



Logic or damage control?

MAZHAR UDDIN



Following disappointing home series against Sri Lanka, the buzz around cricket circles has been the possible return of Mashrafe Bin

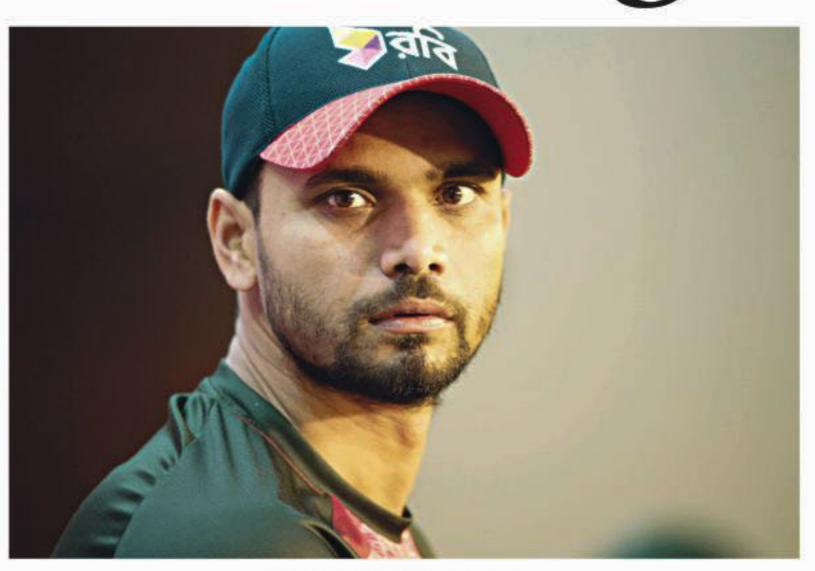
Mortaza to the T20I side as Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) president Nazmul Hassan said on Tuesday that he had asked the inspirational cricketer to make a comeback in the justconcluded two-match T20I series against Sri Lanka.

Hassan also added that he will urge Mashrafe to consider coming back for the upcoming tri-nation Nidahas Trophy, a T20I tournament scheduled to take place from March 6 also involving India and hosts Sri Lanka.

It is quite a change of heart from Hassan. The 34-year-old Mashrafe – who now plays only one format as the ODI captain -- retired from T20Is in April last year in Sri Lanka, and it was then understood that he was persuaded into the decision by the powers that be which included the board president and the then coach Chandika Hathurusingha.

"We have many talented cricketers in the country. But the problem is who to replace. If we don't give the youngsters the opportunity to play then how will they compete. So it's important to give the youngsters some opportunities in the team to play now," Hassan had told reporters in Colombo last year.

With the recent losses to Sri Lanka in all three formats, the BCB seems to be retreating from their previously stated position. The request for Mashrafe's



MASHRAFE BIN MORTAZA

return seems to have stemmed from one of two factors - a quick-fix magic solution as the team are in the doldrums and in the absence of a coach they are thought to be in need Mashrafe's welldocumented inspiration, or there are really no alternatives in domestic cricket. It may also be mentioned here that Bangladesh have played just four T20Is since the Sri Lanka tour.

"In the first place I have to question the departure of Mahsrafe from the T20Is," former Bangladesh captain and chief selector Faruque Ahmed told The Daily Star yesterday.

"I am still not sure whether he took that decision willingly or the situation was created for him to quit. Yes, as a bowler he is still good in the shortest format of the game and there is no

doubt over his leadership quality. I am not sure whether his [possible] T20 return is because of his form or whether the board is trying to regroup the team as they are looking clueless after the defeats in the home series. That may be why Mashrafe's name is coming... for damage control. I am not sure whether his return will ultimately help the team in T20 cricket in the long term," he said.

With the economy rate of 8.04 runs per over Mashrafe has picked up 42 wickets in 54 T20Is. He also led from the front to take Rangpur Riders to the title in the fifth edition of the Bangladesh Premier League, picking up 15 wickets in 14 games at an economy rate of 6.74.

According to the Tigers' former fielding coach and BPL franchise Comilla Victorians head coach

Mohammad Salahuddin, Mashrafe is bowling well in ODIs. You need to have still one of the best options for the Tigers with the new ball in the shortest Salahuddin said. format of the game.

"For me it's not about making way for others in T20Is; I would instead play my best bowler in the side. I think with the fast bowling attack we have at the moment, Mashrafe is the best bowler in the team as we do not have such a bowler in the team who can bowl well with the new ball. Mustafizur Rahman is not bowling with the new ball as we use him after the Powerplay, so who will bowl with the new ball? You need a frontline bowler with the new ball. I have witnessed him in the domestic circuit during the BPL and he is still

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FARUQUE AHMED

will ultimately help.

a bowler to win a T20 game,"

Salahuddin added that T20s are not just about young blood, but it also requires someone who can use his head and perform under pressure.

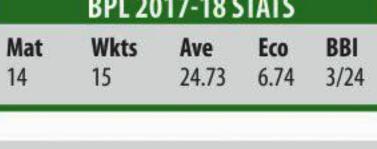
The selectors did try a few youngsters in the two-match T20I series against Sri Lanka in the likes of Mahedi Hasan, Zakir Hasan, Nazmul Islam, Abu Jayed and Afif Hossain, but according to chief selector Minhajul Abedin it is difficult to judge a cricketer by their performance in just two games. He also added that the inclusion of Mashrafe in T20Is will certainly bring some hope for the Tigers before

going to the Nidahas Trophy.

"As T20s are the best platform to try new players in the side we did have a look at some young players who have performed well in the domestic circuit recently. However it is difficult to comment only by their performances in two games," Minhajul told The Daily Star yesterday.

MASHRAFE'S T201 STATS				
Mts	Wkts	Ave	Econ	Best
54	42	36.35	8.03	4/19

Wkts 24.73 6.74 3/24





Why was he allowed to retire if he is needed to come back now? I think Mashrafe is the best bowler in the team as we do not have a bowler who can bowl well with the new ball. You need a frontline bowler with the new ball. He is still bowling well in ODIs. You need to have a bowler to win a T20 game.

MOHAMMAD SALAHUDDIN



Mashrafe's return in T20Is will bring hope to the Tigers, but it is not confirmed yet. As T20s are the best platform to try new players in the side we did have a look at some young players who have performed well in the domestic circuit recently. However, it is difficult to comment only by their performances of two games.

MINHAJUL ABEDIN

South Africa

Level series

A 30-ball 69 from Heinrich

Klaasen and an unbeaten

40-ball 64 from JP Duminy

helped South Africa beat

India by six wickets in the

second Twenty20

International in Centurion

yesterday to level the three-

and three fours while

Duminy struck four fours

and three sixes as the Proteas

chased down 189 with eight

and Mahendra Singh Dhoni

punished South Africa's

bowlers as India recovered

India, sent in to bat, made

188 for four after being 45

INDIA: 188 for 4 (Dhawan

24, Raina 31, Pandey 79 not

out, Dhoni 52 not out; Dala

SOUTH AFRICA: 189 for 4

in 18.4 overs (Klaasen 69,

Hendricks 26, Duminy 64

Result: SA won by 6 wickets.

not out; Unadkat 2-42)

Earlier, Manish Pandey

balls to spare.

from a poor start.

SCORES IN BRIEF

2-28, Duminy 1-15)

for three.

Klaasen hit seven sixes

match series 1-1 last night.

AFP, Centurion

Bowler heads it for six

Star Sport Desk



Umpires wear protective gear nowadays; batsmen have been wearing helmets for a long time. Canterbury fast bowler Andrew Ellis, however, seems to have been endowed with natural protective gear -- namely his forehead.

In the third preliminary final of the Ford Trophy -- New Zealand's domestic one-day tournament --Auckland opener Jeet Raval blasted a match-winning 149. In the 19th over Raval hit Ellis for sixes off successive balls, but he added a gobsmacking injury to insult in the second of those when he hit it straight back at the bowler, who could not raise his arms in time as the ball cannoned into his right temple.



QR CODE TO VIEW THE HEADED SIX

Well, cannoned off, because it was hit hard enough and Ellis's head itself was hard enough for the ball to carry over the long off boundary for perhaps the strangest six seen on a cricket field in a long time. Fortunately, Ellis passed a concussion test after going off the field, and actually came back to bowl four more overs. Most importantly, he got the wicket of his assailant. But given the power his head has proven to have, he should watch out and maybe invest in a helmet, as it may be worth it for batsmen to aim for his cranium in the future.



Gazi Group opener Imrul Kayes (L) and Mominul Haque will be hoping to let their bats do the talking against Brothers Union in their DPL clash today.

learned in Australia's domestic Big

have in Australian cricket. The clar-

ity and roles that these individuals

have at Big Bash level can (also) be

executed on the international

Guptill and Colin Munro made

their intentions clear with a flurry of

Warner held his nerve and backed

his attack to take early wickets,

constantly switching bowlers so the

boundaries in the early overs.

New Zealand openers Martin

They raced to 48 without loss but

"It just shows the great depth we

Bash League.

PHOTO:

STAR

Australia top T20I rankings

Clinch tri-series title with 19-run win over New Zealand

AFP, Auckland



Australia cruised to a 19run victory in a rain-affected T20 tri-series

final with New Zealand Wednesday to claim the world number one ranking in the shortest form of the game for the first time.

New Zealand struggled to 150 for nine after electing to bat first at Auckland's Eden Park but failing to repeat the pyrotechnics that saw them score 243 against Australia at the same ground last Friday.

Australia's bowlers avenged that pasting as they tore through New Zealand's middle order, led by spinner Ashton Agar's career-best

T20 figures for three for 27. Ross Taylor's 43 of 38 balls was the highlight of a poor New Zealand batting display that included just five sixes, despite Eden Park's noto-

riously short boundaries. Australia never looked in danger of missing the 151-run target but the manner in which the victory came

was anti-climatic.

The players were off the pitch Zealand and England. when officials decided to abandon the match due to persistent Pakistan to become the top-rated rain, awarding Australia a 19-run win under the Duckworth-Lewis held the number one spot since system.

The result means David Warner's men complete the tri-series undefeated, notching convincing wins in

It also means Australia leapfrog T20 team, the first time they have rankings were introduced in 2011.

"I'm over the moon, right from the get-go we played superb cricket," Warner said, crediting the all their five matches against New series win to the skills his players



Australia players pose with the trophy after beating New Zealand in the Twenty20 tri-series final at Eden Park in Auckland yesterday.

PHOTO: **AFP**

NEW ZEALAND: 150 for 9 in 20

Maxwell

SCORES IN BRIEF

batters could not settle.

overs (Guptill 21, Munro 29, Taylor 43 not out; Richardson 2-30, Tye 2-30, Agar 3-27)

AUSTRALIA: 121 for 4 in 14.4 overs (Warner 25, Short 50, Maxwell 20 not out, Finch 18 not out; Sodhi 1-21, Munro 1-18)

Result: Australia won by 19 runs (D/L method) Player-of-the-match: Ashton Agar.

Shakib out of PSL

Tamim reaches Dubai as third season kicks off today

SPORTS REPORTER



Shakib Al Hasan, the No. 1 all-rounder in the world, has been ruled out of the Pakistan Super League, the franchise-based T20 league starting in United Emirates today, due to his finger injury.

The Bangladesh all-rounder, who was supposed to play for the defending champions Peshawar Zalmi, was injured during the final of a tri-nation series last month. He was

supposed to play only the initial few matches as he will be busy with the tri-nation Nidahas Trophy starting on March 6 in Sri Lanka.

"Bangladeshi all-rounder Shakib Al-Hasan will not take part in PSL 2018 due to a hand injury. Sabbir Rahman from Bangladesh [has] joined Peshawar Zalmi as Shakib's partial cover," informed the league's official Twitter handle on Wednesday.

Sabbir will also only be available

for the first few games, with English all-rounder Liam Dawson already engaged to cover for the rest of the league. Sabbir, along with Mahmudullah Riyad and Mustafiur Rahman who will feature for Quetta Gladiators and Lahore Qalanders

respectively, have already reached Dubai on Wednesday. Peshawar Zalmi's other Bangladeshi player, Tamim Iqbal, who was awaiting his visa, took the flight for Dubai last night and is expected to take part in the opening game

Faf returns to training for Aus series

REUTERS, Cape Town

South Africa captain Faf du Plessis will begin training as he seeks to prove his fitness ahead of the fourmatch home Test series against Australia starting

on March 1. Du Plessis missed the majority of the one-day international and Twenty20 series against India after picking up a fracture to his right index finger.

"He will start batting tomorrow and we are hopeful he will come through that and be available to captain the team for the first Test against Australia," team manager Mohammed Moosajee said in a news release from Cricket South Africa.

Two more key players are on course to feature in the first Test in Durban with AB de Villiers having fully recovered from a knee injury and wicketkeeper Quinton de Kock over his wrist problem.

Player-of-the-series: Glenn of the tournament against Multan Sultans tonight.