



# WILL BANGLADESH FIELD ITS BEST EVER TEAM IN THE 2019 WORLD CUP?

NAIMUL KARIM

Mashrafe Bin Mortaza celebrated his 200th ODI in style earlier this week, with a three-wicket haul that outfoxed a hard-hitting West Indian line-up and restricted the visitors to a below-par total, which the Tigers eventually cruised past with ease at Mirpur.

The Narail Express became the first Bangladeshi player to cross the 200-barrier. It however, goes without saying that he won't be the sole holder of that tag for too long. Right behind him are the quintessential trio of Mushfiqur

Rahim, Shakib Al Hasan and Tamim Iqbal, who are just a few matches away from reaching that mark.

Aside from being brilliant personal achievements, the above milestone and numbers provide plenty to think about, if you are a Bangladeshi sports analyst or even a fan.

The 50-over World Cup, arguably the marquee event of this sport, is set to take place in England and Wales in May next year. While most sporting analysts around the world

wouldn't place Bangladesh anywhere near the favourites' arena, numbers suggest that this could perhaps be Bangladesh's only shot at achieving something big.

Bangladesh could potentially be the most experienced squad, in terms of the number of ODIs played, when the World Cup begins next year. Currently, the Tigers are the only team in the world to have five cricketers who have played more than 150 ODIs. Mashrafe, Shakib, Tamim, Mushfiqur and Mahmudullah

Riyad have held the backbone of this team for ages and that has allowed youngsters to come in and play with a freehand.

Sure enough, the World Cup is still five months away and a lot can change by then. However, if one were to compare the potential 15-member squads of all the teams of the World Cup—based on the performances of the players in 2018—then the Tigers would be at the forefront as far as the number of ODIs is concerned.

Teams like Pakistan, Sri Lanka,

the West Indies and Australia are going through a transition and still seem to be working on finding their feet. South Africa are busy dealing with ways to replace the likes of AB de Villiers and Morne Morkel and also the injury-prone Dale Steyn.

England, India and New Zealand have a good mix of experience and youth in their respective teams and at the moment seem to be the strongest to get that trophy.

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