



Confident Tigers eye final date

Tri-series game against West Indies today

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh's tri-nation game against the West Indies at the Malahide Cricket Club ground in Ireland today is a crucial one for the Tigers to reach the final, which they will achieve if they win. However, in the larger context it will also be a challenge for Mashrafe bin Mortaza and his troops to maintain their consistency as a unit ahead of the ICC World Cup. The day game is scheduled to begin from 3:45 pm Bangladesh time.

Bangladesh have had only one full game in Ireland so far -- their comprehensive eight-wicket win over the West Indies in their first match on May 7 -- before their game against Ireland was washed out without a single ball bowled on May 9.

West Indies, on the other hand, started off the series on a high by beating hosts Ireland by a commanding 196 runs, courtesy of a world-record 365-run opening stand between Shai Hope and John Campbell.

Jason Holder's side did manage to make a comeback after the defeat against Bangladesh when they completed their highest successful run chase to win a close encounter by five wickets and 13 balls to spare against Ireland.

Meanwhile, the home side will have a close eye on today's game between Bangladesh and the West Indies and if the Tigers manage to beat the Caribbean outfit, it will be goodbye for Ireland with a game in hand.

Coming back to the World Cup preparations, the Tigers' think tank may not tinker with the playing eleven keeping a place in the final in mind and most likely field the same team that played against the West Indies in the first game.

Despite a good start by the West Indies batsmen, the Bangladesh bowlers managed to build the pressure on the opponent, with skipper Mashrafe bin Mortaza and Mohammad Saifuddin bowling brilliantly in the latter stages of the innings after spinners Shakib Al Hasan and Mehedi Hasan Miraz pulled the run rate down with some tight bowling in the middle.

There were concerns about who would partner opener Tamim Iqbal, but the team management will certainly get some relief after Soumya Sarkar's brisk 68-ball 73 in the first game.

Soumya added 144 with Tamim for the opening wicket, which laid the foundation before Shakib finished off the game with an unbeaten, run-a-ball 61 to register an easy win with five overs to spare.

Despite all the positives, there is some concern about left-arm seamer Mustafizur Rahman's bowling as he is yet to find his rhythm, evidenced by him leaking 84 runs from his 10 overs for two wickets against West Indies.

Overall, the Tigers will be looking to continue their consistency -- which according to the head coach Steve Rhodes will be crucial -- and iron out some minor chinks when they take on West Indies for a spot in the final today.



Jasprit Bumrah's death-overs discipline and Lasith Malinga's grit in the last over netted Mumbai Indians a nail-biting one-run win in the Indian Premier League final against Chennai Super Kings at the Rajiv Gandhi International Stadium in Hyderabad yesterday. With their fourth trophy, Mumbai pipped their opponents to the title of most prolific champions.

PHOTO: AFP

BCB forms Elite squad

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The Bangladesh Cricket Board formed a 24-member Elite Squad, who began a skill training camp, to be held till the 30th, at the Academy Ground in Mirpur yesterday.

Right-arm pacer Taskin Ahmed and all-rounder Forhad Reza were included in the Elite squad and are expected to join the camp after returning from the ongoing ODI tri-series in Ireland featuring the hosts, West Indies and Bangladesh. Other experienced campaigners such as Jahurul Islam and Raqibul Islam made the cut as well while Imrul Kayes, who did not make it into the 15-member World Cup Squad, was also included.

Elite players' for the skill camp: Anamul Haque, Jahurul Islam, Shadman Islam, Mizanur Rahman, Imrul Kayes, Mominul Haque, Raqibul Hasan, Fazle Rabbi, Ariful Haque, Forhad Reza, Mehedi Hasan, Tanbir Haider, Nazmul Islam, Taijul Islam, Sanjamul Islam, Nurul Hasan, Irfan Shukkur, Salaudin Shakil, Khaled Ahmed, Ebadot Hossain, Kamrul Islam Rabbi, Shafiqul Islam, Abu Hider and Taskin Ahmed.

Robi to represent Bangladesh

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Robi Axiata Ltd, a telecom company of Bangladesh, will represent the nation at the Standard Chartered Trophy, a football tournament, at the Anfield Stadium in the United Kingdom today.

Various business organizations from six different countries, split into two groups, will participate in the tournament, which is a five-a-side affair where the matches will last 30 minutes each. Bangladesh were placed in Group B alongside Ghana and Hong Kong while Group A consists of India, England and South Korea, according to press release received yesterday.

Robi earned their place in the tournament by emerging as champions from the Bangladesh qualifiers, which were held on March 1 with approximately 12 organizations participating.



'It'll be tough to pick 15'

ICC

In the face of increasingly stiff competition among the fast bowlers, Eoin Morgan, the England captain, acknowledged that making the final selection for the ICC World Cup 2019 would be a difficult task.

England have 17 members in their squad for the ongoing ODI series against Pakistan, of which only 15 will make the cut for the World Cup. And Jofra Archer, who is almost definitely a shoo-in for the event, wasn't named in the original CWC squad, which leaves England with some tough calls to make.

"Unfortunately, a couple of guys from this 17 will miss out, and it's going to be a tough decision, regardless of how they perform in the rest of this series because of what they've contributed over a long period of time," Morgan said.

England were without Archer, who was rested for the second ODI in Southampton on Saturday, 11 May. It paved the way for David Willey's inclusion, and the left-arm pacer turned in a top-notch performance, returning 2/57 in 10 overs. In a match where 734 runs were scored, Willey ended up being one of only two bowlers from either side to go at under six an over -- the other, Haris Sohail, bowled only three overs.

Willey also excelled at the death, and was instrumental in applying the choke on Pakistan. He gave away just 17 runs in a three-over spell, between overs 44 and 48, and picked up two wickets in that time. Pakistan ended up losing by 12 runs.

"I thought he bowled beautifully, even when he came back in the middle," Morgan said of Willey. "He normally bowls a couple more up front, when it swings a bit more, but today it didn't actually swing



EINO MORGAN

that much, maybe for six or seven balls. I thought all of the bowlers, including Dave, who were put under the pump when we couldn't take wickets throughout that whole 30-over period, were brilliant. They reacted really well."

Willey will now essentially be competing for World Cup spots with Archer, Liam Plunkett, Chris Woakes, Chris Jordan and Tom Curran. Willey, Plunkett and Woakes are the more experienced of the lot, while Jordan and Curran are yet to play a game in the series.

"They're all pushing each other," Morgan said. "It's a bit like our batting unit the last two or three years. Guys who come in and do well have missed out."

Mumbai thrill on way to record 4th

AFP, Hyderabad



Lasith Malinga kept his nerve with the final ball as Mumbai Indians beat Chennai Super Kings by one run to clinch a record fourth Indian Premier League title Sunday.

After Shane Watson hit a blistering 80, Chennai needed two runs off the last ball to overtake Mumbai's 149-8 but the Sri Lankan veteran bowled Shardul Thakur lbw to claim the landmark win.

Malinga gave away 49 runs in his four overs but the last two overs by the Sri Lankan and fellow pace bowler Jasprit Bumrah, who took 2-14, were decisive.

West Indies batsman Kieron Pollard smashed an unbeaten 41 off 25 balls to set up the Mumbai total after they elected to bat first.

Watson batted through the Chennai innings until he was run out in the final over going for a reckless second run. He smashed four sixes and eight fours in his 59-ball knock.

Ishan Kishan sent Chennai dangerman MS Dhoni back to the dugout with a direct throw at the bowlers' end to put the defending champions in trouble at 82-4.

Earlier Chennai leg-spinner Imran Tahir took 2-23 to surpass fellow South African Kagiso Rabada as the top IPL bowlers chart this year with 26 wickets. Tahir was also the first 40-year-old to appear in an IPL final.

Deepak Chahar took three wickets while fellow quick Shardul Thakur took two. South African captain Faf du Plessis then came all guns blazing to give Chennai a brisk start with his 26 off 13 deliveries. Mumbai won the IPL in 2013 and 2015 -- both against Chennai -- and again in 2017 when they beat Rising Pune Supergiant by one run.

SCORES IN BRIEF

MUMBAI: 149 for 8 (Pollard 41, De Kock 29; Chahar 3-26, Thakur 2-37)

CHENNAI: 148 for 7 (Watson 80, Du Plessis 26; Bumrah 2-14, Malinga 1-49)

Result: Mumbai won by 1 run

Player-of-the-match: Jasprit Bumrah

Player-of-the-series: Andre Russell

Sheikh Russel notch 10-wkt victory

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Nahida Akter bagged a fiver to help Sheikh Russel Sports Development Academy register a whopping 10-wicket victory over Gulshan Youth Club during their Premier Division Women's Cricket League encounter at BKSP-3 in Savar yesterday.

Sent in to bat, Gulshan were bundled out for a meagre 76 runs in 40.5 overs. Nahida was the pick of the bowlers for Sheikh Russel, returning impressive figures of five for 14 in 10 overs, which included six maidens.

After the exchange, Sheikh Rasel reached the target comfortably in just 14.2 overs.

At BKSP-4, despite Lily Rani's five wickets for 22 runs, Bangladesh Ansar and VDP could not avert a 71-run thumping at the hands of Bangladesh Kirra Shikha Protisthan. Ansar could only manage 98 runs in 39 overs in response to BKSP's 169 in 48.2 overs.

ICC clears Plunkett of tampering

AFP, Southampton

England fast bowler Liam Plunkett has been cleared by the International Cricket Council following allegations he may have tampered with the ball during the second one-day international against Pakistan.

A short sequence from Saturday's match in Southampton led to a debate on Twitter, with some on social media suggesting the 34-year-old had been involved in an act of foul play as a result of a three-second clip showing Plunkett rubbing his fingers along the surface of the ball.

Plunkett himself is understood to have raised the issue with officials after becoming aware of the allegations and he has since been exonerated.

"The ICC has confirmed that the match officials are comfortable there was no attempt by Liam Plunkett to change the condition of the ball or any evidence of this on the over-by-over examinations of the ball throughout Saturday's ODI clash in Southampton," said a statement issued by the global governing body on Sunday.

Fought together as a team: Fredrick

SPORTS REPORTER



The Bangladeshi archers could not create their own small piece of history on the concluding day of the Hyundai Archery World Cup (stage-2) in Shanghai, China yesterday. However, Bangladesh's German archery coach Martin Fredrick felt that a fourth-place finish in the men's recurve team event was a tremendous stride in terms of the sport's development in the country.

Following a defeat against Turkey in the semifinals, Bangladesh had to face Olympic medallists South Korea in yesterday's bronze medal deciding match. Toppling the Asian giants to win the bronze would have been Bangladesh's greatest-ever achievement in archery but as expected, South Korea triumphed in the end but not before being made to work for it.

Bangladesh, comprised of Ruman Sana, Tamimul Islam, Hakib Ahmed Rubel, stunned South Korea by winning the first set, however, the boys in red and green could not hold onto the momentum. South Korea's world class archers showed tremendous consistency in the next three sets to hand Bangladesh a 6-2 set points defeat.

Archery is a relatively new discipline in the country but with their sights set on at least a bronze medal in the upcoming Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games, the Bangladesh Archery Federation appointed

an experienced German coach to help achieve their goal.

"Yes, they could have won the bronze medal but I believe that finishing fourth in the World Cup was a big achievement for Bangladesh nevertheless and an important step for the future," said Fredrick through social media.

Although Bangladesh did unexpectedly well in the team recurve event, the individual performances were not as inspiring as most of the archers in the recurve and compound events were either eliminated from the first

or second round while Sana and Rubel only advanced to the third round.

"If you talk about team events, it's not necessary to evaluate the performance of the individual player. They fought together and helped each other as a team. It was really nice to see the mood as united team. During all rounds of the finals everyone from the team had a very good performance and also few situations where they struggled. However, they compensated with excellent team work," said Fredrick, who congratulated Rubel on his 17th place

finish in the individual event seeing as it was his first-ever World Cup.

The German said he believes that there is still a lot to improve on for Bangladeshi archers and added that he would work on those aspects so that the team can earn a quota placement for the Tokyo Olympic Games.

"We have to continue improving our results in the qualification round and there is still space to improve," he said. "I prefer to aim for the first step before the second and we try hard, we can qualify for the Olympic Games."

Echoing Fredrick's sentiment, Ruman also saw the fourth place finish as a big achievement for the team as this was the first time that they had done so well at a major tournament. It should be mentioned though that Bangladesh previously won gold medals in the ISSF Islamic Solidarity Archery Championships and South Asian Archery Championships.

"Playing in the semifinals of the World Cup is perhaps a big achievement for any discipline of Bangladesh except cricket and shooting and we proved to the rest of world that Bangladesh are going forward as a strong archery nation," said Sana.

Since Bangladesh will not be participating in the third-stage of World Cup, to be held in Turkey later this month, are expected to attend June's World Championships with hopes of earning a quota spot for the Tokyo Olympics.



The Bangladesh men's recurve team missed out on a bronze medal but secured a fourth place finish, their best at any major tournament, in the Hyundai Archery World Cup (stage-2) in China yesterday.

PHOTO: COLLECTED