

## SPORT



## The two calls that mattered

SAKEB SUBHAN



It speaks to the health of Bangladesh's current ODI pedigree that what has often been a contentious announcement ahead of World Cups past, there was very little tumult surrounding the squad announcement for the 2019 World Cup in the United Kingdom this summer.

All but two of the 15 players named by chief selector Minhajul Abedin were virtually automatic picks. In that regard, it was an easy enough exercise for Minhajul and Habibul Bashar. They displayed a bit of selectorial acumen in sticking with the likes of Liton Das, who has not had a good recent tour of New Zealand. However, the selectors -- and let us not forget that the decision was not theirs solely but must have been influenced by Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) high-ups and skipper Mashrafe Bin Mortaza -- may have dropped the ball while picking the two cricketers who were not automatic picks.

The choice for the fifth pacer was a toss-up between Taskin Ahmed and the uncapped Abu Jayed. Jayed got the nod, and he has displayed enough potential in his Test appearances to be blooded in 50-over cricket. However, it is the 'uncapped' before his name that should be a concern and also betray a lack of planning on the part of the BCB. Jayed would have been an uncontroversial choice because he is the one Bangladesh bowler capable of conventional swing in both directions -- surely an advantage in conducive UK conditions.

But that was known as early as February 2018, when he played the T20I series at home against Sri Lanka. Jayed was even taken to New Zealand as part of the Test squad -- a tour that Taskin missed at the last minute because of injury.

Minhajul's reason for Taskin being left out of the World Cup squad was that his match fitness was still in doubt. The doubt would then have been much deeper during the New Zealand tour and if the World Cup was indeed on their minds, the selectors could easily have given Jayed an ODI debut there, in conditions resembling those that may be found in England. As promising as he is, Jayed's List A economy rate of 5.47 does leave a bit to be desired, and testing him before the World Cup -- if he was indeed part of the plans and not a last-gasp replacement -- was a no-brainer.

The other pick was Mosaddek Hossain. The youngster last played an ODI in the Asia Cup in September 2018, but was then jettisoned from the squads for the home series against West Indies and Zimbabwe, as well as that for the New Zealand tour. He has not set the world alight in the Dhaka Premier League, which is beside the point. In Mosaddek's case too, by not picking him for New Zealand, the selectors displayed a lack of long-term thinking that once again proves that Bangladesh's success is in spite of the system, not because of it.



ABU JAYED

## For once, no uproar

ABDULLAH AL MEHDI



Historically speaking, Bangladesh's World Cup squad selection has been followed by friction and even uproar. There have almost always been some controversy following squad announcements. This time around however, there was little room for friction following the selectors' announcement of the squad for the 2019 World Cup. The Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) picked a 15-member squad that possibly represents the best-case scenario under the current circumstances. If we go through what transpired following the announcements of squads and the controversies involved, this time around there was less to complain about even if some expected names did not make the cut.

The situation concerning Minhajul Abedin ahead of the 1999 World Cup is of particular interest since the veteran was not picked in the initial squad for Bangladesh's first-ever World Cup. Age was an issue and his form ahead of the coveted tournament was abysmal, but his experience held value and he proved to be

## SQUAD FOR TRI-NATION

Mashrafe Bin Mortaza (c), Tamim Iqbal, Liton Das, Soumya Sarkar, Mushfiqur Rahim, Mahmudullah Riyad, Shakib Al Hasan, Mohammad Mithun, Sabbir Rahman, Mosaddek Hossain, Mohammad Saifuddin, Mehedi Hasan Miraz, Rubel Hossain, Mustafizur Rahman, Abu Jayed, Nayeem Hasan, Yasir Ali.

## TRI-NATION FIXTURES

Date	Match	Venue
May 5	Ireland v West Indies	Dublin
May 7	West Indies v Bangladesh	Dublin
May 9	Ireland v Bangladesh	Dublin
May 11	Ireland v West Indies	Dublin
May 13	West Indies v Bangladesh	Dublin
May 15	Ireland v Bangladesh	Dublin
May 17	Final	Dublin

relevant, striking two 50s and picking up four wickets, ending up as Bangladesh's top performer after the board changed their stance later on and picked him. It is fitting that he, as chief selector, has presided over a selection that has minimal controversy.

Bangladesh had one of their worst runs of form leading into the 2003 World Cup and Akram Khan, who had been left out of the original squad, was flown in midway through the event. The material and circumstances for controversy was once again on view upon squad announcement.

The 2007 World Cup squad raised eyebrows amongst fans and experts due to the exclusion of the tried and tested Khaled Masud in favour of the inexperienced 19-

## WORLD CUP SQUAD



**MASHRAFE BIN MORTAZA**  
(Captain)  
ODI Debut: Nov 23, 2001  
ODI Matches: 205  
World Cup Matches: 16



**SHAKIB AL HASAN**  
ODI Debut: August 6, 2006  
ODI Matches: 195  
World Cup Matches: 21



**TAMIM IQBAL**  
ODI Debut: Feb 9, 2007  
ODI Matches: 189  
World Cup Matches: 21



**MUSHFIQUR RAHIM**  
ODI Debut: August 6, 2006  
ODI Matches: 201  
World Cup Matches: 21



**MAHMUDULLAH RIYAD**  
ODI Debut: July 25, 2007  
ODI Matches: 171  
World Cup Matches: 10



**RUBEL HOSSAIN**  
ODI Debut: Jan 14, 2009  
ODI Matches: 96  
World Cup Matches: 12



**SOUMYA SARKER**  
ODI Debut: Dec 1, 2014  
ODI Matches: 41  
World Cup Matches: 6



**SABIR RAHMAN**  
ODI Debut: Nov 21, 2014  
ODI Matches: 57  
World Cup Matches: 6



**MUSTAFIZUR RAHMAN**  
ODI Debut: June 18, 2015  
ODI Matches: 43  
World Cup Matches: 0



**MEHEDI HASAN MIRAZ**  
ODI Debut: Mar 25, 2017  
ODI Matches: 25  
World Cup Matches: 0



**LITON DAS**  
ODI Debut: June 18, 2015  
ODI Matches: 27  
World Cup Matches: 0



**MOSADDEK HOSSAIN**  
ODI Debut: Sept 28, 2016  
ODI Matches: 24  
World Cup Matches: 0



**MOHAMMAD MITHUN**  
ODI Debut: June 17, 2014  
ODI Matches: 15  
World Cup Matches: 0



**MOHAMMAD SAIFUDDIN**  
ODI Debut: Oct 15, 2017  
ODI Matches: 10  
World Cup Matches: 0



**ABU JAYED**  
ODI Debut: 0  
ODI Matches: 0  
World Cup Matches: 0

year-old Mushfiqur Rahim. Amid huge uproar, Masud was not however included.

Mashrafe Bin Mortaza's exclusion in 2011 caused a furore as despite an injury, he had wanted to take part in Bangladesh's first home World Cup wholeheartedly. Even in the 2015 World Cup, Al Amin Hossain being withdrawn from the tournament was cause for controversy itself.

Looking at team selection for the 2019 World Cup, there is not much room for argument with the squad selection process. The selectors went for experience with the core group of players already certain of playing. The crop of experienced players like Mashrafe, Tamim Iqbal, Shakib Al Hasan, Mushfiqur Rahim and Mahmudullah Riyad have carried Bangladesh

cricket with their performances. There was very little opportunity for chaos given the options at hand. The pool of players who could be counted on at the highest level is very small and while that may have been cause for headache among the team's think tank, it paved the way for little controversy regarding squad selection.

Soumya Sarkar and Liton Das have been struggling for form and while it is a concern for the selectors, the duo have performed in tournaments where it counted and there simply were not enough options to challenge their positions.

Imrul Kayes could have been an option but his recent form, coupled with the role he plays, did not make him a secure investment in the top-order. Much could be made of Taskin Ahmed's exclusion; his situation is pretty similar

to Mashrafe's back in 2011, but the management had reason to believe that his fitness was not optimal for the long grind ahead. Even as Bangladesh need backup pace options, having an unfit player in a squad which will play nine matches in the group phase alone would be a big risk. The management also has an ace up its sleeve as changes can be made to the squad till May 22. That means the Ireland series could be crucial for both youngsters Naeem Hasan and Yasir Ali, both of whom were named in the 17-member squad for the tri-series that will lead into the World Cup. As it stands, there could be changes but the lack of options mean that the 15-member squad announced for the 2019 World Cup has less room for controversy than ones from the past.

## 'I believe in my team, not names'

MAZHAR UDDIN



Twelve years ago, a teenaged left-handed opener, playing in just his fifth ODI for Bangladesh against India in the ICC World Cup in 2007 in the West Indies, came down the track to fast bowler Zaheer Khan and smacked a six that sailed into the stands.

Over the years the dashing opener has emerged as one of the most experienced and assured Bangladesh batsman. Tamim Iqbal is now set to appear in his fourth World Cup in England this summer with a lot of hopes and responsibility on his shoulders.

After the selectors announced a 15-member World Cup squad yesterday, Tamim informed that it was a deserving team but also added that there would be ifs and buts when forming a balanced squad.

"I think it's unfortunate as you can't take everyone as there were quite a few who performed well such as Bijooy [Anamul Haque] was exceptionally good, Forhad Reza also did well but a few players missed out due to the team combination.

"To see Rabbi [Yasir Ali] get in [for the Ireland series] after performing well in the

BPL and also in the [Dhaka Premier] League was nice. I think it's a deserving team as there will be ifs and buts but you have to remember that it's not an easy thing to do," Tamim told The Daily Star at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.

When asked whether he really had the belief in the squad, Tamim replied: "I believe in my team, I don't believe in the faces, whoever is playing. If we didn't have Shakib [Al Hasan], Mushfiqur [Rahim], Mahmudullah [Riyad], Tamim or Mashrafe [Bin Mortaza] bhai in the team, wouldn't the others believe in themselves?"

However, according to Tamim, it will be a challenging task for the cricketers to play 14 games on the trot, including the tri-nation series in Ireland, and he urged the need to manage workload issue.

"Firstly, it will be difficult as we will be playing nine in the world cup and a maximum of five in Ireland so it's actually 14 matches. The workload is very important and I don't think that Bangladesh has gone to that level yet. If we rest any important players, people don't take that well as they question why that player was rested?"

"You have to realise that all the seniors



With an eye on the upcoming World Cup in the United Kingdom, Bangladesh opener Tamim Iqbal was hard at work at the nets in Mirpur yesterday. PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

have crossed their thirties and everybody has played a lot of cricket this year. I am not talking about the world as in some stage in Ireland if a player needs a break or that individual feels like he needs a break to do well in the upcoming matches, we all should take this positively. If you have noticed, although we have played for a long time none of us have played 14 games on the trot in such a short time. So there will be injuries and niggles but we have to manage the workload. It will be important that the players stay fresh when we go for the world cup in England and I would say everyone should eye to play eleven games, not nine -- including the semifinal and final," Tamim,

who also wants to play in the 20123 World Cup, said.

There was a lot of talk about the form of Liton Das and Soumya Sarkar as one of them are expected to open the innings with Tamim, who has a message for the two cricketers. "I have only one message for them as they may not be able to perform in the league as expected, but it's a new tournament. It just takes one or two good knocks to get into the rhythm. I hope they are ready as it can happen when you are in the best of form but you end up doing nothing. We have to keep our head high, which we can work on and they have enough talent to show the world how good they are."



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There was no reasonable doubt regarding the inclusion of the likes of Mashrafe Bin Mortaza, Tamim Iqbal and Shakib Al Hasan in Bangladesh's World Cup squad. In fact, the core of the squad was ready with 13 of the names quite certain to land a World Cup spot. The major surprises came in the form of the inclusions of Abu Jayed Rahi and Mosaddek Hossain, while the likes of Imrul Kayes and Taskin Ahmed -- both experienced at the international stage -- were overlooked. Chief selector Minhajul Abedin informed a crowded press conference yesterday that they put emphasis on experience, considering the English conditions, before explaining the reasons behind the inclusions and exclusions in the World Cup and tri-nation squads.



'A dream to be a part of this team'

ICC

Dinesh Karthik, who on Monday, was named in India's squad for the ICC World Cup 2019, believed he could make it to the playing XI as a specialist batsman after getting a "dream" call-up to India's ICC World Cup squad.

Karthik was a surprise pick in the 15-man contingent, coming in at the expense of Rishabh Pant to be MS Dhoni's back-up behind the stumps, although Pant has been India's first-choice wicketkeeper in Test cricket.

As a result, Karthik is now set to be a part of his second World Cup, and his first in 12 years, having last played in the 2007 edition in the Caribbean. "I am very excited," he told. "It has been a dream for me to be a part of this [World Cup] team for a long time now."

## 'WHERE STARS ARE BORN'

Favourite World Cup memory as a spectator?

Sanath Jayasuriya in every game of the 1996 World Cup.

Favourite memory as a player in the World Cup?

The game against India in 2007 as I kept watching Sachin Tendulkar when he entered the ground. I was out of the game as I was only concentrating on him.

Fastest bowler you faced in World Cup? I felt it was Lasith Malinga in the 2007 World Cup. He used to bowl 145 km/h

plus at that time but it felt like it was 160 because of his action.

Worst memory of the World Cup?

Being 58 all out against the West Indies in 2011 at home.

Best innings?

Aravinda De Silva in the World Cup final in 1996.

Best innings by a Bangladeshi?

Mohammad Ashraful's 76 against South Africa in 2007.

What does the World Cup mean for Tamim?

An event that creates stars.