



His demeanour says it all. With his head held high and a smile from ear to ear, Bangladesh skipper Mashrafe Bin Mortaza proudly takes a lap with the tri-nation ODI series trophy, their first multinational series title, after defeating West Indies in the final in Dublin on Friday.

PHOTO: AFP

As good as a tune-up gets

SAKEB SUBHAN from London

It would have been natural for Bangladesh fans to have their ears strained in unsavoury anticipation of the sound of the penny dropping when the Tigers took on West Indies in the tri-series final on Tuesday.

Mashrafe Bin Mortaza and his team had easily proven themselves to be the strongest team of the three -- hosts Ireland being a distant third -- as they had not been pushed in the slightest in the group matches when chasing 261, 292 and 247. However, Bangladesh had been in a similarly superior position before tournament finals in the past, only for them to lose the plot at the crunch point.

In that light, Bangladesh's rousing success on the back of an astonishing innings from unlikely hero Mosaddek Hossain in the tri-series will not only provide succour in the form of a maiden international tournament trophy but has also put the Tigers in the ideal mental space for the real challenge -- the 2019 World Cup in England and Wales starting from the end of this month.

It was not just about the final; consider the ducks that the Tigers managed to line up in order to feast on their maiden trophy. Heading into Ireland there were

major question marks over the scale of contributions from the cricketers outside Bangladesh's hallowed Big Five of Mashrafe Bin Mortaza, Shakib Al Hasan, Tamim Iqbal, Mushfiqur Rahim and Mahmudullah Riyad. There was also serious doubt about whether the batting department could match the scoring rates of the likes of England and India when the World Cup would be played on flat batting tracks.

In five matches (one of them rained out without a ball bowled) over 10 days, those doubts have been emphatically quashed.

Tamim Iqbal's opening partner was one of the contentious selection calls heading into the World Cup and both candidates for the position have impressed whenever called upon in Ireland. Soumya Sarkar hit three half-centuries in three innings and more importantly, given Tamim's current role of guiding the innings towards a big score by batting till the 40th over, he scored runs at a strike rate of 109.65. When Soumya was rested and Liton called upon, he kick-started Bangladesh's chase of 292 against Ireland with a 67-ball 76. On a wicket that was quite similar to what the Tigers will face in the World Cup, Bangladesh aced that chase in just 43 overs, a rate comparable to what would be required

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in the World Cup run-fests.

Some may say that it came against a pretty weak and misfiring Ireland attack, but Bangladesh had earlier shown their fast-scoring mettle in their two-group matches against the West Indies on pitches that were much more sluggish against a pretty good attack. Those matches were also a triumph for Bangladesh's bowling

attack because they made scoring seem much harder than it was.

Most impressively, when push came to shove, in the rain-affected final, the deck seemed to be stacked against the Tigers as they were set a target of 210 from just 24 overs -- precisely the kind of reversal that would have left them wanting in the past. But it gave a window into their current bullish mindset that they put hardly a foot wrong -- from Soumya and Tamim's 59-run stand in just 5.3 overs, through Mushfiqur's 22-ball 39 and finally Mosaddek's 24-ball 52 blitz.

It capped off a series where five of Bangladesh's top seven -- Soumya, Mahmudullah, Liton, Mushfiqur and Mosaddek -- scored runs at a strike rate of 100 or higher. Mosaddek's salvo, in particular, lent the whole campaign an especially auspicious glow as his fast-scoring abilities were most in doubt, and so his match-winning knock now makes Bangladesh's 15-member World Cup squad look as complete as can be imagined.

Last and in no way least, the final was won without Shakib as the all-rounder was nursing a back injury. That, more than anything, speaks to the current rude health of the squad, which is the biggest boon the Tigers will take into the World Cup.



Captains hail milestone

It has been a long wait for Bangladesh to finally lift a maiden major tournament title but Mashrafe Bin Mortaza and his troops finally completed the feat by defeating the West Indies by five wickets in the final of the tri-nation series in Ireland on Friday. Despite having reached the final of a tournament six times in both the ODI and T20 formats previously, the Tigers could not break the jinx of losing in finals till their seventh attempt. Overcoming that hurdle, that too ahead of the World Cup in the United Kingdom, should surely boost the Tigers' morale. The following are reactions from three former captains following Bangladesh's historic win.



It is definitely pleasing to the eye, there is no doubt about that. This is for two reasons, we entered the tri-nation series as favourites and it was a big achievement to finish the tournament as favourites as well. There were times in the past when we were called underdogs and from that position, to be able to overcome that tag was something remarkable.

The situation was tough after the rain halted the match but Bangladesh were able to pass the hurdle like a good team.

--Gazi Ashraf Hossain Lipu

It's a big achievement. I was there and remember our first ever one-day win against Kenya the same day (May 17, 1998) in Hyderabad. We did get few opportunities to win series in the past, but somehow we were unable to do that. We managed to do that after a long wait and the way Bangladesh are playing now, they don't just depend on big players like Tamim [Iqbal] or Shakib [Al Hasan]. The junior players are especially playing well and this win will certainly boost the morale of the team before the World Cup.



--Akram Khan

This win is special for a few reasons. First, we needed to break the deadlock of being unable to win finals of such tournaments. There were doubts that Bangladesh could not win in the final and so we really needed to win. This tournament was considered preparation for the World Cup. Not just the final, the whole tournament was very crucial for us. And if you keep the final aside, I think we played as we wanted to. Overall, I am very satisfied with the way we played the entire tournament.



--Habibul Bashar



England's Jason Roy celebrates his ton during the fourth ODI against Pakistan at Trent Bridge in Nottingham on Friday.

PHOTO: AFP

'It's a special one for me and my family'

AFP, Nottingham

Jason Roy was at a loss to explain how he had scored a match-winning century against Pakistan following an overnight visit to hospital with his baby daughter.

Roy's superb 114 was the centrepiece of England's chase as they beat Pakistan at Trent Bridge on Friday to go 3-0 up with one to play in a one-day international series.

Yet Roy's eighth century at this level came in trying circumstances, with the Surrey opening batsman saying he'd been more worried about daughter Everly than piling up the runs.

"It was a very emotional hundred. I didn't see it coming," Roy told BBC Radio's Test Match Special.

"I had a bit of a rough morning so this one is a special one for me and my family," added Roy, who returned to hospital after a three-wicket win, although his daughter's condition is not believed to be serious.

"It was my little one. We had to take her to hospital at 1:30 in the morning. I stayed there until 8:30am, came back for a couple of hours sleep and got to the ground just before warm-up and cracked on."

England were cruising to a target of 341 while Roy was at the crease but, after comfortable wins at Southampton and Bristol, his dismissal sparked a collapse that saw three wickets lost for seven runs in 10 balls.

And when Moeen Ali was out for a duck, England were 216 for five.

But Ben Stokes's unbeaten 71 eventually saw England win with three balls to spare.

Mash heads back home

SPORTS REPORTER

Following Bangladesh's tri-nation series triumph on Friday, skipper Mashrafe Bin Mortaza headed home from Dublin along with four other players -- Yasir Ali, Taskin Ahmed, Nayeem Hasan and Forhad Reza -- who did not make it to the 15-member World Cup squad.

The Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) had sanctioned a brief optional vacation for the players in order to keep them mentally fresh ahead of the quadrennial mega event starting later this month. Tamim Iqbal and Mashrafe had taken this opportunity and while Mashrafe is travelling back home. Tamim flew for Dubai to spend time with his family who are already there.

The other 13-member of the World Cup squad, who departed for London yesterday, are expected to be already in the English capital. From there, they will travel to Leicester.

Pak U-19s to tour SL

AGENCIES, Karachi

The Pakistan under-19 side will tour Sri Lanka for five one-dayers, from May 26 till June 5, according to a revised plan that the PCB announced on Saturday.

Previously, Sri Lanka was to host Pakistan in two four-day and three 50-over matches, but following a series of gruesome bombings on Easter (April 21), the tour was postponed on April 27.

'If possible, bring the Cup home'

In the lead-up to the 2019 World Cup, we take a look back on World Cups past through the eyes of Bangladesh's former World Cup stars. Syed Rasel, who played in six Tests, 52 ODIs and eight T20Is for Bangladesh, was also a pivotal figure in the Tigers' line up for the 2007 World Cup. The left-armer, best known for bowling economic spells, shared some of his World Cup memories in an interview with The Daily Star's Nabid Yeasin.



The Daily Star (TDS): How did it feel to play in the 2007 World Cup?

Syed Rasel (SR): I started playing cricket back in 1998 and I set a goal for myself at that time. I calculated that my age in 2007 would be perfect to feature in a World Cup for Bangladesh and that's what I targeted -- to play in the 2007 World Cup. I actually cannot express my feelings with words about how it felt to play in a World Cup that I had aimed for years back.

TDS: What is your best World Cup memory?

SR: Actually, every wicket I took was memorable. There were some match winning performances in that World Cup. For instance, in our first game against India, I did not get any wickets but I bowled economically and held back the run-flow from one end. I think in that game, players like Mashrafe [Bin Mortaza] and [Abdur] Razzak, who came into bowl after me were benefitted by my bowling. Another thing is that people still talk about Graeme Smith's wicket [against South Africa in the second round of the 2007 World Cup] when they meet me. There is however one interesting story about the game we played against West Indies. In that World Cup, every time before starting to bowl, I used to talk to Tamim [Iqbal]. He used to guess and tell me the amount of runs I am going to concede and the number of wickets I will take. So in the game against West Indies, I asked Tamim 'So, Tamim tell me your predictions for today'. And then Tamim said that 'today you will get one wicket and give 48 runs'. And then I said to him that I think the number of runs is a bit more than I usually concede and it does not go with my character. Then Tamim replied to me

that 'it is what it is, I cannot lessen the numbers'. It was as though I was actually insisting that he lessen the number of runs I would be conceding. Anyways, I was bowling my last over and I had already conceded 42 runs in 9.5 overs. The batsman was Brian Lara and before bowling my last ball to him I looked at Tamim. Tamim was signalling a six with his hand as if he was praying for it to happen and interestingly, I was



struck for a six off that ball. This was the one time his prediction matched perfectly and it was a memorable thing in the World Cup.

TDS: You were always known for your economic spells. In the upcoming World Cup in England, how important do you think it will be for the bowlers to bowl economically on true wickets?

SR: Cricket has now become a game of runs. In England, there won't be any moisture on the pitch like we used to find earlier. But the bowlers might get some swing in the air if there is wind. Other than that, I think it will be a batting track in England and it will be wrong of the bowlers and even the fans to expect some extraordinary bowling in England. So on that type of pitch the bowlers have to be technically sound, otherwise it will be tough for them to survive. The bowlers need to bank on variations like bowling slower, slower yorkers, block holes, lower full-toss deliveries at times. The faster bowlers can even bowl half-volley deliveries at a good speed as it is hard to hit and might result in only a single most of the time. But the bowlers cannot afford to bowl short and good length balls, especially in the last ten overs as those will be easy pickings. The key there will be to try and contain the batsmen and not to go for wickets, because going for wickets might concede runs.

TDS: What do you think of Bangladesh's chances in this World Cup and how far will they go?

SR: The way Bangladesh have been playing and especially after seeing them win the tri-series in Ireland, I am now actually dreaming of them winning the World Cup. This is what we want but it will only be possible if our players can play as per their abilities. So I pray that they can carry their form and if they do then I think we can be in the top three.

TDS: Do you have a message for the players ahead of this World Cup?

SR: First of all, good wishes for the whole team. And my message towards them is that, if possible, bring the cup home.