



With rain forcing yesterday's World Cup match between Bangladesh and Sri Lanka to be called off without a ball being bowled, the Tigers were left with little other to do than converse in the dressing room.

PHOTO: BCB

# Rub of the green and a big fish

ABDULLAH AL MEHDI

Bangladesh got the short end of the stick when the match against Sri Lanka at Bristol was abandoned due to rain yesterday, which in turn made this edition of the World Cup the one with the most number of abandoned fixtures. With the rain in England rearing its ugly head, there have not been many good omens for Bangladesh so far.

As things stand, Bangladesh have three points from four matches and are seventh in the standings. Given the tournament's format, where each team will face each other once in the ten-team competition, a game abandoned here and there could have massive implications. In fact, there have already been some consequences.

Sri Lanka, with a newly-built side, have struggled to cope with the cricketing climate and secured four points from four matches. They lost bitterly by 10 wickets to New Zealand and barely scraped past Afghanistan in what was their only win. Despite such dismal results, they are currently fifth and a point above Bangladesh, who beat South Africa in their opening match. Two of the Lankans' matches have been abandoned so far -- the game against Pakistan and yesterday's match against Bangladesh, and since a win counts as two points, these two abandoned fixtures have paid dividends to Sri Lanka by giving them enough points to equal another win.

When the World Cup started, the Tigers, who were buoyed by their victory in the Ireland tri-nation final, wanted to show how far they have come and ensure their



first-ever semifinal berth at the tournament. However, that dream has gotten further away from Bangladesh now.

In the 1992 World Cup, Pakistan won four of their group stage matches, the same number as Australia and New Zealand. Pakistan had the rub of the green as, after being bowled out for just 74 runs, they acquired a point thanks to the match being called a no result due to rain. That point carried them to the semifinals and then they went on to clinch the title.

Given the weather conditions in England right now, more matches could be abandoned and this may favour the Tigers or act against them. Sri Lanka were one of the opponents who the Tigers fancied a win against. It's an opportunity lost just like their close defeat to New Zealand. Bangladesh will need at least five wins to have a shot at a semifinal berth.

As things stand, New Zealand have three wins from three matches and are on top of the standings. If England,

Australia and India are firm favourites to make the top four, then the Tigers realistically lost a big chance yesterday.

What is the equation for the Tigers to be in contention? Five matches to go and four wins needed to have a realistic chance. So luck will be needed but they also may need the scalp of one of the big fishes, namely India and Australia. They have been beaten by England and need a result against either Australia or India while winning against the likes of Pakistan and West Indies as well.

It is a tough ask but a lot of things are yet to be played out.

The Black caps have not played any of their top four counterparts yet while the likes of Australia and England can yet stumble. Pakistan are a dark horse who can be unpredictable and the rain will play a part in all of this. The Tigers' camp need to find the right results, which is difficult ask but some rub of the green and a big fish could come in handy.

## HOW TO WORK OUT A TIE-BREAK

Number of wins is the first factor in order to break teams tied on points.

Net run-rate, head-to-head results and pre-tournament seedings are, in that order, the next way of working it out.

# 'All we can do now is win'

SPORTS REPORTER from Bristol

Bangladesh skipper Mashrafe Bin Mortaza and coach Steve Rhodes did not cut happy figures when they came out to perform the formalities after the World Cup game against Sri Lanka was abandoned without a ball bowled at the County Ground in Bristol yesterday.

Mashrafe spoke to Michael Atherton as part of the commitment to speak to television audiences after the match, but it seemed an empty gesture without there actually being no match to speak of.

"It is disappointing for any team to not be able to play a game after coming to the ground," Mashrafe told Atherton.

Coach Steve Rhodes fronted up to the media and left no doubt about what the team expected from the match that was not to be.

"We really targeted this sort of game as two points, and I know that Sri Lanka would have fought very hard and no pushovers at all," the Englishman said. "But we do see it as one point lost, and that's disappointing."

After points were shared because of the abandonment, Bangladesh have three points from four games, which means they have to win four of their five remaining matches against West Indies, Afghanistan, India, Australia and Pakistan to stand a chance of making the semifinals.

Mashrafe was asked about their next match against West Indies, and how the small ground at Taunton may play into the hands of their lower-ranked opponents.

"Yes, Taunton is a very small ground, and it won't be easy, especially against the West Indies," Mashrafe said. "But there is no alternative other than to play well... there is no alternative to winning for us."

The washout against Sri Lanka, a match the Tigers were desperate to play as it was one of just three against lower-ranked opposition, makes the equation difficult for Bangladesh but it also simplifies what their approach should be: in the captain's words, there is no alternative

The Export Leader



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to winning.

They were in a similar situation in the Asia Cup last September in the UAE, where they had to win each of their last two Super Four games against Afghanistan -- who had beaten them handily in the group stage -- and Pakistan to reach the final. It was then this singular focus on winning that carried them through and almost won them the final, which they lost against India in the last over.

"And now all we can do is win our games coming up," Rhodes echoed the captain. "One at a time and just think of that, win the next game against West Indies and then win the next one after that. That's all we can do."

"We've played against the West Indies bowlers, recently in Ireland," said Rhodes when asked about West Indies' possible bouncer ploy. "So we are well aware of what they have got and we know what's coming and we've got some plans to try and deal with that."



PHOTO: BCB

Mushfiquur Rahim (L) was seen waving to their fans with a look that said 'no luck today' before their World Cup match against Sri Lanka was called off due to rain.

RAHIM STEEL



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Why England of all places!

WORLD CUP DIARY

SAKEB SUBHAN from Bristol

As rain lashed the County Ground in Bristol yesterday, which it had for the last week and will for the foreseeable future, it became apparent long before the 4:00pm cut-off time that the World Cup match between Bangladesh and Sri Lanka would be abandoned. There were hundreds of Bangladesh fans, some who travelled from London. There were about 30 Bangladeshi journalists at the venue. Bangladesh wicketkeeper-batsman Mushfiquur Rahim was seen on the dressing room balcony as early as 10:50pm while much of the team remained ensconced at the team hotel.

"Score a century today Mushfiquur," was one cry from the gallery opposite after Mushfiquur

came out of the dressing room to help lift the spirits of his adoring countrymen. "We will beat India," was another that rose up from among about two dozen Bangladesh fans there. Mushfiquur just raised his right hand beyond the railing of the balcony, letting the steady drizzle splash his palms, smiled and shrugged as if to say: "No luck today, guys." He was standing beneath a sign that read 'Cricket's greatest celebration'.

This was the second match abandoned at this venue after the Sri Lanka-Pakistan game met a similar fate on June 7, and the third of the ongoing World Cup to end in a no-result. Among the fans huddled under whatever shelter that could be gotten beneath the stands, there were murmurs to the effect of "It's not a good time for cricket here" and "I wonder why they would

schedule the World Cup here."

Others ruefully nodded agreement. But all this was taking place behind the sightscreen of a ground that was bought by WG Grace in 1889, whose name along with Gilbert Jessop's and Wally Hammond's grace the three apartment buildings that dominate the view behind the stands opposite. Grace is one of the most storied cricketers of all time, hailed as the father of modern batting, mostly because he revolutionised the sport in its birthplace. So as we wondered why a World Cup was taking place in this blighted weather, a bigger, more salient question popped up as we gazed upon the three buildings through the miserable drizzle being driven sideways by a cold wind.

Why indeed England? What kind of mentality and perverse tendency towards misery would

compel a nation to invent a game that takes eight hours out of a day, knowing that eight hours without rain is not the likeliest scenario even during what they call 'summer'?

Maybe that is why they like underdogs, or profess to anyway, and have made a culture out of making a fuss out of every exercise (take any royal ceremony as an example) -- because every simple thing has to be a fraught endeavour. Cricket in the summer? Not likely!

Or perhaps, the entire British drive to colonise the world was so that, having foolishly invented a game that they could not play at home, they could pursue their 'summer sport' in drier, more predictable climes. A leap too far? What else would you expect of a sports journalist forced to become a weatherman?



The way that he (Shakib Al Hasan) can recover well, we're very optimistic that he can play in the next game against West Indies.

Steve Rhodes  
Bangladesh coach

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TODAY'S MATCH

ICC CRICKET WORLD CUP

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(BANGLADESH STANDARD TIME)



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Bangladesh, Champion- ICC Trophy, 1997

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