

SPORT



Bangladesh opener Tamim Iqbal has his eyes on the ball during practice at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday, and he will need all his focus in today's tri-series match against Zimbabwe if he is to buck the recent trend of falling between 50 and 100. PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

Focused for 10th ton

MAZHAR UDDIN



Since the 128-run knock against England in the ICC Champions Trophy last year, Tamim Iqbal has scored 95, 0, 70, 23, 84 not out and 84. Despite having struck four fifties in his last six innings, the dashing left-hander has been unable to convert those into hundreds.

In the first game of the ongoing tri-series, Tamim remained unbeaten on 84 to help chase down Zimbabwe's 171 and followed up with another 84 in their second match, against Sri Lanka, where he had the opportunity to register his 10th ODI century but was out with 21 overs to spare.

With 40 fifties to nine hundreds in the one-day format, Tamim surely does not enjoy this statistic as it reflects his difficulty in converting half-centuries into full ones. More frustrating still, the 28-year-old has been dismissed on 95 three times and in the 80s five times.

Ahead of a training session in Mirpur yesterday, Tamim, with an eye on his 10th ton, expressed his disappointment at not being able to convert fifties into centuries, especially after having stuck consecutive fifty-plus scores in the series.

"It was not unlucky, really, in the second game as I started the innings quite slowly. But the positive thing to me is that I did not throw away my wicket as I was waiting for the right time and when the time came, I tried to capitalise by targeting a specific bowler. And when I needed to control, I batted in that way. Unfortunately it was a

good ball. I paced my innings very well. So, I am happy that I did not throw my wicket away in second match.

"To be honest I also felt disappointed as I should have scored more centuries. But yes, I hope to take my centuries into double figures as quickly as I can. Double-figure ODI centuries obviously looks and sounds good. It's no pressure actually. Sometimes I feel disappointed that I should have scored more centuries as I have played over 170 games and scored 40 fifties. In that sense, I should have scored more centuries," Tamim told reporters at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium yesterday.

The southpaw however informed that he will try to continue playing in the same manner and that he looks to stretch his time at the crease.

"I always try to play 30-40 balls early on and get set at the wicket and then try to make it bigger. No matter what position you bat, facing the first 20 balls is always difficult," he added.

Asked whether there was any disappointment over how not one Bangladeshi player won an ICC award last year, Tamim replied: "Aside from the ICC awards, there were no Bangladeshi players in the best eleven list of even the newspapers. But after seeing how last year ended it is not that far, [the time] when we will also get awards. If you have noticed those who received the awards they have scored a lot of runs, be it in the best ODI or Test team. I am not saying that Shakib [Al Hasan] or Mushfiqur [Rahim] do not deserve the award but it is not far away when there will be three-four Bangladeshi players who will receive the awards."

'Shakib at 3 keeps me on my toes'

SPORTS REPORTER



Even during their age-level days, there used to be stiff competition among the two friends over who will score more runs. Both friends often engaged in debate over dismissals and how many balls they faced in their innings, which in turn provided the motivation and urge to get better every day.

The two friends are Tamim Iqbal and Shakib Al Hasan, and despite both having come a long way since then, that healthy competition remains to this day. Shakib has already made an impact in his new batting position, scoring 37 and 67 in his last two innings, and despite

his 182 matches outnumbering Tamim's tally by six games, the ace all-rounder is still 750 runs behind, striking seven hundreds and 36 fifties.

"It will be good if the competition heats up. It's always good if there is healthy competition in the team. If I want to beat him or he wants to beat me, that's always nice. Shakib will get more overs to bat coming in at number three and for this I also have to remember that I have to perform to remain on top. Not only Shakib; Mushfiqur scored a lot of runs and he had a terrific 2017. If you have healthy competition it's always good, be it among batsman or bowlers. Rubel has taken 100 wickets in seven years and now he should target the next hundred in the next three years," Tamim told reporters at the Sher-e-

Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.

According to Tamim it is a new challenge for Shakib to bat at number three, but he was sure that Shakib knows what to do in different situations.

"Normally, Shakib batted at number four or five, where at times he had to bat when Bangladesh were 40 for three or even when 200 for three. But when he bats at number three, it's very crucial as he might be out there batting from the second ball of the innings or he may have to bat after 25 overs. I think he is a smart cricketer but it's too early to comment whether he is perfect in this position or not. What I can say is that he has the ability and he knows what to do," he said.

There have been many occasions

when Tamim, despite scoring runs, did not receive the player-of-the-match award in games where Shakib ended up performing in both departments and snatched the accolade from his friend.

"I have already decided on one thing--I only believe in rewards, not awards. Look, when everything is going right as an individual and also as a team, you need to take more responsibility," Tamim added.

The dashing southpaw, who has already scored 11,000 runs across three formats, is 66 runs shy of 6,000 runs in ODIs. Tamim informed that it is important to celebrate achievements and also added that over the next 10 years the new generation of players will set different goals altogether when they represent the country.



Shakib Al Hasan's promotion to number three means opener Tamim Iqbal will have to be on his game to maintain his place at the top of Bangladesh's ODI run charts. PHOTO: STAR

'Proved our ability in second game'

SPORTS REPORTER



Zimbabwe's cricket so far in the tri-series has had a bit of the Jekyll-and-Hyde quality to it. They first succumbed to an eight-wicket defeat to hosts Bangladesh, then handed Sri Lanka a 12-run defeat, before falling to a five-wicket defeat to the same opponents on Sunday. That last defeat damaged their chances of making the final, but they have one last chance to get a shoe in if they beat Bangladesh today. It will not be an easy task against the strongest side on display, and a lot will depend upon which Zimbabwe turns up.

Wicketkeeper-batsman Peter Moor insisted yesterday that it was the team that played the second match that is a truer reflection of their ability.

"In the last match [five-wicket loss to Sri Lanka], I think the wicket played a big part and we lost in the crucial moments," said the 26-year-old after practice at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium. "But we proved in the second game what we are capable of. We are not going to think about the disappointments and will take the success we achieved in the second game into tomorrow's match."

In their first game against Bangladesh, Zimbabwe were poor as they were shot out for 170 and then failed to trouble the hosts as they catered to the total. Moor however said that there were things in the match that were beyond their control, perhaps hinting at their delayed arrival to the country that may have left them underprepared.

"I think there are a lot of things that were not in our control in the first game. I won't go into the details but once we are settled in with the pitches and conditions we performed to our capability in the second match," he said, before setting out why Bangladesh would be tough to beat. "I think we have to win the crucial parts of the game tomorrow and we are very much capable of that."

The wicket in Mirpur has also been a talking point, with each strip offering something different. "I think it's a huge factor as all three wickets so far have been different," Moor said. "The pitch where we played against Sri Lanka in the second game is more accustomed to our style of cricket. But the good thing is we have played in all the three wickets and we know what to expect. Some days 280 is a good score, some days 250 and some days 200 is a good score."



PETER MOOR

Zakir's double in East's record total

SPORTS REPORTER



Young wicketkeeper-batsman Zakir Hasan turned his overnight 156 into a magnificent maiden double hundred while a vintage Alok Kapali hit his 20th first-class century and young Yasir Ali smashed his fourth as Islami Bank East Zone plundered 735-6 declared on the second day of their Bangladesh Cricket League (BCL) game against Walton Central Zone yesterday.

The imposing score at the batting-friendly Sheikh Abu Naser Stadium in Khulna was the third highest innings total in the country's first-class history and the second highest in the BCL.

Resuming the day on 332-3, East continued to send the Central bowlers on a leather hunt with Zakir hammering 211. The left-hander hit 23 boundaries in his 320-ball knock before becoming the fifth batsman out at 453. But there was little respite for Central as Yasir and Kapali combined forces to plunder 221 runs for the sixth wicket. Yasir scored a fine 132 off 175 balls that contained a dozen fours and a couple of sixes. Kapali, the aggressor of the two batsmen, smashed an unbeaten 165 off only 139 deliveries. The 34-year-old right-hand batsman, who failed to do his talents justice during his stint with the national team, hit 10 boundaries and three sixes in his polished knock.

Buried under an avalanche of runs, Central were reduced to 40-1 at stumps. They need to bat out of their skins for the next two days if they are to avoid their second defeat in three games.

For Central, off-spinner Shuvagata Hom took three wickets for 183 runs. Pace bowler Taskin Ahmed bowled only 9 overs on the second day and was rewarded with a wicket. Fellow pacerman Abu Hider finished with 2-67.



Islami Bank East Zone batsman Zakir Hasan celebrates his maiden double hundred against Walton Central Zone on the second day of the BCL fixture in Khulna yesterday. PHOTO: COLLECTED

TOP FIVE INNINGS TOTAL					
Team	Score	Overs	Opposition	Ground	Start Date
Dhaka Div	756/5d	197.5	Rajshahi Div	Savar (4)	20 Feb 2014
South Zone	749/8d	199.2	Cent Zone	Savar (3)	5 Mar 2017
East Zone	735/6d	164.0	Cent Zone	Khulna	21 Jan 2018
Barisal Div	712/7d	221.0	Sylhet Div	Fatullah	18 Mar 2007
Rajshahi Div	675/9d	135.3	Ctg Div	Savar (3)	12 Apr 2014



KAPALI... 165 not out



ZUNAED... 137



YASIR... 132

SCORES IN BRIEF		
Islami Bank East Zone v Walton Central Zone	East Zone: First innings 735-6 dec in 164 overs (Liton 112, Zakir 211, Tasamul 60, Yasir 132, Kapali 165 not out; Shuvagata 3-183, Abu Hayder 2-67, Taskin 1-113)	Central Zone: First innings 40-1 in 11 overs (Sadman 18 not out, Mehrab 3 not out; Gazi 1-13)
BCB North Zone v Prime Bank South Zone	North Zone: First innings 408 all out in 106.2 overs	(Mizanur 106, Zunaed 137, Dhiman 65, Tajjul 54; Razzak 6-107, Rabbi 3-122)
South Zone: First innings	125-2 in 28 overs (Soumya 29, Imrul 58 not out, Tushar 23 not out; Shafiqul 1-29, Ariful 1-40)	

Dhananjaya to replace Kusal

ESPNCRICINFO

Dhananjaya de Silva will join the Sri Lanka ODI team that is currently playing the tri-series in Bangladesh, as a replacement for the injured Kusal Perera. Kusal suffered a side strain during his innings of 49 in Sri Lanka's match against Zimbabwe on Sunday. He has been advised rest, and will miss the rest of the tournament.

Limited-overs captain Angelo Mathews, who is recovering from a hamstring strain, has returned to Sri Lanka and will take no further part in the tournament. Mathews' participation in the rest of the tour, which includes a Test series against Bangladesh, remains in doubt.

Warner to lead Aus in T20 tri-series

AFP, Melbourne

David Warner will lead Australia in next month's Twenty20 international tri-series against New Zealand and England as regular captain Steve Smith is given a break ahead of the crucial Test tour to South Africa.

Opening batsman Warner, the Test vice-captain, steps up to lead Australia in the T20 games which come a few weeks before the four-Test series in South Africa.