



Bangladesh batsman Mahmudullah Riyad toiled away tirelessly during a training camp at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday. Other members of the World Cup squad, such as ODI captain Mashrafe Bin Mortaza, are expected to join the training camp when it resumes after a two-day break on Sunday. PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

'No massive changes in Ireland'

SPORTS REPORTER



With just over a month left for the World Cup in the United Kingdom, how Bangladesh will fare in the mega event has become the most discussed topic. And when Bangladesh head coach Steve Rhodes attended probably the last press conference in the country yesterday in Mirpur before the World Cup, he appeared very confident and positive about the Tigers' chances in the showpiece event starting from May 30.

"Are we capable? Yes," was how the Englishman responded when asked about Bangladesh's chances of beating big teams in the World Cup. However, Rhodes did mention that the Tigers will have to give their absolute best if they are to yield positive results in foreign conditions.

"Let us be brutally honest. There are some very good teams going to the World Cup. For Bangladesh to do well, it will be tough. But I do know that a lot of these countries respect Bangladesh. They know that if they have an off day or even play well, Bangladesh are capable of beating sides," Rhodes said.

Bangladesh will be leaving for Ireland on May 1 to play a tri-nation series which is scheduled to begin from May 5 and with the World Cup soon to follow, Bangladesh will be taking the Ireland tour as a build-up to the mega event.

The series may be the perfect opportunity for the Tigers to try

and find solutions to issues like injury concerns, keeping players fresh and fit, game time for talismanic all-rounder Shakib Al Hasan who is currently playing for Sunrisers Hyderabad in the Indian Premier League (IPL) and lastly, figuring out who between Liton Das and Soumya Sarkar would be a better option to open with Tamim Iqbal in the World Cup.

Bangladesh bowling coach Courtney Walsh had earlier indicated that the Tigers may need some back-up bowlers in Ireland in order to keep players still recovering or just recovered from injuries fresh ahead of the World Cup. Rhodes



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 BANGLADESH HEAD COACH

echoed that sentiment. "We have some niggles. We have got Rubel [Hossain] who is coming back from a side strain, we got Mustafizur [Rahman] who

has had an ankle problem. He is coming back to fitness. We have [Mohammad] Saifuddin who has been playing nonstop with a bad elbow. And Mashrafe [Bin Mortaza], you never know, he keeps going. So I think what he [Walsh] was alluding to was that if we need to then we may have to bring in some players. But that will be if these guys are a little bit slow with their recovery, but at the moment they are going well."

It will also be very important for Bangladesh to rotate players in Ireland in order to keep them fresh as they have a very hectic schedule, with almost 13-14 matches slated to be played in just one and a half months. After Tamim stressed on the need for rotation, Rhodes seemed to agree yesterday.

"We will try to mix it around a little bit in the tri-nation, but we have to be careful not to get too funky. We won't make massive

changes, but we will share around an odd position just to keep people fresh. I think the length of the tour is more of an issue than the amount of games," the Englishman said.

Rhodes also thought that Shakib's involvement with Sunrisers will benefit Bangladesh, pointing out that Shakib playing a few games with Sunrisers is good as the all-rounder got some match time. Shakib was left out of his IPL team a few times and Rhodes took that positively too as he thought that being starved of cricket would encourage him to some good performances for Bangladesh to show the world what he is capable of.

Lastly, although Rhodes mentioned that he prefers a left-right combination in the opening partnership, he can actually use the Ireland tour to figure out the best possible partner for Tamim before heading into the World Cup.

Abahani start poorly

SPORTS REPORTER

Just this week the Abahani men's team retained the Dhaka Premier League title, however, their women's wing made a poor start to the Premier Division Women's Cricket League at BKSP in Savar yesterday.

An all-round performance from Rumana Ahmed helped Sheikh Russel Sports Development Academy secure a 37-run victory over Abahani, where she claimed two wickets for 28 runs after scoring a 65-ball 41. In chase of Sheikh Russel's 197 for nine, the Dhanmondi-based outfit were all out on 160.

In another match, Mohammedan Sporting Club rode on Sharmin Akter Supta's unbeaten 51 to defeat Bangladesh Ansar & VDP Women's Team by seven wickets at the same venue.

Mohammedan scored 113 for three in 24.5 overs in reply to Ansar & VDP's 112 for 10 in 46.3 overs.

In the other fixture of the opening day, an unbeaten 127-run second wicket partnership between Shuktara Rahman (73) and Farzana Haq Pinky (56) helped Rupali Bank Krira Parishad Women's Team register a nine-wicket victory over Keraniganj Cricket Academy Women's Team. Rupali Bank posted 143 for one in reply to Keraniganj's 139 for 10.

Jahanara picked for Velocity

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh pacer Jahanara Alam will be featuring for Velocity, which is one of the three teams in the Women's T20 Challenge organised by the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI), scheduled to begin from May 6.

BCCI announced that the Women's T20 will see four matches played between the three teams in Jaipur as standalone games during the 2019 VIVO IPL Playoff week.

Jahanara's Velocity will be playing against Trailblazers on May 8 before battling it out with Supernovas on May 9.

Proteas sweat on Steyn fitness

Reuters, Cape Town

South Africa face an anxious wait over the fitness of experienced seamer Dale Steyn after a flare-up of an old shoulder injury ruled him out for the rest of the Indian Premier League season, putting his World Cup prospects in doubt.

The 35-year-old Steyn felt discomfort having played for the Royal Challengers Bangalore on Sunday, just his second game of the competition after he was signed as an injury replacement for Australian seamer Nathan Coulter-Nile.

"Upon assessment and subsequent investigations, a flare-up of his right shoulder was confirmed," South Africa team manager Mohammed Moosaajee said in a statement on Thursday.

"With the World Cup around the corner, it is our priority to get him back to full fitness before the squad departs on May 19.

"He will consult with a shoulder specialist upon his return and a recovery plan will be put in place."

Steyn, arguably his country's greatest fast bowler, was sidelined from South Africa's one-day international side for two years with shoulder, hamstring and foot problems before returning in Oct.



DALE STEYN

2018. He was last week named in a 15-man squad for the World Cup being held in England and Wales, having previously appeared at the tournament in 2011 and 2015.

Steyn is viewed as a key part of a three-man pace attack that also includes Lungi Ngidi and Kagiso Rabada, this season's leading wicket-taker in the IPL.

South Africa open the World Cup campaign against England at The Oval on May 30.

'I'm learning a lot from legends'

PTI, Mumbai

India opener Shikhar Dhawan has said he is learning a lot from legends like Ricky Ponting and Sourav Ganguly and would appropriately use that knowledge during the 50-over World Cup, starting May 30.

Dhawan is currently playing in IPL for Delhi Capitals, coached by former Australia skipper Ponting while former India captain Ganguly is associated with the franchise as advisor.

"Ricky Ponting and Sourav Ganguly... I am very fortunate that I am working with them now. They both have been great leaders. It is very good to be close to them because I can get their insight, know what was their mindset, what was their approach when they used to play or captain their side," explained Dhawan, who has scored 5,355 runs in 128 ODIs.

"I am already learning so many things from them (and) it is helping me. I am grateful (for) that. I am sure those things are helping me in the IPL and I am going to take it to the World Cup," he added.

Dhawan, meanwhile, also heaped praises on his Delhi Capitals teammate Prithvi Shaw, saying he is the next big thing in Indian cricket.

"So Prithvi, I would say it is a very big

achievement to play for India at the age of 19, especially India is a dominating country for batsmen (and there are) lots of batsmen, so someone coming in at 19 is a big achievement and he has done very well for Indian team."

Narine rues missed chance

REUTERS, St. John's

Sunil Narine has still not given up hope of a return to international cricket after missing out on a spot in West Indies' World Cup squad due to injury, the spinner has said.

The 30-year-old, who last played an one-day international in 2016, had come into consideration under the new selection policy of Cricket West Indies (CWI) but missed out due to a finger injury on his right hand.

"I would have loved to play in the World Cup," Narine, who is currently playing for the Kolkata Knight Riders in the Indian Premier League, told ESPNcricinfo.

"I've missed international cricket and missed representing the West Indies. It's where my heart lies. But I don't feel my finger is quite ready for ODI cricket."

City raise the bar

AFP, Manchester



Manchester City manager Pep Guardiola believes his side have raised the bar in the Premier League after edging one point back ahead of Liverpool in a titanic title race with a 2-0 win at Manchester United on Wednesday.

Bernardo Silva and Leroy Sane struck for the visitors in 12 second-half minutes at Old Trafford to inflict a seventh defeat in nine games on United, who remain three points adrift of the top four.

City cannot match their record 100 points tally in romping to the title last season, but victories over Burnley, Leicester and Brighton will clinch the title on 98 points and ensure Liverpool's 29-year wait to win the league continues despite already posting a club record points tally in the Premier League era.

"We increased the level for the Premier League last season with 100 points. That's the level Liverpool are chasing. What they have done is incredible but it's in our hands," said Guardiola.

"Both teams deserve the title. But it can be just one. The team that is going to lose can't have regrets because they have given everything."

United boss Ole Gunnar Solskjaer slammed his players' attitude after a 4-0 thrashing at Everton on Sunday and was

rewarded with a far more energetic and committed performance, even if City's greater quality eventually shone through.

"They've set the standard in the last couple of seasons. They have been the best team in the country and that's the standard we want to get to," admitted Solskjaer.

Yet, Arsenal's defeat at Wolves means the Red Devils are still very much in the race for Champions League qualification, should they beat fourth-placed Chelsea at home on Sunday.

"I'm concerned about the lack of results," added Solskjaer.

"The strange reality is that we are still in with a shout for the top four. We need more quality on Sunday because we need to win that game and, if we win it, we have two games to get those points and goals we need."

Solskjaer has bemoaned United's fitness levels in recent weeks and again after an early burst, they started to flag as City created a spurt of chances either side of half-time.

"We know what's been going wrong, it's mentality and willingness to run for your team," said United striker Marcus Rashford.

"Forget the top four and the Champions League. We have to get to the bottom of it and start playing like Manchester United for ourselves."



Manchester City midfielder Leroy Sane scores the second goal to condemn Manchester United to a 2-0 defeat during their Premier League encounter at Old Trafford on Wednesday. PHOTO: AFP

RR win despite Karthik show

STAR SPORT DESK

Skipper Dinesh Karthik's unbeaten 97 off 50 balls went in vain as Kolkata Knight Riders suffered a three-wicket defeat at the hands of Rajasthan Royals -- courtesy of a late cameo from Jofra Archer -- in Kolkata yesterday.

After being asked to bat first, Kolkata rode on Karthik's valiant effort to post a challenging 175 for six.

Following the exchange, Rajasthan got off to a good start as opener Ajinkya Rahane scored 34 off 21 balls before getting dismissed in the sixth over. After that, Riyan Parag's 47 off 31 balls and a late 12-ball 27-run cameo from Archer eventually helped Rajasthan win with four balls to spare.

SCORES IN BRIEF
 KKR: 175 for six in 20 overs (Karthik 97 not out, Rana 21; Aaron 2-20)

RR: 177 for seven in 19.2 overs (Parag 47, Archer 27 not out; Chawla 3-20)
 Result: Rajasthan Royals won by three wickets.