



Rubel rallies for pace mates

SPORTS REPORTER



The official line in the aftermath of the pacers being largely ignored in the Tests against West Indies has been one of adherence to the team's needs. However, it speaks of the healthy competition between Bangladesh pacers and spinners that even though he was not part of the Test squad, fast bowler Rubel Hossain felt his fellow fast men's discontent at only four overs of pace being bowled in the two-Test series -- that too all in the first game.

He chose the timing of his expression of slight disappointment wisely, as the pace bowlers are set to take centre stage when the limited-overs leg of West Indies' tour of Bangladesh begins today with the warm-up match between the BCB XI and the tourists at the BKSP today, when Rubel will be one of the big names returning to national colours along with skipper Mashrafe Bin Mortaza and opener Tamim Iqbal. The pacers will be woken from their Test torpor because for them, ODIs are a different ball game.

In 2018, among the top 10 ODI teams, Bangladesh's pacers have been behind only their Sri Lankan counterparts in terms of average, taking a wicket on average every 26.01 runs conceded. More relevant in the wake of the spin-dominated Test series is the fact that

Bangladesh's spinners have taken wickets at the cost of 34.82 runs in ODIs in 2018.

"Of course, when the spinners are doing well and the pace bowlers are unable to play matches, it is a little disappointing for us," Rubel told reporters after practice in Mirpur yesterday. "But I think things will change completely in the one-dayers. The wicket will probably not hold as much spin."

"Pacers have won matches in one-day cricket in the past," was the defiant answer from Rubel when asked whether that trend of pace superiority would hold in home conditions as well. "In these conditions we [pacers] can of course win matches."

Rubel has been in prime form in ODIs of late, excelling in Bangladesh's Asia Cup campaign in September when he almost won the tournament for the Tigers with a fiery spell in the final against India. He will be integral to the Tigers' effort to keep a lid on West Indies' scores as Rubel is a death-overs specialist.

"I will definitely have to bowl at the death, and in those situations you can win or lose the match. So I put extra focus on that."

While there was no pacer in the second Test against West Indies in Dhaka, it is a reflection of how well the pacers have been doing in the format that the ODI squad boasts six pacers in Mashrafe, Rubel, Mustafizur Rahman, Abu Hider,



Mohammad Saifuddin and Ariful Haque.

He had good answers to most questions yesterday -- including rubbishing a claim that pacers do not want to play Tests -- but was confounded when asked whether the difference between the dominant style of bowling between Tests and ODIs had something to do with left-arm spinner Shakib Al Hasan leading in Tests while seamer Mashrafe holds the reins in ODIs.

"Actually I can't find a clear answer for that," Rubel said with a chuckle.

It is indeed a tough one to crack, but for now Rubel seemed happy in the knowledge that from today, he and his pace mates will at least get to play.



Bangladesh pacers Rubel Hossain (Inset) and Mustafizur Rahman gear up to play a major role in the ODI series against West Indies starting on Sunday after there being virtually no role for pacers in Tigers' 2-0 Test series triumph.

PHOTO: STAR/BCB

TIGERS' PACE VS SPIN, 2018 ODIs

| | Mts | Wkts | Ave | Econ |
|----------|-----|------|-------|------|
| Pacers | 17 | 73 | 26.01 | 4.72 |
| Spinners | 17 | 45 | 34.82 | 4.49 |

'Need to cover our bases'

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After the Test series played in the daylight of Chattogram and Mirpur, the three ODIs between Bangladesh and West Indies starting from December 9 in Mirpur will be day-night affairs, and the difference between the level of competition could well be like night and day.

That much was obvious in the nine sixes that Shimron Hetmyer hit even as West Indies were in the process of being thoroughly outclassed in a spin-dominated Test series. Along with the presence of the supremely talented Hetmyer in the ODI squad, West Indies will also be bolstered by the arrival of players like T20I skipper Carlos

Brathwaite, Marlon Samuels and the return of Darren Bravo -- all of whom have greater pedigree in the shorter formats.

Bravo, a veteran of 94 matches who last played an ODI for West Indies in October 2016, seems to have been brought into the 15-man squad named yesterday to add some experience in the absence of injured skipper Jason Holder.

One of their biggest hopes, pun half-intended, will however be on a player who has been here since the Test leg -- Shai Hope. The right-hander enjoyed success in India in late October -- hitting an unbeaten 123 and a 95 during a 3-1 loss in the five-ODI series. That they pushed the second-ranked India at home will give the side more confidence heading into a series with seventh-ranked Bangladesh.

Everyone would expect the ball to spin a bit more here. But we have to wait to see how it plays on the day. We can expect spin and it may turn out to be completely different, so we need to cover our bases, ready for whatever they throw at us.

SHAI HOPE
WEST INDIES BATSMAN

"We obviously just got together -- some of the guys were playing in the T10 [Cricket League] in Dubai," Hope told reporters after practice in Mirpur yesterday. "But we've played a few games in India, so there is a nice gel in the team. It's just about getting the best possible preparation in this game [warm-up against BCB XI in BKSP] tomorrow, and leading up to the first game."

After Bangladeshi spin took all 40 West Indian wickets in the two Tests the tourists could be forgiven for expecting spin to dominate, but Hope said that West Indies were keeping an open mind.

"Everyone would expect the ball to spin a bit more here. But we have to wait to see how it plays on the day. We can expect spin and it may turn out to be completely different, so we need to cover our bases, ready for whatever they throw at us."

Like West Indies, Bangladesh had also lost the Test series in the West Indies 2-0 in the summer, but turned around to win the ODI series 2-1. The tourists seemed to be hoping for the symmetry to continue.

"Most definitely, any team we come up against we got to make sure we win the game," said Hope when asked whether there will be an element of revenge in the upcoming series. "We have to put our best foot forward and do the things we know and I'm sure we'll come up victorious if we do that."

SQUAD: Rovman Powell (Capt), Marlon Samuels, Devendra Bishoo, Roston Chase, Chandrapaul Hemraj, Shimron Hetmyer, Darren Bravo, Shai Hope, Carlos Brathwaite, Keemo Paul, Kieran Powell, Fabian Allen, Kemar Roach, Sunil Ambris, Oshane Thomas.



West Indies' director of cricket Jimmy Adams (C), a great fielder in his day, sets an example during a fielding drill. The tourists may not, however, want to emulate his batting in the upcoming ODI series as Adams had a strike rate of 61.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

Kohli eyeing maiden series win in Aus



AGENCIES, Adelaide



India captain Virat Kohli spoke about his team's approach in the upcoming series against Australia, the significant loss of Hardik Pandya, and negating Nathan Lyon on the eve of the first Test in Adelaide on 6 December.

India have been slow starters on overseas tours recently in England and South Africa, but Kohli wants to change that. To that end, he has asked his team to become quicker in adapting to the conditions.

"We are not looking to start tentatively," he said on Wednesday. "We all want to express ourselves and go out there and be positive. We want to bring our A-game in the first game and capitalise as the series goes on."

The hosts will continue without Steve Smith and David Warner, with both still serving bans for the ball-tampering incident in March. This is, therefore, consid-

ered India's best chance of winning their maiden series Down Under, but Kohli talked that down.

"I personally don't think any Australian side is vulnerable at home," he said. "We cannot take any side for granted and more so Australia. Regardless of all the things that have gone by, their skill levels are still there. We'll have to be at our best to get the results that we want here."

"As a side, we're looking to correct the mistakes from the last two tours. The focus is completely on our side."

Tim Paine, the Australia captain, said both victory and regaining the respect of the country were high priorities for the team as they take on India in a four-Test series.

"We play Test cricket to win, there is no doubt about that," said Paine on Wednesday. "Clearly we've realised we needed to do some work in some areas, and gaining the respect of our country is as high a priority as is winning."

U-15 boys to play in Thailand

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Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) has backtracked from its original plan of not sending the winning squad of the SAFF U-15 Championship to a four-nation tournament in Thailand as the boys in red and green are all set to leave for Thailand in the hours on Saturday.

Bangladesh U-15 team will play their first match against Cyprus on December 10 before taking on Thailand and Maldives on December 12 and 14 respectively in the tournament funded by UEFA under its mini-tournament project in Asia.

BFF general secretary Abu Nayeem Shohag had earlier said that they were thinking of not sending the team to the UEFA-funded tournament to avoid embarrassment against strong opponents, but

they later decided to send the team to give the players international exposure ahead of next year's AFC U-16 Championship Qualifiers.

"The boys have been in the training camp since their return from Nepal in early November and they have been trying to improve day by day as there is no alternative to improving if they want to go further. However, they are committed to show good performance in the tournament where we want to win at least one match," coach Anwar Parvez Babu said, adding that they would try not to lose against Cyprus in their first match and then play against Thailand by analysing the performance of the home team.

"I don't have any idea of how the European age-group teams are but our U-14 boys beat Manchester City youth team in Mokh Cup in Malaysia. I think they will not be tough to face," Babu added.

Farhad toys with Central batsmen

SPORTS REPORTER



While there has been plenty of noise about whether the national team management's ploy of employing an all-out spin attack in Tests is discouraging pacers in the country, the green top at the Shaheed Chandu Stadium in Bogura has provided some good news for them.

Fast bowlers continued to exploit the pace-friendly pitch in Bogura as East Zone's medium-pacer Farhad Reza bowled career-best figures of 7-32 to wrap up Central Zone for 118 runs on the opening day of the third round of the Bangladesh Cricket League yesterday.

The 32-year old eclipsed his previous best 6-54 on way to securing an eighth five-wicket haul after Abu Jayed -- who took two wickets -- opened the floodgates by removing Pinak Ghosh.

In a second round match at the same venue, Ebadat Hossain, Shahidul Islam and Mohor Sheikh had run riot on the green pitch.

Marshall Ayub, the Central Zone batsman who made a duck, praised Farhad for his good bowling but added that the wet pitch made the



FARHAD REZA... 7 for 32

You know the pitch was wet as there was no sunshine and because of that it was impossible for the batsmen to survive.

MARSHALL AYUB

job difficult for batsmen.

"You know the pitch was wet as there was no sunshine and because of that it was impossible for the batsmen to survive on such a green top surface. But Farhad deserves praise for the way he

exploited the conditions," said the right-hander.

Pacer Shahadat Hossain scalped the lone East Zone wicket before bad light halted the day's play.

At the Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium in Chattogram, pacer Ebadat made somewhat of an impact but it was left-arm spinner Sunzamul Islam's four-wicket haul that saw South Zone finish the day at 280 for nine against North Zone.

South rode on half-centuries from Tushar Imran, who hit a 146-ball 62, and Rakibul Hasan, who scored a 146-ball 79, to reach a respectable first innings total.

SCORES IN BRIEF

CENTRAL ZONE V EAST ZONE

CENTRAL ZONE: 118 all out in 55 overs (Rakin 14, Pinak 21, Taibur 14, Jaker 20 not out, Sharifullah 23; Jayed 2-33, Ifran 1-26, Farhad 7-32)

EAST ZONE: 37-1 in 14 overs (Rony 18, Shamsur 9 not out, Mahmudul 9 not out; Shahadat 1-25)

SOUTH ZONE V NORTH ZONE

SOUTH ZONE: 280-9 in 90 overs (Anamul 19, Fazle 45, Tushar 62, Rakibul 79, Mahedi 23 not out; Ebadat 2-41, Sunzamul 4-62)