



Much more of the same

City

SAKEB SUBHAN from London

Bangladesh supporters may well be waiting for someone to pinch them in order to wake them from what has so far been a dream lead-up to the 2019 World Cup. 2019 so far has been a rollercoaster ride, and the current ascent -- after the win-less tour of New Zealand in February-March -- has served to strengthen the surreal feeling. As skipper Mashrafe Bin Mortaza said during the World Cup captains' press conference in London last Friday, it is hard to see how Bangladesh could be better prepared.

It is an indicator of the peaks and troughs that dot the development chart of a team that the seeds for the prevailing positivity were sown during the New Zealand ODIs. Shakib Al Hasan missed the tour due to injury and batting mainstays Tamim Iqbal, Mushfigur Rahim and Mahmudullah Riyad did not really fire across the three matches. That opened the door for some non-regular performers and the likes of Sabbir Rahman, Mohammad Mithun and, surprisingly perhaps, pace-bowling allrounder Mohammad Saifuddin stepped in manfully with the bat. With the ball, Mehedi Hasan Miraz did an admirable job to try and fill the hole left by Shakib. In the Tests, which Mushfiqur missed due to injury, Soumya Sarkar proved his worth with a century.

Of course, without contributions from the mainstays -- especially in the ODIs -- the aforementioned performances could not affect the results in New Zealand. But the silver lining of the dark tour was that Mushfiqur, Mahmudullah and Tamim -- who along with Mashrafe and Shakib make up Bangladesh's Big Five -- would soon turn the corner and turn in match-turning displays. With that assumption, if the less experienced players could continue their form, well, that would be the dream heading into the World

That has happily been the case in Ireland, where Bangladesh won their maiden multiteam ODI trophy. By the time Mosaddek

Hossain hit an unbeaten 24-ball 52 to deliver a win in the final against West Indies, there did not seem to be a weak spot in Bangladesh's 15-member squad. Soumya Sarkar hit fifties in each of the three innings he played opening alongside Tamim, Liton Das came in and hit a fifty in the only opportunity he got to open the innings and uncapped pacer Abu Jayed -- along with an underperforming Mosaddek, the only surprise in the World Cup squad -- took a five-for in only his second match.

The dream scenario is that in less than a month, talk has gone from the importance of Bangladesh's Big Five -- Mashrafe, Shakib, Tamim, Mushfigur and Mahmudullah -- to the whole squad. It should be remembered, however, that against a top-notch team like New Zealand, without the big players firing -- and pacer Mustafizur Rahman should also be counted as a big player in waiting -- Bangladesh managed to be just about competitive, scoring more than 220 each time but only to be handily beaten each time.

That, and the warm-up defeat against India on Tuesday -- regardless of whether their bowling was characterised more by experimentation than a winning purpose -- is a reminder that above all, the Tigers need the Big Five to perform when playing the biggest teams. They will play a big team in South Africa when they open their campaign and that will continue when they play New Zealand on June 5 and England on June 8. Skipper Mashrafe often talks about the importance of starting well and the Tigers will have their jobs cut out to start well against the aforementioned opposition, especially as they would have to win at least five of their nine matches to have a realistic chance of making the semifinals.

It will therefore be imperative for Tamim Iqbal to play his role to perfection -- anchoring the innings till overs 30 or, better yet, 40, while his likely opening partner provides ballast at the start. The ideal template would be what they did in the West Indies roughly a year ago -- Tamim and Shakib building the base with a big first-



ROAR TIGERS, ROAR: When Bangladesh open their ICC Cricket World Cup account in London against South Africa on Sunday, the country's cricket fans will certainly hope to see the Tigers celebrate as ferociously as seen above. PHOTO: STAR FILE

innings partnership and then Mushfiqur and Mahmudullah, with help from the likes of Mohammad Mithun and either one of Sabbir Rahman or Mosaddek Hossain, finishing things off in a flurry.

On the bowling side, skipper Mashrafe and Shakib can always be relied upon to keep things tight and incisive. It is fortunate that Mustafizur looked like he was back to his best against India. Mehedi Hasan Miraz

has proven to be a perfect foil for Shakib and Saifuddin an able death overs bowler. Even if one of Mustafizur or Saifuddin were to lose form, a dependable Rubel Hossain would be waiting in the wings -- his performance against India may even place him in the playing eleven.

It has always been said that Bangladesh have no such match-winners as Virat Kohli, Steven Smith, Chris Gayle or Andre Russell. But the team's strength has been that when they get it together, their performance as a unit enable them to beat the best. They are ranked seventh in the world, so even with all their recent successes should not be expected to bring home the trophy. But by being in lockstep for the past month, they have ensured that the millions of fans back home can dream. Now it is left to see whether they can make it three months in lockstep.

INFO ZONE **HEAD TO HEAD IN WORLD CUP**

NGLAND	5	UUIHAF
3	WIN	3
3	LOSS	3
0	TIE	0
0	NR	0

HEAD TO HEAD IN ODIS

ENGLAND		SOUTH AFRICA	
26	WIN	29	
29	LOSS	26	
1	TIE	1	
3	NR	3	
6250	1127000000	VOVE-	

LAST MEETING

MAY 29 2017 AT LORD'S IN LONDON. SOUTH AFRICA WON BY 7 WICKETS (WITH 127 BALLS REMAINING)

KEY PLAYERS





		2
ENGLAND	S	OUTH AFRICA
JOE ROOT	K	AGISO RABADA
50.47/65.45	BAT/BOWL AVG	14.35/26.43
87.15/67.7	BAT/BOWL STRIKE RATE	76.42/31.8
5.80	ECO RATE	4.98
30	50S	0
14	100S	0
133*	HS	26
5300/20	RUNS/WICKETS	201/106
3/22, 29*	LAST MATCH	13 4 0



Rafael Nadal celebrates after winning against Yannick Maden in their men's singles second round match of the French Open in Paris yesterday.

Nadal powers thru'

AFP, Paris



Rafael Nadal continued the strong start to his bid for a record-extending 12th French Open title on Wednesday with

a comfortable victory over German qualifier Yannick Maden, while Stefanos Tsitsipas had to dig deep to reach round three.

The 32-year-old Nadal was in near total control against world number 114 Maden bar some nervy moments in the third set, winning 6-1, 6-2, 6-4.

The 17-time Grand Slam champion will play Belgian 27th seed David Goffin in the last 32.

"He (Maden) is a good player. He

had already won four matches so was full of confidence," said Nadal, whose Roland Garros win-loss record now reads an incredible 88-2.

The Spaniard wasted little time in wrapping up the first two sets on Court Suzanne Lenglen.

Maden may have briefly allowed himself to dream of an outrageous upset when he twice broke to level at 3-3 and then 4-4 in the third set, but Nadal put him back in his place with two quick games to seal victory.

Nadal appears to be hitting form at just the right time, after following three consecutive semi-final defeats on clay with the Italian Open title before arriving in Paris.

Elizabeth II chats to England captain Eoin Morgan (2R) as Bangladesh captain Mashrafe Bin Mortaza (3L) and India captain Virat Kohli (R) look on during a meeting with the captains of the of the ICC Cricket World Cup 2019 at the Buckingham Palace in London on Wednesday.

Britain's Queen

on final AFP, Liverpool

Mane focused



Sadio Mane admits he is flattered by suggested interest from Real Madrid but insists he is happy at Liverpool and fully focused on trying to help them win the Champions League.

Reports from Spain in recent weeks have suggested that Real want to bring the Senegal forward and Manchester United's French midfielder Paul Pogba to the Bernabeu.

Mane will be in action across the city on Saturday, at Atletico Madrid's Wanda Metropolitano home, which will host the Champions League final between Liverpool and Tottenham. The 27-year-old has scored 17 goals in 24 matches for

his club since the turn of the year, and is expected to lead his country's attack in Egypt at the Africa Cup of Nations, which starts in late June. As he prepared for Saturday's European final, Mane

was asked about interest from Real Madrid, and did not dismiss it altogether. He did, though, insist that Liverpool's progress to the

Champions League final -- which has seen them knock out Napoli, Bayern Munich, Porto and Barcelona -- is a sign of their standing in the European game.

"This is part of football, so we have to deal with it," said Mane.

"But for me, the more important thing is that I am with Liverpool and I am very happy here, and I am preparing for one of the club's biggest games.

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TODAY'S MATCH ICC CRICKET WORLD CUP ENGLAND V SOUTH AFRICA LIVE FROM 3:30PM (BANGLADESH STANDARD TIME)

WHAT TO WATCH

BTV, GTV, MAASRANGA TV, STAR SPORTS SELECT 1 ICC CRICKET WORLD CUP ENGLAND V SOUTH AFRICA LIVE FROM 3:30PM

> STAR SPORTS SELECT 2 FRENCH OPEN ROUND-2 LIVE FROM 3:00PM

'Khelbe Tiger, Jitbe Tiger'

STAR SPORTS DESK

Together, the Bangladesh Cricket Board and Lifebuoy have reinforced the bridge between supporters and the Bangladesh team in many ways. Lifebuoy's invulnerable protection from germs has teamed up with the Tigers' in their quest to attain victory, marking the beginning of a winning partnership.

In fact, Lifebuoy has brought a breath of fresh air to the national cricket scene with an array of initiatives, one of which is an appealing campaign titled 'Khelbe Tiger, Jitbe Tiger'.

As a brand, Lifebuoy enlightens and empowers mothers in their efforts to protect their children in the simplest, yet most effective way. To pay tribute to all the mothers, on Mother's Day Lifebuoy released an Audio Visual representation of the mothers who made the biggest contributions in the lives of their cricketer children. Lifebuoy also released a video called 'Tigers Rising' to give fans a glimpse of what pre-match preparations look like

in the dressing room. Nafees Anwar, Marketing Director of Unilever, described the music video as

educational in terms of healthcare. "In the music video, you will see that the cricketers are showing Lifebuoy's signature move and a gesture to wash their hands five times a day. This way fans can also learn about the importance of this simple act which keeps them

protected against infection causing germs. In this way, Lifebuoy is getting the nation onboard, through the cricketers, in their a movement of washing hands five times a day, which is the simplest yet most effective way to reduce child mortality,"

he said. The lyrics of the song used in the video was written by the Creative Director of the project, Pulak Aneel. Zohad did the vocals while Emon Choudhury was the music director and Sakib Fahad was the video director. The overall project is led by Anwarul Kadir [Head of Client Services, Adcomm].

In addition, Lifebuoy released special World Cup editions of their products, where the Tigers' feature on the packs. Lifebuoy also visited eight divisions to collect red and green handprints from 7,000 children, which will be used to make a national flag collage which should in turn boost the Tigers' spirits during the 2019 ICC Cricket World Cup in the United



PHOTO: AFP