

Rhodes wary of 'backlash'

SPORTS REPORTER



2018 has not been a good year for the West Indies even in their favoured T20 format, in which the world champions have banked on their muscle to great effect, as they have won just two matches of 12.

One of those matches ended without a result, while one of their wins came in a three-match series against Bangladesh which they lost 2-1 earlier this year in Florida.

However, with the inclusion of Evin Lewis alongside pacers such as Kesrick Williams and Sheldon Cottrell in the squad, the West Indies will be gearing up for a good showing in the three-match T20I series against Bangladesh, starting tomorrow in Sylhet.

However the visitors will surely miss two explosive all-rounders in the form of Kieron Pollard and Andre Russell due to injury.

Bangladesh head coach Steve Rhodes is well aware of the threat that the world champions pose, emphasising that they would come at the Tigers even harder after being defeated in the T20Is at home earlier this year.

"As Mash [Mashrafe Bin Mortaza] said in his interview, it is the best format for the West Indies. They are world champions and they will be very difficult to beat. Having said that, the way we beat them in the West Indies was a very special victory for us. It was a little unexpected but the boys did extremely well to win that last game in Florida," Rhodes told reporters in Sylhet yesterday.

"They are hurting. Like all teams that you play against and if you win, then you can expect some sort of backlash. I think the West Indies, with some new players who have



Having made significant contributions in the series-deciding ODI against the West Indies on Friday, Bangladesh batsman Soumya Sarkar (R) and all-rounder Mehedi Hasan Miraz will hope to carry their form into the T20I series, starting Monday.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

arrived here, will be a tough opposition. It's a format they know very well. We will give it our best shot; they always do, the boys. They keep surprising me because they come up with some great performances. Now we have got some continuity with regards to winning series," he added.

Former Pakistani leg-spinner and the spin coach of the West Indies, Mushtaq Ahmed, also said that they would be banking on their explosive brand of cricket, but he opined that the side

were also developing as a Test and ODI unit.

"Sure, this is a good headline. Because this is the brand of cricket West Indies play. They are a good T20 team, but they are developing in 50 overs also. They're developing in Test cricket. So they are bringing lots of focus into 50-over and Test cricket also. But it's a new team, lots of young people; they are learning the brand of international cricket and hopefully sooner or later they can deliver the skill for their nation," Mushtaq said.

Southee keeps SL in check

AFP, Wellington



Paceman Tim Southee skittled Sri Lanka's top order with a

five-wicket haul to give New Zealand an edge on the opening day of the first Test in Wellington on Saturday.

Southee took three scalps in a devastating opening spell to reduce the tourists to nine for three, then followed with a double strike to snuff out a promising fightback in the final session.

Sri Lanka were 275 for nine at stumps, with their hopes resting on a rearguard action from Niroshan Dickwella, who was not out on 73.

Angelo Mathews and Dimuth Karunaratne were the only other batsman to offer any meaningful resistance, notching 83 and 79 respectively and forging a 133-run partnership.

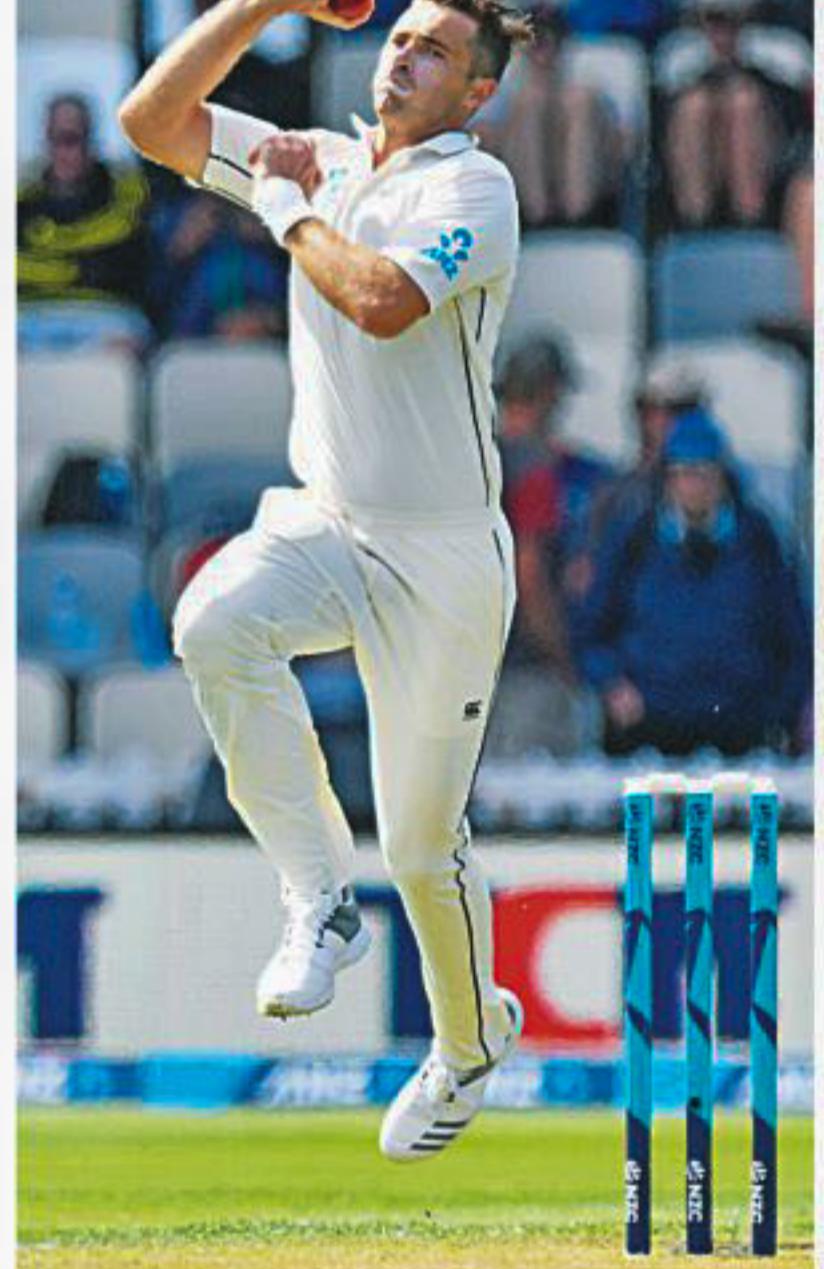
Mathews said it was a difficult wicket to play on as the ball nipped around early, although he was wary of conditions possibly easing when New Zealand bat on day two.

"We need as much (runs) as we can," he said. "The wicket might get better once the sun is out."

Southee ended the day with five for

67 in 25 overs, his eighth five-wicket haul in Test cricket and his best figures at the Basin Reserve.

His early burst ensured New Zealand's decision to bowl on a green wicket after winning the toss reaped immediate rewards.



TIM SOUTHEE... 5 for 67

Sri Lanka captain Dinesh Chandimal said before the match that he wanted his top order to survive the first hour and see off the new ball but the wickets began to tumble in just the second over.

Danushka Gunathilaka was Southee's first victim, out lbw for one after failing to deal with a late inswinger.

Dhananjaya de Silva then edged through to the keeper for the same score and a clearly rattled Kusal Mendis only managed to reach two before hitting a simple catch to Ajaz Patel at mid-wicket.

Mathews looked threatening before Southee struck again, leaving Dickwella to work with the tailenders in pursuit of a respectable total.

He did the job superbly, frustrating the New Zealand attack to take Sri Lanka's innings into a second day.

Southee said Dickwella had showed that batting positively could work on the pitch.

"Dickwella's come out and played aggressively and a gem of an innings for them, frustrating for us probably," he said.

SCORES IN BRIEF

SRI LANKA: First innings 275 for 9 (Karunaratne 79, Mathews 83, Dickwella 73 not out; Southee 5-67, Wagner 2-75)

Victory Day cricket match today

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The traditional Victory Day exhibition cricket match between Shaheed Jewel XI and Shaheed Mustaque XI will be held at the Sher-e-Bangla National Cricket Stadium in Mirpur today.

The Bangladesh Cricket Board yesterday announced the teams for the annual celebration, which was first organised in 1972 in memory of the Liberation War martyrs Shaheed Abdul Halim Chowdhury Jewel and Shaheed Mushtaque Ahmed.

The two squads will include many former cricketers with the likes of Habibul Bashar, Hannan Sarker, Akram Khan, Minhajul Abedin Nannu featuring for Shaheed Jewel XI while Mehrab Hossain, Mohammad Rafique, Javed Omar and Faisal Hossain will feature for Shaheed Mushtaque XI.



Kohli, Rahane propel India

AFP, Perth

India expect captain Virat Kohli to continue to lead from the front after he guided their fightback on day two of the second Test against Australia at Perth on Saturday.

At stumps, the visitors had overcome a terrible start and were 172 for three, still trailing the Australian first innings total of 326 by 154 runs with seven wickets in hand.

The imperious Kohli was unbeaten on 82 and shaping as the major stumbling block for Australia, with Ajinkya Rahane also in fine form on 51, the pair having added 90 for the third wicket.

Paceman Ishant Sharma, who claimed four first innings wickets and will start the Australian second innings on a hattrick, said the game was still evenly poised.

However, he believes Kohli is their trump card heading into day three.

"We feel pretty confident whenever he is batting," he said of Kohli.



"We finished the day in a strong position.

"It's equal right now, hopefully we'll win the first session tomorrow and turn the game in our favour."

Australian batsman Usman Khawaja admitted Kohli was the prized wicket, but believed his team still held the upper hand.

"We're still ahead of the game in a lot of respects," Khawaja said. "Virat's a good batsman, he respects good balls and tries to put away bad ones."

Up 1-0 in the four-Test series, India made a terrible start to their first innings after cleaning up the Australian tail in the morning session, before Kohli came to the rescue.

With the last ball before lunch, left-arm paceman Mitchell Starc found a gap between opener Murali Vijay's bat and pad to send his stumps flying for a 12-ball duck.

Shortly after play resumed both openers were gone, with Josh Hazlewood getting through KL Rahul's defences to bowl him for two with India slumping to eight for two on what appeared a tricky pitch on the first day.

SCORES IN BRIEF

AUSTRALIA: First innings 326 all out (Harris 70, Finch 50, Marsh 45, Head 58, Paine 38; Sharma 4-41, Bumrah 2-53, Yadav 2-78, Vihari 2-53)

INDIA: First innings 172 for 3 (Pujara 24, Kohli 82 not out, Rahane 51 not out; Starc 2-42)



Virat Kohli cast aside any concerns about his latest failures in Australia -- which stretched to 83 runs from his past seven Test innings at an average of less than 12 -- as he came out with the score on two for eight and played an immaculate knock on the second day of the second Test in Perth yesterday. The right-hander finished the day unbeaten on 82 after negotiating 181 balls.

PHOTO: AFP

EMERGING TEAMS ASIA CUP

SL hold on for glory

SPORTS REPORTER

The Sri Lanka U-23 team were crowned champions after defeating their Indian counterparts by three runs in a thrilling ACC Emerging Teams Asia Cup final at the R Premadasa Stadium in Colombo yesterday.

Sri Lanka posted 270 after electing to bat first, riding on an 82-run second-wicket stand between Hasitha Boyagoda and Avishka Fernando before the former was dismissed for 54. Afterwards, Kamindu Mendis's 55-ball 61 helped the hosts reach the competitive total.

India suffered a batting collapse in chase, losing six wickets for 127. A 107-run seventh-wicket partnership restored some faith before an unbeaten 15-ball 28 from Atit Sheth almost took India over the line.

SCORES IN BRIEF

SRI LANKA U-23: 270 for seven in 50 overs (Mendis 61; Rajpoot 2-61)

INDIA U-23: 267 for nine in 50 overs (Yadav 71; Gunaratne 3-38)

Result: Sri Lanka U-23 won by 3 runs.

A year of expansion in ODIs

SAKEB SUBHAN from Sylhet

There was a sense of inevitability about Bangladesh's series win over West Indies even after the Tigers lost the second match to go into

Friday's series decider in Sylhet with an even chance of losing their last ODI of the year. As the hosts romped home with 69 balls and eight wickets to spare, the feeling of assurance could not have been in sharper contrast to the gloomy uncertainty with which 2018 had started.

Bangladesh started the year after being consummately outclassed across all three formats in South Africa in their last international assignment of 2017. The fallout from that tour was that Chandidak Haathurusingha, Bangladesh's most successful coach and one who deserves partial credit for bringing them out of the doldrums of 2014, prematurely quit his post. He took charge of his native Sri Lanka and



Having started the year with a heart-breaking loss to Sri Lanka in the final of a tri-nation series at home, Mashrafe Bin Mortaza and his troops went from strength to strength, defeating the West Indies in an away ODI series, reaching the final of the Asia Cup and defeating Zimbabwe and West Indies in home ODI series.

PHOTO: STAR FILE

in his first assignment visited Bangladesh to contest a tri-series with the hosts and Zimbabwe. The Tigers thrashed Sri Lanka in their first match against their former coach, but lost their way in spectacular fashion after that, losing the next match against Sri Lanka and the final on January 27 by convincing margins.

Less than 11 months later, Bangladesh have ended the year with 13 wins in 20 ODIs -- the fourth-best win-loss ratio of the year. Five of those wins have come abroad -- a series win in the West Indies in July and an against-the-odds run to the Asia Cup final in the UAE in September.

The 2-1 win in the West Indies had

come courtesy of the usual suspects -- the Big Five of skipper Mashrafe Bin Mortaza, Shakib Al Hasan, Tamim Iqbal (who hit two centuries), Mushfiqur Rahim and Mahmudullah Riyad -- but the Asia Cup campaign was the result of the team digging deep without two of its brightest stars -- the injured Tamim and Shakib -- and, perhaps for the first time,

coming up with some handy resources. Players like Imrul Kayes and Liton Das stepped up and almost landed the Tigers the title.

Before that, young off-spinner Mehedi Hasan Miraz had announced himself as a major force in ODI cricket by bowling with guile with the new ball in the West Indies and has continued to do so since, culminating in a player-of-the-match performance in Friday's series clincher.

It will be a source of relief that others have started to catch up. Liton has one century and a fifty mixed in with some other fast starts at the top, Imrul has two centuries and two fifties and Soumya has hit a blistering century and a fifty in six matches for an average of 42.5.

"I know why people talk about the Big Five -- I don't because I know we are a team and a squad," said head coach Steve Rhodes yesterday. "Mehedi's form is incredible. He has done well in all formats. Liton is a really dangerous player and has done well in the big matches. No one talks about Fizz [Mustafizur Rahman] and how good he is in one-day cricket and one of the best death bowlers in the world."

"I think the good thing for Bangladesh is that we are starting to get some depth."

In a year that results can be compared to the best in the world, that may have been the biggest gain.