



The Tigers are playing a game of football at the Senwes Park, where they will round up their forgettable series with the second and final T20I against hosts South Africa today. The match will start at 6.30pm.

PHOTO: SAKEB SUNBAN

'Don't want to give them a sniff'

SPORTS REPORTER from Potchefstroom



South Africa's players are intent on finishing off Bangladesh today in the second T20I and eager to maintain a clean sheet on the Tigers' tour of the country by sweeping the two-match series 2-0 as they had done in the Tests and ODIs.

Farhaan Behardien was instrumental in getting the South Africans to this point in the series as he hit a 17-ball 36 in the first match at Bloemfontein after coming in at number six in the midst of a fightback from Bangladesh.

"One more game of the tour left for Bangladesh and we are not looking to take our foot off the throat there," said Behardien after the team's practice at Senwes Park yesterday. "We played a good game the other night in Bloemfontein and tomorrow should be no different.

"We play to win every game. We want to

have a clean sweep and not give Bangladesh a sniff or any joy before they travel back. It is important to end this mini season on a high before the India series."

Bangladesh's fightback in the first game was down to the spinners Shakib Al Hasan, Mehedi Hasan Miraz and Mahmudullah Riyad tightening things up after a blistering half-century stand between AB de Villiers and Quinton de Kock. With their success, spin may be a strategy that the Tigers will use today to get the joy that Behardien wants to deny them.

"We had nine overs of off-spin in the first 13. I've been working really hard with our batting coach Neil McKenzie and spin bowling coach Claude Henderson, who has really helped with our game plans. I think the guys have handled it well; we have some real experience at the top with AB and Hashim [Amla], JP [Duminy] and David Miller, they have played hundreds of T20 games, so whatever the Bangladesh side throw at us in

regards to spin, I am sure we will have it covered tomorrow [Sunday]."

Spin being Bangladesh's strength, Behardien talked about their strength in pace bowling. Even with stalwarts like Kagiso Rabada and Morne Morkel missing, Behardien identified the fast bowling unit as the difference maker in Thursday's 20-run win. While Bangladesh's 10 overs of pace cost 108 runs for one wicket, South Africa's 16 overs of fast bowling cost just 129 runs and accounted for eight wickets.

"Robbie Frylinck, Beuran Hendricks, Dane Paterson are great exponents of death bowling. They performed really well the other night and that was the difference. Our death hitting and their death hitting were not as good but that is a tribute to our fast bowling unit. They are working really hard with our coach [Ottis Gibson], whose specialty is bowling, and together with Charl Langeveldt that is going to be an important factor tomorrow [Sunday]."

'Winning is the minimum'

SAKEB SUBHAN from Potchefstroom



It was fairly obvious that the tour was ending. South Africa's T20I captain had said before the first match that Bangladesh may have one foot on the plane and that may be an advantage for the home side, but the promise of home comforts after an arduous tour may have rejuvenated the Tigers. Yesterday that lightness of spirit was apparent during Bangladesh's training and warm-ups at Senwes Park in Potchefstroom, the venue where it all started with a 333-run defeat in the first Test.

Today they will play the last match of the tour when they take on South Africa in the second T20I and it will be one final shot at getting a win next to their name as they have lost all six international matches so far on tour. The levity -- the players were laughing and joking while playing a warm-up football game with two in the middle of the circle chasing the ball and having to do push-ups when 10 passes were completed -- probably had as much to do with the fact that they gave South Africa a run for their money in the first T20I, the first show of real fight on the tour.

Before the first match, T20I skipper Shakib Al Hasan talked about the aim being to show fight and play like a team, but when asked yesterday about what he would be happy with, he smiled broadly, as if wondering about the legitimacy of the question.

"What else is there but winning," he laughed and said. "The minimum is to win, I don't see much beyond that."

Despite the 20-run loss in the first game in Potchefstroom, the new skipper seemed happy with the performance -- an understandable reaction given the huge margins of defeat in the preceding games.

"Everything went well but if we played better, we would have had a chance of winning. We played with an extra bowler so that we could stop them around 180," he said. "We had the confidence that our batsmen could chase that total on that pitch. I thought we gave 10-15 extra runs, and we could have fielded better. But if we can improve in certain areas, we will be able to play a good game."

He also admitted that losing two quick wickets -- those of seniors Mushfiquir Rahim and Mahmudullah Riyad to big shots -- after Soumya Sarkar had provided a good platform for the chase of 196 was not the ideal approach.

"We could have been a bit sensible during that time, not lose wickets for about 4-5 overs. But you have to take risk to get runs. I think we need to find the right balance in our batting -- take risks, score runs but not lose wickets.

"We play T20s once in a while so it takes a bit of time to adjust to the format in the first match. The moment you feel like you have got the measure of it, you go into a six-month break. But most teams don't play more than one or two T20s in a series in any case. So this is not an excuse; when you are out there you have to try to win."

He added that while the pitch here is a little slower than most in the country, it looked like being another belter of a wicket and they will have to score at least 180 or keep South Africa within that total if they want to win.

The feeling yesterday was one of positivity, and foot on the plane or not, the Tigers finally seem to be having fun, which might be the right recipe to end on a high.



T20I skipper Shakib Al Hasan (R) shares a light moment with chief selector Minhazul Abedin at Senwes Park.

PHOTO: STAR

HONG KONG SIXERS Bangladesh start strong

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh made a good start in the Hong Kong International Sixers six-a-side tournament by defeating Australia and Sri Lanka to stand in second position of the group-B points table, at the Kowloon Cricket Club in Hong Kong yesterday.

However in the day's other group match, all of which were five overs a side, Saif Hassan and his troops succumbed to a three-wicket loss to the New Zealand Kiwis after posting 82 runs for 1 wicket.

In the first game Bangladesh posted 93 for 4 against Sri Lanka as skipper Saif blasted 52 runs off just 15 balls with five sixes and the same number of boundaries. In reply, Sri Lanka managed to score 86 runs for 3 wickets, which were taken one apiece by Saif, Afif Hossain and Monirul Islam.

In the Australia encounter, which in order to reach the cup stage was a must win game, Afif displayed an all-round performance to help clinch the six run win.

Bangladesh posted 88 for 2 riding on Afif's 11 ball 34 run knock and, after scoring the team highest, the left-hander retired.



Young Tigers take a selfie after their victory against Australia.

Australia required 14 runs from the last over to steal the win but Afif bowled in tight lengths and gave the Aussie batters no quarter as his side eventually pulled off the victory. Australian national cricketer and skipper John Hastings was the highest scorer for the team from down under with 32.

Decider at Kanpur today

AGENCIES, Kanpur

If the series opener was about New Zealand's adaptability - they bumped Colin Munro to the top and launched the sweep-happy Tom Latham in the middle order - then the second match was about India's bouncebackability. This now means India and New Zealand will square off in an ODI series decider for the second time in two years--this time at Kanpur's Green Park Stadium, which will be hosting its first ever 50-over game under lights.

Last year, on October 29, India picked three specialist spinners on a slow turner in Visakhapatnam, where New Zealand capsize to 79 all out from 63 for 2. What will Kanpur throw up this October 29?

'Can't be lazy under Mash'

SPORTS REPORTER



English all-rounder Ravi Bopara revealed his intent to take the title of the upcoming fifth edition of the Bangladesh Premier League with his new outfit Rangpur Riders after formally joining the team training sessions at the Academy ground in Mirpur yesterday.

The-32-year-old, who played a crucial role for the champions of the previous season Dhaka Dynamites, informed that the team needs to be well adjusted before the tournament begins on November 4 while adding that a lot depends on pitch conditions.

"I want to win the tournament, there is no point coming here to lose," Bopara said. "There have been big players in the past, like last year you had Kumar Sangakkara and Dwayne Bravo. The competition has always been good in Bangladesh. A lot depends on the pitches -- if they are good we are going to have a good tournament. If they are bad

then it will be interesting. We expect competition against every team, but we have got a good team."

The T20 specialist also informed that he is already very familiar with the team and their coach, Tom Moody; from his ventures in different franchise leagues all over the world but reserved special praise for Tigers ODI skipper Mahsrafe Bin Mortaza, stating that players can never be lazy under the inspirational leader.



RAVI BOPARA

"Mash (Mashrafe) is the type of guy you want to play for. He gives 100 per cent so you have to give 100 per cent. It is good for any team. Nobody can be lazy with Mash. He is a good cricketer. He is a very accurate bowler, and he can smack the ball against spinners. He also has authority, which is good."

Bopara will definitely play his part alongside Rangpur's other experienced foreign recruits, the explosive West Indies batsman Chris Gayle and New Zealand hard hitter Brendon McCullum, as the trio undoubtedly make the side one of the fiercest title contenders this season.

AFC president due today

SPORTS REPORTER

Asian Football Confederation (AFC) president Salman Bin Ibrahim Al-Khalifa will arrive in Dhaka today on a two-day visit.

The AFC President is expected to meet BFF president Kazi Salahuddin on Monday morning before an official meeting with the executive committee members of the federation.

"I think it would be a positive thing for our football," BFF's senior vice-president Salam Murshedy said. "We will try to showcase our future plan to give him a positive impression. We will discuss our recent success at the youth level both in men's and women's game."

Murshedy added that they would ask for technical assistance from the AFC president for running development programmes smoothly.

Uttara CCC win 2nd Div chess

SPORTS REPORTER

Uttara Central Chess Club emerged unbeaten champions in the Walton Second Division Chess League, which concluded yesterday.

The club won all seven rounds, collecting 14 match points and 25 game points on their way. Legend Faraz Ayaaz Chess Club finished runners-up with 10 match points and 19 game points. Dhaka Knights Chess Club finished third.

The champions and runners-up teams will play in the first division league next year.

The champion team were awarded Tk 25,000 while the runners-up and third place teams were given Tk 15,000 and Tk 10,000, apart from Walton home appliances for the players.

Meherpur disqualified

Federation claims team violated rule; team claims otherwise

SPORTS REPORTER



The Bangladesh Table Tennis Federation (BTF) yesterday scrapped Meherpur District Association from the men's team event of the 37th Senior National Table Tennis Championship for a 'violation of rule of the competition.'

The game's local governing body took the decision based on a complaint from the Chittagong team which stated that Meherpur team had fielded three players who did not belong to that team.

Meherpur had secured semifinal berth after having won four matches but the tournament committee forced them to play another match against Narail team violating the fixture.

Meherpur refused to play against Narail which forced the tournament committee to halt the matches of the men's team event for the last three days.

Federation's general secretary Khandoker

Hasan Munir said they tried for an amicable solution but failed to convince the Meherpur team.

"They broke rule of the competition by playing the match against Chittagong without their own players," Munir said.

"Even though we tried to reach an amicable solution to keep them in the competition, they didn't change their stance which is why we had to disqualify the team."

Meherpur team player Nazmul Haq Salman claimed that they are victims of politics.

"According to fixture we had four matches and we won all of those to secure the semifinals," he said. "But later federation officials asked us to play another group match against Narail violating the fixture and we refused to play. And then we became victim of politics because Chittagong didn't follow the rule before lodging complaint against us."

The tournament committee said they will reschedule the fixtures of the men's team event after disqualification of Meherpur.



Police stand guard at an entrance of the Gaddafi Cricket Stadium in Lahore ahead of today's last T20 match between Pakistan and Sri Lanka. The Lankans will become the first major team to visit Pakistan since they were targeted in a deadly militant attack here in 2009.

PHOTO: AFP