

## 'The plan is to go home'

SPORTS REPORTER from London

With there being much speculation surrounding Bangladesh skipper Mashrafe Bin Mortaza's future, there was some tension in his post-match press conference yesterday. He had already announced that this was to be his last World Cup, but there was an outside chance that the 35-year-old -- no stranger to impulsive decisions -- would make a surprise announcement in his last press appearance.

However, he doused all that with a straight-batted answer when asked what his future plans were after Bangladesh closed their World Cup campaign with a 94-run loss to Pakistan at Lord's yesterday.

"My future plan is obviously going home from here, and I will have a rethink," was the anticlimactic answer delivered with a straight face.

Mashrafe had said before that he did not want to think about his future during the World Cup and would go home and discuss with his family about his future.

Bangladesh have a tour of Sri Lanka later this month, and much of the interest following the World Cup will be around whether Mashrafe is on the plane to Colombo.



Bangladesh's inspirational captain Mashrafe Bin Mortaza would have hoped for much more from his final World Cup match, but all of the Tigers' flaws came to the fore as they fell to a 94-run defeat to Pakistan at Lord's yesterday.

PHOTO: BCB

## 'We get down during partnerships'

SAKEB SUBHAN from London

Although it was an academic match for Bangladesh, skipper Mashrafe Bin Mortaza admitted in so many words after the 94-run defeat to Pakistan in their last World Cup match that the result coloured how their campaign would be remembered.

"If we could finish the match on a good note, we could have said that luck has not been with us," the 35-year-old Mashrafe, appearing downcast after what was his last World Cup match, said in the post-match press conference. "We have been really good in a few things, but a few things have not been with us."

One of those few things that were not on the 'Tigers' side was their fielding. Having let go of opportunities in crucial moments during the matches they lost -- against New Zealand, England, Australia, India and Pakistan -- Mashrafe did not mince words when it came to their failings on the field.

"In some matches, fielding really cost us -- ground fielding especially. It helps the bowlers when fielders back you up," Mashrafe said. "Catches were dropped, it happens, but when it keeps happening questions will of course be asked."

"Fielding, it has been a concern all of my career. When there is a partnership, we get down," Mashrafe said. "This is the part that a player can change. I think we really need to improve fielding."

Getting down when the going got tough was a theme of Bangladesh's performance on the field. Although Pakistan would also have had little motivation to do well as they needed to bundle Bangladesh out for seven runs to progress to the semifinals, they stuck to their task and finished their World Cup proudly. Mashrafe thought that it was the teams' contrasting lead-ins to the last game that made the difference.

"It was not like we took the field not thinking of a win, but when the team knows that they are not in the semifinals, in the back of the mind you are a little upset. In these situations it is difficult for both teams. Pakistan were in good touch in the last few matches. Momentum was with them. In our last match it was confirmed that we were out of the World Cup."

Looking back at the World Cup, Mashrafe said that a seventh-placed finish was not bad, and that there were a few positives.

"If we won today, we could have gone to five. We had a chance to go to five till our last match," Mashrafe said. "If we won against India, we could have had a certain type of momentum. I wouldn't say that seven is a very bad place to be."

"I was worried about all three departments before the World Cup and I thought that we lagged behind in all three. After the World Cup I see that there is a big difference in bowling and an even bigger one in fielding," Mashrafe said when asked where Bangladesh lacked against the big teams. "But after the matches against Australia and India, I think we are in a similar position in batting."

## 'Feel sorry for Shakib'

SPORTS REPORTER from London

Such has been Shakib Al Hasan's brilliance in this World Cup that after a whimpering end to their campaign, Bangladesh skipper Mashrafe Bin Mortaza kept naming the all-rounder when speaking of the positives. Shakib's performance -- 606 runs and 11 wickets -- actually transcended the results of the team he played for, and Mashrafe said the only regret was that Bangladesh could not take Shakib further.

"I should talk about Shakib; he has been absolutely beautiful. Batted at three, did what he could do. I feel very bad for Shakib," Mashrafe said after the match. "The tournament he had, he deserved to be in the semifinal. Really feel sorry for him. I think it was one of the best performances not just in this World Cup, but in all editions. It is disappointing that a player who played like that is not in the semifinals."



"Mushfiqur [Rahim] batted so well," Mashrafe continued about the positives. "We could not do the right things at the right times. We could not take catches when we needed to, and when we needed to bowl well, the bowlers could not step up."

With this being Mashrafe's last World Cup, there was little to do than look forward to Bangladesh's next World Cup in India in 2023, even though he would not be there. He wished that the core of the team would survive and there would be new players who could step up in favourable conditions.

"When we play in the next World Cup, I am sure if there are new players who come

in, the team will go forward even more," Mashrafe said. "I wish and pray that Shakib, Tamim [Iqbal], Mushfiqur and [Mahmudullah] Riyad will be alive and well for the next World Cup so that they can guide the newer players. Since it is in India, I of course cannot say that we will win, but Bangladesh will have a chance."

He was more positive about the next tournament because it would be played in Asia and he believed that a bowling attack that was exposed in England would be more impressive in Asia.

"If you ask me after this tournament, when we play in this part of the world, bowling is a big issue. But if we play in Asia we are a far better bowling side."

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### BANGLADESH-PAKISTAN SCOREBOARD

PAKISTAN	R/B	4s/6s
Fakhar c Mehedi	13/31	1/0
b Saifuddin		
Inamul hit wkt		
b Mustafizur	100/100	7/0
Babar lbw b Saifuddin	96/98	11/0
Hafeez c Shakib b Mehedi	27/25	3/0
Sohail c Soumya	6/6	1/0
b Mustafizur		
Imad c Mahmudullah	43/26	6/1
b Mustafizur	3/3	0/0
Sarfraz not out	2/4	0/0
Riaz b Saifuddin	1/2	0/0
Shadab c & b Mustafizur		
Amir c Mushfiqur	8/6	1/0
b Mustafizur	0/0	0/0
Afridi not out	16	
Extras: (lb-3, nb-1, w-12)	315	
Total: (For 9 wks in 50 overs)	315	
Fall of wickets: 1-26, 2-180, 3-246, 4-248, 5-255, 6-267, 7-288, 8-314, 9-314.		

Bowler	O	M	R	W
Mehedi	10	0	30	1
Saifuddin	9	0	77	3
Mustafizur	10	0	75	5
Mashrafe	7	0	46	0
Shakib	10	0	57	0
Mosaddek	4	0	27	0

BANGLADESH	R/B	4s/6s
Tamim b Afridi	8/21	0/0
Soumya c Fakhar b Amir	22/22	4/0
Shakib c Sarfraz b Afridi	64/77	6/0
Mushfiqur b Riaz	16/19	2/0
Liton c Sohail b Afridi	32/40	3/0
Mahmudullah b Afridi	29/41	3/0
Mosaddek c Babar b Shadab	16/21	1/0
Saifuddin c Amir b Afridi	0/1	0/0
Mehedi not out	7/6	0/0
Mashrafe st Sarfraz b Shadab	15/14	0/2
Mustafizur b Afridi	1/3	0/0
Extras: (lb-5, w-6)	11	
Total: (All out in 44.1 overs)	221	
Fall of wickets: 1-26, 2-48, 3-78, 4-136, 5-154, 6-197, 7-197, 8-198, 9-219, 10-221.		

Result: Pakistan won by 94 runs.  
Player-of-the-match: Shaheen Shah Afridi.

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## Tahir set for emotional exit

AFP, Manchester

South Africa's Imran Tahir is readying himself for an emotional farewell to one-day international cricket, although the veteran is upbeat about the Proteas' future.

Saturday's World Cup match against reigning champions Australia is set to be Tahir's 107th and last ODI before the leg-spinner bows out of the 50-over game at international level.

Born in Pakistan but married to a South African, the much-travelled Tahir made his ODI debut in February 2011, just a month before his 32nd birthday.

But the 40-year-old has still taken 172 ODI wickets heading into this weekend's match in Manchester.

This has been a disappointing



World Cup for South Africa, with just two wins from eight games so far and the Proteas have long been out of the race for semi-final qualification.

"As a team, we need to think about finishing on a good note," he said. "But it makes me feel very sad and emotional that I'm going to leave."

"It was always my dream to play international cricket and I'm really

grateful to everyone who helped me along on the way. They accepted me for who I was, the guy who came from overseas."

"It's a big moment of my life -- I always wanted to play cricket and play as long as I could and now is the right time to go."

"It will be quite a hurtful and sad moment for me but I've prepared myself for that, so hopefully it will go well for me and the team."

Tahir added: "I'm not worried about (the) future of the team -- there are a lot of youngsters."

"I strongly believe there is lots of talent but they just need experience and then they'll get to the stage where everyone wants to see South African cricket."

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It was Shakib Al Hasan yet again leading from the front for the Tigers in their last World Cup game against Pakistan yesterday. Although the champion all-rounder remained wicketless, conceding 57 runs from his ten overs, it was a decent performance considering Pakistan's start to the innings during which they at one point looked likely to post over 350 runs. Shakib also shone with the bat and struck his seventh fifty-plus innings in the World Cup and was eventually dismissed after scoring 64 off 77 balls, which featured six fours.

**Kamaphuli**

## ROAR AGAIN TIGERS



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