



'Relaxed Shakib gets the best out of us'

SPORTS REPORTER



Shakib Al Hasan led Dhaka Dynamites to the Bangladesh Premier League (BPL) title last season and his star-studded side are once again on a mission for a repeat in the fifth edition of the BPL.

Despite losing their tournament opener to Sylhet Sixers, they staged a turnaround, winning their next two games including an eight-wicket thrashing of Sylhet in the opening fixture of the Dhaka leg.

With the likes of Kumar Sangakkara, Shahid Afridi, Kieron Pollard, Sunil Narine featuring in the squad, it could be a challenge for the all-rounder to captain the team, especially in the face of expectations to do well and display leadership qualities.

However, according to the Dynamites West Indian spinner Narine, who participates in T20 leagues the world over, Shakib has those qualities that define a proactive leader.

"Yeah I think when you have a star-studded team it can be a challenge at times but I think he is doing a good job. He is letting all the individuals do what they have to to build on their strengths and I think he

is a relaxed captain and gets the best out of his players," Narine told reporters ahead of today's game against Khulna Titans at the National Academy ground in Mirpur yesterday.

The 29-year-old became just the third bowler to cross the 300-wicket landmark in T20s when he claimed three Sylhet wickets on Saturday. Narine, who is the first spinner ever to achieve this feat, also added that he looks forward to more personal milestones in the coming days.



SUNIL NARINE

"In cricket, I mean you always want to do good and doing good and getting achievements at the end of the day by itself is a lot. It says that you are working on your game and focusing a lot and hopefully there will be more achievements in the future and I am taking it step by step, game by game," he said.

Asked whether it is challenging to perform in a team featuring Afridi and Shakib, Narine informed that it makes the job easier.

"I think the quality bowlers we have actually makes things easier. I think it's less pressure on one individual so that makes it a good team effort. If you don't do well there's someone to fill the gap and do it for the team," said Narine.



Shakib Al Hasan's Dhaka Dynamites juggernaut will look for another strong display when the Bangladesh Premier League resumes today at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur after a day's break. Dhaka will take on Khulna in the first game starting at 1.00pm. PHOTO: STAR

Ajmal quits cricket

AFP, Karachi

Pakistan spinner Saeed Ajmal announced his retirement from all forms of cricket on Monday, two years after losing his wicket-taking bite with a remodelled bowling action that was twice deemed illegal.

During a successful but controversial career, Ajmal was once celebrated as the world's number one bowler in one day internationals (ODIs) and Twenty20 cricket, and was almost as successful in Tests.

He famously captured 24 wickets in three Tests against England in 2012.

But his time in the limelight was cut short after a temporary ban for chucking saw him return to the sport in 2015 without the same form.

He took just one wicket in two ODIs and a Twenty20 in Bangladesh, his first matches after being cleared to bowl, and was never selected for the national team again.

"I am quitting all forms of cricket after the current National Twenty20 tournament," Ajmal told AFP from Rawalpindi on the phone.

"It was a highly satisfying career in which I achieved whatever goals I set for myself and helped the team win matches."

Ajmal took 178 wickets in 35 Tests, the last of which was at Galle in Sri Lanka in 2014, where his bowling action was reported for a second time. It was first reported during an ODI series against Australia in the UAE in 2009.

He finished with 184 wickets in 113 ODIs, and 85 in 64 T20Is.

Tamim set to return today

SPORTS REPORTER



Tamim Iqbal will return to action today when his side Comilla Victorians take on Chittagong Vikings in today's second match of the Bangladesh Premier League (BPL) at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur.

"I didn't appear in the first few matches in BPL as I wanted to be fully fit. I was supposed to play the last game against Rajshahi Kings but after consulting with national physio [Bayjidul Islam] I have changed my mind to avoid any risk. Now, after ticking all the boxes I am ready to play the BPL. Let's see what happen," said Comilla Victorians captain.

It is however not yet certain whether Tamim will take the reins immediately, and it may be that Mohammad Nabi will continue his stopgap role today.

Tamim Iqbal sustained a thigh muscle injury during a practice match against a South African Invitation XI on September 21 but played the first Test a week later, which only aggravated his injury. Tamim was retained for the three-match ODI series in South Africa and despite not being hundred per cent fit he played the second ODI before he was ruled out of the remainder of Bangladesh's tour to South Africa.

Meanwhile, under the leadership of Nabi, Comilla have won one match against Rangpur Riders out of three games played so far.

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One of the most noticeable aspects of the ongoing Bangladesh Premier League is perhaps the lack of intensity in the 12 matches so far. Apart from the game between Sylhet Sixers and Comilla Victorians during the Sylhet leg when the home side sealed a nerve-racking four-wicket win with one ball remaining, the games have not really been very competitive.

That will be one of the things to watch out for when the BPL resumes today after a day's break with Shakib Al Hasan's star-studded Dhaka Dynamites taking on Mahmudullah Riyad's Khulna Titans in the first game of the day, followed by a Comilla Victorians-Chittagong Vikings clash in the second match.

Most of the games were one-sided and it was reflected in the fact that not many spectators turned up for the matches in Dhaka. When it comes to exciting cricket the fare on offer in this edition has so far fallen far short of the mark.

On the other hand, this season's BPL probably has the highest number of quality foreign players taking part after the decision to play five foreign players in the playing eleven. The likes of Kumar

Sangakkara, Shahid Afridi, Ravi Bopara, Jos Butler, Dwayne Bravo, James Franklin have a firm presence in the league but the lack of contributions from local batsmen has contributed to the dulling of the contests so far.

In the last season, three of the top five run-scorers were Bangladeshi. This time however, none of the Bangladeshi players are in the top five run-getters' list so far. Mominul Haque's half-century during the game between Rajshahi Kings and Rangpur Riders on Saturday was the first fifty struck by a local player after eight games in the tournament.

The question, therefore, is whether the local players are not getting enough opportunities to display their talents because of the five-foreigner rule or are they just not pulling their weight. It seems to be a case of the latter as in most games the Bangladeshi players who did get chances were unable to cash in.

As examples, Chittagong Vikings' opener Soumya Sarkar has so far scored 45 runs in three games and Sabbir Rahman has scored 22 from five games for Sylhet Sixers batting at number three. Liton Das has 67 runs from three matches and the Comilla opener had the platform to finish the game after a blistering start, chasing a

total as low as 116 against Rajshahi Kings on Sunday, but instead threw his wicket away by playing a rather rash shot for 23.

However, his partner Imrul Kayes did exactly the opposite and went on to finish the game, remaining unbeaten on 44 off 41 balls alongside English batsman Jos Buttler which will definitely give him some confidence in the coming games.

The situation is different when it comes to the bowlers. Khulna Titans fast bowler Abu Jayed picked four wickets in the previous game against Chittagong Vikings on Sunday, which took him to the highest wicket-takers table alongside English pacer Liam Plunkett with six scalps in three games.

Taskin Ahmed also has six wickets in the same number of matches but the fast bowler has been very expensive and is yet to showcase anything extraordinary. Apart from these two, there has not been any spells from local bowlers that have caught the eye, be it in their first spells or in the death overs, which is something the locals will definitely want to correct on such a platform.

The fifth edition of the BPL is still in its first quarter and there are a lot of matches to be played, the locals will have to step up their game not only to further their own credentials but also to make the tournament an exciting one.

Vettel wins Brazilian GP

REUTERS, Sao Paulo

Sebastian Vettel restored Ferrari pride with victory in the Brazilian Grand Prix on Sunday while newly-crowned four-time world champion Lewis Hamilton produced the drive of the day from last to fourth for Mercedes.

Hamilton, who clinched the title in Mexico two weeks ago, started from the pit lane after changes to his car following a crash in qualifying then began a thrilling charge through the field.

The Briton was already up to ninth after 10 laps, with the safety car deployed after opening lap collisions and led the race before the halfway stage as others pitted and he ran longer.

Hamilton finished only 5.4 seconds behind Vettel with Finland's Kimi Raikkonen holding him off to take third place for Ferrari, the 2007 world champion's third podium finish in a row.

"It was fun. It was reminiscent of my karting days when I'd start at the back, particularly in my first year or two," said Hamilton, voted driver of the day by fans in an online poll.

Mercedes team boss Toto Wolff described his stirring performance, with a series of overtakes, as "a champion's drive."

Vettel is now 22 points clear of Bottas with only the Abu Dhabi season-ender remaining. Hamilton's unassailable overall lead was reduced to 43.

Hridoy ton drives young Tigers to crushing win

SPORTS REPORTER



Towhid Hridoy slammed a blazing hundred as Bangladesh Under-19s outclassed their Malaysian counterparts by 262 runs to maintain their winning run in the ACC Under-19 Asia Cup at the Bayuemas Oval in Kuala Lumpur yesterday. Captain Saif Hasan missed a hundred by just 10 runs but added 192 with Hridoy for the third wicket stand to help Bangladesh pile up a huge total of 335 for six after at one stage being 36 for two.

It was the second successive win for the young Tigers as they won against Nepal by two wickets through the D/L method in the opening game. Bangladesh lead the Group A table with two wins and they will play their last group match today against defending champions India, who suffered a shocking 19-run defeat to Nepal on Sunday.

In yesterday's second match, Malaysia made a good start to justify their decision to bowl first as Bangladesh lost openers Pinak Ghosh and Naim Sheikh for 36 runs. Hridoy, who is considered a future prospect by many, then joined Saif to put the Malaysian bowlers to the sword.

Hridoy smashed seven fours and four sixes during his run-a-ball 120 while Saif struck 90 off 103 balls with five fours and three sixes. Aminul Islam was the other notable scorer as he made an unbeaten 39 off 17 balls that contained two fours and four sixes.

In reply, Virandeep Singh was the only Malaysia Under-19s batsman to reach double digits but his 130-ball 46 only helped the hosts to complete the 50-over quota for a dismal score of 73 for eight.

Shakhawat Hossain picked up three

wickets for 18 runs while Afif Hossain picked up two wickets for 19.

SCORES IN BRIEF

BANGLADESH U-19S: 335-6 in 50 overs (Towhid Hridoy 120, Saif 90, Aminul 39 not out; Hafiz 4-78)

MALAYSIA U-19S: 73-8 in 50 overs (Virandeep 46; Shakhawat 3-18, Afif 2-19, Saif 1-7)

Result: Bangladesh Under-19s won by 262 runs.

Player-of-the-match: Towhid Hridoy.



Towhid Hridoy (L) and skipper Saif Hasan put on a blistering 192 runs for the third wicket to guide Bangladesh U-19s to a massive 262-run win against their Malaysian counterparts in their Youth Asia Cup match yesterday. PHOTO: BCB

'First target is to win opening Test'

PTI, Kolkata



India's wicketkeeper Wriddhiman Saha on Monday said that his team's first target is to win the opening Test at the Eden Gardens to set the momentum for the three-match series against Sri Lanka.

"We are yet to see the wicket but the first target is to win the first Test and get momentum to win the series," Saha said after Indian team's first practice session ahead of the opening Test against Sri Lanka from November 16.

Not looking too far ahead of the South Africa series, beginning with Cape Town Test on January 6, Saha said it was about taking it match by match.

"Every match is important and poses a different challenge, there's nothing like preparation. We will go match by match. If we do better here then we will think of the SA series."

Rating Ravichandran Ashwin ahead of others, Saha said the off-spinner posed a big challenge to keep behind the stumps with many variations.

"Ashwin is ahead of others. He has got many variations, also the length varies, so it's tough against him. He has more

variation than (Ravindra) Jadeja, Kuldeep (Yadav).

"We have played many matches in Ranji, India A and during practice. The more you keep, the better idea you develop. It becomes easier after a point. I've always played with them in all my 28 Tests," he said.

India boast of three spinners -- Ashwin, left-arm spinner Ravindra Jadeja and left-arm chinaman Kuldeep Yadav -- all are very different from each other.

"Your 50 per cent job is done mainly by reading the hand at the point of release then you see how it bounces off the pitch and turns. The challenge is to hold on to all the balls, even if it turns or not."

Among the pacers, Saha picked Ishant Sharma and Mohammed Shami as the seam bowlers who pose a bigger challenge than swing.

"The ball wobbles after it goes past and it becomes tough for the wicketkeepers too. But being swing bowlers, Umesh Yadav and Bhuvneshwar Kumar there's not much of a problem."

Asked whether they would play three spinners, he said: "Ultimately we will decide as per the wicket and see who gets maximum purchase from the wicket."