Sangsad, who suffered this defeat following successive wins, stayed at six points, slipping to seventh position.

After the match both coaches blasted the ground's condition, which was filled up with sand making it difficult for players to display their natural performance.

"It was very very tough for the players to play on such a ground. The ball was bobbling and it was very very heavy and that made the players get fatigued. You can't play quality football on such a surface," said Saif SC's Ghanaian-born English coach Kim Grant.

However, he praised his charges for showing patience and cashing in on the opportunities they created in the match.

"It was a good win for us because we totally dominated the game. It was about being patient because we wasted a chance of scoring in the first minute. Olaya took his chance well and then we got the second one after controlling the game," said Grant.

Saif SC's Hemanta Vincent Biswas put the ball into the net in the fifth minute, but his effort was ruled out as



Saif Sporting's promising forward Matin Mia (2nd from L) dribbles past a host of Muktiyoddha players during their Bangladesh Premier League fixture at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

SAIF SPORTING (OLAYA 54, MATIN 73)	2 - 0	MUKTIJODDHA SANGSAD
ARAMBAGH KS (BUKOLA 9, ASHRAFUL 4 OG)	2 - 1	BROTHERS UNION (ZUNAPIO 90+3)

he was adjudged to have handled the ball. In the dying moments of the first half, the former Bangladesh midfielder wasted another chance by sending the ball wide off target before Jewel Rana rattled the crossbar from the right flank.

Saif SC finally broke the deadlock in the 54th minute, with Olaya driving on a cut-back from Jewel Rana while Matin played a one-two with Olaya to beat Muktiyoddha goalkeeper Uttam Barua with a curling attempt in the 73rd minute.

Muktiyoddha Sangsad coach Masud Parvez Kaiser accepted the defeat but was not happy with the ground condition.

"It is not possible to display natural

football on such a pitch, which has been filed with sand and that troubled the players throughout the game. I don't know why they put sand on mud because it is not the last match of the league," said Kaiser.

Meanwhile, Arambagh KS collected their first points of the campaign with a 2-1 victory over Brothers Union in the other match of the day.

Arambagh found the opener when Brothers defender Ashraful Karim put the ball into his own net following a block from goalkeeper Abdul Kader. Alamu Bukola doubled the lead four minutes later while Siyo Zunapio scored a late consolation goal for Brothers Union in stoppage time of the second half.