

SPORT

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The Australian team, led by captain Steven Smith (R) and vice-captain David Warner, paid a short visit to the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium yesterday afternoon. PHOTO: STAR

Nasir, Shafiuul return for first Test

SPORTS REPORTER

All-rounder Nasir Hossain and pacer Shafiuul Islam were recalled as the selectors announced the 14 member Bangladesh squad for the first Test against Australia, starting from August 27 at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur.

BANGLADESH SQUAD FOR FIRST TEST

Mushfiqur Rahim (captain), Tamim Iqbal, Soumya Sarkar, Imrul Kayes, Shakib Al Hasan, Mosaddek Hossain, Sabbir Rahman, Mehedi Hasan, Liton Das, Nasir Hossain, Mustafizur Rahman, Shafiuul Islam, Taijul Islam, Taskin Ahmed.

Although Nasir played the last of his 17 Tests against South Africa two years ago at home, the right-hander staged a comeback to the ODI side during a tri-nation match against New Zealand earlier this year following strong performances in the domestic circuit.

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

Head coach Chandika Hathurusingha said that it was the selectors' decision to include Nasir in the squad and added that the all-rounder was considered a replacement for Mosaddek Hossain, who is suffering from an eye problem.

"It's the selectors call. First of all we think that he [Nasir] can be valuable against Australia if we go a certain way. And another

BCB XI FOR TWO-DAY TOUR GAME

Nazmul Hossain, Liton Das, Mominul Haque, Nasir Hossain, Mahmudullah Riyad (captain), Mosaddek Hossain, Irfan Sukkur, Safiuddin Ahmed, Shubashish Roy, Tanvir Hayder, Jubair Hossain, Abul Hossain, Abu Jayed, Kamrul Islam Rabbi.

Sarkar and Imrul Kayes have been performing well in the position in the batting order that Mominul occupies. Soumya has scored four fifties in his last eight Tests and averages 45.75, so by that measure Mominul's chances were less," chief selector Minhajul Abedin explained.

"And apart from that Imrul has a better record at home although he missed few matches through injury. However we did not rule out Mominul from consideration and he is still our first choice among the pool."

Young Mosaddek Hossain, who missed

Double standards hurt Mominul

SPORTS REPORTER

Mominul Haque and Soumya Sarkar are both talented players. The national selectors and the head coach will not disagree with that assessment. However, it may sound harsh that they are not being treated the same by the team think-tank when it comes to selecting the national team; you may even raise the question that in this regard there is a double standard. The last few days' speculation turned into reality yesterday when the selectors, including coach Chandika Hathurusingha, announced a 14-member team for the first Test against Australia without Mominul.

Mominul's omission was the centre of argument during the lengthy press conference and the explanations from chief selector Minhajul Abedin and Hathurusingha only served to provide further evidence that the diminutive left-hander has not been treated fairly at all.

They made it clear that Mominul, a specialist at the crucial number three spot, was dropped for his poor averaging around 28 in his last three Tests.

him in the one-day squad. Since his 90-run innings against South Africa in July 2015, Soumya scored 85 runs in 8 matches at the average of 12.14 before finally getting back among the runs with 61 against New Zealand and an unbeaten 87 against Ireland that

forcefully establish at number three despite the fact that his best performances came as an opener -- has a good home record, which presumably justifies his inclusion ahead of Mominul, who however has a very healthy home average of over 58.

We don't want to believe that Soumya is a blue-eyed boy of our coach and Mominul is a pariah in his eyes. We want to believe that Hathurusingha has no bias when he picks a player. There have been whispers that Hathurusingha -- the most successful Bangladesh coach -- was behind the axing of Mominul; and when Minhajul tried to deflect the volley of questions from the reporters towards the coach that impression was strengthened.



MOMINUL HAQUE



SOUMYA SARKAR

not up to the management's standards. The decision could be accepted without objection if it was in keeping with a consistent policy. But over the last two years they have been saying that they want to give a player enough time to establish their position and they followed it to the letter for Soumya. The selectors and coach showed enough patience towards Soumya in persisting with

was followed by another bad patch in the next five matches. One may say that performances in Tests cannot be compared to those in ODIs. While that is true, the comparison stands if you are talking of consistency in national team selection. The lack of that consistency was further highlighted when the chief selector pointed out that Imrul Kayes -- who the management wants to



Chief selector Minhajul Abedin (C), flanked by head coach Chandika Hathurusingha (R) and selector Habibul Bashar, replies to reporters' queries in Mirpur yesterday. PHOTO: STAR

most of the practice sessions due to an eye problem, has been retained by the selectors after his impressive debut in Sri Lanka in mid-March.

The selectors also picked three pacers -- Mustafizur Rahman, Taskin Ahmed and Shafiuul Islam -- in the squad for the first Test. Rubel Hossain and Subashish Roy were left out from the previous Test squad.

Liton Das has been included as an understudy to skipper Mushfiqur Rahim behind the stumps.

The selectors also named the BCB XI for the lone practice game against Australia. The game is scheduled to start at the currently water-logged Khan Shaheb Osman Ali Stadium in Fatullah from August 22.

thing is that Mosaddek is not well; he is having an eye problem so we needed a back up. So we need a replacement and that's why he was included," Hathurusingha told media persons during a press conference at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium yesterday.

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

However, the selectors did not consider Mahmudullah Riyad and Mominul Haque, neither of whom were part of Bangladesh's historic 100th Test that they won in Sri Lanka.

"Mominul was dropped after considering his overall performance as Soumya

Brothers fly in Serbian coach

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Premier League outfit Brothers Union are all set to appoint their third coach in four months as they have flown in Cyprus-born Serbian coach Nicolas Vitorovic to replace Italian Giovanni Scanu, said a club official yesterday.

The 27-year-old Serb arrived in Dhaka on Saturday midnight to take charge of Brothers, who are in 11th position among 12 teams in the ongoing Bangladesh Premier League with only two points from four matches.

Brothers decided to terminate the contract of Scanu on August 12 after the Italian went for a lengthy leave, citing the health concerns of his mother.

The club handed temporary charge to assistant coach Arifur Rahman Pannu, who guided the side to a 1-2 defeat against Arambagh KS in their last match on Friday.

The team management considered Vitorovic for his dual quality as he is not only a coach but is also continuing his playing career. Last year he played for Malta first division side Xaghra United FC as a striker.

Earlier, the Gopibagh outfit appointed Subrata Bhattacharya Jr. in May, but got rid of the Indian after a disappointing Federation Cup campaign before appointing Scanu, who guided the team to two consecutive goalless draws before leaving on August 5.



England pacer James Anderson celebrates taking the wicket of West Indies' Roston Chase during the third day of the first Test match at Edgbaston in Birmingham yesterday. PHOTO: REUTERS

England eye innings win

AFP, Birmingham

James Anderson put England on course for an innings victory inside three days over the West Indies as the tourists collapsed twice at Edgbaston on Saturday in the inaugural day/night Test in Britain.

West Indies, following on, were 76 for four at tea -- still needing a further 270 runs to make England bat again.

England were now just six wickets away from victory, with a minimum 38.4 overs left in the day.

Play could also potentially go on to 10:30pm local time (2130 GMT) if the umpires allowed England to claim the extra half hour in the belief they could win in that time.

Roston Chase was nine not out after Moeen Ali had opener Kraigg Brathwaite (40) lbw on review to what became the last ball of the session.

Earlier Anderson, England's all-time leading wicket-taker, sparked a first-innings slump that saw the West Indies dismissed for just 168 -- 346 runs behind the hosts'

514 for eight declared. Anderson finished with first-innings figures of three for 34 in 15 overs.

The Lancashire paceman took two for six in four overs in Saturday's first session, with the West Indies losing seven wickets for 89 runs in 23 overs before lunch -- all without the problems of batting under floodlights against the pink ball.

Jermaine Blackwood's 79 not out constituted nearly 50 percent of a total that was 75 runs fewer than the 243 opener Alastair Cook had made off his own bat in England's first innings.

Joe Root, the England captain, enforced the follow-on and the wickets kept falling, with Kieran Powell out for 10 when Cook held a routine chance at first slip off Anderson.

SCORES IN BRIEF

ENGLAND: First Innings 514 for 8 dec

WEST INDIES: First Innings 168 all out (Blackwood 79 not out; Anderson 3-34)

WEST INDIES: Second Innings 76 for 4 (Brathwaite 40)

Sunshine can save warm-up

SPORTS REPORTER

The visiting Australian team have conveyed their decision not to play the warm-up game in the BKSP. They made this decision after a security inspection at the venue in Savar yesterday.

The decision might see the visitors go straight into the first Test without any match practice since the Khan Shaheb Osman Ali Stadium in Fatullah, the venue for the two-day practice game, still remains water-logged.

However the BCB is still hopeful of hosting the lone practice match in Fatullah. A source close to the board said that the game could still be played provided that rain stays away for the next couple of days. And if the weather is fine the touring team can get the chance to have one last inspection on August 21, the day before the game, to have a final say.

It was learnt that the Australian team management, who have reportedly asked for more practice facilities at the home of cricket in Mirpur, were yet to decide on waiting till the last moment.

The workers employed by the board have been working round the clock to make the ground fit for play. But the biggest problem they are facing at the moment is the water-logging which has been the main concern.

Smith aware of Tigers' threat

SPORTS REPORTER

The last time Australia toured Bangladesh for a Test series some 11 years ago, current captain Steven Smith was an 18-year-old youngster trying to pave his way in world cricket who had not even featured for New South Wales.

Things have changed a lot since 2006 -- when Bangladesh, despite giving the Aussies a scare in the first Test in Fatullah, and Australia had a huge gulf in terms of strength. Another interesting fact is that these two sides have only played four Tests so far, but the current batch of players have never faced each other in the game's most prestigious format.

However, Smith still has an idea of the threat that the new-look Bangladesh side pose in Test cricket as evidenced by their success against England at home last year followed by a win over Sri Lanka in their own den in the Tigers' landmark 100th Test.

The number one Test batsman in the world is anticipating a challenging series for his side, but he added that his team would reap the rewards when it comes to conditions in the subcontinent from their recent tour of India.

"It will be a challenging series. Bangladesh have played some brilliant cricket here. They beat England in a Test match here not too long ago. We are seeing it as a bit of a challenge. Hopefully we can come with the thing we learned from India and bring that into the game here," the 28-year-old told reporters at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.

"I am a little bit surprised that we played just four Tests in the last 17 years. But I don't do the scheduling. I am told where to play. I guess the question is more for the administrators than it is for me," Smith continued.

The right-hander added that he expected the pitch and conditions would mainly help the spinners.

"Conditions are always foreign to us when we are in the subcontinent. The wickets are not what we get at home. I hope we can learn from the last Test series in India. I expect we will come up to some pretty similar wickets, similar amount of spin. Hopefully we can learn from what we did there [in India]."

"Spin will play a big part throughout this series. Reverse swing will be expected, because the wicket will be abrasive," he said.

Australia have managed to win only twice in the subcontinent in the last 10 years in the longest format of the game and Smith said that it was one of the areas that he will be looking to improve upon.

Smith also praised the amount of security they have received so far since their arrival in Bangladesh.