

SPORT

A right decision that came too late

SAKEB SUBHAN from East London

After a scan at East London yesterday showed that there was no improvement in his left thigh muscle tear, the Bangladesh team management finally decided to send opener Tamim Iqbal back home today. He will now be out for four weeks and apart from missing the remaining ODI and the two T20Is on tour, the left-hander will also miss a minimum of three matches in the upcoming BPL for Comilla Victorians.

The injury was sustained on the tour's very first day of competition on September 21 during the three-day tour match at Benoni. It has been a month now that Tamim has been pushing and being pushed to get on the park to prop up a team that was looking more and more haggard with every passing match. The left-hander was uncertain for the first Test and in the lead-up did not face anything but throwdowns until the last evening before the match, when he faced his teammates' bowling at the centre wicket. He played anyway at Potchefstroom from August 28 and duly aggravated the injury during fielding.



That led to him missing the second Test in Bloemfontein from October 6 after a specialist had prescribed four weeks' rest on October 3 and gave him an outside chance of being fit for the first ODI. Given that the rest period prescribed has remained the same 17 days later, at the very least the decision to play Tamim in the second ODI after he missed the first one upon physio Thihan Chandramohan's advice,

has contributed to the problem.

In Bloemfontein before the second Test, the impression was that the injury was a serious one. However, in Dhaka, before the ODI series started the noise from Bangladesh Cricket Board high-ups was that the injury was not so serious and that he would be okay to play the one-dayers. He did feature in the second match, but it seems clear now that he was definitely not okay.

The despair and short-sightedness of the management was encapsulated perfectly when even yesterday before the scan, tour manager Minhajul Abedin was using the word doubtful and hinting that they will wait till today to take a call, because back-up opener Soumya Sarkar was not in form.

In fact, it was learnt that the pain had increased following the second ODI. On the day before the second match, Tamim's words should have been a warning to himself as well as the management, and while a player will always want to play, it falls upon the management to manage their players' fitness with a view to the longer term and not just focus on avoiding another chapter in an already embarrassing tour.

"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. If I can pass the fitness test, I will play tomorrow but if I can't, then I have to give the injury time to heal."

While he did pass the fitness test, it is doubtful how helpful that was for Bangladesh. With the series lost, the right decision not to risk a player seems to have been taken at least two weeks too late.

LOOKING UP DOWN SOUTH

On the ropes from coast to coast

SPORTS REPORTER from East London



If you were travelling on the highway between Cape Town and East London yesterday, a distance of about a thousand kilometres along the southern coast of South Africa, having crossed Queenstown at around 8:30 am you would have seen a group of hapless Bangladeshis staring blankly at the whizzing cars going by. You would also have seen a bus -- let us not name the company here -- blowing smoke out its exhaust pipe and going nowhere a few yards ahead. Just thank your lucky stars that you were in a car.

There is just one bus a day leaving Paarl for East London and on Thursday we rushed, because Bangladeshis always rush, to the Shell Garage where they would pick us up. Well, the South African bus drivers are on another level it seems as they made Bangladeshis wait for an hour, and we stood with those vacant expressions -- little did we know that that would be the theme for the journey.

The first stop after they finally picked us up at 8:00pm was at another Shell Garage four hours later, and the driver officiously said "10 minutes!", but after those 10 minutes we were on the bus for another 40 minutes before we set off, as more passengers got on, heaven knows from where and why because while loading our luggage the helper said not to worry about tags for our

luggage as no one else would be getting on.

It was repeated over the next two stops, but then, after the Queenstown stop at eight, we knew we were now on the way to East London. "No more stops, one hour at most," the driver laughed. We did not take the second part of that statement seriously as his start-of-journey estimate of an 8:00am arrival time had been woefully overshoot. Google Maps said it was two hours over to East London and that is what we settled in for.

10 minutes into the journey, the bus stopped, a policeman entered and soon the driver was telling us to disembark. They have these highway checkpoints with police standing on both sides of the road and flagging down seemingly every vehicle that dares pass, another aspect in which they surpass their Bangladeshi counterparts. "This bus won't go further" was all we were told by the driver. Where are we? "Queenstown."

But where in Queenstown? "Don't know." It took an admonishment from the policewoman there who seemed to be in charge for the driver to tell us exactly what happened. The bus was not road-fit as it was spewing black exhaust that had blackened the back of the bus, and that they had called the office and another one was coming in 10 minutes (read one hour 15 minutes).

We reached East London at 12:30, each feeling like we had been through a 12-round bout but with a message for the operators of Shohagh, Hanif, Desh Travels et al -- unlike the South African cricket team, your South African counterparts cannot hold a candle to you.



A group of Bangladeshi journalists were left stranded in the middle of nowhere, because "the bus won't go further".

PHOTO: SAKEB SUBHAN

AB returns to No. 1

AGENCIES, Cape Town

Proteas star batsman AB de Villiers has stormed back to the No 1 position of the ICC ODI batsmen rankings.

An astonishing knock of 176 by De Villiers in the second ODI against Bangladesh in Paarl on Wednesday - consisting of 15 fours and seven sixes and off only 104 balls - saw the Proteas take a 2-0 lead in the three-match series.

According to the ICC's official website, De Villiers has climbed to the top of the ODI table for the 14th time in his career.

He leapfrogged Australian David Warner and India captain Virat Kohli for top spot, having first attained the No 1 position on May 30, 2010.

Other Proteas batsmen to make a move in the rankings include the opening pair of Quinton de Kock, who moved up three places to fifth and Hashim Amla, who slots into the top 10 of the batting rankings climbing up two places to ninth.

Zim-WI first Test starts today

AFP, Bulawayo

Batsman Brendan Taylor and fast bowler Kyle Jarvis will make their returns to international cricket on Saturday when Zimbabwe take on the West Indies in the first of two Tests in Bulawayo.

Jarvis has not played for Zimbabwe since signing a Kolpak deal with English county side Lancashire in 2013, while Taylor followed suit in 2015 when he moved to Nottinghamshire.

However both players have been lured back as part of Zimbabwe Cricket's attempts to revive the national team, which last year included hiring former Zimbabwe captains Tatenda Taibu and Heath Streak as national selector and head coach respectively.

Those appointments appear to be bearing some fruit -- in July, Zimbabwe won their first one-day international series in Sri Lanka, and nearly pulled off an upset in a one-off Test as well.

The additions of Taylor, Jarvis and Solomon Mire, who was previously based in Australia, have given Zimbabwe the belief that they could cause an upset in their first home Test of the year.

'Tigers have to overcome fear'

SPORTS REPORTER from East London



Such has been the one-sided nature of the series that the talking point on both sides has become Bangladesh's performance on the South African tour. Yesterday, Proteas' batting coach Neil McKenzie sought to soften the criticism on the Tigers but also hinted that fear is a factor when playing in conditions like South Africa and Australia.

"It's hard coming to South Africa. A lot of subcontinent sides struggled in South Africa with that extra pace and bounce, although the pitches that they played on were not as fast as the ones in Centurion, Wanderers or SuperSport Park," McKenzie told reporters during his team's practice session at East London's Buffalo Park yesterday, the venue for the third and final ODI tomorrow.

"The biggest thing for them will be to tour in Australia or South Africa, get used to the bounce, quicker wickets and aggression factor. In the subcontinent you will find the spin challenge, but in South Africa or Australia you will face the aggression and fear factor about pace and

bounce. That's the number one stepping stone that the Bangladeshi batsmen have to get over."

He was not inclined to be as harsh on the Bangladesh bowlers as others have been. "I don't think they were poor. They have some younger guys who bowled a few bumpers in the Tests where our batsmen had to duck. I think it's about maintaining pressure. I think there were too many easier options to score, like one bowler bowled well but his partner did not and released the pressure."

He also indicated that, with the series won through the 104-run win in Paarl on Wednesday, South Africa will bring some changes to the side for the dead rubber.

"We've got an opportunity for a few guys -- Hashim Amla is resting, he will spend time with his family, so there will be a change for Quinton de Kock up front. It's just another opportunity for someone to stake their claim."

"We will try to make it 3-0. We can't think that it will be easy. Bangladesh have proved over the last few years that they have played good cricket at times. They have beaten Australia in Tests recently. They have beaten South Africa in a series. So it's another challenging ODI for us. There will be no dead rubber and we will not take the game lightly."



NEIL MCKENZIE



Players and officials of Abahani pose for photographs after winning their maiden Women's Premier Division Cricket League title at BKSP on Thursday.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

WOMEN'S PREMIER DIV CRICKET LEAGUE

'It was a total team effort'

SPORTS REPORTER

Abahani Limited clinched their maiden Women's Premier Division Cricket League title with a game remaining as they defeated defending champions Rupali Bank Krira Parishad by three wickets on Thursday.

After being asked to bat, Rupali posted 101 for 9 in the rain curtailed 27 over game at BKSP, Savar with opener Sanjida Islam scoring a team high 32 runs while Jannatul Ferdousi picked up three wickets alongside Suborna Islam and Nida Dar who bagged two each for the bowling side.

In reply, Abahani reached the target with two balls to spare as skipper Jahanara Alam hit the winning shot for a six and remained unbeaten on 20. Opener Sharmin Sultana top scored for the side with 30 runs and Sharmin Akter added 20.

Abahani won eight out of ten games and of the two remaining, the first was a loss to Mohammadean Sporting Club -- their only defeat in the competition -- while the other fixture was abandoned due to inclement weather. Meanwhile Rupali Bank, who played the same num-

ber of matches, are in second position with seven wins.

According to Abahani skipper Jahanara it took a 'total team effort' to seal the victory: "It was a total team effort for the girls to clinch the maiden title for Abahani and I am really proud of my team."

"Every single player has contributed this season which has been the main reason we were clinical throughout the tournament," Jahanara told The Daily Star yesterday.

The former Bangladesh captain lead Abahani from the front with an all-round performance as she picked up ten wickets at a miserly economy of 2.63 with figures of 3 for 8, her best bowling of the tournament, while she also contributed with the bat in crucial moments.

"It was a challenge for me before the start of the tournament and I tried to lift the morale of the side by performing whenever my team required and I think credit goes to the whole team which eventually worked well for us," she added.

This was the ninth edition of the Women's Premier League, the competition which Mohammadean has won six times while Ansar, VDP and Ruplai Bank took the title once apiece.

Same old faces in Hassan's panel

SPORTS REPORTER



There were no surprises when Nazmul Hassan yesterday announced an unchanged panel for the upcoming Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) election, scheduled to be held on October 31.

Manzur Kader, who was nominated from the District Sports Association during the previous election, was named from the club category this time in place of Ahmed Iqbal Hasan. As the National Sports Council quota has been reduced from three to two there was no need to fill the vacant post for late Nazmul Karim Tinku in the panel.

The election is likely to be settled without contest in all regions except Dhaka and Barisal, which may also be cleared before the candidates' withdrawal date on October 29.

"All of those who took part in the previous election from Dhaka clubs are here this time as well. However there are two changes. Two of them have col-

lected forms from Barisal and there is likely to be an election for that post. From Dhaka there will be two directors from among the three-four people who have collected forms along with Naimur Rahman from our panel. But if they withdraw their names then there will be no election," Hassan told media at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.

Out of two posts for Dhaka in Category 1, Naimur Rahman Durjoy -- who is part of Nazmul's panel -- picked up a nomination form alongside Sheikh Naeem, Junaid Hossain, Ashfakul Islam, Shahinul Islam and Tanveer Ahmed Titu for the second post. MA Awal Bulu, who is also part of the panel from Barisal, is likely to contest Alamgir Khan.

Hassan and Ahmed Sazzadul Alam will be taking up the posts from the NSC quota while former Bangladesh captain Khaled Mahmud was named from Category 3.

Although the last date for collecting forms is October 24, it is unlikely that

there will another panel to contest the elections. However, Hassan informed that he would welcome anyone who wanted to contest the election.

HASSAN'S PANEL
Category 1 District Sports Association (10-member): Naimur Rahman Durjoy, Sheikh Naeem (Dhaka), MA Awal Chowdhury (Barisal), AJM Nasir, Akram Khar (Chittagong), Sheikh Sohel, Kazi Enam Ahmed (Khulna), Mohammed Shafiqul Alam Shopon, Advocate Anwar-ul-Islam (Rajshahi), Shafiqul Alam Chowdhury (Sylhet).

CATEGORY 2 Dhaka Clubs (12-member): IH Mallick, Manzur Kader, Afzalur Rahman Sinha, Enayet Hossain Siraj, Lokman Hossain Bhuiyan, Mahub Anam, Jalal Yunus, Hanif Bhuiyan, Tanzil Chowdhury, Shawkat Aziz Rasel, Najib Ahmed, Gazi Golam Mortuza.

CATEGORY 3: (Institution and Player's Category): Khaled Mahmud Shujon.
NSC NOMINATIONS: Nazmul Hassan and Ahmed Sazzadul Alam.

Steyn targets Nov return

REUTERS, Cape Town

Fast bowler Dale Steyn is hoping to make a comeback following a year out with a shoulder injury at next month's South African domestic Twenty20 competition.

Following an extended spell of rehabilitation, Steyn said he has finally recovered from the shoulder problem he suffered while bowling against Australia during last November's Test series.

"My arm is perfect, if anything it's stronger than it was before because it's (been) reinforced with a pin," the 34-year-old told ESPNcricinfo.

Pakistan make it 4-0

AFP, Sharjah



Medium pacer Hasan Ali grabbed three wickets to celebrate his rise to the top of the one-day rankings as Pakistan downed Sri Lanka by seven wickets in the fourth day-night international in Sharjah on Friday.

Hasan took 3 for 37 while spinners Shadab Khan (2-29) and Imad Wasim (2-13) also chipped in with useful wickets as Sri Lanka were skittled out for 173 in 43.4 overs.

Only Lahiru Thirimanne resisted with a 94-ball 62 on a flat pitch at Sharjah stadium on which Babar Azam scored a stroke filled 69 not out and Shoaib Malik matched him, also with an unbeaten 69, to help Pakistan overhaul the low target in 39 overs.

Despite Pakistan losing three early wickets, the target was never out of reach as Azam and Malik shared an unbroken 119 runs

fourth-wicket stand.

Malik smashed Milinda Siriwardana for a boundary and a six to seal the victory.

He hit three sixes in all and two boundaries in his 81-ball knock while Azam, who had scored successive hundreds in the first two matches, had five boundaries off 101 balls.

Pakistan lost Imamul Haq for two after his debut hundred in the last match while Fakhar Zaman fell for 17 and Mohammad Hafeez made nine.

SCORES IN BRIEF

SRI LANKA: 173 all out in 43.4 overs (Dickwella 22, Thirimanne 62, Dananjaya 18, Lakmal 23 not out; Wasim 2-13, Hasan 3-37, Shadab 2-29)

PAKISTAN: 177 for 3 in 39 overs (Fakhar 17, Babar 69 not out, Malik 69 not out; Gamage 1-27)

Result: Pakistan won by 7 wickets and lead 5-match series 4-0.

Player-of-the-match: Babar Azam.