

SPORT



Premier Bangladesh all-rounder Shakib Al Hasan enjoys a richly deserved day off from cricket with his only daughter at the team hotel yesterday.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

'Coaches doing better now'

According to many, Mashrafe Bin Mortaza was already Bangladesh's most successful ODI captain, but Tuesday's 91-run win over Zimbabwe put him officially on top of the list. He surpassed former Bangladesh captain Habibur Bashar's 29 wins in 69 games and now leads the chart with 30 wins in 53 matches. The inspirational skipper spoke about the feat along with the changes in the Tigers dressing room since the post Chandika Hathurusingha era with a few reporters, including The Daily Star's Mazhar Uddin at the team hotel yesterday. The following are excerpts from the conversation:

Q: Will Bangladesh go with a ruthless approach [in today's match against Sri Lanka] despite already being in the final?
Mashrafe Bin Mortaza (MM): For us that is important. If you look at the way our team has been playing, it is tough to continue but it will boost our confidence the longer we can keep it up. There will be risks playing this type of cricket where we want to dominate the opposition but I think it's the best way to win. If you want to go to the next level like England or Australia -- they are scoring 300-plus runs every day. But we are yet to make it a habit which was the reason why we failed in South Africa. We have to learn from this.

Q: How do you see Khaled Mahmud's role as a technical director since the departure of Chandika Hathurusingha?

MM: He is doing very well. As an example, when was the last time that numbers 9, 10 and 11 scored 46 runs. The credit goes to Sujon bhai who worked one hour daily with the bowlers on their batting during the fitness camp. There was a lot of talk after Hathurusingha left but I think they are doing a better job than he would have done. So I give full marks to our coaching staff, especially Sujon bhai.

Q: Who do you think will be the stronger opponent in the final?

MM: I think Sri Lanka is far ahead as they have the ability to beat any side. They have beaten India in the recent past and they have also chased over 330 runs in the Champions Trophy. On their given day they can be dangerous and I will put Sri Lanka ahead in terms of experience.

Q: How important is it for juniors to contribute with the seniors?

MM: If you want to achieve something big, the juniors must contribute. We are trying to match up with the juniors and they have to broaden their mindset where they can follow Tamim -- you don't need to follow Virat Kohli or AB de Villiers. The way Tamim

changed his game and his consistency along with Shakib, Mushfiqur and Mahmudullah... how they deliver under pressure, the juniors need to follow these things. I think they are doing well and it's a matter of time.

Q: How do you see the return of Mustafizur Rahman in the series?

MM: I think it's too early to say and even when he picked up five-six wickets against India I was being realistic about Mustafizur, as I knew he will face a difficult time. It was important how he reacted and it was nice to see him take that in his stride as there were expectations that he will take wickets in every game. As I said previously he can change the Bangladesh bowling attack and I still believe that. It was important for him to return to rhythm after the injury.

Q: Do you think there should be more competition among the bowlers?

MM: Obviously, if you see we have awarded Rubel [a trophy from the team management] after taking 100 wickets, you don't see that everywhere but we are starting to give him responsibility so that he can be inspired and chase down the 200-wicket mark. It's impossible to win matches without a group of spinners or

fast bowlers in the team. We are trying and it's not like we will get the reward immediately, but in the coming days we will surely get the results.

Q: Your take on becoming the most successful Bangladesh ODI captain?

MM: It was never a big deal for me as it's something temporary. It will change from one person to another at some point. But if you see Sumon bhai [Habibul Bashar], a win under him was equal to two wins keeping the situation back then in mind -- it was very difficult. But now it's a different target of going to the next level. Every win under all captains is important. Obviously being a player I also felt good but it's temporary and it's my job to keep my team on the right track.



ICC U-19 WORLD CUP Pakistan in last four

PTI, Christchurch

Ali Zaryab hit a composed 74 to complement the hard work done by pacers Muhamad Musa and Shaheen Afridi as Pakistan notched up a three-wicket win over South Africa in the ICC U-19 Cricket World Cup Super League quarterfinal here on Wednesday.

Left-handed Zaryab compiled a cautious but attractive 111-ball unbeaten knock, with five fours, that took two-time champions Pakistan to their target of 190 in 47.5 overs after the pace-duo of Musa and Shaheen had shared five scalps to help restrict South Africa to 189 for nine.

The victory over the 2014 champions means Pakistan will now play the winners of Friday's quarterfinal between India and Bangladesh in the second semi-final here on January 30.

The 2004 and 2006 champions have to be thankful to Zaryab, who was not perturbed even as the Asian side was reduced to 111 for five after all-rounder Jason Niemand gave South Africa a glimmer of a hope with the wickets of captain Hassan Khan and Muhammad Taha.

Tame draws amid run-fest

SPORTS REPORTER



The third round of the Bangladesh Cricket League ended the way it started with four centuries on the fourth and the final day showcasing an astonishing display of batting in two games where a staggering 2,586 runs were scored against the fall of 41 wickets.

For the record, 12 centuries, including a magnificent maiden double hundred by Zakir Hasan (211), and 11 half centuries marked this round of



JUNAED SIDDIQUI... 150

run-fest.

Bat was so dominant both at the Sheikh Abu Naser Stadium in Khulna, where a mind-boggling 1,398 were scored for the loss of only 16 wickets, and at the Shaheed Kamruzzaman Stadium in Rajshahi, that not a single game witnessed a fourth innings, essentially meaning that both games ended in tame draws.

At Khulna, Islami Bank East Zone captain Mominul Haque decided against throwing the ball to his tiring bowlers on a benign pitch again despite having the opportunity of

enforcing a follow-on against Walton Central Zone, who, resuming the final day on 357-8, batted for another 20-odd overs before being all out for 428 in 121.1 overs.

After scoring a massive 735-6 (declared) in their first innings -- the third highest innings total in the country's first-class history -- East Zone opted to bat again. Openers Mehedi Maruf, who missed out on the first innings run-fest, gleefully seized the opportunity and smashed an unbeaten 111. His opening partner Tasamul Haque, who scored 60 batting

had lost their last two wickets in the second over of the fourth morning, increasing their lead to 25.

Resuming the day on 429-8, South were reeling quickly with their overnight batsman Tushar Imran departing without adding a single run to his 148.

Leaders North started their second essay badly, losing three wickets for 49 runs before a century-stand between Junaed and Naeem Islam (61) steadied the ship. Left-handed Junaed also shared 160 runs for the fifth wicket with Ariful Haque, who scored an unbeaten 103 before becoming the last

SCORES IN BRIEF

Islami Bank East Zone v Walton Central Zone East Zone: First innings 735-6 dec and 226-0 in 52 overs (Mehdi 111 not out, Tasamul 108 not out) Central Zone: First innings 428 in 121.1 overs (Sadman 56, Raquibul 85, Marshall 65,	Shuvagata 73, Tanbir 56; Gazi 7-141, Enamul 2-80) Result: Match drawn Player of the match: Zakir Hasan	Naeem 62, Ariful 103 not out)
BCB North Zone v Prime Bank South Zone North Zone: First innings 408 and 356-5 in 71.3 overs (Junaed 150,	Al-Amin 46; Shafiqul 4-58, Tajjul 4-136) Result: Match drawn Player of the match: Junaed Siddiqui	South Zone: First innings 433 in 115.1 overs (Imrul 118, Tushar 148,

at number five in the first innings, hammered a quick-fire unbeaten 108 as East raced to 226-0 in 52 overs.

It was certainly a punishing 52 overs for Central and their frustration was quite evident. They used all 11 players including wicketkeeper Irfan Sukkur, who bowled three overs, by rotation just for the sake of completing those mandatory overs.

At Rajshahi, BCB North Zone opener Junaed Siddiqui scored his second consecutive hundred as his side recovered from a nervy start to post 356-5 after Prime Bank South Zone

batsman out.

Junaed scored 137 in the first innings. The experienced left-hander hit 16 fours and a six and won the player-of-the-match award.

Despite conceding a first-innings lead, North Zone lead the four-team table with 34 points followed by East Zone's 30 and South Zone's 24.

The BCL will have a long layoff for accommodating the Premier Cricket League, which commences from February 5. The fourth round will start on completion of the one-day competition.

Young Tigers face acid test

SPORTS REPORTER



In the last youth World Cup held in Bangladesh the country's youth team achieved their best result by reaching the semifinals and finishing third, but Bangladesh Under-19 will face stiff odds when they attempt to replicate that run by winning tomorrow's ICC Under-19 World Cup quarterfinal against their mighty Indian counterparts in Queenstown, Otago.

The match will get underway at 3:30 am Bangladesh time and there is scant reason for the young Tigers to be confident ahead of the knockout clash in alien conditions.

While the young Tigers have been efficient in brushing aside unfancied Group C opponents Namibia and Canada by 87 and 66 runs respectively, their batting has not withstood the sterner test against England as they were all out for 175 and lost the match by seven wickets. Pinak Ghosh, Afif Hossain, skipper Saif Hasan and Towhid Ridoy, who hit a century against Canada, are the main batting hopes but it is doubtful whether they can ace the pace test of India's Shivam Mavi and Kamlesh Nagarkoti.

India, meanwhile, hold a 13-2 advantage in head-to-head contests against Bangladesh. Prithvi Shaw's team have also completely bossed their opponents on way to finishing Group B champions, with the narrowest margin of victory being 100 runs against Australia in their opening match. They brushed aside both Zimbabwe and Papua New Guinea by 10 wickets, with 170 and 252 balls remaining respectively.

Moving past the current tournament, the wider history of youth cricket also favours India greatly. Along with Australia, they have the most titles with three and were also the runners up in the 2016 edition in Bangladesh.

There are really only two states that Bangladesh can draw comfort from -- they won the most recent meeting between the two teams in the U-19 Asia Cup in Malaysia last November, and their other victory, coincidentally, came in their only other meeting with India in New Zealand, in Auckland during the 2002 edition. However, there are caveats there too -- only four of the current Indian team were not present during the loss in Malaysia and the 2002 match was played between two completely different sets of players.

Hungry for runs, not chicken roast

MAZHAR UDDIN



He now plays long innings and has consequently become the first Bangladeshi to reach 6,000 ODI runs, but in his early days he was a rough and tough bulky

young boy who used to drink more coke than water. The story of Tamim Iqbal is not only of a country's best batsman and his deeds on the cricket field; it is also about his transformation into a health and fitness freak over the past few years, a change that took him from a promise that often frustrated to a world-class batsman.

"Coke was one of my favourite things in life and there was a time in my childhood when I even took medication with Coke. To come out of that is a big achievement for me. I won't say that I have completely stopped drinking Coke but I can proudly say that 95 per cent of the habit is gone now," Tamim told The Daily Star yesterday.

The southpaw has faced immense criticism at certain points of his career and that made the cricketer more determined to change his habits off the field.

"I can remember after the last match of the 2015 World Cup, I had a chat with the [then] coach Chandika Hathurusingha. He never doubted my game, but he had questions over my fitness and food habits. I took a lesson from that and our trainer Mario Villavarayan is the main man behind all these things [changes]."

The 28-year-old informed that he followed a strict diet and lost eight or nine kgs in three-four months since returning from the 2015 World Cup, and that helped him to run faster, move better and concentrate longer but he knows that he is still not perfect and has a long way to go regarding fitness.

"My family... even if we eat very less it still looks like we have gained a lot. You will see there are many people who eat biriyani three times a day but there is no effect on their bodies. So I have to be very particular with my food. I never used to eat a lot; maybe I ate wrong foods but not a lot.

"What I am doing now, especially before this series [the ongoing tri-series], is that there is a company called 'Lean Nation'. They basically count your calories and ask whether you want to lose or maintain

have a very small amount of pasta or grilled chicken and the afternoon snack is a small packet of biscuit, a few almonds and a fruit -- apple or guava. At dinner it's the same -- only grilled chicken with some veggies but the portions are very small," Tamim added.

His favourites are Hilsa, chicken roast and pulao but there are some conditions to meet before Tamim can have those mouth-watering items.

"I don't get to eat these foods now, although when I follow my diet

"It's the sleeping habit. Normally I don't go to parties or do late nights. But I used to stay up late, around 1:00 or 1:30 at night, but I am very careful now. Before a game I try to sleep as early as possible and these small things can make a huge difference. I used to think that even if I am up till 3:00 at night, it won't matter if I score runs the next day, but because of that I failed. In the last two-three years I have been maintaining a proper sleeping habit and that is very important for any sportsman."



As important as the runs Bangladesh opener Tamim Iqbal has scored is the fitness battle he has waged with himself from (R-L) his early days in 2008, through his weight issues in 2014 to his current trim form that has allowed him to run faster and bat longer.

weight. Then they will fix you a specific calorie target and send you four meals a day at home. You will strictly eat that and nothing else. So I was doing that but normally during a series I am not able to do it as you have to eat a bit more as you need a lot of energy and strength, but I look after my diet. But when I am not playing I always use Lean Nation," he said.

"The meals are very disgusting... in the morning I get a piece of bread with some peanut butter and a boiled egg. For lunch I

for three weeks at a stretch I get a cheat day and I can eat whatever I want for a day and then again three weeks of diet," he said.

Tamim said that his dedication to changing his food habits was inspired by the examples of India captain Virat Kohli and also his friend and national teammate Mushfiqur Rahim, adding that he wishes to become like Mushfiqur someday.

He added that there was another vital change to his lifestyle which came later than it should have.

According to Tamim, family played a huge role over his change in lifestyle as his wife has also become fitness-conscious to inspire him.

"Every cricketer sacrifices; I have a very young family but I don't get to see them often enough even when I am in Bangladesh. Yesterday [Tuesday] I played a game and I had a swimming session at 11:00 am today [Wednesday] so I didn't go home to see my son. These are all sacrifices I have to make," said Tamim.

PHOTOS: STAR ARCHIVE