

# SPORT



## It's Liton after Miraz for Shakib

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Twenty20 and ODI skipper Shakib Al Hasan has been ruled out of the Nidahas Trophy tri-Nation tournament in Sri Lanka.

Although the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) dragged the issue till the last moment before confirming his absence the day before the team's departure, the ace all-rounder's unavailability for the T20 tri-series was inevitable due to the gravity of the injury to his left hand.

However the most curious part of the official press release was that Shakib had been replaced in the squad by wicketkeeper-batsman Liton Das. That is because during the announcement of the squad on February 26, chief selector Minhajul Abedin informed the reporters: "[Mehedi Hasan] Miraz has been included cover for Shakib in the 16-member squad."

When his attention was drawn to Liton's selection, Minhajul told The Daily Star over phone that Liton had been included in line with the demands of the team management; a very common explanation from the chief selector whenever a question has been raised about any unusual inclusion.

"The team management wanted an additional batsman and that's why we called up Liton," Minhajul explained.

Confusion and chaos regarding selection -- especially surrounding premier all-rounder Shakib following the finger injury he sustained during the tri-series final on January 27 at Mirpur -- has apparently become a routine practice from the selectors. The Tigers' limited-overs skipper Shakib had ruled himself out of the T20I home series against Sri Lanka just a day after he was included as captain of the 15-member squad.

Another interesting news is that Shakib will go to Australia for better treatment, but he will fly for Melbourne from Colombo.

"Three doctors in Bangkok gave different opinions and there is also the issue of surgery if physiotherapy fails to have the desired effect. That's why the board has decided to send him Australia. He will first go to Colombo on March 6 and then fly to Australia on March 8," informed BCB director and media committee chairman Jalal Yunus.

But the board must ensure one thing that interim head coach Courtney Walsh said yesterday.

"He [Shakib] is someone you have to give a lot of time if he is going to be fit to play. We will give him time; as long as he needs to get ready. Guys have to understand and work around that. When you have a world-class player like Shakib, you give him every opportunity to get fit," advised the West Indies legendary fast bowler.



Shakib Al Hasan (L), standing beside interim head coach Courtney Walsh, watches his colleagues go through their last training session from the dressing room as the regular skipper of the Twenty20 team will not be part of the upcoming tri-series in Sri Lanka due to his finger injury. PHOTO: STAR

## Mahmudullah joins Tigers

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh's stand-in skipper for the upcoming Nidahas Trophy, Mahmudullah Riyad, was scheduled to return to Dhaka yesterday night before travelling to Sri Lanka for the tournament with the team today.

Mahmudullah, who was participating in the Pakistan Super League (PSL) for Quetta Gladiators in Dubai, was scheduled to return after playing his last game of the competition against Multan Sultans.

The other Bangladeshi cricketers include Tamim Iqbal and Sabbir Rahman, whose Peshwar Zalmi were scheduled to play Mustafizur Rahman's Lahore Qalandars yesterday. They will join the squad directly in Sri Lanka after playing their last PSL game.

The Nidahas Trophy will kick off on March 6, with Bangladesh set to play their first game against India on March 8.

## 'My target is to win as many as possible'

SPORTS REPORTER



It will be interesting to see how the Bangladesh team approach the upcoming Nidahas Trophy under new interim coach Courtney Walsh after a disappointing home series against Sri Lanka where the Tigers were beaten in all three formats.

The Tigers will depart for Sri Lanka today to play the tri-nation T20I series that also involves India and the hosts.

Chaos had reigned during their previous series against Sri Lanka, from the team selection to providing specific plans, and it was exacerbated due to a communication gap under technical director Khaled Mahmud.

However, the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) has this time realised the need for a coach who can guide the ship with a clear

plan, with Mahmud returning to his previous duties as team manager. His replacement, Walsh, informed that things would be different this time around and urged the players and board officials for support.

"Everything happened in a rush the last time [during the Sri Lanka series]. It is different now since there is someone who is responsible for organising and ensuring things are done properly. I will try to have dialogues with all the relevant parties about what is required. I think it is good for someone to be able to hold their hand up and say yes or no to what's happening," Walsh told reporters after the Tigers' final training session at the Sher-e-Bangla National stadium in Mirpur yesterday.

"I am excited to be in that position. I am sure I will get the full support of the BCB, president, directors, senior players and even the junior players. Once everybody comes to the table and we work together, it will be good

to start planning how we go from here," added the legendary Jamaican.

The message from the interim coach, who added that he wants the players to be proud of representing Bangladesh, is clear; forget what happened in the past, enjoy the game without taking any added pressure and do things with a purpose.

There will be a change to the planning as regular skipper Shakib Al Hasan was ruled out of the series yesterday, but Walsh urged the others to step up.

"Everybody has to step up to the plate. Shakib is still getting treatment so we are not sure when he might be available. We have to plan at the moment without him. I don't want to divulge too much of the plans. We are going to have to do things a bit differently in his absence. He is a hard player to replace overnight. He does everything -- bat, bowl, field and captain. As soon as he is well enough to play, we will have to get him there," Walsh added.

The 55-year-old pulled no punches, saying that Bangladesh would be underdogs in the series, which starts on March 6 before the Tigers' first game against India on March 8.

"There will be specific targets; what we want to achieve and how we will go about doing it. We have started the discussions already. We will fine-tune that once everybody arrives in Sri Lanka.

"My target will be to win as many games as possible on this tour. I am very hopeful that we can do so. It will be nice to get into the final. We are taking it a game at a time at this point," Walsh said.

The legendary fast bowler, who conducted a special camp with the pacers ahead of the series, said that the team would rely on fast bowlers such as Mustafizur Rahman, Rubel Hossain and Taskin Ahmed in the absence of Shakib in the spin department.

## Tamim's Zalmi canter to a win

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh opener Tamim Iqbal shared an unbeaten 104 runs partnership with Kamran Akmal as Peshawar Zalmi heaped more misery on Lahore Qalandars with a 10-wicket victory in their Pakistan Super League match in Sharjah yesterday.

Chasing only 100 for a win Tamim scored a measured 35-ball 37 with four boundaries while his partner Kamran blasted 57 off 47 balls with seven fours and two sixes.

Bangladeshi counterpart Mustafizur Rahman had a quiet day with the ball for Lahore bowling two overs for 10 runs.

Batting first Lahore were bundled out for 100 runs with pacers Hasan Ali and Liam Dawson taking 3 wickets apiece for 22 and 20 respectively.

Earlier, in the days first match Bangladesh's stand-in ODI and T20I skipper Mahmudullah Riyad failed to make a mark in his final match of the Pakistan Super League as his side, the Quetta Gladiators, were handed a crushing nine-wicket defeat by the Multan Sultans.

Multan's Imran Tahir put in a show-stopping performance as he picked up a hat-trick to wipe out the tail as the Gladiators fell for a meek 102.

Tahir finished with impressive figures of three wickets for 19 runs from 2.4 overs. Sohail Tanvir also had eye-popping figures, grabbing three wickets for 14 runs from his three overs.



New Zealand captain Kane Williamson needed a six off the last ball to win the third ODI against England but the centurion failed to connect the wide off-stump yorker from Chris Woakes at Wellington yesterday. PHOTO: REUTERS

## England hold firm

AFP, Wellington



Moeen Ali was as surprised as anyone as he combined with Adil Rashid to plunder New Zealand's batting stocks in England's dramatic four-run victory in the third one-day international in Wellington on Saturday.

Not even an unbeaten 112 by Kane Williamson could save New Zealand after their top order disappeared in Ali and Rashid's devastating spell of five wickets for 23 runs in 41 deliveries.

When time was up New Zealand were 230 for eight in reply to England's 234 after Chris Woakes bowled two dot balls to Williamson to end the match.

The game boiled down to New Zealand skipper Williamson needing a six off the final ball, but a wide yorker from Woakes meant he was unable to deliver.

New Zealand appeared to have the game in their hands at 80 for one in the 18th over, before Ali and Rashid turned the match.

Williamson denied there were concerns about the brittle New Zealand batting performance.

"Not really. It was a game where we weren't at our smartest. We didn't adjust well on a tough surface and that's all it is," said Williamson, adding it was a "very frustrating" defeat.

"Starting off in our second innings we were in a position of strength after maybe 15 overs then we stumbled a bit in the middle which really hurt us ... and just a shame not to get across the line.

"And credit to the way the English spinners bowled through the middle. They were outstanding."

Ben Stokes took a stunning dive to his left to catch Colin Munro (49) off Rashid to ignite the slump as New Zealand went from a comfortable 80 for one to 103 for six.

**SCORES IN BRIEF:**  
**ENGLAND:** 234 all out in 50 overs (Morgan 48, Stokes 39; Sodhi 3-55, Boult 2-47)  
**NEW ZEALAND:** 230-8 in 50 overs (Williamson 112 not out, Munro 49, Santner 41; Ali 3-36, Rashid 2-34, Woakes 2-40)  
**Result:** England won by four runs  
Player of the match: Moeen Ali

## Shooting's team events dropped?

SPORTS REPORTER



Bangladesh's slim chances for medals in shooting events of the upcoming Asian Games got even slimmer after the games' organizers dropped all the team events from its roster, according to news in international media.

The Asian Games will be held in Jakarta and Palembang of Indonesia from August 18 to September 2 this year.

The organisers have reportedly removed a total of 25 events including all team events in shooting from their schedule, including traditional events like the rifle 50m prone (men and women), 50m pistol, 25m centre fire pistol and 25m standard pistol, according to a report on the Times Of India yesterday.

The Olympic Council of Asia's corresponding body in Bangladesh, the Bangladesh Olympic Association

(BOA), however, said it has not received any official letter yet. "We don't know anything about such a decision yet. We have only started accreditation for the contingent which will end in April," said BOA's DGM Sayeed Ahmed.

However, a high-official of the Bangladesh Shooting Sports Federation (BSSF) said that they expected such a decision. "Although we have not heard anything official in this regard, we did expect team events to be dropped from the Asian Games after the Gold Coast Commonwealth Games organizers took a similar decision," Asbab Ali, training committee secretary of BSSF, told The Daily Star yesterday.

Another high-up of the federation, chief executive officer Mushtaq Wais, said that they sent a 23-member entry list to the BOA on Thursday, with 10 male shooters, eight female shooters and five officials. If the number of events are trimmed, the numbers in

the contingent will be trimmed as well, he added.

While Bangladesh have never won medals from shooting in Asia's biggest multi-discipline sporting competition, the country has won a number of medals, both individual and team, in other competitions like the Commonwealth Games and the South Asian Games.

Bangladesh's top shooter Abdullah Baki, who won a silver medal in the 10m air rifle event in the 2014 Commonwealth Games and also represented the country in the 2016 Olympics, feels the dropping of shooting events is bad news for Bangladesh. "If such a decision is indeed taken, it will be bad for us," Baki told The Daily Star. "Even though we haven't won in the past, there is always a chance of winning medals in team events because if one does poorly, the others can make up for it with good performances. In fact if team events are dropped, the chances of individual

## U-17 squad for Afghan series announced

SPORTS REPORTER

The Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) yesterday announced the Under-17 squad which will tour India to play a series against their Afghan counterparts.

The series comprises two three-day matches and three one-dayers which will be played in Greater Noida.

The team will depart on March 10.  
**SQUAD:** Parvez Hossain (C), Amite Hasan (VC), Faiz Habib Khan, Prantik Nawrose, Md Tahsin, Sazzad Hossain, Pritom Kumar, Mrittunjoy Chowdhury, Shahadat Hossain, Rishad Hossain, Iftikher Hossain, Mehedi Hasan, Mehedi Hasan, Asadullah Hill, Tanzim Hossain.

## Australia build big lead

AFP, Durban



South Africa fought back on the third afternoon of the first Test but could not stop Australia from forging a commanding lead at Kingsmead on Saturday.

Australia were 213 for nine at stumps, an overall lead of 402.

Opening batsman Cameron Bancroft made 53 and got Australia off to an aggressive start to their second innings together with David Warner in an opening stand of 56 in 13 overs.

Australia reached 112 for three at lunch but the scoring rate stalled after lunch with stroke play proving difficult on a slow pitch against disciplined bowling. The tourists added 63 runs in 27.5 overs for the loss of three wickets during the afternoon.

Australian captain Steve Smith made 38 but was unable to bat with fluency in an 81-ball innings before he was trapped leg

before wicket by part-time left-arm spinner Dean Elgar.

Shaun Marsh laboured for 77 balls to make 25 net out, twice surviving South African reviews for leg before wicket, the first when a ball from left-arm spinner Keshav Maharaj hit him in the "umpire's call" zone and the other when a delivery from a hostile Kagiso Rabada pitched outside leg stump.

Rabada had first-innings top-scorer Mitchell Marsh caught at first slip for six while Maharaj claimed his third wicket of the innings when Tim Paine (14) edged him to slip in the last over before tea.

Bancroft hit his first fifty since he made 82 not out on debut against England in Brisbane in November.

**SCORES IN BRIEF**  
**AUSTRALIA:** First innings 351  
**SOUTH AFRICA:** First innings 162  
**AUSTRALIA:** Second innings 213 for 9 (Bancroft 53; Maharaj 3-93, Morkel 3-42)



BANCROFT... 53