

SPORTS

No Tension with Digestion

'We have nothing to lose'

SAKEB SUBHAN from Bloemfontein

'Can Shakib succeed where Mashrafe and Mushfiqur failed?' will be the question when Bangladesh and South Africa take the field for the first T20 at Bloemfontein's Mangaung Oval today. This match will be a new beginning for Bangladesh cricket as Shakib Al Hasan's first match as T20 captain will officially mark the start of the three-captain era for Bangladesh, after Mushfiqur Rahim overawed the 0-2 Test whitewash and Mashrafe Bin Mortaza was at the helm for the 0-3 ODI clean sweep.

In truth, success will probably not be defined simply by something other than a zero for Bangladesh in the series scoreline, but after injuries to key players like Tamim Iqbal and Mustafizur Rahman and consummate hammerings in each of the five international matches on tour so far, the Tigers giving the Proteas a run for their money will be a positive end to a sordid season. To that end, Bangladesh at least have the right person for the format leading the team.

'Not only is Shakib Bangladesh's highest run-scorer and wicket-taker in T20s but he is also by far the most experienced, having played 237 T20 matches around the world, 59 of which have been for Bangladesh. Moreover, at this crucial juncture for Bangladesh, Shakib's distilled thinking about the game and not giving mind space to factors off the field may be just what



Bangladesh skipper Shakib Al Hasan speaks at a press briefing in Bloemfontein yesterday ahead of today's first T20I against South Africa.

PHOTO: SAKEB SUBHAN

is needed for the format that squeezes the game into three and a half hours of action.

'I think it is such a short format that we don't have much time to think about things, which is to our advantage - thinking too much can be a problem,' said Shakib when asked whether his experience and the absence of some other seniors adds extra responsibility on him.

'In Tests and ODIs there's a lot of time to think, which leads to a lot of complicated thinking. So if everyone can keep things simple, we can

leave with a good performance.

'I think those who are playing here are mature enough,' he said when asked whether he would try and motivate his players at the end of a gruelling tour. 'I hope they can understand their own roles. It is important to motivate the team. I can't fix anyone's skills or mentality. But it can be tried. We have to play as a team in these two matches, which is my goal.'

At his first stint as Bangladesh player, Shakib had led the team in T20s in four matches in 2009 and

2010. The difficulty of gaining his first win today was not lost on the world's top all-rounder.

The format is different. We don't have big hitters so we have to do the small things right. Otherwise it becomes hard for us to win. I wouldn't say that it is impossible to win but we have to do the one per cent stuff. We cannot let anything go. My target is that it should look like a team is playing and that they are trying really hard.'

The absence of stalwarts like Tamim and Mustafizur, as well as Mashrafe who quit the format during Bangladesh's last T20I outing in Sri Lanka in April, is certainly a blow. But Shakib saw opportunity.

'There were some injury worries, plus it is so far that one can't expect a T20 squad to come here,' said Shakib when asked about the squad that has been reduced now to 14 players. 'We are seeing players who played Tests and ODIs on this tour. So quite naturally, there was no option to think as far as selection was concerned. We have 14 available players, so we have to pick our best XI. I think it is a good opportunity to find ourselves in a good place despite being in such a situation. We will be able to show a side of our character.'

It is possible to win a T20 if one or two bowlers or a couple of batsmen do well. Most matches finish in the 19th and 20th overs regardless of who is playing. South Africa is a test place to play for any sub-continent team. Since we have nothing to lose, this is a good opportunity.'

'Sure someone will step up for Tigers'

SPORTS REPORTER from Bloemfontein

Two new captains will take the field today in the first T20I series as Shakib Al Hasan will start his second stint of national captaincy and JP Duminy will be filling in for regular skipper Faf du Plessis, who injured his lower back during the third ODI and is now out for six weeks.

The talk from the Bangladesh skipper was that the visitors will have nothing to lose at the end of a long tour during which they lost the Test series 2-0 and the ODI series 3-0.

'For me there are two ways to look at it,' said Duminy yesterday when asked whether there was a danger in facing a side that has nothing to lose. 'It can be dangerous as you mentioned as they have nothing to lose. Or they can have one foot in the plane already, wanting to go home. We will find out tomorrow [Thursday]. But our main target as a team is focusing on what we want to do, and that is to walk away from the series 2-0.'

But the left-hander was prepared to give Bangladesh their due.

'It's not like we will just walk over them. Obviously we are confident coming into the series. We believe we have the players to win, but we know it's going to be a tough contest. They have some world class players.'

'The shorter the format is, the closer the teams come to each other. Bangladesh are pretty much a formidable team. Yes, they are dealing with some injuries and that may help us in some way. But again it is an opportunity for young players to perform well in that vacant place which can cause a

problem for us.'

That has been the refrain throughout the series: when a South African player has been asked about Bangladesh's injuries, they have said that it is a good opportunity for someone else. And they have proven as throughout the Tests and ODIs they were missing at least three bowlers to injury but still managed to dominate.

'It's always difficult when you play away from home, especially for a new guy, who



JP DUMINY is obviously used to his home conditions,' he said when asked whether the lack of someone stepping up for Bangladesh surprised him. 'I am not surprised, but again, it's another opportunity for young players. You got nothing to lose. And I am sure there are some players who will put up their hands.'

Bangladesh A win sole T20I

SPORTS REPORTER

AL-Amin and captain Nazmul Hasan put the Ireland A bowlers to the sword as Bangladesh A posted a four-wicket victory in their T20 match at the Sheikh Kamal International Cricket Stadium in Cox's Bazar yesterday.

The fourth game was supposed to be a 50-over affair but both the teams' management agreed to play a T20 game as they did not want to play three one-dayers in as many days.

The final match of the series will be held at the same venue and it will be a 50-over match. Bangladesh have an unassailable 2-0 lead in the one-day series.

'It was a T20 match as both teams agreed to play a T20 game instead of a 50-over game due to the hectic schedule. The last match that was a 50-over game,' informed match referee Roquibul Hasan.

Ireland set a challenging target of 172, which Bangladesh overcame on the back of a 58-run third-wicket partnership between Nazmul and AL-Amin. They added those runs in just 5.2 overs.

AL-Amin smashed eight fours and two sixes during his 40-ball 67 while Nazmul struck four boundaries and three sixes during his 26-ball 47.



AL-AMIN ... 67

Barry McCarthy took two wickets, while Andrew McBriene, Peter Chase, Stuart Thompson and Simi Singh scalped one each.

Earlier, Ireland scored 171 courtesy of Andy Balbirnie's 51-ball 83, a knock that contained seven fours and four sixes.

Bangladesh pacer Imran Al Enam took three wickets while Mahedi Hasan, Abu Hider and Abul Hasan took one each.

SCORES IN BRIEF
IRELAND A: 170 for 7 (Balbirnie 83; Imran 3-33)
BANGLADESH A: 172 for 6 in 19.4 overs (AL-Amin 67, Nazmul 47; McCarthy 2-32)
Player-of-the-match: Andy Balbirnie.

Moody's focus on local cricketers

SPORTS REPORTER

One of only two foreign coaches among the seven teams for the upcoming fifth edition of the Bangladesh Premier League (BPL), former Australia cricketer Tom Moody began his assignment as Rangpur Riders' head coach yesterday.

Moody arrived in Dhaka on Tuesday, nine days before the tournament opener on November 4, and emphasised on local talents as he worked with the available local players at the National Academy ground in Mirpur yesterday.

Bangladesh ODI skipper Mashrafe Bin Mortaza will feature for Rangpur this season and the previous edition's semifinalists are already among the favourites after picking up West Indies' Chris Gayle and Samuel Badree and New Zealand's Brendon McCullum in their foreign players' squad.

With the likes of Abdur Razzak, Shahriar Nafees, Rubel Hossain, Sohag Gazi, Mohammad Mithun, Ziaur Rahman and Shamsur Rahman among the local cricketers, Moody's goal is to clinch the title this season and bring out the best of the local cricketers.

'To me it is also about developing players. I have come here a couple of days early because I was keen to work with domestic players before the international players come. It is important that I know them personally, know their games, build a relationship and trust each other,' Moody told reporters yesterday. 'I hope that with the experience of us being together and having experienced players around, everyone is better off for.'

The 52-year-old, who also has coaching roles in the Indian Premier League (IPL), Caribbean Premier League and Pakistan Super League, informed that it was always a challenge to work in the sub-continent.

'I have always enjoyed the challenge of working in the sub-continent, which is why I took the opportunity to coach Sri Lanka in 2005. I would have easily stayed in the comfort zone of working in Australia or England but I am challenging myself in different environments and cultures. I thoroughly enjoyed my time in Sri Lanka and in the IPL. This is a challenge that I have experienced, and I welcome it with open arms,' he concluded.



Former Australia cricketer Tom Moody began his assignment as Rangpur Riders' head coach yesterday at the National Academy ground in Mirpur.

India draw level with 6-wicket win

APP, Pune

Half-centuries from Shikhar Dhawan and Dinesh Karthik fired India to a comfortable six-wicket win over New Zealand after a pitch-tampering storm threatened the second one-day international in Pune on Wednesday.

Dhawan scored a classy 68 and Karthik notched an unbeaten 64 as India made 232-4 to clinch victory with 24 balls to spare and level the three-match ODI series 1-1.

The match had looked to be under threat after a groundsman at the Maharashtra Cricket Association (MCA) stadium told undercover journalists that he had doctored the pitch before the game.

The Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) dismissed Pandurang Salgaonkar, the pitch manager at the Pune ground, after he described to India Today TV reporters, who were posing as bookies, how he had tampered with the surface.

'The BCCI has zero tolerance towards any activity that brings the game into disrepute,' Amitabh

Choudhary, the BCCI's acting honorary secretary, said in a statement.

The International Cricket Council said that it had launched an investigation into the pitch tampering claims 'to establish the facts'.

Another curator was swiftly drafted



India pacer Bhuvneshwar Kumar (L) celebrates the dismissal of New Zealand's Colin Munro during the second ODI in Pune yesterday.

in before match referee Chris Broad inspected the pitch and gave the go-ahead to start on schedule.

New Zealand captain Kane Williamson won the toss and chose to bat as the visitors looked to clinch the series with a victory following their six-wicket win in the opening ODI in Mumbai on Sunday.

India had other ideas though and restricted New Zealand to 230-9.

Fast bowler Bhuvneshwar Kumar claimed three wickets while paceman Jasprit Bumrah and spinner Yuzvendra Chahal shared in with two each.

Henry Nicholls top-scored for New Zealand with 42 while skipper Williamson's miserable series continued, adding just three runs to the six he made on Sunday.

Off-hander Dhawan hit five fours and two sixes during his 84-ball knock before driving straight at Ross Taylor to cover for a simple catch off Adam Milne.

SCORES IN BRIEF
NEW ZEALAND: 230 for 9 in 50 overs (Taylor 21, Latham 38, Nicholls 42, De Grandhomme 41, Santner 29, Southwell 25; not out; Kumar 3-45, Bumrah 2-36, Chahal 2-36)
INDIA: 232 for 4 in 46 overs (Dhawan 64, Kohli 29, Karthik 64; not out; Pandya 30, Dhoni 18; not out; Milne 1-21, Nicholls 1-38)
Result: India won by 6 wickets.
Player-of-the-match: Bhuvneshwar Kumar.

PHOTO: APP

Six U-19 players leaving for HK

SPORTS REPORTER

The Bangladesh youths will leave for Hong Kong today to take part in a six-a-side tournament today as part of their preparations for the upcoming Under-19 Asia Cup, slated to start in Malaysia from November 8.

South Africa, Sri Lanka, New Zealand, Pakistan, Australia, Antigua and Barbuda Cricket Club and the host nation will also take part in the tournament, which will be followed by the ICC Under-19 World Cup in New Zealand next year.

Ahead of the tournament's start on October 28 the eight teams were divided into two groups, with Saif Hasan's side being pitted against New Zealand, Sri Lanka and Australia.

BCCI age-level selector Ehsanul Haque believes the competition will help cricketers gain confidence in their power-hitting abilities.

'The batsmen will get the opportunity to improve their skills in the competition and that is why we decided to send our cricketers to Hong Kong. The batsmen can gain confidence in power-hitting by taking part in such tournaments,' Ehsanul told reporters yesterday.

After the trip to Hong Kong, the Bangladesh team will return to play a three-match one-day series against their Nepalese counterparts, who will arrive in Dhaka on October 30.

All the matches will be played at the BHSPO on November 2, 4 and 5. According to Ehsanul, the Cricket Association of Nepal insisted on the series as part of their preparations for the upcoming Asia Cup and World Cup.

He also added that the series would help Bangladesh rectify their mistakes and improve after the recent disappointment against Afghanistan, against whom the hosts lost the one-day series 3-1.