

# SPORT

## Mominul's return is a relief: Mushy

SPORTS REPORTER



There has been a lot of talk since Mominul Haque was left out from the first Test squad to eventually making a comeback in the team.

Four senior members of the Bangladesh team -- Shakib Al Hasan, Mushfiqur Rahim, Mashrafe Bin Mortaza and Tamim Iqbal -- had a talk with Bangladesh Cricket Board president Nazmul Hassan about selection of the first Test squad and eventually Mominul was recalled to the side in place of Mosaddek Hossain, who is suffering from an eye problem.

According to Bangladesh Test captain Mushfiqur Rahim, the inclusion of the left-hander is a relief and he is hoping that Mominul will grab the chance with both hands if he gets the opportunity.

"Obviously it's a relief for the team and I think everyone wants to do the best for the team combination and maybe the Almighty also wanted it this way. I hope he [Mominul] will utilise the chance if he gets it," Mushfiqur told reporters after distributing gifts to under-privileged children in Mirpur yesterday.

The 30-year-old said that the Tigers have been playing good cricket, especially at home in the last couple of years, but the

upcoming series against Australia will be a competitive one if weather permits as rain has been a regular feature in recent times.

"Finally, after all the tension Australia have arrived and the series is going to take place. Not just the players, I think the whole country is eagerly waiting for the series. Weather permitting, and as the Australian team members have already mentioned, I think it's going to be a very competitive series.

"Obviously we always play to win and we have some very good talent and have been playing really well at home in the last couple of years. We managed to draw our last series at home against a team like England, so obviously we are confident. But we all know that it's not going to be easy against a tough and professional team like Australia. We will try to give our best and if we can do so we have the ability to beat them," he said.

The Bangladesh Test skipper has always come forward during any national crisis and his appeal to help the flood-affected people on his Facebook page was praised by many.

He informed that it is his duty as a national figure to help the people in whatever manner he can.

"Obviously, we have some responsibility to do something for the people who need help. I would like to congratulate the organisers for arranging such activities and I am happy to be a part of this good cause," added Mushfiq.



Although it looks like star Bangladesh all-rounder Shakib Al Hasan (R) has hurt his finger and needs physio Thihan Chandramohan's attention, it was actually just a glancing blow during a fruitful practice session in Mirpur yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

## 'The shift to No. 3 is a tough one'

SPORTS REPORTER



Imrul Kayes made it clear yesterday that it is the opening position where he feels most at home, but

the left-hander has been trying hard to adjust to his new role as a one-down batsman assigned by the team management.

It was the 30-year-old left-hander's turn to appear at the official media briefing after training at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur where he mostly fielded questions regarding his batting position, especially after the reintroduction of Mominul Haque threw the selection possibilities wide open for the first Test starting from August 27.

"See, I batted at number three in

the last Test in Sri Lanka. Actually I am talking with the coach [Chandika Hathurusingha] and as per his advice I am batting at number three in the nets. It's tough to shift to number three from the



IMRUL KAYES

opening position, but I had to adjust," said Imrul, in response to a question about his new batting position.

He also spoke his mind when asked how difficult it was for him to bat at three despite the fact that he is a successful opening batsman. "When I sit in the dressing room with the pads on, I feel restless wondering when I will go to the middle. I need to adjust to it. If you ask Tamim [Iqbal] to do it, he will not do it. Initially it was also difficult for me but I had to play in the interest of the team."

Reminded of his eight-year career's 'ins and outs', Imrul was not willing to comment on whether the team management deprived him by changing his batting position; instead, he was looking forward.

"I think that I am at number three because of the team plan. Soumya [Sarkar] did well in the last few matches and that's why the coach gave me the number three

position," he added.

Ultimately, Imrul's main objective is to play for the national team and further the team's best interests regardless of where he is asked to bat. He also named some positives at number three.

"There are both advantages and disadvantages when you face the new ball. I think there is more of an advantage to batting at number three because many batsmen in the world became successful batting in this position."

He also saw the inclusion of Mominul as a good sign for the team as it will create a good competition for the number three position.

"It was a positive sight [the return of Mominul]. Healthy competition for a spot is always good. If there is competition, the team management can pick their best option. And it also helps the

## I'm ready to go: Agar

SPORTS REPORTER



It has been a wait of over four years for left-arm spinner Ashton Agar to make a comeback in the longest format of the game since making his Test

debut back in 2013. Despite an impressive start to his Test career, the 23-year-old lost his place in the Australian side after playing two Ashes Test in 2013, but an outstanding Sheffield Shield season last year put him back in contention.

Agar scalped 16 wickets in four matches and also impressed with his ability to bat lower down the order -- an ability he showcased with a sensational Test debut innings of 98 from number 10 -- which according to coach Darren Lehman adds flexibility to the side.

The Victorian cricketer is all set to make his Test return against the Tigers in the first Test starting from August 27 and added that he has learned a lot since playing his last Test four years ago.

"Obviously, it depends on what the wicket looks like, but I'm ready to go if I get the nod. I've been preparing really well and I've done everything I can now. I feel like everything is in really good order. It's really pleasing to be around the Test group. It's

what you want to do and it's a great bunch of guys to be around. It's good fun.

"It's just four years of experience, four years of extra bowling, a lot of balls bowled in that time and naturally you just get better. The more you bowl, the better you get at bowling. And just learning the game of cricket over the last four years as well, playing a lot more. It's just a lot of time to learn about myself and how I play my best cricket," Agar told reporters before the team's training session at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium yesterday.

He also said that the visitors are focusing more on their strengths rather than targeting the opposition, but added that the team management analysed the Bangladeshi cricketers to make specific plans ahead of the series.

Meanwhile, the conditions are expected

to help spinners but according to Agar, pacers like Josh Hazlewood, Pat Cummins and Jackson Bird will play a big role with reverse swing and also with the new ball.

"The wickets generally tend to play that way [spin-friendly] here. I think though that our fast bowlers Josh Hazlewood, Pat Cummins and Jackson Bird can all bowl really well if we get the ball reversing. They're going to play a really big role too so it's going to be a really big team effort but certainly spin will play a major role," he said.



## Tamim likely to be in World XI

STAR SPORT DESK

Bangladesh opener Tamim Iqbal is likely to feature in the World XI squad set to play a three-match T20 series in Lahore in

September, a source close to the Bangladesh Cricket Board informed yesterday.

Either South Africa captain Faf du Plessis or star batsman Hashim Amla will be assigned the captaincy of the squad, a top Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) official told DawnNews on Tuesday.

"Two big names in South Africa and world cricket, Hashim Amla and Faf du Plessis, have consented to touring Pakistan with the ICC World XI and one of them will be the captain of the side," the official said.

According to sources, the International Cricket Council (ICC) and PCB are currently processing financial and insurance matters for World XI players. Once contracts are signed by the players, the team will be announced in the coming days.

PCB Chairman Najam Sethi said on Monday that 15 players from seven countries had agreed to visit Pakistan as part of the World XI squad, adding that India had declined to send any players.

Former Zimbabwe captain Andy Flower, who will coach the World XI, has been assigned to select the squad for the tour, which is financially supported by the ICC.

## Mohammedan lose again

SPORTS REPORTER



Mohammedan Sporting Club returned to the cycle of defeats as they suffered a 2-3 loss against Saif Sporting Club in a thrilling encounter of the Bangladesh Premier League at Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

The fourth defeat in five matches left Mohammedan on three points and in 10th position while newcomers Saif SC, with four successive wins, climbed up to third position with 12 points.

Falling giants Mohammedan came into the match after a morale-boosting 4-0 win over Farashganj SC after having conceded three straight defeats. The Black and Whites looked like they were in for another dazzling performance as they broke the deadlock in the 12th minute with a superlative strike from Tokhlis Ahmed, who did not give Saif SC goalkeeper Anisur Rahman any time to react after side-volleying a well-judged cross from Kingsley Chigozie.

But the lead last only ten minutes with Saif SC's Jewel Rana nodding home a Motin Mia lob. The Motjheel-based outfit hit back again in the 38th minute when Faisal Mahmud saw his harmless cross from the right flank being fisted into the net by Anisur.

But the charges of Naeemuddin yet again failed to hold on to the lead, this time Colombian defender Lordaba Escarpeta headed in a Shakil Ahmed corner home in the 38th minute to make it 2-2.

Saif, who have been playing some attacking football, took the lead in stoppage time of the first half when Colombian forward Hember Valencia Olaya received a forward pass from Matin Mia and rounded off two defenders inside the box before placing it at the far post.

Both sides continued to play attacking football at the other side of the



Saif Sporting Club's Jewel Rana (R) celebrates his equaliser against Mohammedan during their Bangladesh Premier League encounter at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

<b>BROTHERS</b> (WALSON 71)	<b>1 - 0</b>	<b>MUKTIJODDHA</b>
<b>MOHAMMEDAN</b> (TOKLISH 12, FAISAL 32)	<b>2 - 3</b>	<b>SAIF SC</b> (JEWEL 22, ESCARPETA 36, OLAYA-45+2)

break, but neither managed to add to the scoresheet any further.

Brothers break duck  
Meanwhile, Brothers Union gave Nikola Vitorovic, their third foreign coach of the season, a debut victory with a single-goal win over Muktijoddha Sangsad, courtesy of a second-half strike from substitute forward Augustine Walson.

Former coach Giovanni Scanu went to Germany to attend to his ailing mother after guiding Brothers Union to successive draws in the in the first two matches of the league. The Italian did not return and in his absence the Gopibagh-based outfit suffered two successive defeats before Cyprus-born-Serbian Vitorovic

took over a few days ago.

Both Brothers and Muktijoddha Sangsad fought equally well on the muddy pitch but failed to open up the opposition's defence. Muktijoddha Sangsad, who came into the match on the back of a 0-2 defeat to Saif SC, found the best opportunity to take the lead in 61st minute, but Egyptian forward Esian Mohammad saw his close-range header cleared by goalkeeper Abdul Kader.

Ten minutes later, Brothers scored the decisive goal when Walson, having availed a through-pass from Mohammad Rony, raced past three defenders before placing it past the left side of onrushing goalkeeper Uttam Barua.

## Joshi joins Tigers

SPORTS REPORTER

Former India left-arm spinner Sunil Joshi joined the Bangladesh squad yesterday as the spin bowling consultant for the two-match series against Australia.

Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) made a short-term contract with the 47-year-old, who played 15 Tests and 69 ODIs for India, after former Australia leg-spinner Stuart MacGill, their first choice, was reluctant to join the Tigers ahead of the two-match Test series.

Joshi has previously worked as the spin bowling coach of the Oman national team in the Asia Cup and ICC World Twenty20 in 2016. He has also been involved with the National Cricket Academy of India as a spin consultant.

The first Test will take place in Mirpur from August 27 and the second Test will be played at Chittagong from September 4.

## Gala opening cancelled to aid flood victims

STAR ONLINE REPORT



The fifth edition of the Bangladesh Premier League (BPL) will not have the glitzy start of its earlier years as there will not be an opening ceremony, with the governing council of the lucrative T20 tournament choosing instead to donate the funds allocated for the purpose to flood victims.

BPL governing council chairman Afzalur Rahman Sinha informed The Daily Star of this development yesterday.

"We all know the dire straits the country is in because of the floods," Sinha said. "Keeping that in mind we don't think it will be right to hold an opening ceremony, which is why we have decided to donate the money we would have spent on an opening ceremony to the flood victims."

"Next Friday, the BCB president [Nazmul Hassan] and some other board officials will visit Sirajganj to distribute relief to the victims there," Sinha added.

Unlike the first three editions of the tournament, the last edition of the BPL in 2016 also did not have a festive opening ceremony. The last edition got off to a false start as the first two matches of the event were washed out, forcing the governing council to shift the start date from November 4 to November 8.

With the reintroduction of Sylhet this edition was supposed to feature eight franchises, but the ejection of Barisal Bulls because of their failure to comply with regulations reduced the number to seven, the same as the last edition.