



Bangladesh's Tamim Iqbal (2nd From L) and Shakib Al Hasan (C) will know what they have to do against Sri Lanka in the tri-series match today, but the less experienced players surrounding them will also have to step up. PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

First-class feats are no joke

BISHWAJIT ROY



"10,000 runs and 500 wickets; it's no joke."

Bangladesh ODI captain Mashrafe Bin Mortaza has rightly recognised the monumental achievements of Tushar Imran and Abdur Razzak while responding to a question regarding the country's two ageless cricketers' recent feats in first-class cricket.

He also ensured that the two heroes were receiving congratulations and their due respect from the players and also reminded the media that it is as important to focus on the dedication of players like Tushar and Razzak in the domestic circuit as it is to report on what Shakib-Tamim-Mashrafe-Mushfiqur are saying.

It was nice to hear from the country's most loved cricketer that the players have congratulated the two cricketers and have discussed their achievements. While it is true that more can be done to keep domestic cricket in focus, one cannot say that the media have neglected it in the face of all the international engagements; they have instead tried to cover domestic achievements with utmost sincerity. However, the manner in which the Bangladesh Cricket Board failed to appreciate or even remark on the milestone publicly is unfortunate.

Would it not have been a source of great encouragement if the two players received crests for their achievement, if not financial rewards, from the board?

It could have been an occasion for the board to show that they are not just busy with international cricket, but place equal importance to the domestic circuit especially as there has been a criticism that it only matters to the board when it relates to

international cricket.

Most importantly, to develop a rich cricket culture in the country we should make sure that such achievements will not go unnoticed and for that to happen, the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) must change their mindset.

The other vital question that emerges from this is whether the monumental achievements of scoring 10,000 runs and taking 500 wickets will catch the attention of the selectors.

"I must say it's a big achievement to score 10,000 runs and take 500 wickets. Bringing them back into the national team is not the only way to show them respect. We can glorify our first-class cricket in different ways and we can recognise their feats in many ways," said chief selector Minhajul Abedin yesterday.

"But you all know there are some issues we need to consider when picking a player for the national team. We have to go into details about the conditions or how many overs a bowler has bowled to be successful before considering him for the national side. At this moment, Razzak has little chance as we have a number of good options but we can think about Tushar, but then again Mushy (Mushfiqur Rahim) is now batting at that position in the national side. Actually if we have an A team which plays regularly then it is helpful for these kinds of player. But still, we may try Tushar," he added.

Interestingly, many say that it is not that hard to score runs in Bangladeshi first-class cricket, but if you ask recent national discard Soumya Sarker or other young players they will definitely give you some different notes.

Looking down upon and neglecting first-class cricket has become the fashion in Bangladesh cricket's corridors of power, but they will do well to remember that demeaning first-class cricket means demeaning the whole cricket culture.



In the BCL match against Central Zone, Abdur Razzak (L) and Tushar Imran brought up historic milestones of 500 first-class wickets and 10,000 runs respectively. PHOTO: COLLECTED

Fearless cricket Mashrafe's mantra

SPORTS REPORTER

The hallmark of a professional is his ability to think positively and the words of Bangladesh ODI captain Mashrafe Bin Mortaza yesterday reflected that ideal ahead of today's tri-series clash between Bangladesh and Sri Lanka at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur.

It was evident during the pre-match briefing that Mashrafe and Co. were well aware of the fact that they need to handle their emotions professionally in the face of all the chatter surrounding their former coach, Chandika Hathurusingha.

There is nothing wrong with the players being pumped up to prove their credentials against their recently-departed coach, but what Bangladesh's most successful ODI captain desires from his teammates is 'a brand of cricket which ensures freedom and a fearless approach'.

During a marathon press conference, Mashrafe repeatedly emphasised on the need to properly execute their plans and play disciplined cricket all through the match, just as they had against Zimbabwe in the tri-series opener.

"We did everything right in the first match, now how we can execute our plan in the next match is most important. The way Bijoy

[Anamul Haque] played the first match on his return to the team after a long break embodied exactly how we want to play; fearless cricket," opined Mashrafe.

Like a true professional, Mashrafe added that the team had put the Chandika issue behind well before the start of the series.

"It's new for a team to face its last coach...actually we put behind the issue well before the series. Once he left we forgot his planning. We are coping with a new coach, so there is no scope to think about this issue,"

said Mashrafe.

The right-arm pacer also did not hesitate in having a slight jab at his former coach, saying: "Everywhere you face challenges. When Hathurusingha was in Bangladesh there was some kind of pressure on him and the challenge for him would have increased after the loss in South Africa. That challenge could have been interesting but he didn't stay, rather he chose Sri Lanka."

However Mashrafe showed his opponents due respect considering

that they have players like Angelo Mathews and Thisara Perera, and added that the team had to be mentally prepared to handle any tough situations, such as the one Sri Lanka found themselves in against Zimbabwe.

Mashrafe, who was looking for a combined effort and consistency, has high hopes from his pace bowlers as he believes that their performance matters the most in Bangladesh's wins and informed that it was good news for him that Mustafizur Rahman provided evidence of returning to his old form.

Mashrafe has all but a settled unit, with two stalwarts in Tamim Iqbal and Shakib Al Hasan getting off to a flyer in the new year, but he believes that Shakib's promotion to the number three position created an opportunity for young all-rounders to show their potential at the number eight position by scoring quick-fire runs.

"We have a big space at the number seven-eight position after Shakib's promotion in the batting order and one will only be able to cope if he can be consistent at this position," said Mashrafe.

In the end, the Bangladesh captain gave the impression that the Tigers were confident of their plan to beat Chandika's Sri Lanka and just needed to execute accordingly in the middle today.



Sri Lanka coach Chandika Hathurusingha's inside knowledge of the Mirpur wicket from his time as Bangladesh coach may be useful in today's tri-series match against the hosts. PHOTO: STAR

Under-19s fail England test

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Under-19s failed to on their good form into their first major group-stage challenge in the ICC Under-19 World Cup as they suffered a seven-wicket defeat to their English counterparts at the John Davies Oval in Queenstown, New Zealand yesterday.

Bangladesh Under-19s had simply outclassed their Namibian and Canadian counterparts in the first two Group C matches, but their batting was well below par against England as they were bundled out for 175 in 49.2 overs.

England rode on a century from their captain, Harry Brook, and his unbroken 128-run stand with Euan Woods (48 off 57) to coast to a seven-wicket victory in 29.3 overs. While making an unbeaten 84-ball 102 that contained 13 fours and three sixes, Brook became the first England Under-19 captain since Alastair Cook to score a century in the Youth World Cup.

Meanwhile, Canada cruised to a four-wicket victory over Namibia in the day's other match to keep their knockout hopes alive, but they will have to win the last group match against England on January by a big margin to have a chance of progressing.

England are now leading the Group C table with four points from two matches and a net run rate of 3.278 while Bangladesh are in second place with four points from three matches and a net run rate of 0.438. Canada are third with two points and a net run rate of -0.277.

The Bangladesh Under-19 batting was a big concern prior to the tournament proper but they showed their ability against the two minnows. However, they reverted to their old state as the top order was not afforded the time to settle in against disciplined bowling from Ethan Bamber and Dillon Pennington.

At 27 for four, Bangladesh could not pose any threat to their opponents despite Afif Hossain's 85-ball 63. Ethan Bamber initiated the early collapse with a three-wicket haul and then Euan Woods rattled the middle order.

SCORES IN BRIEF

BANGLADESH U19S: 175 all out in 49.2 overs (Afif 63, Aminul 31, Mahidul 20; Bamber 3-19, Woods 3-26, Pennington 1-26)

ENGLAND U19S: 177-3 in 29.3 overs (Brook 102 not out, Woods 48 not out; Onik 1-19, Hasan 1-27, Nayeem 1-36)
Result: England Under-19s won by seven wickets.
Player-of-the-match: Harry Brook (England Under-19s)

Ton-up Mominul

Second round ends in draw

SPORTS REPORTER



The game of landmarks at the BKSP in Savar involving Prime Bank South Zone and Walton Central Zone ended in a predictable draw yesterday.

After Prime Bank South's Tushar Imran became the first player to score 10,000 runs on the opening day of the four-day game, his teammate Abdur Razzak achieved the unique feat of scalping 500 wickets on the third morning while the fourth day turned into one for the battling teams to gain some crucial points by virtue of having a first innings advantage.

Central won that battle when they, resuming on 313-3, more than matched South's first innings total of 448, thanks to a gritty half century from number seven batsman Tanbir Hyder.

The leg-spinning all-rounder hit 77 as Central posted 505 after batting for a marathon 150.4 overs. He was also involved in a crucial 73-run sixth wicket stand with Nadif Chowdhury, who made 40.

Tanbir was the fifth batsman who scored fifties but failed to translate that into a hundred for Central's impressive total. Earlier, Raquibul Hasan was out without adding a single run to his overnight score of 82 and Mehrab Hossain turned his overnight 40 to 76 before becoming one of the four victims of left-arm spinner Razzak, who finished the memorable game with figures of 152-4.

South, who started their second essay with a deficit of 57 runs, scored 120-3 in 26 overs before both captains agreed to a draw. Former national opener Shahriar Nafees

scored an unbeaten 50 while milestone man Tushar made 16 before being run out. For discarded national opener Soumya Sarker, it was yet another disappointing day out in the middle. Dropped from the national team for his inconsistent form, the left-hander scored 18 before being adjudged leg-before off Tanbir. It was the second time in as many matches he was out lbw. He scored 10 in the first innings.

South's wicketkeeper-batsman Nurul Hasan was adjudged player-of-the-match for his fine 133, the only century in a high-scoring affair.

The other game, at the Sylhet International Stadium, also ended in a draw but not before Mominul Haque tuned up for the first Test against Sri Lanka later this month with a typically resolute century.

The left-hander, who hit 258 in the previous game, scored 107 as Islami Bank East Zone finished their second innings on 202-6. Mominul hit eight fours and a couple of sixes in his 147-ball knock. The match was declared a draw moments after he was dismissed in the 58th over on completion of his century.

Earlier, resuming the day on 273-8, BCB North Zone added 11 runs before being bowled out by the fourth over of the day, leaving East to score 260 runs for an outright victory.

But apart from the 63-run second wicket stand between Mominul and Liton Das (48), they lacked the pace and necessary partnerships to achieve the target. They lost four wickets for 14 runs after Liton departed at 102.

The third round will start in Rajshahi and Khulna on January 21.



MOMINUL ...107

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SCORES IN BRIEF

PRIME BANK SOUTH ZONE V WALTON CENTRAL ZONE
SOUTH ZONE: 448 and 120 for 3 in 26 overs (Soumya 18, Nafees 50 not out, Al-Amin 20 not out; Ebadat 1-15, Tanbir 1-35)
CENTRAL ZONE: 505 all out in 150.4 overs (Shadman 89, Robiul 90, Raquibul 82,

Mehrab 76, Nadif 40, Tanbir 77, Razzak 4-152, Mosaddek 3-59)
Result: Match drawn.
Player-of-the-match: Nurul Hasan.

ISLAMI BANK EAST ZONE V BCB NORTH ZONE
NORTH ZONE: 187 and 284 all out in 81.3

overs (Nazmul 31, Mizanur 20, Farhad 85, Dhiman 23, Ariful 28, Suhraward 23, Reza 33; Jayed 3-71, Khaled 5-89)

EAST ZONE: 211 and 202 for 6 in 57.4 overs (Liton 48, Mominul 107; Taijul 4-68)
Result: Match drawn.
Player-of-the-match: Mominul Haque.

Hazlewood out, Paine in doubt

Second ODI today

AFP, Sydney

Australian quick Josh Hazlewood has been ruled out of Friday's second one-day international against England in Brisbane with illness, while gloveman Alex Carey has been called up to cover for Tim Paine.

The Aussies lost the first of the five-match series against the tourists in Melbourne last Sunday, and with Hazlewood Thursday determined to unwell to play, paceman Jhye Richardson appears set to make his debut on a Gabba pitch expected to provide plenty for fast bowlers.

"You're always confident as an Australian batsman when you come and look at this wicket, that's for sure," Australian vice captain David Warner told Cricket Australia's official website on Wednesday.

"It's always got good bounce and carry for the bowlers as well."

Hazlewood is among several players in both the Australian and English locker rooms to be hit by illness in recent weeks, with team mates Paine, Warner, Steve Smith and Patrick Cummins all stuck down by a bug.

England Test captain Joe Root suffered through stomach problems during the Ashes test series, while batsman James Vince has also been affected during the tour.

Kohli at the top

AFP, New Delhi



Virat Kohli on Thursday was crowned cricketer of the year by the sport's world governing body, capping off a strong innings for the Indian skipper across all three formats of the game.

Australian captain Steve Smith was named Test player of the year as the International Cricket Council unveiled its annual awards.

Kohli is just the fourth Indian to win the prestigious Sir Garfield Sobers Trophy, following in the footsteps of batting greats Sachin Tendulkar (2010), Rahul Dravid (2004) and teammate Ravichandran Ashwin (2016).

"It's the first time winning the Garfield Sobers Trophy, and it's a huge honour for me," Kohli said in a statement.

Kohli was also crowned the world's best one-day batsman, winning that title for the second time since 2012.

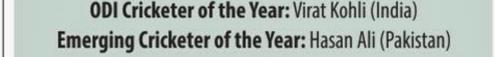
During the voting period from 21 September 2016 to end-2017, Kohli scored 2,203 Test runs at an average of 77.80 including eight centuries.

He accumulated 1,818 runs in the one-day format including seven centuries.

The Australian captain played 16 Tests during the 15-month voting period, scoring 1,875 runs at an average of 78.12, with eight hundreds and five half-centuries.

"I've had a really good year. I think I've scored six hundreds in the year and more importantly led the team to an Ashes victory, which is something that is really important to me," said Smith.

ICC'S CLASS OF 2017



VIRAT KOHLI STEVE SMITH

Cricketer of the Year: Virat Kohli (India)

Test Cricketer of the Year: Steve Smith (Australia)

ODI Cricketer of the Year: Virat Kohli (India)

Emerging Cricketer of the Year: Hasan Ali (Pakistan)

Associate Cricketer of the Year: Rashid Khan (Afghanistan)

T20I Performance of the Year: Yuzvendra Chahal (India)

Umpire of the Year: Marais Erasmus

Spirit of Cricket: Anya Shrubsole (England)