

SPORT



After being called into the Bangladesh ODI squad for today's third match against Zimbabwe, Soumya Sarkar was put through the paces during training at the Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium in Chattogram yesterday. PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

Soumya can slot in at 3 or 7

MAZHAR UDDIN from Chattogram

Yesterday was a day of relaxation for the Bangladesh team, having sealed the three-ODI series against Zimbabwe with a game in hand on Wednesday. Apart from Ariful Haque, Abu Hider, Rubel Hossain, Nazmul Hossain and Soumya Sarkar, all the members of the team opted to rest in the team hotel in Chattogram.

There was still some work to be done as reporters went to the Radisson Blu to get skipper Mashrafe Bin Mortaza's thoughts on the series win and also his plans for the today's third and final ODI.

Mashrafe, who could not sleep properly the previous night as he was suffering from a cold, woke up late and finally came down to the hotel lobby. After his usual light-hearted greetings, the inspirational cricketer switched to serious mode and answered questions, talking about probable experiments for the third ODI and providing opportunities to youngsters, his own injury concerns and a few other topics.

ON EXPERIMENTING WITH THE LINEUP FOR THE THIRD ODI AND TEAM COMBINATIONS FOR THE WORLD CUP

Actually, it is not necessary to have a look at all the places. Fazle Rabbi came in because we needed a left-arm spinner as Shakib [Al Hasan] was not there. But with [Mohammad] Saifuddin, we were looking for a pace-bowling all-rounder and he has been the only one in recent times. He has done well in the High Performance squad and also in the Dhaka [Premier] League. Apart from that there is no room for much change and I think there is hardly any chance for there to be changes to the top six if they remain fit till the World Cup. I think even if they are not in form, we should give players who are likely to be in the World Cup squad enough chances so that they can perform and settle in.

ON SOUMYA SARKAR'S ROLE IN THE TEAM

He has played both at number three and seven, and I have no issues if he plays in either position. If Soumya is in form he can even be the backup for the openers and also a backup number seven. The main reason is that he can bowl and he has been bowling well. I think we can get the solution in either position from him.

YOUR THOUGHTS ON TRYING THE FOUR CRICKETERS FROM THE SQUAD WHO ARE YET TO PLAY

It's because of the recent wins that we were unable to have a look at them, but if we had lost the situation would have been different. Among those four, Rubel is already a proven player. Then we have Ariful [Haque], Nazmul [Hossain Shanto] and Fazle, who have already played. It depends on the position of a player and what suits the team combination. We will try to focus on a few specific players till the New Zealand series.

SAIFUDDIN THE BIGGEST GAIN FROM THE SERIES

Saifuddin has done well with both bat and ball, but you also have to mention Imrul as he has been doing well since the Asia Cup. His performance will certainly create healthy competition in the opening slot after Tamim [Iqbal] returns. In England [during the World Cup] we may even play with four seamers and in that case if he [Saifuddin] can bat at number seven the way he did [in the first ODI] it will be a positive thing for us. But still, it will take some time to judge when they play on the big stage as now we are doing well and everyone is confident.

HIS CURRENT INJURY SITUATION

Look, I only play one format, so I try to play any way I can. I don't play Tests or T20s, so it's hard for me rest and get set again. But there are some problems due to injury; after the series there is a gap of four-five weeks and I need some good treatment. Let's see how it goes after discussion with the coach and selectors.



Bangladesh ODI skipper Mashrafe Bin Mortaza is in a relaxed mood as he holds court with reporters at the team hotel in Chattogram yesterday. PHOTO: STAR

Experiment goes on

4 uncapped players in Test squad

The current series against Zimbabwe has already been dubbed a series for experimentation and in line with that thinking the Minhajul Abedin-led selection panel included four uncapped players for the first Test. Ariful Haque, Mohammad Mithun, Khaled Ahmed and Nazmul Islam were the fresh faces in the 15-member squad as axes fell on Kamrul Islam, Rubel Hossain and Nurul Hasan from the last Test squad for the West Indies tour while Tamim Iqbal and Shakib Al Hasan are still injured. Refreshingly, the selectors put their focus on domestic performances in recent times when introducing new faces or considering old ones, but that was not the case for Tushar Imran, who has been achieving one domestic batting milestone after another. Mahmudullah Riyad will lead the team in the absence of Shakib, who has yet to recover from his finger injury. Tamim is recovering from a left knuckle fracture sustained during the first match of the Asia Cup in September in Dubai. Minhajul told reporters yesterday that they picked the best possible side and also explained the reasoning behind picking the new faces. The following is his explanation about the call-ups of Ariful, Mithun, Khaled and Nazmul.



MOHAMMED MITHUN

Mithun has been doing well in recent times, since the Asia Cup. As he has been among the runs and gaining confidence we wanted to see him in Test cricket. Hopefully he will be able to continue the good run.



KHALED AHMED

Khaled Ahmed is an HP [High Performance] team member and he is the fastest bowler among all the HP bowlers. We have full confidence in Khaled to serve as a backup and to become a frontline bowler in the future.



ARIFUL HAQUE

Ariful Haque has been picked in the team keeping in mind that we need a batsman in the lower order who can adapt to home conditions and score quick runs when the wicket is slow.



NAZMUL ISLAM

Nazmul Islam has got the experience in domestic cricket and he has also gained experience with the ODI team. In the absence of Shakib we needed another left-arm spinner with Tajjul, so we decided to include him.

FIXTURES

| DATE | MATCH | VENUE | TIME |
|----------|-------------|---------------|--------|
| Nov 3-7 | First Test | SICS, Sylhet | 9:30am |
| Nov 11-5 | Second Test | SBNCS, Mirpur | 9:30am |

SQUAD

Mahmudullah Riyad (Captain), Imrul Kayes, Liton Das, Mominul Haque, Nazmul Hossain, Mushfiqur Rahim, Ariful Haque, Meheddy Hasan, Tajjul Islam, Abu Jayed, Shaiful Islam, Mustafizur Rahman, Mohammad Mithun, Khaled Ahmed, Nazmul Islam.



I don't think any team, even the qualifying teams, goes into the World Cup with thinking they cannot win the World Cup -- then they should not be there. The attitude has to be there. So don't quote me now and say Bangladesh can win. I said every team should have the mindset of winning when they go into a competition. Asia Cup is the same. If there is no [such] mindset, then the team should stay home.

Khulna Titans head coach & former Sri Lanka captain Mahela Jayawardane during the BPL players' draft plan.

Thrillers at Rajshahi and Rangpur

SPORTS REPORTER



After a dull third round which saw all four matches end in draws, the National Cricket League roared to life in the fourth round, which ended yesterday with two thrilling finishes and two more results. Rangpur Division defeated Barishal Division by five runs, while Sylhet Division ran it even closer, besting Dhaka Metro by just three runs.

Rajshahi -- who were promoted after finishing top of Tier-2 last season -- moved to the top of the Tier-1 table with an eight-wicket win over defending champions Khulna. The margin of victory was

the same for Chattogram Division, who overcame Dhaka Division to move to second spot in Tier-2.

In the Tier-2 game at the Sheikh Kamruzzaman Stadium in Rajshahi, Metro started the day on 28 for one in chase of 197. The overnight pair of Shadman Islam and Shamsur Rahman took the score to 77 before Sylhet medium-pacer Khaled Mahmud removed the latter. While Shadman held firm at one end, it was a procession of batsmen at the other as Khaled picked up his second five-for of the match.

It was still Metro's game at 178 for five, but Shadman's dismissal for 78 opened the floodgates as they lost the last five wickets for 15 runs. The memorable win was sealed



MOMINUL ... 111 not out

when Khaled trapped last man Arafat Sunny leg-before.

In the Tier-1 game at the Cricket Garden Stadium in Rangpur, Barishal started the day precariously placed on 71 for three in chase of 230. They lost Shamsul Islam without adding to the score and when Al-Amin was fifth out for 52 with the score on 114, the innings started to unravel and they were staring at certain defeat at 169 for eight. A 54-run ninth-wicket stand between Nuruzzaman and Tanvir Islam then turned the table on the hosts. However, it was all over in a jiffy when both batsmen were dispatched with just six runs left to pull off a sensational win.

At the Sheikh Abu Naser Stadium, hosts Khulna just had to bat out two sessions to ensure that the match would end in a draw. However, they were bundled out for a paltry 158 as player-of-the-match

Forhad Reza took four for 26 while Shaiful Islam and Muktar Ali took three apiece. Rajshahi lost two wickets in reaching the 37-run target.

At the Sheikh Kamal International Stadium in Cox's Bazar, Mominul Haque guided Chattogram to an eight-wicket win over Dhaka with an unbeaten 115-ball 111, which included 11 fours and two sixes. Chasing 202 to win, they started the day on 113 for two and Tasamul Haque kept Mominul company with 89 in an unbroken 183-run third-wicket stand.

HIGHLIGHTS

● Medium-pacer Khaled Ahmed picked up his maiden 10-wicket haul in the process of helping Sylhet to a three-run win over Dhaka Metro. The 26-year-old, who only had one five-wicket haul from 19 first-class games before this one, picked five for 85 in Metro's first innings and followed that up with five for 54 in the second.

● Soumya Sarkar has been in tremendous form for Khulna, but was called away on national duty for the ongoing ODI series against Zimbabwe. With Soumya missing at number three on the last day yesterday, Khulna folded for 158 in a match that produced scores of 309 and 431. Rajshahi thus won a match seemingly heading towards a draw and moved to the top of Tier-1.

● Bangladesh Test specialist Mominul Haque struck form at just the right time for Chattogram, hitting his 15th first-class ton as he guided his team to a comprehensive eight-wicket win over Dhaka.

Bravo calls it a day



REUTERS, Antigua

West Indies all-rounder Dwayne Bravo announced his retirement from international cricket on Thursday.

The 35-year-old Trinidadian, who made his West Indies debut in 2004, played 40 Tests, 164 one-day internationals and 66 T20 internationals. His last appearance for his country came in the shortest format against Pakistan in Sept. 2016.

"Today I want to confirm to the cricket world that I have officially retired from international cricket in all formats of the game," he said in a statement.

"After 14 years when I made my debut for the West Indies, I still remember that moment I received the maroon cap before walking onto the Lord's Cricket Ground against England in July 2004."

STATS

| Tests | Innings | Runs | BATTING | | | 100s | 50s |
|-------|---------|------|---------|-------|--------|------|-----|
| | | | HS | Ave | SR | | |
| 71 | 2200 | 113 | 31.42 | 48.59 | 3 | 13 | |
| ODIs | 141 | 2968 | 112* | 25.36 | 82.30 | 2 | 10 |
| T20Is | 69 | 1142 | 66* | 24.29 | 116.41 | 0 | 4 |

| Tests | Innings | Wkts | BOWLING | | | 4w | 5w |
|-------|---------|-------|---------|------|------|----|----|
| | | | Ave | Econ | SR | | |
| 61 | 86 | 39.83 | 3.17 | 75.1 | 6 | 2 | |
| ODIs | 150 | 199 | 29.51 | 5.41 | 32.7 | 6 | 1 |
| T20Is | 56 | 52 | 28.26 | 8.46 | 20.0 | 2 | 0 |