



Tough tour without Tigers' talisman?

SPORTS REPORTER



The BPL fever is over and the focus now shifts to Bangladesh's tour of New Zealand, which will start with a 50-over practice match against New Zealand XI in Lincoln today ahead of the three-match ODI series starting from February 13 in Napier.

The T20 domestic extravaganza however ended with the shocking news that Tigers' champion all-rounder and Test captain Shakib Al Hasan was ruled out of the ODI series in New Zealand and may even miss the entire tour because of a left ring finger injury he sustained during the BPL final on Friday. This is Bangladesh's second injury blow as pacer Taskin Ahmed was earlier ruled out due to an ankle injury.

Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) chief physician Dr. Debashish Chowdhury could not confirm whether Shakib would be available for the Test series starting from February 28 but there was a hint that Shakib may miss the entire tour when Chowdhury said: "An X-ray was done after the match and the results have confirmed a fracture on the left ring finger. The affected area will now have to be immobilised for around three weeks. We will assess his condition every week," informed Chowdhury.



(From L to R) Bangladesh's Nayeem Hasan, Mustafizur Rahman, Mushfiqur Rahim, Soumya Sarkar and Mehedi Hasan Miraz enjoyed exploring Christchurch ahead of today's practice match against New Zealand XI.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

The three-week recovery timeline means that Shakib will certainly miss the first Test and may not reach match-fitness for the next two Tests.

The selectors were yet to decide about Shakib's replacement -- always a difficult task when it comes to a multi-skilled player like Shakib. A replacement will only be named if requested by coach Steve Rhodes and captain Mashrafe Bin Mortaza, who is currently travelling to New Zealand along with Tamim Iqbal, Rubel Hossain and Mohammad Saifuddin.

With Mominul Haque already in New Zealand as an early arrival from the Test squad and Imrul Kayes advised to take at least a week's rest after aggravating his back pain, there is no scope to send any batsman. Shakib was also the only left-arm spinner in the ODI side along with two off-spinners in Mehedi Hasan Miraz and Nayeem Hasan. If the team management needs a left-armer then Taijul Islam -- who is part of the Test squad -- may leave for New Zealand early. Another candidate is Nazmul Islam.

Bangladesh's first big challenge would be to acclimatise with conditions as soon as possible and change gears from T20 cricket to the 50-over game.

About today's practice game, the BCB could not provide information about the opposition, except for the name of the team.

Shakib's injury tale extended



The hammering suffered during Tamim Iqbal's 141-run whirlwind knock for Comilla Victorians in Friday's BPL final may have led to this reaction from Dhaka Dynamites skipper Shakib Al Hasan, but there was even more grief to follow for Bangladesh's star all-rounder as it was later revealed that Shakib suffered a fracture on his left ring finger during the encounter, ruling him out of the ODI leg in the upcoming tour of New Zealand.

PHOTO: STAR

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A huge blow to Bangladesh came yesterday morning in the form of news that the nation's ace all-rounder and Test skipper Shakib Al Hasan would miss the New Zealand ODI series, and perhaps the whole tour, because of a left ring finger fracture. Shakib sustained the injury during his side Dhaka Dynamites' 17-run defeat to Comilla Victorians in the BPL final on Friday.

Bangladesh are yet to announce a replacement for the all-rounder ahead of the ODI series starting from February 13, but it is certain that ODI captain Mashrafe Bin Mortaza will have to make a lot of amendments to his plans in New Zealand after the loss of arguably world's best all-rounder. On their last tour of New Zealand in 2016-17, although Bangladesh were whitewashed in all formats, Shakib had some very noteworthy contributions. He finished as the joint highest wicket-taker with five wickets in three ODIs alongside New Zealand pacer Tim Southee. While he had a high score of 59 in ODIs, the most memorable innings for him was in the Tests as he authored a doubleton -- his career best and then Bangladesh's highest Test score of 217 -- in the first Test in Wellington. He also finished as the second-highest run-scorer in the Test series.

It will be close to impossible for Bangladesh to find an adequate replacement, but playing without Shakib has become a frequent reality for Bangladesh and the situation is one with which Mashrafe and Co would be quite familiar.

Since being granted a break from Test cricket during the 2017 South Africa tour, Shakib has missed a chunk of Tests, ODIs and T20Is for Bangladesh owing to injury. He sustained an injury on his left little finger while fielding during Tigers' final of the tri-series against Sri Lanka back in January 2018. The injury eventually ruled the 31-year old out of the ensuing two-Test series and the two-T20I series against visiting Sri Lanka in January-February. Bangladesh, without their premier all-rounder, did not fare well in those matches as the Tigers managed a draw in the first Test but were beaten comprehensively in the second, followed by thumping defeats in T20Is.

After that, although Bangladesh initially included the all-rounder in the squad for the Nidahas Trophy in Sri Lanka in March 2018, he was later ruled out of the tournament as the doctors advised him for an extended period of physiotherapy treatment to his injured finger. However, Shakib was included in the latter part of the tournament and played the last two games, including the final, which Bangladesh lost to India by four wickets.

The left little finger injury would haunt him for a majority of the year as even after seven months, Shakib was forced to fly back home when the injury flared up in the middle of the Asia Cup in September of the same year. Even though Bangladesh managed to win the do-or-die match against Pakistan in the Asia Cup after Shakib had left, the Tigers' Nidahas Trophy final memories came back as they lost to India by three wickets in the final, this time without Shakib.

The fallout from the flare-up was that he missed the three-match ODI series in the month following the Asia Cup and two-match Test series against the visiting Zimbabwe in November. Bangladesh however whitewashed Zimbabwe in the ODIs but only managed a 1-1 Test series draw in his absence. Shakib returned for the West Indies series at home in November-December and made his presence known, guiding Bangladesh to a 2-0 Test series win against the Caribbean outfit -- their first ever Test series triumph at home against West Indies.

Shakib had then played the three ODIs and three T20Is against West Indies in December and also played out the entire sixth edition of the BPL, but it was again another injury in the last game of the tournament that ruled him out of the upcoming New Zealand tour. With mixed results in the past, it remains to be seen how the Tigers fare in one more series without Shakib.

India look for series victory

Final T20 against NZ today

AGENCIES, Hamilton



India will look to end what has been a fine tour of New Zealand on a terrific high when the teams clash in the final Twenty20 International in Hamilton on Sunday.

The sides are locked 1-1 in the three-match series. India had a poor outing in Wellington, where they were bundled out for 139 chasing 220. They fought back in Auckland after all departments came together in a seven-wicket triumph.

They now have a chance to win a T20I series in New Zealand, having not even had a victory in the format in these parts till Friday.

That said, India's reaction to defeats have been particularly noteworthy so far this series. When they were bundled out for 92 in an eight-wicket loss in the fourth ODI, they managed to secure a fighting victory in the final ODI in Wellington.

Similarly, after going down in the first T20I, the team came together in the second match, winning quite comfortably in Auckland to level the series.

But what will particularly please the management is how the revival has been led by the players who needed to make their mark -- Ambati Rayudu and Vijay Shankar starred in the victory in the final ODI and it was Krunal Pandya and Rishabh Pant, playing just his second match in the series, leading things on Friday.

That's already a lot of positives from the series, something especially pertinent given India have been experimenting with combinations and personnel ahead of the ICC Men's Cricket World Cup 2019.

The visitors are unlikely to be satiated with that, though. They will want to bring an end to what has been a fine few months on the road with another series win.

That's easier said than done, of course. New Zealand have posed more of a threat in the latter part of India's tour, and have been a force in the shortest format.

Even in defeat in the second T20I, New Zealand had some positives, particularly in the performance of Colin de Grandhomme, who scored a 28-ball 50, and Ross Taylor (42 off 36).

Furthermore, they will be aware India have struggled with the moving ball this series -- that collapse for 92 in the fourth ODI came in Hamilton -- and the likes of Tim Southee, Scott Kugeleijn and de Grandhomme will be hoping to once again inflict some pain on the Indian batsmen on Sunday.

They will miss Lockie Ferguson -- he makes way for the uncapped Blair Tickner for the final match of the series. Despite that, they will be confident of getting one back against India.



Asadullah Hill Ghalib turned into a bane for England U-19s, scalping three wickets as Bangladesh U-19s positioned themselves for a win on third day of the first four-day Youth Test in Chattogram yesterday.

PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN

U-19s on the cusp of big win

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Bangladesh Under-19s slowly but surely moved into a winning position by the end of the third day of the first four-day Youth Test against their English counterparts at the Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium in Chattogram yesterday.

The visitors ended the day on a shaky 89 for six, still 29 runs shy of making the hosts bat again after Bangladesh declared their first innings closed on a strong 398 for nine after resuming the third day on 266 for five. Skipper Akbar Ali added 26 runs to his overnight score of 56 before being dismissed by Tom Lammonby. The other overnight batsman, Shahadat Hossain, carried on and scored 84 before he was ninth out with the lead having swelled to 118, at which point Akbar declared the innings.

In reply, England once again had no answer to Asadullah Hill Ghalib, who took six wickets for 68 runs during England's first innings. Asadullah accounted for three wickets in the second innings, ending the day with figures of three for 22.

SCORES IN BRIEF

ENGLAND U-19S: 1st innings 280 all out and 2nd innings 89 for 6 (Charlesworth 20; Asadullah 3-22, Minhajur 2-16)

BANGLADESH U-19S: 398 for 9 dec (Shahadat 84, Akbar 82, Parvez 62, Towhid 61; Qadri 2-105)

'Series crucial for World Cup fine-tuning'

AGENCIES, Napier



Martin Gupitll, the opener, has recovered from his back injury and was included in New Zealand's 14-man squad for the upcoming one-day international series against Bangladesh.

Gupitll was ruled out of the Twenty20 Internationals against India with an aggravated disc in his lower back, but a New Zealand Cricket release confirmed he had recovered enough to take his place in the ODI squad. He will play the first match in Napier pending a fitness test on Sunday, 10 February.

Kane Williamson, the New Zealand captain, has been rested

for the third ODI of the three-match series -- Colin Munro will replace him and open the innings in that game in Dunedin, with Tom Latham, the wicketkeeper-batsman, standing in as captain.

"We're delighted to have Martin back on the park for this series," said Gavin Larsen, the selector.

"He and Henry did a good job



MARTIN GUPTILL

opening up in Hamilton against India and they're a combination we want to see some more of in this series, before Colin returns to the top for the third game with Kane resting."

The series will give another opportunity to assess Mitchell Santner, who has recovered impressively from a knee surgery

The World Cup is looming large, but we're very much focused on the series ahead and the type of cricket we want to play.

GAVIN LARSEN
NZ SELECTOR

last year and played seven of the eight limited-overs matches against India.

He will be one of two specialist spinners, along with Todd Astle, in the squad for the Bangladesh ODIs, with Colin de Grandhomme and Jimmy Neesham slotting in as pace-bowling all-rounders.

"We've been really pleased with Mitchell's return after a serious knee surgery last year and we'll continue to monitor him through the rest of the season," said Larsen.

"Jimmy's impressed us with the bat this summer, while Colin's proved what he can do with the ball -- especially if it is moving around."

Larsen added that the series would be crucial in New Zealand's attempts to fine-tune plans ahead

of the 2019 ICC World Cup.

"It's an exciting time for the players and coaches alike as we look to sign-off our home summer of white-ball cricket," said Larsen. "Undoubtedly the World Cup is looming large, but we're very much focused on the series ahead and the type of cricket we want to play."

The ODIs, starting on Wednesday, will be followed by a three Tests in Hamilton, Wellington and Christchurch.

Squad: Kane Williamson, Todd Astle, Trent Boult, Colin de Grandhomme, Lockie Ferguson, Martin Gupitll, Matt Henry, Tom Latham, Colin Munro, Jimmy Neesham, Henry Nicholls, Ross Taylor, Mitchell Santner, Tim Southee.