

SPORT



Bangladesh players and officials pose for photographs after arriving at Nwu Puk Sports Village in Potchefstroom yesterday. The Tigers will play their first Test against South Africa from September 28.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

Tigers chilling at the Village

SAKEB SUBHAN from Potchefstroom



Although just 120 kilometres away from South Africa's biggest city, Potchefstroom is a world away from the hustle, bustle and the sometimes intimidating muscle of Johannesburg. There are no taxis in Potchefstroom on Sundays, so the journey to the Bangladesh team's hotel was on foot, on the side of wide, six-lane city streets whose sparse traffic will take some getting used to for Bangladeshi eyes. Perhaps for Bangladeshi national cricketers too, the team hotel will take some getting used to.

So often used to being put up in five-star hotels, Mushfiqur Rahim's team arrived at the comparatively humbler Nwu Puk Sports Village at around 1:00pm yesterday after a two-hour drive from Johannesburg. To say it is walking distance from Senwes Park, the venue for the first Test against South Africa starting on September 28, would be an understatement. The layman, not aware of the high demands on international sportsmen, could well imagine setting the alarm to half an hour before the toss, grabbing a quick breakfast and strolling over to the international cricket ground well before the first ball.

To call it humble may be a disservice, because it has the bells and whistles of modern

hotels, but is set out in a more modest fashion and its sport-friendly ambience -- the several two-storey accommodations look out on a swimming pool, and beyond the single-storey main building are tennis and basketball courts -- make it an ideal abode for the sporting elite.

The players themselves were in relaxed mood. Their first practice match, which ended in a draw on Saturday in Benoni, produced no cause for alarm apart from the injury concerns surrounding openers Tamim Iqbal and Soumya Sarkar. Five of them had come down to the main building for lunch and were talking animatedly, while coach Chandika Hathurusingha was having his lunch in a quieter fashion at a table nearby along with four other members of the coaching staff. Among the five cricketers were Mushfiqur, Tamim and Soumya. Tamim seemed to be walking around without the thigh injury bothering him too much and Soumya also seemed unperturbed by the shoulder niggle.

The rest had opted to take their lunch at a nearby shopping mall, probably the only one open in Potchefstroom, and returned presently bearing sated expressions. Yesterday, a rest day for players on a challenging safari, was the calm before the storm. But they can still relax knowing that they are in the ideal place to prepare for the Protea challenge.

Pacers need to step up: Taskin

SPORTS REPORTER from Potchefstroom



A tour of South Africa is not a familiar one for Bangladesh cricketers. Only batsmen Tamim Iqbal, Mushfiqur Rahim and Imrul Kayes in the current squad are survivors of the Tigers' last tour of the country in 2008, and they will probably want to forget the twin innings defeats they suffered then. The bowling is in inexperienced hands, especially with Shakib Al Hasan opting out of the Test leg of the tour.

With that in mind, a concession of 313 for eight to a young South Africa invitation XI batting line-up in the three-day tour match that ended on Saturday may raise some concern among Bangladesh fans but fast bowler Taskin Ahmed, likely to lead the charge against a formidable South African batting line-up in the first Test from Thursday, did not seem too worried.

"The pitch [in Benoni] was flat and slow; it almost seemed like home," said Taskin at the team hotel in Potchefstroom yesterday. "I doubt we will get a wicket like that in the first Test. Altitude is little bit high [in South Africa]. We had a little bit of trouble with that during the practice match. But we are adjusting to it well. Hopefully we will adjust fully before the first Test."

Despite the inexperience -- the five Bangladesh pacers have a combined Test total of 47 Tests, with Rubel Hossain alone accounting for 24 -- Taskin was excited at the prospect of bowling here.

"It is a kind of pressure, because the pacers have to bowl really well in these conditions," The 22-year-old speedster said. "The pacers have to step up and take responsibility, because I believe if the pacers are not to bowl well here, then it will be impossible to even fight in the match."

"Consistency and patience is important, along with swing bowling, to get success in Test cricket. Although we are kind of inexperienced as -- I have played only four Tests and Mustafizur [Rahman] has only played six Tests, but I believe we have tried to get results in our short careers. We are training under Courtney Walsh, [Chandika Hathurusingha] and other coaches. Hopefully we will get good results."

'Acclimatising is crucial'

SPORTS REPORTER from Potchefstroom



For a team from the subcontinent raised on slow and low pitches, cricket tours do not come much tougher than a Test series on the seaming, bouncy wickets of South Africa. The prospect seemed even tougher for Bangladesh as there were serious question marks over three of their top-order batsmen, but after the three-day tour match there are small, auspicious signs for the tourists.

Makeshift number three batsman Imrul Kayes had a wretched series against Australia at home recently with just 21 runs in four innings, opener Soumya Sarkar averaged just 16 and deposed number three Mominul Haque has been in and out of the side. Therefore it must be a great fillip for the visiting camp that all three did well in their first taste of South African conditions. Soumya hit 43 in the first innings and did not play in the second because of a shoulder niggle picked up while fielding, Imrul scored 34 and 51 in the two innings while Mominul top-scored with 68 in the first dig and scored 33 in the second innings.

"Their batting looked very good. The way they have batted in the practice match as well as in practice, it seems like they have

adjusted well. The ball comes on to the bat here and it is easier to get used to that. So I think that if they concentrate well, they will do well here," said Bangladesh chief selector Minhajul Abedin, who is on tour with the team in South Africa.

The wicket in Benoni for the tour match may not have been the most representative of South African conditions, but Minhajul thought that the preparation was valuable because it helped the team get used to the weather.

"It was a little slow, but we did what we needed to do in terms of spending time on the field and adjusting," the former Bangladesh captain said. "Obviously they will not give us the kind of wicket that they will use for the Test match. That is normal. But how well you can adjust to the weather is the main preparation."

The bowlers had conceded 313 for eight in South Africa Invitational XI's only innings, but according to Minhajul the adjustment to weather is as, if not more, important for the bowlers.

"For the bowlers, they were adjusting to bowling at a hundred per cent in these conditions. There are breathing problems here [because of the high altitude]. It was their first match in these conditions, so considering that I think that whatever they did, they bowled well enough."



MINHAJUL ABEDIN

Khulna seek first win

SPORTS REPORTER



Defending champions Khulna Division were looking to register their first win in the 19th National Cricket League against Barisal Division, who face a daunting task on the fourth and final day in their second round Tier 1 match at the Sheikh Abu Nasir Stadium in Khulna.

Nuruzzaman's maiden first class hundred was not enough for Barisal as they were bowled out for 258 after resuming the third day on 171 for six, handing Khulna a lead of 186 runs.

Overnight batsman Nuruzzaman was the only performer as he struck an unbeaten 175-ball 101, smashing eight fours and three sixes. However the right-hander found no support as Barisal were bundled out before lunch.

Pacer Al Amin Hossain and veteran left arm spinner Abdur Razzak bagged four wickets each. In reply, the hosts looked kept the run-rate over four before declaring on 216 for nine, posting a massive 402-run target.

Barisal ended the day's play on 32 for no loss in their second innings, needing another 370 runs to win.

Meanwhile the Tier 2 game between Chittagong and Rajshahi was heading towards a draw at the Shahid Kamruzzaman Stadium. Chittagong added 13 runs to their overnight score before being bowled out for 432. Rajshahi began well in reply and added 103 runs for the opening wicket before Myszukur Rahman departed for 35. Skipper Jahurul Islam was unbeaten on 75 and his side were 147 for one, facing a first-innings deficit of 285 runs.

At the Shaheed Chandu Stadium in Bogra, Dhaka and Rangpur finally took to the field after the first two days were abandoned due to a wet outfield. However a delayed start meant that only 17 overs could be played.

SCORES IN BRIEF

KHULNA VS BARISAL

KHULNA: 444 all-out and 216-7 decl (Tushar Imran 57 not out, Nurul Hasan 57, Sohag Gazi 3-78)

BARISAL: 258 all-out (Nuruzzaman 101 not out, Rafsan 58, Al-Amin 4-72, Razzak 4-90) and 32-0 Barisal trails by 370 runs.

RAJSHAHI VS CHITTAGONG

CHITTAGONG: 432 all-out (Yasir Ali 94, Sazzadul 68, Irfan Shukkur 65, Shariful 3-70, Nazmul 2-44, Saqlain 2-76)

RAJSHAHI: 147 for 1 (Jahurul Islam 75 not out, Myszukur 36, Nazmul 25 not out) Rajshahi trails by 285 runs.

DHAKA DIV VS RANGPUR

RANGPUR: 49 without loss (Salmon 28 not out, Jahid 20 not out)

DHAKA METRO VS SYLHET

Day 3 called off due to wet-outfield.

Rupali Bank edge Kalabagan

SPORTS REPORTER

Holders Rupali Bank KP clinched a narrow two-run victory over Kalabagan KC to register their second consecutive win in the Women's Premier Division Cricket League at the BKSP in Savar yesterday.

Needing eleven runs in the final over which was being bowled by Rupali's Tazia Akhter, Kalabagan managed only eight after Rupali posted 200 for 8 in 50 overs where opener Sanjida Islam top scored with 60 while Ayesha Rahman added 46.

Initially Kalabagan replied well, riding on a 110-run stand between skipper Lata Mondol and Shailla Sharmin for the third wicket and looking to be chasing the target.

However after Lata, who scored a team-high 68 off 95 balls which included seven fours, and Shailla (48) were dismissed, Kalabagan lost their way in the middle. Sultana Yesmin remained unbeaten on 25 but was unable to carry her side over the finish line.

Player-of-the-match Tazia bagged three wickets after scoring a quick-fire 41 off 38 balls.

In the day's other match, Khelaghar SKS sealed a comprehensive ten-wicket win against Indira Road KC after being bundled out for just 31 runs in 34 overs. None of the Indira Road batters were able to reach double figures. Khelaghar's Ritu Moni and Indian recruit Renu Yadav bagged four wickets each before their side reached the target in 8.3 overs without losing a wicket.

Petition to stop BCB AGM filed

STAFF CORRESPONDENT



Former Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) director Mobasher Hossain filed a writ petition in the High Court yesterday seeking a directive to restrain the BCB's executive committee from holding the upcoming AGM and EGM, which are scheduled to take place on October 2.

In his petition Mobasher sought an order to show cause upon the respondents as to why they should not be directed to restrain the present BCB executive committee from holding and continuing to hold office in the BCB.

The respondents are the government, the secretary of the ministry of youth and sports, the chairman and secretary of the National Sports Council (NSC) and the BCB president. Barrister Mahub Shafique filed the petition on Mobasher's behalf.

While speaking to The Daily Star yesterday, Attorney General Mahubey Alam said that the matter could be heard in court today [Monday].

On September 16 Mahub Shafique, on behalf of Mobasher, served a legal notice to the NSC asking the country's local sport's governing body to stop any and all functions of the present BCB board of directors, including president Nazmul Hassan.

It also asked the BCB president to not only stop all his activities but also to refrain from holding the upcoming AGM of the board.

The notice, which was simultaneously served to the BCB and NSC, stated that the present committee of the BCB had lost its legality following the judgement of the Supreme Court on July 26 this year.

The apex court declared the amendment in the BCB constitution made in 2012 illegal and also ruled that the BCB was the sole authority to amend its constitution, not the NSC, which can only consent or reject.

The present board had been elected under the 2012 constitution and Nazmul Hassan became the first elected BCB president in that campaign. The notice also said that the matter will be taken to court if action is not taken within 72 hours of receiving the notice.

Historic win over Qatar

SPORTS REPORTER



Bangladesh under-16 men's team followed in the footsteps of their female compatriots to create a bit of history with a 2-0 victory over Qatar in the AFC U-16 Championship Qualifiers in Doha last night.

Midfielder Dipok Roy and forward Faisal Ahmed Fahim scored in the second half of the match at Doha's Grand Hamd Stadium as Bangladesh came up with not only their first-ever victory over Qatar at any level, but also kept their dreams of a final round appearance alive.

Both teams came into the last match of Group E on the back of defeats against group favourites Yemen. While the hosts were thrashed 6-1 by Yemen, Bangladesh were far more impressive in their 2-0 defeat against the Yemenese on Friday. In fact Bangladesh were unlucky not to come out with a point from that match as they threatened the opposition goal more than once and conceded goals from counter-attacks.

In last night's match, the last in this group which was reduced to a three-team affair after UAE's late withdrawal, both sides had a chance each in the first half.

Qatar striker Abdul Rahman saw his shot from a free-kick come off the post before Bangladesh's Miraj Molla saw his effort well blocked by the Qatar keeper.

The hosts dominated early in the second half, but it was Miraj who again wasted another chance on the hour-mark, this time blasting the ball wide off target with only the keeper to beat. Two minutes later Dipok saw his attempt from inside the box miss the target by a few inches before he made amends with a towering header to give Bangladesh the lead in the 70th minute.

The midfielder rose above his marker on a perfectly-weighted corner and picked the opposite corner of the net as the few hundred Bangladeshi expatriates at the stadium erupted in joy.

Bangladesh goalkeeper Samiul Islam then produced an excellent save to protect the margin following a defensive fumble which had gifted the ball to a Qatari



There were wild celebrations in the Bangladesh U-16 camp after the boys in red and green created history with a 2-0 win over Qatar in the AFC U-16 Championship Qualifiers in Doha yesterday.

PHOTO: BFF

forward right in front of the box.

But defensive errors were more commonplace at the other end as a total miscommunication between the Qatar goalie and his defenders in the 81st minute saw Fahim, adjudged the best players of SAFF U-16 Championship last month, pouncing on the ball and expertly placing it past the goalie for the second goal.

As soon as the final whistle went, the Bangladeshi players and officials rushed towards the gallery and celebrated wildly where a few hundred Bangladeshi expats had cheered them on all through.

Bangladesh will now have to wait for the other groups to finish to learn whether they have a chance to go through to the 16-team final round to be played in Malaysia next year.

Ten group champions and five best runners-up teams along with the hosts will participate in that tournament.

Afghan U-19s land today

SPORTS REPORTER

The Afghanistan Under-19 cricket team is scheduled to arrive today to play five youth ODIs against their Bangladeshi counterparts.

All five matches will be held at the Sylhet International Cricket Stadium, with the first game scheduled for September 28. The visitors will leave Bangladesh on October 8.

The series against Afghanistan is a part of the Bangladesh U-19 team's preparations for the upcoming ICC Under-19 Cricket World Cup next year.

England crush West Indies

AFP, Bristol

England beat West Indies by 124 runs to win the third ODI at Bristol on Sunday.

West Indies, set 370 to win, finished on 245 all out after Moeen Ali's 53-ball century took England to 269 for nine.

Windies' Chris Gayle marked his return with 94 before he was run out, after which their chase fell away. **ENGLAND:** 369 for nine (Ali 102, Root 84, Cummins 3-82) **WEST INDIES:** 245 all out (Gayle 94; Plunkett 5-52, Rashid 3-34)

Result: England won by 124 runs and lead five-match series 2-0.