

# SPORT



Ahead of today's tri-series final in Mirpur, Sri Lanka coach Chandika Hathurusingha and captain Dinesh Chandimal (L) were in good spirits during yesterday's training after Thursday's 10-wicket win over the hosts, but Bangladesh skipper Mashrafe Bin Mortaza and vice-captain Shakib Al Hasan (R) also have reason to be upbeat as that was the only blip in an otherwise stellar campaign.

PHOTOS: FIROZ AHMED

## 'Have something up our sleeves'

SPORTS REPORTER

In the pre-match press conference yesterday ahead of today's tri-series final against Bangladesh, Sri Lanka's stand-in captain Dinesh Chandimal expressed the ideas and plans of his team which time and again were uttered by the Tigers under the tutelage of Chandika Hathurusingha, who is now the Lankan coach.

"We'll have a process to do that [win]. We have to do our basics and stick to the plans. If we can execute, we're in the game. We just need to be competitive and we can get a good result," was the sentiment from Chandimal, which was also often the mantra of the Tigers under their former coach.

Rejuvenated by a 10-wicket mauling of the Tigers in the last league game, Chandimal however issued a warning for the home side.

"We have something up our sleeves for tomorrow. Now, with the new coach, we've got some new strategies. We've got a lot of faith in him, and we've got some confidence. We're not thinking about the result. We are always thinking about how to play good cricket when we're in the middle. That's the main change we have in the team," he added.

Chandimal also spoke about the good 'mixture' in the team after Hathurusingha came on board.

"Winning always gives you more confidence going forward. If you have a good coach and don't have good cricketers, you can't get a good result. But if you have good cricketers with a bad coach, you also can't get a good result. Now we're in a mixture, and we'll hope to do well tomorrow -- that's the main thing," he said.

The Lankan skipper also said that they were aware of the strengths of Bangladesh in their own backyard, but he was just looking to implement their dressing room plans out in the middle.

"Actually, we don't think about the result. Especially on home soil, Bangladesh are a really good side. They've got some really good players who've played more than eight to 10 years in international cricket. But we have to execute our game plan and then we're in the game," said a confident Chandimal.

Chandimal was also not offering any excuses for their recent slump in ODI cricket; while he acknowledged the injury issues, he believed that the players need to perform well.

"Actually it was a hard time for the team and the Sri Lankan fans over the past two years, especially in the one-day format. But when you're looking at the one-day format we also had some injury issues. Sometimes we couldn't get the right combination to the game. But that's not an excuse. As players you need to perform well wherever you're playing," he concluded.

## Won't back off after one loss: Mash

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh ODI captain Mashrafe Bin Mortaza was aware of the risk inherent in looking to dominate the opposition as the result may not always go in their favour all the time, but the crushing 10-wicket defeat on Thursday will certainly send warning signals to the Tigers to remain on their toes ahead of the final of the tri-series against Sri Lanka today.

Sri Lanka completely outplayed the hosts, bowling them out for 82. When asked how difficult it will be to come back from the heavy defeat, Mashrafe said: "Very natural [that it is difficult], not even 24 hours have gone by and I have to come for the press conference again. There is nothing new to say as we already had a talk and even told the players the previous day that we did not want such a defeat. It's difficult to take the field what that mentality so the message was to remain positive.

"We will have the same mindset that we had in the first game [against Sri Lanka, which Bangladesh won by 163 runs] when we play the final and it's not that we have to think negatively after the defeat or that we will abandon our game plan," Mashrafe told reporters after the training session at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.

But despite the heavy defeat Mashrafe sees the positives as accord-

ing to the inspirational skipper it will help them to remain more focused and he thought that tense situations sometimes bring out the best in the players.

"We will have to take the final like just another game but we have to make sure that we don't repeat the mistakes we made in the previous game and look to

minimise those. The start will be very important whether we bat or bowl and if we are able to control the start the pressure will start to release," he said.

The 34-year-old however informed that he always knew that Sri Lanka have the ability to make a comeback.

"They have a few players who

played the World Cup final and you will expect from them that they can come back from any situation. We don't have that experience even after playing for 10-12 years. We have been able to take the home advantage in the previous three games and we will try to maximise that in the final," Mashrafe said.

The opening slot remained the biggest concern for the Tigers after Anamul Haque was unable to utilise the opportunity in all four games, leading to the selectors including Imrul Kayes in the squad for the final. Although Mashrafe did not want to reveal the chances of including Imrul in the playing 11, there is a good chance that the team management will opt for more than two changes for the final.

Bangladesh have never won a tri-series and the Tigers have faced Sri Lanka once in a final back in 2009 at home when they were beaten by two wickets.

Bangladesh have featured in three tournament finals in Mirpur and have never won, and according to Mashrafe the Tigers will be eager to win this final.

"That was not on my mind... you should not have mentioned that [smiles]. Actually it's a new opportunity for everyone. Maybe only myself, Mushfiqur, Shakib and Tamim were part of those three finals, so it's a new opportunity for us as well," Mashrafe added.



Bangladesh will hope that opener Tamim Iqbal, the top run-scorer in the tri-series, fires in the final against Sri Lanka today to fulfil Bangladesh's quest for their first silverware in a triangular series.

PHOTO: STAR

## Consolation win for Aus

AFP, Adelaide

Travis Head, promoted to the top of the order, led Australia to a drought-breaking win over England in the fourth one-day international in Adelaide on Friday.

Replacing injured opener Aaron Finch, Head anchored a shaky Australian run chase with a polished 96, falling just shy of a deserved century and with victory imminent.

England were dismissed for 196 after being sent in to bat in bowler-friendly conditions, losing four of their top six batsmen for ducks as the possibility of a record low score in one-day cricket briefly loomed.

In reply, Australia reached the modest target with 13 overs to spare, finishing on 197 for seven, but the chase was not without concerns as they struggled to win their first game in the five-match series and turn around their dismal recent one-day form.

**SCORES IN BRIEF**  
ENGLAND: 196 all out in 44.5 overs (Morgan 33, Moeen 33, Woakes 78, Curran 35; Hazlewood 3-39, Cummins 4-24, Tye 3-33)  
AUSTRALIA: 197 for 7 in 37 overs (Head 96, Marsh 32, Paine 25 not out; Rashid 3-49)  
**Result:** Australia won by three wickets.  
**Player-of-the-match:** Pat Cummins.

## Naeem the wildcard

### Mosaddek, Rabbi back in Tigers' Test squad

SPORTS REPORTER

The national selectors seem to have thought outside the box to play a mind game on Chandika Hathurusingha's Sri Lanka ahead of the tri-nation ODI series final today as the board announced a 14-member squad, for the first Test of the two-match series beginning on January 31, with the surprise inclusion of 17-year-old off-spinner Naeem Hasan yesterday.

The little-known cricketer, who has a solid physique standing at six feet tall, is currently in New Zealand with the Bangladesh Under-19 team to take part in the ICC U-19 World Cup, where they will face England in a play-off for 5th position tomorrow, but is expected to join the Tigers before the first Test.

The off-spinner was instrumental in their World Cup quarter-final fixture against India yesterday as he bagged two wickets for 36 runs from his ten overs. However, the young Tigers eventually succumbed to a comprehensive 131-run defeat.

Son of former football player Mahbul Alam, Naeem picked up nine wickets from the four first class games he has played so far while he also featured for Chittagong Vikings in the fifth edition of the Bangladesh Premier League. The youngster finally impressed the selectors though when he was called

to the national team's training camp in Chittagong ahead of the Test series against Australia at home last year.

"Naeem is a talented bowler and since we wanted an additional off-spinner, as we mostly rely on spinners at home, we picked him. I think Naeem is a good option and I think he has the ability. He will be coming back from New Zealand since we lost to India today [yesterday]," chief selector Minhajul Abedin told reporters yesterday.

Another notable inclusion is pace



NAEEM HASAN

### SQUAD

Shakib Al Hasan (capt), Mahmudullah (vice-capt), Tamim Iqbal, Liton Das, Mushfiqur Rahim, Imrul Kayes, Mominul Haque, Mosaddek Hossain, Tajjul Islam, Mustafizur Rahman, Kamrul Islam, Mehedi Hasan, Rubel Hossain, Naeem Hasan.

bowler Kamrul Islam, who played his last Test in February last year against India, while Mosaddek Hossain also made a return to the team having recovered from his eye infection.

Mosaddek scored 75 runs against Sri Lanka on his Test debut last year but went on to miss the Australia and South Africa series due to his slow recovery, however, his century in the Bangladesh Cricket League last week caught the selectors' attention.

Shakib Al Hasan also returned to the Test team, he was rested for the two Tests against South Africa, but this will be his maiden assignment as Test captain, replacing Mushfiqur Rahim.

According to the chief selector though, changes were made to the squad and subsequently certain individuals were, keeping their poor performances in South Africa in mind, left out.

Soumya Sarkar and pacer Taskin Ahmed, who were both dropped for the tri-series, did not get called up for the first Test while pacers Shafiul Islam and Subashis Roy were also excluded. Sabbir Rahman was out as well as his form has not been up to the mark and he struggles to prolong his starts.

The first of the two-match Test series will take place at the Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium in Chittagong while the second Test will kick off at the Sher-e-Bangla National stadium in Mirpur on February 8.

## Big guns skip Windies' WC qualifiers

AFP, St. John's

Chris Gayle was named in the West Indies' squad for the 2019 World Cup qualifying tournament on Thursday, but other leading players ruled themselves out in order to play in the Pakistan T20 Super League.

All-rounders Kieron Pollard and Andre Russell, spinner Sunil Narine and batsman Darren Bravo have all decided to miss the qualifiers in Zimbabwe, which will run from March 4-25.

"We are pleased that Chris Gayle and (batsman) Marlon Samuels have indicated their full support and commitment to the cause," chairman of selectors Courtney Browne said in a statement.

They are having to face qualifying after slipping to ninth in the ODI world rankings, with two teams from the qualifiers to join the world's top eight countries at the 2019 tournament in England and Wales.

The West Indies play their opening game against a World Cricket League Division Two team on March 6 in Harare, before also facing Papua New Guinea, Ireland and the Netherlands in Group A.

## Young Tigers' run ends at quarters

SPORTS REPORTER



A spicy match that Bangladesh Under-19 were in with a chance of winning till the halfway stage came to a tame end as India Under-19 dumped the young Tigers out of the ICC Under-19 World Cup with a 131-run win in the quarterfinal in Queenstown, New Zealand yesterday. India will now face Pakistan, who won their quarterfinal against South Africa on Wednesday, in the semifinal in Christchurch on January 30. Bangladesh will fight it out with England in the fifth-sixth place playoff match on Sunday.

The young Tigers had done well to restrict India, who were at one stage 176 for two in the 34th over after electing to bat, to a manageable 265 all out in 49.2 overs. Pacer Qazi Onik was the pick of the bowlers with three for 48 while Naeem Hasan and skipper Saif Hassan picked up two wickets each.

However, in the chase Bangladesh were over-cautious in the first 10 overs, scoring just 28 runs and playing out 41 dot balls while losing their first wicket.

The climbing required run rate and the excellence of India's fielding and bowling combined to bring a sorry end to the innings for 134 in 42.1 overs. Pinak Ghosh top-scored with 43 but no other batsman crossed 20 as lively Indian pacer Kamllesh Nagarkoti picked up three for 18 in 7.1 overs.

It was reaffirmation of Bangladesh's batting concerns as they have failed to put up respectable totals against the two ICC Full Members they played against, having earlier been bundled out for 175 by England in a Group C match.

There was a fair amount of sledging from both sides, with Bangladesh wicketkeeper and close-in fielders having a bit to say to India batsman Shubman Gill, who top-scored with 86. The needle between the two sides date back to Bangladesh's U-19 Asia Cup win over India in November 2017, and yesterday India repaid the favour when it was Bangladesh's turn to bat.

**SCORES IN BRIEF**  
INDIA: 265 all out in 49.2 overs (Gill 86, Sharma 50, Shaw 40; Onik 3-48, Nayeem 2-36, Saif 2-41)  
BANGLADESH: 134 all out in 42.1 overs (Pinak 43, Afif 18; Nagarkoti 3-18, Sharma 2-11)  
**Result:** India won by 131 runs