



Opener Tamim Iqbal and (Inset) pacer Rubel Hossain brushed up on their skills during net sessions at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium indoors in Mirpur yesterday. While Rubel left for Dubai yesterday evening, Tamim was expected to set off in the early hours of Wednesday for the Asia Cup. PHOTO: BCB

Tamim, Rubel set to join team

SPORTS REPORTER

As head coach Steve Rhodes worked with the Tigers in the nets before a fielding session at the ICC Academy ground in Dubai yesterday, opener Tamim Iqbal and pacer Rubel Hossain practised at the outer nets of the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium indoor premises.

However, while Rubel left for the United Arab Emirates yesterday evening after getting his visa, Tamim is still anxious about whether he can join the team in Dubai in time to play their opening Asia Cup fixture against Sri Lanka on September 15.

Tamim had received his visa along with Rubel but, according to sources close to the matter, there was a technical problem. Due to this, he had to re-send his visa to the authorities. However, it was learnt that Tamim received his visa later and he was expected to fly in the early hours of Wednesday.

Rather than giving in to his anxiety, the left-hander opted to bat in the nets to gauge how much he has recovered from the injury to his right hand's little finger, which he sustained during a skills training camp in Mirpur.

It has also been learnt that there is still some swelling on his injured finger but Tamim is confident that he will be able to participate in the first game.

Tamim and pacer Rubel Hossain were unable to fly for the UAE with the team on September 9 due to visa complications.

Rubel looked relaxed yesterday at the home of cricket in Mirpur ahead of his departure as his visa had arrived on Monday night.

In Dubai, the cricketers had to deal with scorching heat combined with high humidity during the training session but it is paramount for the Tigers to acclimatise with the tough conditions, which is why the board decided to send the team there a week before their first game.

Vice captain Shakib Al Hasan also joined the team in Dubai but the all-rounder is apparently still experiencing some discomfort on his left hand's injured little finger.

Despite the discomfort, it was learnt that the ace all-rounder would be ready to take the field from the first game of the tournament.

Salahuddin to look into SAFF failure

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Football Federation president Kazi Salahuddin yesterday said that he would look into the failure of the national football team in the ongoing SAFF Suzuki Cup.

"We have done a lot for the national team but they could not qualify for the semifinals of the SAFF Championship. The early exit from the tournament is disappointing and hurts for all of us. I will look into the matter by talking with the head coach," Salahuddin told reporters at the BFF House yesterday.

Coach Jamie Day is currently on vacation in England and is likely to return on September 20 or 21 to start his assignment of preparing the team for October's Bangabandhu Gold Cup.

Asked whether he has any plans to reshuffle the national teams committee and the managerial post of the national team, the BFF boss said that he would think of the matter after talking to the head coach.

Pakistan up against favourites India

Trouble-hit Maldives face spirited Nepal

ANISUR RAHMAN



Nepal and Pakistan are looking forward to making it to their maiden final appearances in the regional football extravaganza when they take on Maldives and India respectively in the semifinals of the SAFF Suzuki Cup at the Bangabandhu National Stadium today.

Pakistan and India will renew their rivalry in the second semifinal at 7:30pm after Nepal and Maldives play the first one at 4:00pm, with Channel 9 telecasting both matches live from the venue.

Nepal and Pakistan have never crossed the last four hurdle in their previous four and three attempts respectively, but this time both teams put up some good performances in group-stage matches to raise their hopes of reaching the stage for the first time.

Nevertheless, the task is not going to be easy for either side as Pakistan face ten-time finalists and seven-time champions India, who hold a 14-3 head-to-head advantage over their bitter rivals.

Pakistan had to quit from the title race in their first-ever semifinal attempt when they lost to India 2-0 in 1997 before being knocked out by Maldives and Bangladesh in their following two semifinals during the 2003 and 2005 editions respectively.

Nepal, on the other hand, will meet four-time finalists and one-time champions Maldives, who shattered their dreams in the 1999 edition, beating them 2-0 in



While Pakistan skipper Saddam Hussain (L) was eyeing up the SAFF Suzuki Cup trophy at a press conference yesterday, the defending champions India were in business, gearing up for today's battle against their arch-rivals. PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

the semifinals. Nepal were also beaten by Sri Lanka in 1995 and Afghanistan in 2011 and 2013 -- all in semifinals.

After 18 years, it is again Maldives, who will have an edge over Nepal (seven wins, four draws and four losses). However, the Islanders had to depend on the luck of a coin toss to qualify for the last four after collecting only a point from their two matches, having failed to score a single goal.

Nepal, on the other hand, have scored seven goals in three matches and collected six points.

"We are in good condition and came into the knockout stage after proving our worth in the group stages. We have played two semifinals against Maldives and beat them on both occasions in the



Bangabandhu Gold Cup and the SA Games football event in 2016. And I am really hopeful that the boys will play their own game to create a new history for Nepal tomorrow," Nepal coach Bal Gopal Maharjan said at a pre-match conference.

Maharjan's counterpart Maldives coach Petar Segrt was, however, lambasted for his side's poor performance following their goalless draw against Sri Lanka and the 2-0 defeat against India. The German blamed the Maldivian media for creating confusion between the coach and the players.

"The players were asked whether my assistant coach will take over and face the media today, but I am still the coach of Maldives. Please don't make any confusion among the players and the Maldivian

people. I take all the responsibility for my players," Segrt said. "Nepal are a strong team and we will try to do our best because we came here to play in the final."

The focus, however, will be on the India-Pakistan match and Pakistan coach Jose Antonio Nogueira will need to prepare a plan to stop a youthful and spirited India.

"I am very excited that we have reached the semifinals. Tomorrow is the day we want to qualify for the final by any means," Nogueira said. "India are a very synchronised team and play very fast but we will try our best."

India manager Venkatesh Shanmugam said, "India and Pakistan are serious rivals. Pakistan are physically strong. They have good players. It will be a difficult match. We hope to come up with a good result."

Siddle recalled for Pak Tests

REUTERS, Melbourne

Australia named five uncapped players in a raw tour squad to play Pakistan in a Test series in the United Arab Emirates, while recalling pace veteran Peter Siddle for the first time in two years and dropping middle order batsman Peter Handscomb.

With injuries having gutted the pace stocks and suspensions ruling out former captain Steve Smith, David Warner and Cameron Bancroft, selectors have filled the holes with a mix of unproven talents and well-travelled journeymen.

One-day international specialist Aaron Finch, 31, will have his chance for a Test debut in the October matches in Dubai and Abu Dhabi, along with Queensland's South African-born duo Michael Neser, a pace bowling all-rounder, and batsman Marnus Labuschagne.

Another Queensland cricketer in rookie fast bowler Brendan Doggett joins the Mitchell Starc-led pace battery which will lack injured regulars Josh Hazlewood and Pat Cummins.

Warhorse Siddle is back after nearly two years in the freezer - his last Test being a home fixture in Perth against South Africa in November, 2016.



Alice Cook (L) is delighted after her husband Alastair scored a century in his final Test innings on Monday. PHOTO: REUTERS

It's been the most surreal four days of my life really. I suppose if she (Alice, his wife) goes into labour tonight that will probably top it off but it's been incredible.

ALASTAIR COOK

'The last four days were incredible'

AFP, London

Alastair Cook said the final Test of his glittering career had contained some of the most "surreal" days of his cricketing life after he signed off with 147 in his last England innings on Monday.

The Essex opener has been given numerous standing ovations during the fifth Test against India at the Oval and the crowd were willing

him to go out in style.

The former England captain, about to become a father for the third time, said it was difficult to put his achievement into words.

"There's a few of my friends here as well so for that all to happen today and every reception I've had over the last four days it's just been incredible, even that last couple of overs when the whole crowd were singing my Barmy Army (fan) songs, incredibly special."

When asked if it was his best day ever in cricket, Cook described it as a "different day".

"On a purely selfish point of view I couldn't have asked for a better week for me so yes on that side but obviously there have been bigger things in more important games that have meant more."

He said the match had been emotional for him with family and friends looking on, which had brought a different type of pressure.

Anderson eclipses McGrath

England win despite Rahul, Pant centuries

REUTERS, London



England beat India by 118 runs in their final Test despite defiant centuries from KL Rahul and Rishabh Pant, as a series full of twists reached a compelling conclusion at The Oval on Tuesday.

Chasing an improbable 464 for victory, India were eventually dismissed inside the last hour for 345, with James Anderson taking the final wicket - his 564th in Test cricket, taking him past Australian great Glenn McGrath as the most successful fast bowler of all time.

The 36-year-old Anderson received a standing ovation as he walked off

with Alastair Cook, England's most-capped player and record Test run scorer who marked his 161st and final match on Monday with an emotional century.

For most of the day, however, the story was of spirited Indian resistance that at one point gave them an outside chance of an unimaginable consolation victory, having gone into the fifth and final Test 3-1 down.

With India beginning the day on a precarious 58 for 3, a full day's play looked unlikely for the sparse crowd.

But shortly after tea they were motoring along at 325 for 5 with Rahul and Pant's partnership worth 204.

Opener Rahul, who had earlier shared a 118-run fourth-wicket partnership with Ajinkya Rahane, was eventually bowled for 149 by an Adil Rashid 'wonder ball' that pitched way outside leg stump before spinning back out of the rough and hitting off.

The 20-year-old Pant lit up a murky day with a sensational maiden century to become the first Indian wicketkeeper to score a ton in England, striking three fours off one Ben Stokes over. He struck 19 boundaries, including

four sixes in a fearless display of shot-making, but shortly after Rahul's exit he holed out trying to smash Rashid out of the ground.

| MOST TEST WICKETS BY A PACER | | | |
|------------------------------|------|------|------|
| PLAYER | INNS | WKTS | SR |
| Anderson (ENG) | 267 | 564 | 55.8 |
| McGrath (AUS) | 243 | 563 | 51.9 |
| Walsh (WI) | 242 | 519 | 57.8 |
| Kapil Dev (IND) | 227 | 434 | 63.9 |
| Broad (ENG) | 225 | 433 | 58.3 |



England pacer James Anderson (R) celebrates after taking the wicket of India's Mohammed Shami on the fifth day of the fifth and final Test yesterday. PHOTO: REUTERS

SCORES IN BRIEF

ENGLAND: First innings 332
INDIA: First innings 292
ENGLAND: Second innings 423 for 8 decd
INDIA: Second innings 345 (Rahul 149, Rahane 37, Pant 114; Anderson 3-45, Curran 2-23, Rashid 2-63)
Result: England won by 118 runs and clinched five-match series 4-1.
Player-of-the-match: Alastair Cook.