

SPORTS



The Boland Park Stadium in Paarl was showered by rain yesterday, forcing the Bangladesh team to practise indoors. The fans will be hoping that the gloomy weather subsides by the time the second ODI begins today.

Tamim hopeful of return

SPORTS REPORTER from Paarl

There has not been a lot to smile about on this tour for Bangladesh or their fans but the fact that opener Tamim Iqbal came to the pre-match media conference yesterday, ahead of today's second ODI against South Africa in Paarl, could be said to be a good omen as far as him featuring in the match today is concerned.

In gloomy weather conditions Tamim, fellow injury coner Musfiquar Rahim, Mohammad Saifuddin, Mehedi Hasan Miraz, Soumya Sarkar and Mominul Haque came to the Boland Park Stadium for an optional practice session. Skipper Ashraful Bin Mortaza and the rest sat out the session because only indoor practice would be possible in rainy Paarl.

Having missed the second Test and first ODI because of not having fully recovered from a thigh muscle tear sustained earlier on tour, Tamim did a few sprints - which he had done before the first ODI as well - and seemed comfortable when batting in the indoor nets yesterday against throwdowns from coach Chandika Hathurusingha and some gentle medium pacers from trainer Mario Villavrayana.

"I have probably had three batting sessions in the last 15 days, which is not ideal. I am trying to get prepared mentally. I think I am ready for it, depending on my fitness test today," said Tamim. "I was close to playing the last game. If my fitness test goes well today, I don't see why I can't play tomorrow. Injuries need time. This is not my last match, nor is it Bangladesh's last tour. If I get injured again [in the same place], then I will be out for two months which I hope the team management doesn't want and neither do I."

Team manager Minhajul Abedin later informed that Tamim passed the fitness Test, and will play if everything is okay this morning.

Batsman Musfiquar, who scored a century in the first game but did not take the field because of a tweaked hamstring, also seemed fine according to team manager Minhajul Abedin. He did some sprints along with the physio Tithan Chandramohan at the soggy venue, and seemed his effortless self while batting in the nets, dancing down the wicket to drive Mehedi and spin-bowling coach Sunil Joshi on a few occasions.

Rupali blank Mohammedan

Abahani-Khelaghar ends in tie

SPORTS REPORTER

The four-team Super League phase of the Women's Premier Division Cricket League began with an interesting encounter between Abahani United and Khelaghar SSK that ended in a tie at BKSIP, Savar yesterday.

Needing five runs to win from the last over with just one wicket remaining, Abahani's Jahanaara Alam smashed a boundary off the first Renu Yadav ball to level the scores but she was bowled by the very next ball, ending the match as a draw.

Chasing the target of 184 runs, Abahani lost wickets at regular intervals despite Nida Dar scoring 59 runs off 96 balls, including four boundaries, while Shivani Sharma added 35. As for the Khelaghar bowlers, Renu and Fahima Khatun picked top two wickets each.

Earlier, Khelaghar posted 183-5 in 50 overs where Fahima Khatun remained unbeaten on 71 and Nigar Sultana scored 62 as the pair added 132 runs for the fourth wicket.

Meanwhile in the other Super League fixture, skipper Rumana Abhadh displaced an all-round performance for holders Rupali Bank CC as they sealed a five-wicket win over Mohammedan Sporting Club.

Rumana bagged five wickets to bundle out Mohammedan on just 147 runs and in reply, remained unbeaten on 55 runs to reach the target with 14 balls to spare.

'Bowlers contributed to our progress'

SAKEB SUBHAN from Paarl

Shakib Al Hasan had talked about it just being a game two days before the first ODI in Kimberley, and while Tamim Iqbal does not have the same insouciance that his teammate does, the left-hander seemed to be singing from the same songbook yesterday when he sought to play down the hysteria surrounding Bangladesh's dismal showing in South Africa so far, especially after the 10-wicket defeat in the first ODI.

The bowlers were hit all around the park by Hashim Amla and Quinton de Kock as they notched the highest unbeaten opening partnership in a successful chase. Speaking about contributions to our progress in the last two years, said Tamim, and the focus of his sympathy seemed to be Taskin Ahmed, who was taken for 61 runs in eight overs on Sunday. "Mustafiz [Rahman] was highlighted during the India series but I personally felt that Taskin played a major



Bangladesh opener Tamim Iqbal is hopeful of playing in the second ODI today, provided that he passes a pre-match fitness test.

role by giving us breakthroughs. Rubel's performance against South Africa [in 2015] also shouldn't be forgotten. When they are not doing well, we should get behind them and support them. I am sure tomorrow or the next game or the next series, they will come back.

"We are not playing great cricket and we know it," said Tamim of the first ODI, where they scored 278 for seven. "It would have been a complete batting performance had we scored 300-plus. We weren't up to the mark with our bowling, especially in these conditions against this opposition. We couldn't take early wickets which hurt us, but we will try to do this in the next game."

Bangladesh has not been able to take wickets throughout the tour, totalling a meagre 25 scalps across five games including the two practice matches. With their bowling so far in mind, it may be hard to share Tamim's confidence.

"The world depends on hope; we do that too," said Tamim when his declaration of confidence in the bowlers was met with scepticism. "We believe that we can do it. It is a new game, a new day. We have taken lessons as a group, so I will hope to rectify

these mistakes and get better."

He also spoke out in support of Shakib, whose bowling has not been very incisive of late. "When Shakib or Mustafiz bowls, we want a wicket every over. It is not possible. People will have good and bad days. We are talking about the same guy who won us a Test a month ago with his brilliant bowling."

Bowling is only half the problem however. Sunday's 278 was the best batting performance on tour but it was still built around an outstanding innings from Musfiquar Rahim, who scored 110, while the rest continued the old habit of getting set and then getting out.

"I think some batsmen were unlucky. Imrul Kayes, the next highest scorer with 31 did all the hard work but got out down the leg side which happened in the second Test and in the first ODI," said Tamim of the batsman with whom he formed Bangladesh's most successful opening pair in Tests. "He played the appropriate shot and the bowler too does not expect a wicket off that ball. If we can convert the 20s and 30s to 60s and 70s, we will score more runs as a team. I think all the batsmen know they need big scores but I have zero complaints against their work ethic. They need to be luckier and smarter."

First one-dayer washed out

SPORTS REPORTER

The first fixture of the five match one-day series between Bangladesh A and Ireland A was abandoned due to inclement weather at the Sheikh Kamal International Cricket stadium in Cox's Bazar yesterday.

After a delayed start Ireland, opting to bat, were all out on 29 runs in 49.1 overs where Sean Terry top scored with 65 while Barry McCarthy added a quick 39 off 32 balls.

Subashis Roy, Abu Haider, Abul Hasan and Tanvir Haider took two wickets each for the bowling side.

In reply, Bangladesh were on 75 runs for 3 wickets within 14 overs before rain interrupted the game, where Zakir Hasan remained unbeaten on 35, and the encounter was eventually called off.

The second match of the series will take place tomorrow at the same venue.

SL agree to play in Lahore

Gimathilaka ban eased

AFP, Colombo

Sri Lanka's cricket board Tuesday halted a six-match ban imposed on all-rounder Damushka Gunathilaka for misconduct, amid speculation several players may drop out of an upcoming Twenty20 series final in Pakistan.

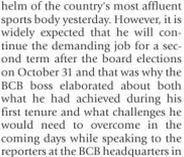
The board's decision clears Gunathilaka to play in the three-match series starting October 26 in the UAE. The board announced that it would go ahead with the tour and confirmed its commitment to play the third T20I in Lahore, where the Sri Lanka team has come under attack from militants in 2009.

The final will be played on October 29.

Hassan already looking forward

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) president Nazmul Hassan and his committee completed its four-year tenure at the helm of the country's most affluent sports body yesterday. However, it is widely expected that he will continue the demanding job for a second term after the board elections on October 31 and that was why the BCB boss elaborated about both what he had achieved during his first tenure and what challenges he would need to overcome in the coming days while speaking to the reporters at the BCB headquarters in Mirpur yesterday.



It might not have been the ideal time for Hassan to speak about success considering the tough time the national team is enduring in South Africa because cricket administrators' successes often evolve with the successes of the national team. But he certainly deserves kudos for the transformation of the men's team from a hit-and-miss side to a unit that has finally translated its

potential into success. So when he highlighted the Tigers' successes in the 2015 World Cup, the 2017 Champions Trophy, three 'unimaginable' home series



wins against Pakistan, India and South Africa, the Test victories against England and Australia at home and Sri Lanka in Sri Lanka while speaking about his success during the four-year tenure, he did not say anything wrong.

Hassan also reminded of the struggles off the field which were no less challenging, from hosting the ICC World Twenty20 to ensuring discipline among the players, and added: "A major issue was solved during my tenure when we played a one-off Test in India. It was a breakthrough."

However, he acknowledged reality, especially in the face of the Tigers' recent performances in South Africa, which is why he went on to say: "We have a long way to go. True, we have reached a level where all teams now take us seriously but we are not a big team in world cricket and we are very weak abroad. So it will be a big challenge in the coming days and we have

to work on that aspect."

"I had a dream of taking the team to number five in the ICC [ODI] rankings but we could not make it, so that will be another challenge to overcome," he added. "Another important issue will be to make separate teams for Test, ODI and T20 cricket and if I come to power, I will definitely focus on tours for the A team, High Performance team and the U-19 team so that new players get international exposure."

He has another dream, perhaps the most important of them all, which is the formation of the much-talked about Regional Cricket Associations, which was a commitment from the BCB when it applied for Test status.

"As I said earlier, I have a desire of staying as a director but everybody with me is requesting me to continue as president. Let the election take place first then we will think," ended Hassan.

Tigers lacked creativity: Donald

SAKEB SUBHAN from Paarl

In their current beleaguered state, Bangladesh bowlers have a shining example in how to take wickets in the very city where they will play the second ODI today. One of the all-time great fast bowlers, former South Africa speedster Allan Donald, was sympathetic to the Bangladesh bowlers' plight and had some words of advice on how to avoid a repeat of the punishment during multiple century and double-century partnerships on tour so far, culminating in Hashim Amla and Quinton de Kock's record 282-run stand in the first ODI.

"With absolute respect, I could see it happen when they come here," Donald told The Daily Star when asked about Bangladesh's bowling performance in the two Tests and the first ODI, during which they have managed to take just 13 wickets, one of which was a runout. "For me, Bangladesh didn't show any creativity in their thinking on the field - someone taking charge. I know there wasn't Shakib Al Hasan,

he's a big leader on the field. The captain [Musfiquar Rahim in the Tests] is a very respected captain, but also, how can he tell his bowlers that you've got to try this and that - it's got to come from someone. That's the one thing that they lack."

He recalled how his one-time captain and good friend, the late Hansie Cronje, wanted



the bowlers to be proactive and think out of the box. "He would often say to us: 'You've got to come up with a plan. So if I am standing there and if I haven't bowled for three overs, then I need some feedback. Let's share

information quickly. What he enjoyed more was guys asking for the ball, not just saying 'I'll come and have a bowl'. That leadership needs to come from your senior fast men. That is something you grow into. If you don't fancy you will never become a leader on the field."

When asked how he went about breaking partnerships in his heyday, he said it "Abahani United and Khelaghar SSK that ended in a tie at BKSIP, Savar yesterday."

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"The game slows down so much quicker. Here it doesn't slow down. They've got a very, very good man as a bowling coach in the changing room, Courtney Walsh, who probably has said all these things."