

SPORT



Bangladesh ace pacer Mustafizur Rahman bowls in the nets during the training camp ahead of next month's Asia Cup at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

Fizz far from satisfied

SPORTS REPORTER



Mustafizur Rahman bowled decisively and took crucial wickets during the last ODI and T20I series against West Indies, which came as a relief for the shaky Bangladesh pace bowling department.

Many were encouraged enough by his bowling to say that the left-arm paceman was all set to get back to his full rhythm but the 22-year old bowler, who is popularly known as Fizz, was hardly satisfied with his bowling and instead believed that he was well behind his standard mark.

"Not 100 per cent... it was only 60 per cent [his effort during West Indies series]. The rhythm is an issue for pace bowlers. I am now fully fit but it is possible to get my rhythm better," responded Mustafizur when reminded that he looked good while bowl-

ing in the last series.

The next question was what he would need to do to make up that forty per cent. "I think there is a scope for me to improve in all areas," came the deadpan reply.

He however promised that he will try to fulfil expectations in the Asia Cup to be held in UAE from September 15. "I have no individual targets but I will try my best to do well. Many have high expectations of me, so my aim will be to fulfil their expectations," said Mustafizur.

The young pace bowler was familiar with conditions in the UAE and opined that it will be the same as home.

"The heat is the same as our country. I played there in 2014 in the ICC Under-19 World Cup. The grounds will be the same in Asia Cup as the ones where I played the U19 World Cup. So, everything will be the same as our country, now let's see what kind of wickets ACC [Asian Cricket Council] offers," said Mustafizur.

Anamul, Sabbir axed from ODIs

Three changes in ODI squad for the Asia Cup

SPORTS REPORTER



Sabbir Rahman, Anamul Haque and Abu Jayed were dropped from Bangladesh's ODI squad after having been in the fold for the Tigers' victorious ODI series in West Indies as the national selectors yesterday announced a 15-member squad for the upcoming Asia Cup scheduled to begin from September 15 in UAE.

Wicketkeeper-batsman Mohammad Mithun was rewarded with a recall for his fine performance with Bangladesh A's tour of Ireland while all-rounder Ariful Haque was also named in the squad.

Chief selector Minhajul Abedin informed that Sabbir's exclusion was brought about by a combination of a long stretch of poor form and his recent off-field disciplinary issues -- the batsman will face a hearing with the disciplinary committee tomorrow.

"Sabbir's exclusion was a mixture of both his off-field incidents and his recent poor perfor-

mance as he was out of form for a long time now," Minhajul told The Daily Star yesterday.

Anamul was unable to utilise his opportunities -- the right-handed opener scored just 88 runs in the seven consecutive games he was picked for since making a return to the ODI side after three years.

The selectors are considering Mithun as Sabbir's replacement in the lower middle order and Minhajul added that the team management has kept faith on another wicketkeeper-batsman, Liton Das, as the Tamim Iqbal's opening partner in the Asia Cup.

Young batsman Nazmul Hossain was also retained in the squad. The left-hander did not play a game in the series against West Indies as an understudy to the first-choice openers.

Ariful is expected to play the role of a batting all-rounder who can score quick runs in the lower middle order and chip in with his medium pacers.

"He [Ariful] has already made his T20I debut and also performed in the domestic circuit, batting well in the T20s after coming in at number

Mithun given new function

SPORTS REPORTER



Wicketkeeper-batsman Mohammad Mithun's inclusion in the squad for the upcoming Asia Cup can be considered as recognition for his fine run of form during the Bangladesh A team's recent tour of Ireland. The right-hander was instrumental as he scored two fifties in the five-match one-day series while batting at the middle order.

Therefore the selectors are considering the 27-year-old, who also played as an opener in 13 T20Is, for the middle order in the upcoming Asia Cup.

"It was a reflection of the captain's and coach's demands as they asked for a middle order batsman who can play spin well. They mentioned his name so we decided to include him. We are considering him in the middle order at number six-seven position and he has scored a couple of fifties in the A team ODI series in Ireland," chief selector

Minhajul Abedin told the Daily Star yesterday.

Mithun has only played three ODI's since debuting in the format against India in 2014, where he scored 26 runs as an opening batsman while the following game was abandoned, but the cricketer was still dropped from the side after that.

The wicketkeeper-batsman, who has been scoring consistently in the domestic circuit, made his comeback to the one-day side earlier this year, four years after being dropped, in the tri-nation ODI series final in Mirpur. Mithun replaced an underperforming Anamul Haque for the opening spot and scored ten runs but he was dropped from the team again for the next series.

The right-hander was in and out of the team ever since his international debut four years ago but according to Minhajul, the team management hopes that Mithun will be able to utilise this opportunity and cement his place in the middle order.



Bangladesh coach Steve Rhodes imparts some wisdom on Mohammad Mithun (L) during net practice.

PHOTO: STAR



Sam Curran scored a gutsy 78 to pull England out of the gutter on the opening day of the fourth Test against India at the Ageas Bowl in Southampton yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

Curran rescues England

AFP, Southampton



Sam Curran marked his England return with a Test-best 78 as the hosts fought back on the first day of the fourth Test against India at Southampton on Thursday.

It was a familiar story when Curran, primarily a left-arm swing bowler and playing just his fourth Test, came into bat with England in dire straits at 86 for six.

But thanks to the 20-year-old they finished on a far more respectable 246 all out, with India fast bowler Jasprit Bumrah taking an economical three wickets for 46 runs in his 20 overs.

India had four overs to bat until the close but reached stumps on 19 without loss, a deficit of 227 runs.

Shikhar Dhawan was three not out and KL Rahul 11 not out.

Curran was unfortunate to miss the third Test at Trent Bridge, a match India won by 203 runs to reduce England's lead in the five-match series to 2-1, as he made way for returning all-rounder Ben Stokes.

But Thursday saw him put on 81 for the seventh wicket with the recalled Moeen Ali (40) and Curran then added 63 for the ninth with Stuart Broad (17).

Curran, a son of the late Zimbabwe all-rounder Kevin Curran, was last man out, bowled trying to heave spinner Ravichandran Ashwin.

In all, he batted for over three hours, facing 136 balls including three fours and a six.

Earlier, England captain Joe Root opted to bat after winning the toss and promptly saw his side slump to

36 for four.

It was the 32nd time in their last 63 Test innings that England had been four wickets down with 100 or fewer runs on the scoreboard.

India's four quicks all gained sharp and often extravagant seam movement -- which helped explain the large total of 23 bytes conceded by wicket-keeper Rishabh Pant.

Bumrah struck with just his seventh delivery when he had the Keaton Jennings lbw for a duck, with the struggling left-hander leaving a ball that cut back into him.

SCORES IN BRIEF

ENGLAND: First innings 246 all out in 76.4 overs (Stokes 23, Buttler 21, Ali 40, Curran 78; Bumrah 3-46, Sharma 2-26, Shami 2-51, Ashwin 2-40)

INDIA: First innings 19 for no loss (Dhawan not out 3, Rahul not out 11)

Rope running out?

SPORTS REPORTER



Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) president Nazmul Hassan returned to the country on Wednesday evening after performing hajj and made his presence felt the following day. Unfortunately for batsman Sabbir Rahman, the BCB supremo said that his repeated disciplinary indiscretions played a part in his omission from the 15-man squad for next month's Asia Cup.

"Sabbir had to be called by the [disciplinary] committee, so there will be a decision after that. And definitely that has had an impact [on his omission]," Hassan told reporters yesterday in Mirpur.

Sabbir will face the committee tomorrow to give his side of threatening a Facebook user hours after Bangladesh lost the second ODI against West Indies on July 27, which led the user to criticise the batsman in a Facebook post.

Two other players will also face the committee tomorrow -- Nasir Hossain, who is in trouble because he was a



SABBIR RAHMAN

participant in an unsavoury Youtube video, and Mosaddek Hossain because of being recently sued by his wife of six years. The president, however, seemed to separate instances of personal problems from behavioural short-circuits in which Sabbir has been involved -- he had previously assaulted a young spectator in December 2017 and ordered officials to keep their mouths shut.

"There are some who we have been punishing, but if they keep repeating their wrongdoings, we have to punish them harshly," said the president, adding that the BCB will have to be given time to

ascertain the veracity of allegations.

"If there has been a wrongdoing, we will try to keep the perpetrator away from any further such action. But if he does not keep away, then a final decision will have to be taken, and to me there is only one final decision -- he won't be in the national team."

He also added that the BCB were mulling whether to bar players from using social media while on tour and drawing up a set of dos and don'ts that they have to be signatories to. However, in a frank mood, while saying that BCB never helped or sought to help those against whom there were complaints, he admitted to an exception.

"Except one -- Rubel [Hossain, who was embroiled in legal turmoil before the 2015 World Cup]. At that time, we tried to take him to the World Cup."

In that was an admission of the BCB clearly prioritising performance over issues of player conduct in the past. However, leaving Sabbir out -- although it was not the toughest course because of his poor recent performances -- may be a sign that the camel's back has finally been broken.

'Hardik could be crucial factor against Pakistan'

PTI, Dubai



Former Australia speedster Mitchell Johnson feels all-rounder Hardik Pandya could be among the key men when India take on arch-rivals Pakistan in the Asia Cup in UAE on September 19.

"Against Pakistan, India's age-old cricketing rival and neighbour, and keeping UAE's pitch conditions in mind, I think seamers like Umesh Yadav and Hardik Pandya would work in India's favour," Johnson told PTI.

"Pandya is currently doing well in England, where he is utilising the conditions well. Pandya's ability to extract pace from pitches and smartly bowling at length when required will

help knock out the tricky Pakistani batting line-up. I am actually excited to see the way Umesh Yadav will bowl in the Asia Cup," said Johnson.

"Yadav's biggest asset lies in the ability to choke an opposition at crunch times along with knocking opponents out with variations/reverse swing during his spells. Yadav, along with Pandya and (Jasprit) Bumrah, can perfectly set up the situation for the spinners who would be carrying the mantle of negotiating matches through the middle overs," explained Johnson.

Hardik picked up his first five-wicket haul in Tests in the third Test against England that helped his side to win the contest and keep the five-game series alive.

PCB picks 18 for Asia Cup camp

DAWN.COM

The national selection committee on Thursday announced an 18-member training camp for the 2018 Asia Cup, scheduled to be played in the UAE from September 15-28.

The Inzamamul Haq-led committee made the announcement after consultations with head coach Mickey Arthur and captain Sarfraz Ahmed.

The week-long camp will take place from September 3 to September 10 at Gaddafi Stadium, Lahore.

SQUAD: Fakhar Zaman, Imamul Haq, Shan Masood, Muhammad Hafeez, Babar Azam, Shoaib Malik, Asif Ali, Haris Sohail, Sarfraz Ahmed, Shadab Khan, Muhammad Nawaz, Imad Wasim, Hassan Ali, Usman Khan Shinwari, Muhammad Amir, Junaid Khan, Shaheen Shah Afridi, Faheem Ashraf.