



Mashrafe Bin Mortaza (L) was perhaps trying to take Mahmudullah Riyad's mind off all the talk surrounding his slow starts in the World Cup so far as he aims to keep all the negative talk far away from the locker room. PHOTO: BCB

**FACTS**

Tamim Iqbal is the highest run getter for Bangladesh against Sri Lanka. The stylish left-hander has amassed 645 runs in the 21 matches he played against the Islanders.

Mushfiqur Rahim's 150-ball 144 against Sri Lanka during the last meeting between the two sides remains the highest individual score by any player in either of the two team's current World Cup squads.

Bangladesh's largest margin of victory -- a 163-run win -- came against Sri Lanka when the two sides met during a tri-nation series in Dhaka in January 2018.

Among the players in Sri Lanka's current World Cup Squad, Kusal Perera is the highest scorer for the Islanders against Bangladesh. The left-hander scored 262 runs in the nine games he played against the Tigers.

Bangladesh skipper Mashrafe Bin Mortaza has scalped 26 wickets -- the most by any player on either of the sides' current World Cup squads -- in the 22 matches he played against Sri Lanka. However, Sri Lanka's ace pacer Lasith Malinga is just behind Mashrafe on the list with 24 wickets to his name despite having played 12 games less.

# Don't want the buzz to reach the dressing room: Mashrafe

SPORTS REPORTER from Bristol

Tamim Iqbal, with 59 runs from three innings in the World Cup, was the first to go to the nets at the Bristol County Ground in practice yesterday ahead of today's match against Sri Lanka. He had a long discussion with batting consultant Neil McKenzie, before having a net session.

By the time Tamim had finished batting, Mahmudullah Riyad, another member of the Big Five, was engaged in a lengthy conversation at a corner of the rectangular ground with skipper Mashrafe Bin Mortaza. The conversation was an animated one, and while only of those two would know what it was, Riyad then proceeded to go to the nets propped up beside the centre wicket and hit the bowlers -- net bowlers and teammates -- all around the park.

Along with Shakib Al Hasan and Mushfiqur Rahim, these five cricketers have carried the weight of the team's fortunes for much of the last decade, and it is understandable that failures -- like Mahmudullah getting off to slow starts in the defeats against New Zealand and England -- weight heavily, especially in the World Cup. "Seniors have a greater role at times. Seniors feel pressure on the field when everything is not going well,"

said Mashrafe during the pre-match press conference yesterday. "It's important that everyone is trying to give their best. In the first match, seniors performed -- Shakib and Mushfiqur scored -- but juniors also played a role. It is a team of 11, everyone has a responsibility. Along with



that, if the seniors can contribute the way they have done before, then it will be easy to win these matches."

While the team had a rest day the previous day, Tamim ventured to the indoor nets to face throwdowns, indicating how important it was for the left-hander to get going.

"We are all trying. Tamim has been the team's best batsman over the last four years. I think he is the one who

feels the worst about not being able to give the team his best in the last three matches," Mashrafe said.

When asked about Mahmudullah's slow starts, Mashrafe was quick to protect his lieutenants. "To be honest, I am looking at things positively. I think everyone is okay mentally. We are all emotional and we want to get everything overnight. Players are like that too -- they want to play well in every match. Riyad has to play that way in every match, 'why is Tamim not scoring hundreds?' and such. Tamim also takes the field with that expectation. It is more important that this buzz does not enter the dressing room. Because if it does, there will be pressure. So the further they stay away, the more freely they can play."

"In the first match Riyad performed his role. In the last match [against England], he knows what he thought or maybe I will know if I talk to him, but if you see the second match [against New Zealand], he was going in the right direction, but got out when he was about to accelerate. And then some wickets fell quickly, so maybe Riyad should have played shots deeper into the innings, but he got out trying to do that. I would say the same of [Mohammad] Mithun. When you lose these things arise, if Bangladesh lost against the World XI it would have been the same."



Bangladesh will be wary of Lasith Malinga, who always seems to have their number. He scalped four wickets in his last outing against the Tigers in September last year and has taken 15 wickets in the past five games against Bangladesh. PHOTO: AFP

**INFO ZONE**

**HEAD TO HEAD IN WORLD CUP**

BANGLADESH	WIN	SRI LANKA
0	3	3
3	LOSS	0
0	TIE	0
0	NR	0

**HEAD TO HEAD IN ODIS**

BANGLADESH	WIN	SRI LANKA
7	36	36
36	LOSS	7
0	TIE	0
2	NR	2

**LAST MEETING**  
September 15 2018 at Dubai International Cricket Stadium  
Bangladesh won by 137 runs.

**KEY PLAYERS**



BANGLADESH	SRI LANKA
Tamim Iqbal	Lasith Malinga
35.99/- Bat/Bowl Avg	6.93/29.02
77.93/- Bat/Bowl Strike rate	74.69/32.5
46 50s	1
11 100s	0
154 HS	56
13.00 Econ	5.35
-- BBM	6/38
6695/0 Runs/wickets	555/325
19 Last Match	4, 3/39

# Shakib gives Tigers the cue

**AL-AMIN**

When Shakib Al Hasan scored his maiden World Cup century in Cardiff against hosts England on Saturday, he did not embark on a celebratory run. The champion Bangladesh all-rounder just raised his bat to acknowledge the crowd's applause.

It might give you the impression that he is a kind of player who does not like emotional override. His 121 off 119 balls might not have quite matched England opener Jason Roy's 153 off 123 balls, but the southpaw's innings was yet another statement of the positive intent he has been demonstrating over a course of 13 long years since his ODI debut in 2006.

You are allowed to criticise him for his off-the-field attitude -- the latest being mysteriously missing the team photo session prior to the team's departure for the World Cup.

But on the field, the 33-year-old athlete is a top professional who has only learnt how to give his best day in and day out. His aggression might at times backfire, but this is how he approaches his game, be it with the ball or bat. He is also one of those few Bangladeshi fielders who attacks the ball.

Prior to the World Cup, Shakib set a lofty personal goal of becoming the player-of-the-tournament and he is already on his way towards that target by scoring 260 runs, the highest in the World Cup so far, and scalping three wickets in as many games. Shakib is a different breed in that

**THIRD EYE**

Bangladesh ranks. After the heavy defeat against England, the Tigers travelled to Bristol from Cardiff to play their next game against Sri Lanka. It has been reported that



the players were still reeling from that punishing defeat.

But those who have closely followed Shakib over the years will tell you that a defeat never depresses Shakib. He is a kind of player who will go out the next day with an intent to cut the ball hard

if that was on the fourth stump irrespective of the situation or even if he was coming with a couple of ducks behind him.

In a cutthroat profession, he loathes the idea of different roles for seniors and juniors. To him the role is defined for every member of the team and it is up to each individual to live up to their role irrespective of being a senior or junior.

During the 2017 ICC Champions Trophy, Shakib was having a chat with this reporter while his daughter was dawdling at the team hotel lobby in London. His daughter suddenly tumbled onto the floor. I promptly tried to volunteer to pull his lovely little kid up, but Shakib refrained me and said: "Let her get on her feet by herself." He was not pretending. It was perhaps something natural that goes with his character.

He is also not the kind of player who cherishes his personal success most. He has always been most engrossed and animated when he sniffs the chance of his team's success. He has demonstrated that emotional override before.

It was logical from Shakib's perspective that he did not celebrate his century against England because he knew it may not still win the game for his team.

Bangladesh will take on Sri Lanka in Bristol today. A win will put the Tigers' World Cup ambitions back on track. Going into the game and beyond, the Tigers need Shakib's steely resolve to put behind the England disappointment.

**MR EFFICIENT**



West Indies pacer Sheldon Cottrell was the standout performer in their match against South Africa before rain had interrupted proceedings at The Rose Bowl in Southampton yesterday. The left-arm quick started by removing Hashim Amla in his second over. However, his final blow of the day was when he scalped the wicket of Aiden Markram in his last over, which was a maiden of the day before rain halted the game.