



With Bangladesh's next World Cup fixture pitting them against Sri Lanka in Bristol, the team were seen leaving their hotel in Cardiff yesterday with mixed emotions. Having lost by 106 runs against England on Saturday, the batting department is a concern with opener Tamim Iqbal's lack of form highlighting the issue. Fans could however be relieved by all-rounder Shakib Al Hasan's (R) return to form.



Dhawan third in elite list

AGENCIES, London

Shikhar Dhawan slammed a brilliant century takes him to the third in the list of Indian batsmen with the most number of centuries in the tournament. The left-hander who scored 117 off 109 balls against Australia entered the elite list of cricketers yesterday.

The list is headed by Sachin Tendulkar who scored six World Cup hundreds while the second position belongs to Sourav Ganguly with four. Thanks to this knock, Dhawan surpassed teammates Rohit Sharma, Virat Kohli and former India opener Virender Sehwag, who all have two World Cup tons to their name.

This was also his third ODI century at The Oval - the second most ever after England's Marcus Trescothick (3).

His innings was laced with 13 boundaries as India posted a huge total of 352 for 5 in 50 overs.

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SEVEN: A REMINDER

SAKEB SUBHAN from Bristol

Lucky or not, seven is a number that should be tattooed on every Bangladesh supporter's minds over the next month or so. Because seven is reality and rankings matter. It is the very number that Bangladeshis had rejoiced in less than two years ago at the cut-off stage for the top eight to qualify for the 2019 World Cup, three matches into which supporters are now wringing their hands and talking of wholesale changes in the middle of a tournament Bangladesh were never expected to win.

There is a reason there are six teams ahead of Bangladesh in the world and many of those were in evidence during Saturday's 106-run loss to top-ranked England in Cardiff.

Bangladesh do not have the massive hitting power that the likes of Australia, South Africa, India and England do. They do not have multiple bowlers who can run through the opposition with sheer skill, pace, or mystery spin. That is not to say



that bowlers have never done that for Bangladesh or that a batsman has not scored a 20-ball 50; just that there is no one in the squad or back home who can do it on a consistent basis.

Like most mid-table teams, Bangladesh are constantly battling with limitations, and it is with an understanding of those limitations that they have excelled over the past year and built a brand of their own, the successful execution of which saw them score 330 for six in their opening game and beat fourth-placed South Africa by 21 runs.

Two losses in two matches later and, after an admittedly poor display on the field against England, the knives are out. The age-old trapping

of exalting those on the bench and belittling those on the field has come to the fore, which brings us to the following:

RAVING FOR RUBEL

Rubel Hossain has been the third-highest wicket-taker for Bangladesh in ODI cricket over the last two years, but because of considerations of team combination and the advent of pace-bowling all-rounder Mohammad Saifuddin he has not been in the first eleven. The 29-year-old has also not bowled with the pace he has been known for and which saw him bowl Bangladesh to a famous win in Adelaide against England in the 2015 World Cup. There were glimpses of it in the Asia Cup final against India last September, but it has been missing since in matches against New Zealand, West Indies and Ireland.

Yet there has been a clamour for Rubel to be included at the expense of one of the four specialist bowlers. If one scratches beyond the surface of knee-jerk panic brought about by a bad loss, there is very little substance. There are three positions Rubel can fill -- those currently occupied by pacers Mustafizur Rahman, Saifuddin and off-spinner Mehedi Hasan Miraz. Mehedi is Bangladesh's most economical bowler in the tournament so far, Saifuddin their highest wicket-taker and also the lower order batsman who ensured that the match against New Zealand was a close one. Mustafizur Rahman has been underperforming in the first three matches, but he is the closest Bangladesh have to an X-factor in their bowling lineup and currently bowling faster than Rubel.

There have even been murmurs about Rubel replacing Mashrafe. The way the team's fortunes turned around in the West Indies last summer from an abject 2-0 Test defeat to a 2-1 ODI series win is indication enough that this collection of players need Mashrafe at the helm. The non-performing captain theory holds little water because three matches do not change the fact that Mashrafe has been the second-highest wicket-taker for Bangladesh in the last two years. As no one is talking of dropping Tamim Iqbal after three indifferent scores, there is no call for dropping



Fans began to clamour for Bangladesh pacer Rubel Hossain (L) to be included in the Tigers' next match at the expense of one of the four specialist bowlers or even the inspirational captain himself, Mashrafe Bin Mortaza, following their 106-run loss to England on Saturday.

PHOTO: BCB

Bangladesh's highest wicket-taker. Also instructive is Rubel's figures in his last three matches -- four wickets at an economy rate of 6.48 against Ireland, New Zealand and West Indies.

There is also the intangible of Mashrafe's value as a leader and also the kind of sacrifices he makes, such as bowling against a stiff breeze in Cardiff while allowing Saifuddin and Mustafizur the better end. Then, as captain he could have preserved his status as the most economical bowler with figures of one for 50 from nine overs, but as one of those who bowl at the death, he bowled the last over and ruined his figures, thus allowing critics to get their knives out.

FAILURES WITHIN, SOLUTIONS TOO

Neither Mashrafe nor the Bangladesh team are blameless. Being defensive on the field against England was understandable, but Mashrafe crossed the line into being negative when he



won the toss and elected to field first, pitting his weak link against the strongest batting lineup of the tournament and paving the way to be played out of the game at the halfway stage. The fielding was also an embarrassment as the square boundary riders repeatedly failed to attack the ball and cut off the angles that allowed England to take several couples, threes and even a four after hitting towards the big square boundaries. It was inexcusable after the Tigers held a training camp here and played a practice game and it does not reflect well on the backroom staff, especially fielding coach Ryan Cook.

But these are all problems to be solved from within, and it remains to be seen whether that can be done. But there are no magic solutions sitting on the bench or back home -- that is the reality of being a limited team ranked number seven in the world.

'It is not a big setback'

ICC

Beaten but far from broken, Bangladesh still have hopes of qualifying for the next phase of the ICC Cricket World Cup.

They are not the first side to suffer at the bat of Jason Roy, but the character shown by young spinner Mehedi Hasan Miraz provides encouragement for their remaining games.

Mehedi, 21, is refusing to think of the 106-run loss to hosts England in Cardiff as a serious setback and he anticipates a strong response when Bangladesh face Sri Lanka at Bristol on Tuesday.

Many slow bowlers of that age would look for excuses after being struck for successive sixes from the first three balls of an over. Instead, Mehedi held his nerve, pushed



one of his off-breaks quicker and wider and saw Roy, on 153, slice into the covers.

Figures of 2/67 from ten overs were commendable in the circumstances at a ground whose short, straight boundaries contributed towards England's decision to omit spinner Moeen Ali in favour of an extra pace bowler. "These conditions are always difficult for spinners," Mehedi reflected. "I just tried to bowl in the right areas with a good line. You know that Roy all the time takes on the boundary, so I just tried for him to get singles, not too many things."

"Unfortunately, in that over he hit three sixes, but that is cricket. I think it was Shakib [Al Hasan] who told me to bowl on the outside if he still comes down the pitch. I tried that and he got out."

"We know what can happen if the opening batsman plays well for a long time and that was Roy, he really batted well."

"It is not a big setback. Although we have lost two matches, we still have six to play and if we do well in the next two or three we can stay in the World Cup."

"The next, against Sri Lanka, is very important for us. We need to come back strongly and just make sure we do our best in the middle. We will talk among ourselves and just focus on the coming game because the three we have played already are gone."

Bangladesh had beaten England in the previous two World Cups, at Chittagong in 2011 and Adelaide four years later. Mehedi, however, believes that home knowledge helped Roy this time as he gradually opened his shoulders to prime effect.

"It is suitable for him because he knows the conditions," Mehedi said. "He has played here for so many years. It was tough for us."



RAHIM STEEL



All-rounder Hardik Pandya was instrumental for India against Australia in their second World Cup match yesterday. Promoted to the number four position, Pandya utilised his opportunity to the utmost as the right-hander struck a quick-fire 27 ball 48, laced with four fours and three sixes, to help India post a daunting 352 for five in 50 overs. Pandya was also influential on the field as he was involved in the run-out of Aussie skipper Aaron Finch.

PHOTO: REUTERS

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INDIA-AUSTRALIA SCOREBOARD

INDIA	R/B	4s/6s
Sharma c Carey b Coulter-Nile	57/70	3/1
Dhawan c sub (Lyon) b Starc	117/109	16/0
Kohli c Cummins b Stoinis	82/77	4/2
Pandya c Finch b Cummins	48/27	4/3
Dhoni c & b Stoinis	27/14	3/1
Rahul not out	11/3	1/1
Jadhav not out	0/0	0/0
Extras: (lb-3, w-7)	10	
Total: (For 5 wkts in 50 overs)	352	
Did not bat: B Kumar, Kuldeep Yadav, Y Chahal, J Bumrah.		

Bowler	O	M	R	W
Cummins	10	0	55	1
Starc	10	0	74	1
Coulter-Nile	10	1	63	1
Maxwell	7	0	45	0
Zampa	6	0	50	0
Stoinis	7	0	62	2

AUSTRALIA	R/B	4s/6s
Warner c Kumar b Chahal	56/84	5/0
Finch run out	36/35	3/1
Smith lbw b Kumar	69/70	5/1
Khawaja b Bumrah	42/39	4/1
Maxwell c sub (Jadeja) b Chahal	28/14	5/0
Stoinis b Kumar	0/2	0/0
Carey not out	55/35	5/1
Coulter-Nile c Kohli b Bumrah	4/9	0/0
Cummins c Dhoni b Bumrah	8/7	1/0
Starc run out	3/3	0/0
Zampa c sub (Jadeja) b Kumar	1/3	0/0
Extras: (lb-3, lb-3, nb-1, w-7)	14	
Total: (All out in 50 overs)	316	

Fall of wickets: 1-61, 2-133, 3-202, 4-238

5-238, 6-244, 7-283, 8-300, 9-313, 10-316.

Bowler	O	M	R	W
Kumar	10	0	50	3
Bumrah	10	1	61	3
Pandya	10	0	68	0
Yadav	9	0	55	0
Chahal	10	0	62	2
Jadhav	1	0	14	0

Result: India won by 36 runs.

Player-of-the-match: Shikhar Dhawan.

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