

# SPORT



## We don't have many concerns: Rhodes

SPORTS REPORTER



Despite Bangladesh drawing their recent two-Test home series against Zimbabwe 1-1, many will have given the visitors the edge as they stayed competitive throughout the series while Bangladesh's batting failed abjectly in the first Test, and it remains the Tigers' biggest concern.

The home batsmen eventually managed to snap the streak of eight consecutive sub-200 scores in the second Test in Mirpur, where Mushfiqur Rahim struck a magnificent double hundred and Mominul Haque registered his sixth Test ton. Stand-in skipper Mahmudullah Riyad joined in with his second Test ton in the second innings.

Riding on these contributions, Bangladesh managed to avoid humiliation and won the second Test comprehensively by 218 runs to level the after the 151-run loss in Sylhet.

The upcoming series against the West Indies will be even tougher for the hosts and according to head coach Steve Rhodes, the hard-fought series against Zimbabwe would do a lot of good for Bangladesh against the Caribbean side.

"I think at Sylhet and Mirpur, Zimbabwe made us fight all the way. Some people might be a little bit surprised at the 1-1 result and the hard-fought series. I think it will do us a lot of good going into a contest against the West Indies, who are obviously going to be tough oppo-

It is great to have him back. I keep saying Shakib is a master tactician. Riyad did a good job as captain in the Mirpur Test but somebody of Shakib's stature, cleverness and tactical awareness is a really important cog for a successful Bangladesh team. We welcome him back with open arms. His finger seems fine at the moment. He had a long 45-min bat in the nets today. So things are looking good.

**BANGLADESH COACH  
STEVE RHODES**

sition. We needed to go there with some tough games under our belt. Zimbabwe proved to be a tough opposition. I was very pleased with the Mirpur result but as you said, we wanted more than 1-1," Rhodes told reporters after the Tigers reached Chattogram yesterday.

Whether it is the team combination, the over-dependency on spin on home soil or even the top-order failures, there are a few areas of concerns for the Tigers as they prepare for a stronger opposition in the form of West Indies, who will have their after a good outing in India in the ODI series.

"To be perfectly honest, we don't have many concerns. We are looking forward to the series against West Indies. They are excellent opposition, as we saw in June or July this year. Conditions are little bit different in Bangladesh, so hopefully we will have good games against them. They have got some

injury problems with Jason Holder going home. We are without Tamim Iqbal; we wish him all the best to get back as quick as he could. It will be a good contest," he said.

Facing quality fast bowling has always been a vulnerability of Bangladesh batsmen and Rhodes said that the likes of Shannon Gabriel, who proved vicious against Bangladesh during their last tour earlier this year, would once again play a crucial role in the Test series.

However, he added that they were not worried about the opposition and were rather focusing on their own strengths.

The wicket at the Zahur Ahmed Stadium in Chattogram pitch has always been a batsman's paradise, but when it comes to gaining the advantage of home conditions the Bangladesh team management has not been able to utilise the luxury properly in recent times.

"I had a good look with the captain [Shakib Al Hasan] and curator [Zahid Reza]. What we are doing now is gather as much information as possible from the curator. We are lucky that Shakib has played here a lot. He knows the wickets well, more than I do. It is a learning curve for me. You get wickets right and wrong. I won't be saying how



After two months on the sidelines due to an injury on his left hand's little finger, Bangladesh's Test skipper Shakib Al Hasan began to grip the bat on November 13. The star all-rounder seems determined to get fit again ahead of the West Indies series as he batted in the nets for 45 minutes yesterday before practising his bowling as well at the Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium.

PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN

## Sheikh Jamal stand in Abahani's way

SPORTS REPORTER



Since Sheikh Jamal DC's elevation to top-flight football, the clash between them and traditional powerhouse Abahani has turned into a mouth-watering one. The neighbouring outfits are to square off again in the Federation Cup semifinal at the Bangabandhu National Stadium today.

Defending champions Abahani have their sights on a third consecutive title and the ten-time champions are seemingly determined to reach the final but Sheikh Jamal stand between them and a hattrick title.

Sheikh Jamal had earlier shown the exit path to Abahani either from the quarterfinals or the semifinals in the 2011, 2012 and 2013 editions after having lost an entertaining Federation Cup final in 2010 where Abahani won the match 5-3 against the debutants.

Sheikh Jamal played five successive finals of Federation Cup from 2010, but they failed to make it to the final in 2016 and 2017. Abahani eliminated Sheikh Jamal from the semifinals of



Defending champions Abahani will look to get past Sheikh Jamal DC in the first semifinal of the Federation Cup today as they bid for a third consecutive title in the season's curtain-raiser.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

### HEAD TO HEAD IN FED CUP

TEAMS	M	W	D	L
ABAHANI	6	2	2	2
SHEIKH JAMAL	6	2	2	2



Sheikh Jamal DC, like Abahani, will be banking on their foreign strikers as they bid for a third Federation Cup title.

PHOTO: STAR

the 2017 edition, thanks to a lone goal from Nigerian Emeka Darlington.

Though Abahani are ahead of Sheikh Jamal on paper this time around, both teams have showed their potential in group stages and quarterfinal matches. Abahani showed

their character by coming from behind twice to beat Arambagh KS while Sheikh Jamal outplayed Saif SC to notch up a deserved victory in the last-eight battle.

Abahani's striking pair of Kervens Belfort and Sunday Chizoba played a

great role in the quarterfinal clash against Arambagh while Gambian forwards Sainey Bojang and Solomon King have been the architects behind the win over Saif SC. Today's match is likely going to be a show between the foreign strikers of the two teams.

"I think Abahani are favourites and we will win the match by demonstrating good performance because the boys have shown consistent performance in the last two big matches," said Abahani coach Jakaria Babu, who has all the players at his disposal following a week-long rest.

"Sheikh Jamal are good opponents, who I think depend on their Gambian players. But we, too, have good foreign players alongside good quality local players. So we will face them with a proper plan and I think we will succeed."

Sheikh Jamal coach Joseph Afusi is confident about toppling Abahani to reach the final.

"After four months of hard training, we have gained a lot of strength which we have shown in group-stage and quarterfinal matches. We did not play badly in any matches, so I think we should win the match," said the Nigerian, who guided the Dhanmondi giants to the Federation Cup final three times so far.

"I must agree that our Gambian players are playing well but it would not have been possible if the other players did not provide the support," said Afusi.

## Hasan, Yasir put Pakistan on top

AFP, Abu Dhabi

Medium pacer Hasan Ali and leg-spinner Yasir Shah took five wickets apiece to set Pakistan on the victory path on the third day of the first Test against New Zealand in Abu Dhabi on Sunday.

Hasan took his maiden five-wicket haul with 5 for 45 while Yasir finished with 5 for 110 as New Zealand collapsed from 220 for 4 to 249 all out soon after tea.

That left Pakistan with 176 to win the Test and at close they were 37 for no loss.

### SCORES IN BRIEF

NEW ZEALAND: First

innings 153

PAKISTAN: First innings 227

NEW ZEALAND: Second

innings 249 (Raval 46,

Williamson 37, Nicholls

55, Watling 59; Hasan 5-

45, Yasir 5-110)

PAKISTAN: Second innings

37 for no loss (Imamul 25

not out, Hafeez 8 not out)

## Give Kohli silent treatment: Faf

AGENCIES

South African captain Faf du Plessis offered tips to Australia ahead of their big-ticket clashes against India: avoid confrontation with Virat Kohli and give him "silent treatment".

Du Plessis on Friday said that his team gave India captain Kohli the "silent treatment" in an attempt to keep him quiet when the two teams squared off earlier this year.

"There are guys like that [who enjoy the confrontation]. We feel like that when we play against someone like Kohli, he wants to get into the fight," du Plessis said.

South Africa beat India 2-1 in the series but Kohli emerged as the top run-getter with an aggregate of 286 from three Tests.

"There's one or two guys in each team around the world that we as a team discuss before playing against them. We're like, 'better not say too much to him because you'll get him going'."

## Visitors kept guessing

SPORTS REPORTER



It can be said that for the past few years Bangladesh followed a particular way of

approaching a series at home that has proved to be very successful. The trend has been to keep the opposition scratching their heads before getting on the field. That can also be said for the upcoming series against West Indies that starts with the first Test match on November 22 at the Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium (ZACS) in Chattogram.

Currently, the visitors are playing a two-day practice match against BCB XI in Chattogram's MA Aziz Stadium. BCB XI have three spinners and only one, Nayeem Hasan, is part of the Test squad and he too, according to chief selector Minhajul Abedin, is considered as a 'backup' for this Test.

The inclusion of only two genuine pacers, Mustafizur Rahman and Khaled Ahmed, may be indicative of how Bangladesh are going to approach the Test but BCB XI's lineup for the practice match with no recognised spinner will surely leave the visitors guessing. Also, the flat nature of the pitch may play a role in not letting the opposition get accustomed to the conditions they are likely to face in the Test at the ZACS, where the pitch tends to be a slow and low one.

West Indies managed to post 303 for six on the first day. Soumya Sarkar, the left-handed opener who made a return to the Test squad after more than a year, talked about the efficiency of the Windies batsmen in handling the spinners.

"Our spinners have bowled well but they [West Indies] managed to handle them well."

Soumya also thought that West Indies' recent tour of India may have aided them a little coming into this series.

"They played for a long time in India so maybe they were prepared for it. They have been playing spin for a while. However, if we bowl quality deliveries, then they would not be able to survive for long," said Soumya.

Soumya scored a hundred in the third ODI against Zimbabwe in October and has been in good form in the NCL, but the last time he featured for Bangladesh in a Test was against South Africa in September last year.

"Tomorrow, there's an opportunity to bat. I got this chance after a long time. If I get the chance to bat at the top or anywhere else, I'll try to spend as much time as I can on the pitch."

### SCORES IN BRIEF

WEST INDIANS: First innings 303 for 6

(Powell 72, Hope retired hurt 88, Chase 35,

Hetmyer 24, Dowrich 24; Nayeem 2-104)



The West Indians enjoyed some good practice on the first day of their two-day warm-up match against BCB XI at the MA Aziz Stadium yesterday with Kieran Powell striking 72 runs off 142 balls. (Inset) Bangladesh's Soumya Sarkar secured a solitary wicket but is surely eager for his return to Tests.

PHOTO: STAR