

SPORT

Another muddled selection

SPORTS REPORTER

The chaotic scenario regarding team selection for the Sri Lanka series continues to dumbfound everyone as the Tigers' limited overs skipper Shakib Al Hasan yesterday all but ruled himself out of the upcoming T20I series, just a day after he was included as captain of the 15-member squad.

The all-rounder suffered an injury to the little finger on his left hand during the ODI tri-series final on January 27, and was subsequently ruled out for the two-match Test series.

However, the team management, on Saturday, included Shakib in the T20I series, just a day after he was included as captain of the 15-member squad.

The Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) is, however, yet to make any formal declaration as to whether he will be excluded from the squad.

"I don't know if it was announced officially, but I think I might not be able to play the T20 series as well," Shakib told reporters yesterday during a programme where he was officially appointed as a goodwill ambassador of the Anti-Corruption Commission.

"The doctor has said that I would need another two weeks to recover from the injury which means I will be missing the series. After recovering, I will go through rehabilitation and start training where I will be able to make a return for the tri-series in Sri Lanka," Shakib added.

The first of the two Twenty20 matches will be held in Dhaka on February 15, with the second scheduled for Sylhet on February 18.

It was learnt that Shakib's bandage was removed on Saturday and that the doctor found the injured area had not yet healed. However, the selectors announced the T20 squad earlier on the same day apparently without being aware of the pace of



While everybody is expecting his return to salvage the battered Tigers, Shakib Al Hasan yesterday said he was very unlikely to lead Bangladesh in the two-match T20I series against Sri Lanka due to his finger injury requiring a further two weeks to heal.

PHOTO: STAR

his recovery. It was also learnt that Shakib himself was present during the team selection meeting on Saturday, and that his inclusion was made with his consent.

So the question that rises here is whether Shakib's inclusion was simply a publicity stunt or was it the consequence of a massive overhaul in the whole selection process? Or was it just a case of a muddled selection in the aftermath of defeats in the ODI series final and the Test series.

This was not the first decision during the Sri Lanka series that raised eyebrows; the selection of veteran Abdur Razzak, who had not played a Test match in the past four years, and that of out-of-form Sabbir Rahman, also raised a lot of eyebrows.

According to chief selector Minhajul Abedin, the selectors were aware of the fact that Shakib had little chance to take part in the first T20I.

"We knew that he was highly unlikely to play the first T20 but since we are yet to receive any official report from the doctor we can't keep him out of the squad. Even if he is unavailable for the first game, we are hopeful of having him for the next one. But we are not going to take any risks as he will only return after becoming fully fit," Minhajul told reporters yesterday.

There was no official confirmation from the BCB till yesterday whether Shakib will remain in the squad and if not, who will be leading the T20 side. Interestingly, there was also confusion over Shakib's deputy in the squad.

It has been learnt that BCB president Nazmul Hassan, who is currently in Dubai for ICC's general meeting and expected to return tomorrow, is likely to hold a video conference with the board officials regarding the matter today.

Intent cannot mask Tigers' deficiencies

AL-AMIN



When we try to hide the reality we often come out with an excuse that belies logic. So when stand-in Bangladesh captain Mahmudullah Riyad said that the positive intent from the batsmen did not work against Sri Lanka at a post-match briefing after the home side's massive 215-run defeat in the second Test at Mirpur on Saturday, it served as a popular idea that most of us entertained. He also blamed the bowlers for not bowling in the right areas in patches, allowing the Lankans to score some free runs on a challenging wicket.

We do not have a problem with accepting his second observation as a matter of fact. But his invented notion of 'positive intent from the batsmen' is completely misleading and a concerted effort to hide the harsh reality.

Let us have a look at Bangladesh's two innings in the second Test. They scored 110 in their first essay and 123 in the second. The two Bangladesh innings lasted a combined 75.1 overs, eight balls more than Sri Lanka's second innings. Although the visitors scored more runs than Bangladesh in both innings and consumed more overs, the Test itself failed to provide quality cricket overall. This is a wicket that offered bounce and turn but more importantly it offered true bounce and good pace. And if you are a batsman with good technique and temperament, it was a wicket on which you could make a big statement.

So, batting on this wicket for 75 odd overs in two innings and scoring fewer runs cannot justify the so-called 'positive intent'. When you come out to bat you come out with two purposes -- to occupy the wicket for as long as possible and score runs the hard way or dominate the opposition's bowling and score quick runs.

Now the question is: when you have your opposition bowled out for 222 runs on the opening day of a Test match, which tactic will you adopt? You will definitely not come out all guns blazing unless you do not trust your ability to graft.

Here is a classic example of what graft is all about and as the saying goes you can learn it even from the kids. The tiny tots of Rajshahi Division grafted their

way to 96 all out in 81.3 overs against Barisal Division in a Young Tigers U-14 National Championship game at the Shaheed Sheikh Kamal International Cricket Stadium in Cox's Bazaar on Sunday.

What the Rajshahi boys did was follow the instructions of their coach, whose only mission was to test their skill and tenacity. One Shifayet Mohaiman scored a 102-ball 25, Masud bin Farid scored a 72-ball 9, and Sadman Hossain played 114 balls and scored 6 runs. Tawfiqur Hasan negotiated 43 balls without scoring. They might not have played on a tougher wicket like Mirpur, but one test they have passed with flying colours was their tenacity and trust in their defence. For context, the opposition were 26 for 6 in 18 overs at stumps on the opening day.

This is what the senior Tigers lacked. They did not trust their defence and did not show the tenacity to occupy the crease. When you are not sure about your defensive ability and lack the necessary technique, you resort to the so-called 'positive batting approach' primarily to drive your fear away. This was exactly what happened when Bangladesh batted in both innings.

Reckless is a popular word most of us used while describing Bangladesh's batting in the second innings. But if we look at those dismissals, we can be convinced that not a single batsman threw his wicket away or resorted to reckless batting. Tamim Iqbal paid the price of playing outside the line of the delivery. Imrul Kayes and Mominul Haque edged behind the wicket while playing on the front foot. Mushfiqur Rahim and Mahmudullah Riyad paid the price of coming down the wickets to get to the pitch of the ball. Sabbir Rahman also came on the front foot and edged to close in-field.

The common thread in all the dismissals was that they tried to play premeditated front-foot shots without judging the delivery, when they really should have played late as the only unpredictable aspect was the extent of the turn. Liton Das was the only batsman undone by a delivery that kicked up from good length.

It was a concerted effort from the Bangladesh team management to play safe in the first Test in Chittagong. It was also a collective decision to play hard in Dhaka. But the only difference was the players were not up for it mentally and technically. They did not play positive cricket. They were too scared to be exposed to the harsh reality.

Proteas fined for slow over-rate

PTI, Johannesburg

South Africa were on Sunday fined for maintaining a slow over-rate in the fourth ODI against India in Johannesburg, which they won by five wickets to keep the six-match series alive.

ICC match referee Andy Pycroft imposed the fine after Aiden Markram's side was ruled to be one over short of their target on Saturday's match, when time allowances were taken into consideration.

In accordance with Article 2.5.1 of the ICC Code of Conduct for Players and Players Support Personnel, which relates to minor over-rate offences, players were fined 10 per cent of their match fees for every over their side fails to bowl in the allotted time, with the captain fined double that amount.

As such, Markram has been fined 20 per cent of his match fee, while the South African players have received 10 per cent fines.

Karachi to host PSL final?

APP, Karachi

Foreign experts on Sunday inspected security arrangements in Karachi, which is scheduled to stage the final of Pakistan's Twenty20 league next month -- the city's first international match in nine years.

The third season of the Pakistan Super League starts in the UAE on February 22. The tournament will move to Pakistan for two play-offs on March 20-21 and the final in Karachi on March 25.

Security experts Reg Dickason and Richard Dennis witnessed a full dress rehearsal for the final in Karachi.

"Whatever we have witnessed today, it's as good as I have seen in all my years of work but I can't say a final word (on hosting the final) now and will submit my report within the next seven days," Dickason told media.

All-rounders rule the day

SPORTS REPORTER



An all-round performance from skipper Alok Kapali steered Brothers Union to a 24-run win against Prime Bank CC in their Dhaka Premier League encounter at the BKSP in Savar yesterday.

It was Brothers' second consecutive win after a five-run victory against Mohammedan in their first fixture, where Razzak had also starred with an unbeaten 95. Yesterday Razzak top-scored with quickfire 79 off 67 balls, a knock that featured five fours and as many sixes, as Brothers posted a challenging 294 for 7 after being sent in to bat.

The experienced all-rounder was also part of a crucial 93-run fifth-wicket stand with Yasir Ali, who remained unbeaten after a blistering 63-ball 69, which included two sixes and four boundaries. Yasir also provided the late boost which saw Brothers add 46 runs in the final five overs.

However all-rounder Ariful Haque, who was included in the Bangladesh squad for the first T20I against Sri Lanka, had a rough outing with both bat and ball, giving away 76 runs for two wickets from nine overs and scoring only two.

After the exchange, Prime Bank lost wickets at regular intervals but wicketkeeper-batsman Zakir Hossain -- who also received his maiden call-up to

the national team -- and Indian recruit Kunal Chandela both scored fifties as they tried to spark a resistance.

Nahidul Islam responded to that call and kept hopes alive with some lusty blows, including eight fours and four sixes, but after his departure for a team-high 88 the batting line was unable to hold on and Prime Bank eventually folded 270 with 14 balls to spare.

Player-of-the-match Kapali proved deadly with the ball as well, scalping three wickets with his leg-spin, while Khaled Ahmed and Sohrawardi Shuvo took two wickets each for Brothers.

In another ground at the BKSP, Sheikh Jamal rode on a blistering 48-ball 71 from Tanbir Hayder to clinch their second win, defeating Agrani Bank by 28 runs despite an all-round performance from Shafiqul Islam.

Sheikh Jamal did find themselves in a spot of bother when they were reduced to 56 for three inside 13 overs, but Indian recruit Digvijay Rangi added 58 and Elias Sunny scored 40 as the pair steadied the ship by forging a 94-run partnership.

Tanbir then took charge, smothering three sixes and five fours before becoming Shafiqul's fourth victim off the last ball of the innings. However, it was more than a little late as the Dhanmondi-based outfit had already added 55 runs in the last five overs and posted 294 for 9.

Left-arm spinner Abdur Razzak and medium-pace Soumya Sarkar scalped two wickets each for Agrani, but the latter failed

to impress with the bat, not succeeding in converting his start into a big knock. The mercurial opener was dismissed for 22, starting Agrani Bank's steady fall of wickets.

Dhiman Ghosh top-scored with 48 while Shafiqul struck 44 off 31 balls, but that was nowhere near enough as Agrani were bundled out for 266.

Sheikh Jamal's Elias Sunny and Nazmul Islam took three wickets each while pacer Abu Jayed, another newcomer to the national T20I squad, picked up a solitary wicket in exchange for 60 runs from his ten overs.

In the other game of the day, Mohammedan were unable to chase a modest 232 and fell to a 62-run defeat against Legends of Ruppangj at Fatullah.

No one in the top order was able to convert their starts into big knocks and Mohammedan were eventually bundled out for just 169 in 44.3 overs with skipper Shamsur Rahman scoring a team-high 34.

Left-arm spinner Mosharraf Hossain bagged four wickets while fellow left-arter Asif Hasan and pacer Mohammad Shahid took three each for the bowling side.

Earlier, national under-19 team's left-arm seamer Qazi Onik picked up five wickets for 44 runs from his ten overs to put Ruppangj under pressure. After being sent in to bat, Ruppangj opener Abdul Mazid top-scored with seventy while Avishek Mitra added a run-a-ball 45 and Tushar Imran added 40.



KAPALI... 79



TANBIR... 71

SCORES IN BRIEF

SK JAMAL V AGRANI BANK

SK JAMAL DC: 294 for 9 in 50 overs (Shykat 43, Rangi 58, Sunny 40, Nurul 36, Tanbir 71; Shafiqul 4-68, Razzak 2-40, Soumya 2-50)

AGRANI BANK CC: 266 all out in 49.1 overs

(Soumya 22, Nafees 21, Rafatullah 43, Dhiman 48, Javed 19, Razzak 24, Shafiqul 44; Shohag 2-55, Nazmul 3-21, Sunny 3-50)

Result: Sheikh Jamal won by 28 runs.

LEGENDS OF RUPGANJ V MOHAMMEDAN

LEGENDS OF RUPGANJ: 231 for 7 in 50 overs (Mazid 70, Salauddin 22, Naem 36, Tushar 40, Mitra 45 not out; Enamul 2-38, Onik 5-44)

MOHAMMEDAN SC: 169 all out in 44.3 overs (Rony 30, Butt 21, Shamsur 34, Raqibul 32, Shahid 3-33, Asif Hasan 3-37, Mosharraf 4-23)

Result: Legends of Ruppangj won by 62 runs.

BROTHERS UNION V PRIME BANK

BROTHERS UNION: 294 for 7 in 50 overs (Mizanur 36, Junaid 45, Myshukur 30, Kapali 79, Yasir 69 not out; Delwar 2-54, Ariful 2-76)

PRIME BANK CC: 270 all out in 47.4 overs (Zakir 50, Chandela 50, Nahidul 88, Delwar 36; Khaled 2-43, Kapali 3-46, Suhrawadi 2-54)

Result: Brothers Union won by 24 runs.

'I couldn't even get tickets to the game'

AGENCIES, Johannesburg



Two weeks ago South Africa wicketkeeper-batsman Heinrich Klaasen could not even get tickets for the Pink ODI but as fate would have it, he turned out to be the hero in the Proteas' five-wicket victory over India in Johannesburg's famous Bullring on Saturday.

Klaasen delivered a delightful unbeaten knock of 43 from 27 balls, showing off a wide range of strokeplay that even returning teammate AB de Villiers would be proud of to plunder five boundaries and one six, as South Africa took the series to 3-1 with two matches in Port Elizabeth and Centurion remaining.

During his time on the field as the Proteas successfully chased down their revised target of 202,



Heinrich Klaasen's sparkling 43 off 27 powered South Africa to a five-wicket victory against India in the fourth ODI in Johannesburg on Saturday.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

Klaasen shared match-winning partnerships of 72 with David Miller (39) and an unbeaten 33 with Andile Phehlukwayo, who

starred himself with a five-ball 23, as South Africa registered their first win in the series on a sobering night for the Indian spinners who

had dominated the series.

The spinning duo Yuzvendra Chahal and Kuldeep Yadav had claimed 21 wickets for just 190 runs in the three preceding ODIs, but hemorrhaged 105 runs in 11.3 overs for the meager return of two wickets in Saturday's one-dayer.

"It was an unbelievable experience for me and something that I have always dreamed of," player-of-the-match Klaasen said after the match, adding that he had never played in such a pumped up crowd before.

"I just said to Aiden Markram that two weeks ago I told my misus that I don't have tickets for the game and now this.

"The crowd was unbelievable. I have never experienced something like this before and there were some stages in the game where the crowd just went ballistic. I couldn't hear any nicks or stuff like that, but it was an unbelievable vibe."

The Proteas went into the

match under tremendous pressure after their misery from opening three matches was compounded by Quinton de Kock's absence due to injury. However, they kept alive their unbeaten streak in 'Pink ODIs', which first started in 2011 and has since become a tradition, with six matches held so far.

The occasion is not only named for the almost-completely pink kit that the Proteas' don, but is also Cricket South Africa and its players' way of raising awareness for breast cancer and showing support to survivors and patients, with even fans encouraged to wear pink to the ground.

The match also features a drive to collect money for the treatment of men and women suffering from breast cancer and this year raised \$136,410, almost double of what was donated the last time around and far more than the targeted \$83,000.

Morgan in doubt for rest of T20 series

SMH

England are sweating on the fitness of skipper Eoin Morgan for the remainder of the Twenty20 tri-series after losing to Australia by seven wickets in Melbourne.

Morgan was a late omission for Saturday night's match at the MCG after straining his right groin at training on Friday.

The injury could prove to be a major blow for England with stand-in skipper Jos Buttler admitting he was unsure whether Morgan would be available for the New Zealand leg of the series.

"He got a little niggle yesterday in training," Buttler said. "I don't think we quite know the extent of it yet so we'll wait and find out."