



Bangladesh captain Mashrafe Bin Mortaza looked relaxed in training yesterday, but he will be quite clear on who the dangerman in the West Indies side is. Although Chris Gayle, Shimron Hetmeyer and Nicholas Pooran can prove to be significant threats, the Tigers will be especially wary of Shai Hope. The right-hander has scored at least 74 in each of his past five games against the Tigers, including three centuries, and boasts a career batting average of 94.57 against today's opponents.

PHOTO: BCB/REUTERS

## 'Players should decide on game strategy'

SAKEB SUBHAN from Taunton

Bangladesh started this World Cup campaign by looking within. Before the first match against South Africa, skipper Mashrafe Bin Mortaza talked about the team helping each other and shutting out the noise from outside. That approach, as well as sticking to their own brand of cricket, won them a memorable match against South Africa on June 2. Yesterday, some revealing words from Mashrafe indicated that not judging the situation and conditions themselves may have cost them the next match against New Zealand. That narrow two-wicket defeat at The Oval led to a confused bowling display against England in Cardiff and spirits were further dampened by a washout against Sri Lanka in Bristol, a match Bangladesh would have expected to win.

They have now arrived at a crucial juncture in their campaign, with much riding on today's match against the West Indies on a small ground in Taunton and on a pitch which Mashrafe was unsure about as late as on the eve of the game. Misreading conditions had blighted them in the New Zealand match, and Mashrafe was eager not to repeat the same mistake today. "Winning or losing depends a lot on how we assess the wicket. The team that correctly assesses the wicket faster, they will be ahead in the game. I think we misread the pitch in the New Zealand game," Mashrafe said in the pre-

match press conference yesterday. "If we had read the wicket right in that game, we would have targeted 260-270 batting first."

Bangladesh were more or less on course for that kind of score, having reached 151 in the 31st over when Shakib Al Hasan got out. The following batsmen such as Mohammad Mithun seemed in a hurry to get a 300-plus score and lost their wickets, the result being Bangladesh all out for 244 when just 20 or 30 more runs

judgment."

He said this in response to a question about whether having Englishman Steve Rhodes as coach should have prevented such a misreading. Mashrafe, however, put the onus on players to decide as they were the ones playing on the surface.

"I think as much blame also goes to the players," Mashrafe said. "It is normal to be criticised after losing a game. Wicket's behaviour changes as the match progresses. You are likely to have in the back of your mind that the Oval wicket will produce 330-350 runs. I think our calculations were spot-on against South Africa."

"If Shakib hadn't gotten out, we were going along the same path against New Zealand. When Mithun and Riyad were batting, we had the right thinking, towards a score around 270."

The Taunton wicket, which produced a 300-plus total in the Australia-Pakistan game on June 12, will have similar ambiguity, according to Mashrafe.

"There's confusion about this wicket as well. We heard it will be grassy but some are saying that it is usually a flat wicket. I think those who go out in the middle can assess it quicker."

In a crunch game, it seems that Mashrafe is calling for a return to the ethos that won them the last game -- players thinking for themselves on the field and helping each other with their own judgment.



could have made the difference.

The radio commentators during that game were insisting around the halfway stage of Bangladesh's innings that the wicket looked good for a score above 300. Interestingly, Mashrafe mentioned commentators when speaking on the issue yesterday.

"I think it is the players' call rather than someone from outside. It is hard to judge the wicket listening to commentary. They can only speculate, and only comment on things as it progresses in front of them. I think those in the middle should make decisions based on their

### FACTS

Bangladesh have never won a match against West Indies in the World Cup. Among the four matches played between the sides, West Indies have managed to win three while the 2003 World Cup encounter ended as a no result.

Among the 37 ODIs played between the sides, Bangladesh have won 14 and lost 21 matches while two games ended as a no result. However, Bangladesh have won the last four of five meetings with West Indies.

With 885 runs at an average of 40.22 from the 25 matches he played against West Indies, Bangladesh's Tamim Iqbal is the leading run-getter between the sides. Mushfiqur Rahim is just behind with 879 runs while Shai Hope is in third position on the list.

Bangladesh ODI skipper Mashrafe Bin Mortaza is the highest wicket taker between the two teams, leading the chart in ODIs with 30 wickets in 18 games. West Indies seamer Kemar Roach is on an equal 30 wickets but the right-arm pacer has played one match more than Mashrafe.

Bangladesh were bundled out on just 58 by West Indies in the 2011 ICC World Cup in Dhaka. It was the lowest total ever from the Tigers in ODIs.

### MR EFFICIENT



Indian opener Rohit Sharma has been in terrific form in the ongoing World Cup as the right-hander struck his second hundred of the flagship event against their sub-continental archival Pakistan yesterday. After striking a hundred against South Africa in their World Cup opener, the stylish batsman remained compact right from the start of the innings and eventually reached his 24th ODI hundred off just 85 deliveries. Rohit was finally dismissed on 140 off 113 balls, laced with 14 fours and three sixes, as India rode on his century to post 336 for five in fifty overs of the high-voltage game.

## 'If it's unorthodox but effective, we will go for it'

AGENCIES, London

Bangladesh announced themselves at this World Cup with a comprehensive, all-round victory over South Africa. A washout and two close losses, though, mean that they now have it all to do to make the knockout stages. Any comeback will start against the West Indies today, and the approaches of these two teams could not be more dissimilar.

"A lot of it is the nature of the [Bangladesh] wickets. You don't get those big scores," explains Bangladesh's batting coach, Neil McKenzie on his side's past struggle to reach 300-plus scores. "What I have picked up from the guys, however, is that they are very, very clean and consistent strikers of the ball. They have more of the skilled hitting side of things rather than the West Indian hitting to row Z type of players."

The West Indies play a book-ended style of cricket; they go hard at the start and end, but their run-rate dips in the middle. Bangladesh, tend to build throughout the innings. The problem is that the rate of increase isn't fast; since the 2017 Champions Trophy, of the teams competing at this World Cup, only Sri Lanka and Afghanistan score more slowly.

Bangladesh are a more evenly-balanced side. They have a lower dot-ball percentage and their average in the middle 30 overs is 41.2, more than 11.4 runs higher than the West Indies. The question for McKenzie is how to translate this platform into match-winning totals.

"We are really focusing on the Bangladesh strengths, that skilled hitting, trying to hit some space and go with what we have in terms of a talented bunch of skilled hitters," says McKenzie, who was recruited as a batting consultant just over a year ago. "We have tried to improve their handling of the short-pitched bouncy ball, for example, and just given the guys options. I think the biggest thing that [head coach] Steve Rhodes and we look for is that there is not one way to get a job done. So if it's going to be unorthodox but it is going to be effective we will go along with it."

In their opening match the West Indies' towering quicks peppered Pakistan with short balls to take seven for 55 and bowl them out



for 105. While Pakistan average 17.85 against the short ball, Bangladesh's is up at 29.27

"We have tried to influence them in terms of the running, and other ways of being innovative as well," continues McKenzie. "They are fanatical about their cricket so they are always watching different players. Always coming up with ideas. They want to be something different."

"We've also encouraged them to look at someone like Graeme Smith, who was unorthodox in a different way, and just trust those methods," McKenzie explains. "If that's your strength, have faith in what you do. A lot of these guys are unorthodox in some of the parts that they hit the ball, which is a positive. A guy like Smith, you bowl straight to him and he hits you through the leg-side. Most guys are just blocking it whereas he is squeezing it for two runs. That is what I mean by unorthodox, making it work for you."

A more recent improvement to Bangladesh cricket, which McKenzie is quick to cite, is a

selection policy which is now, finally, starting to back its players for an extended run. In 2018, six players played five or fewer matches before being dropped, more than any other year since Bangladesh were awarded ODI status in 1986.

"The whole system is getting a little bit more confident, a little bit more trustworthy," reflects McKenzie. "We've tried to lay the onus on the players. To trust their game plans. Trust what you want to do, trust where you want to score. And how you want to score."

"There are a few ex-players who are in the selection panel. They know what it takes to make it and how hard it is to be a young player coming into international cricket. So when I say give a person a chance, really give the guys a run. You've been chosen because we want your set of skills and we trust them. Yes, obviously we are going to try and nurture and push you as much as we can in the right direction, but the trust and the freedom is now there."

### INFO ZONE

#### HEAD TO HEAD IN WORLD CUP

BANGLADESH	WIN	WEST INDIES
0	3	
3	0	
0	0	
1	1	

#### HEAD TO HEAD IN ODIS

BANGLADESH	WIN	WEST INDIES
14	21	
21	14	
0	0	
2	2	

#### LAST MEETING

May 17, 2019 in Dublin, Bangladesh won by 5 wickets.

#### KEY PLAYERS



BANGLADESH	WEST INDIES
Shakib Al Hasan	Chris Gayle
36.66/30.66	Bat/Bowl Ave 38.13/35.56
82.09/40.6	Bat/Bowl Strike Rate 87.36/44.6
44	50s 55
8	100s 25
134*	HS 215