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DHAKA TUESDAY JULY 9, 2019, ASHAR 25, 1426 BS

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BCB, Rhodes cut ties as revamp begins

SPORTS REPORTER

In their first attempt to revamp the backroom staff following the ICC Cricket World Cup in England, the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) have cut ties with head coach Steve Rhodes. BCB CEO Nizamuddin Chowdhury informed yesterday that they reached a mutual understanding with Rhodes and that his tenure with the team would be terminated with immediate effect.

"You know after any big events every board assesses the performance of their coaching staffs and we also met to discuss the issue soon after the completion of our team's last group match against Pakistan at Lord's. You know it's vice-a-versa as Steve Rhodes has to have the desire to continue the job and the board has to want to keep him. Finally, we came to a mutual understanding," said Nizamuddin.

On June 7 last year the BCB appointed Rhodes as head coach after the post remained vacant for seven months following the resignation of Chandika Hathurusingha in October 2017. It was then revealed by the BCB that Rhodes' contract would see him take charge of the Tigers until after the 2020 T20 World Cup in Australia.

"It was in the agreement that we would assess everything after the ongoing World Cup," added Nizamuddin.

He also informed that they would set up the next course of action in regards to

the appointment of a new head coach at the next board meeting.

"The ICC meeting will be take place from July 15 to 19 and after that a board meeting will take place where we discuss everything at length. But what I can say that internally we have started it. Right at this moment we didn't decide about who will look after the team for the three-match ODI series in Sri Lanka and it will also be decided in the board meeting," he explained.

Although Nizamuddin said that Rhodes was relieved of his duties under a mutual understanding, the board was apparently not happy with the way he handled the team during the World Cup. Rumours swirled during the quadrennial mega event that the players felt that they lacked a good planner at the helm.

In addition, the board will also likely search for a bowling coach and fielding consultant as bowling coach Courtney Walsh's four-year contract and fielding consultant Ryan Cook's contract expires at the end of the World Cup and, according to sources, the board is not interested in renewing their contracts. However, it is likely that batting consultant Neil McKenzie and spin-bowling coach Sunil Joshi will continue in their roles.

The board however did not clear the air about whether Mashrafe bin Mortaza will continue as a ODI captain as they want to Mashrafe to make his own decision.



New Zealand skipper Kane Williamson controls the ball during a training session yesterday, ahead of their World Cup semifinal encounter with the high-flying India at Old Trafford in Manchester today. Having beaten group champions India during a warm-up match before the mega event, Williamson will hope that his charges can once again deliver the goods.

PHOTO: AFP

Bangladesh to tour Sri Lanka

STAR SPORT DESK

Bangladesh will be back to business as usual shortly after their gruelling ICC Cricket World Cup journey in England as the Tigers are set to play three One Day Internationals on July 26, 28 and 31 at the Premadasa International Stadium in Colombo.

The Sri Lanka Cricket (SLC) confirmed the tour's schedule in a statement. Bangladesh will become the first team to tour Sri Lanka since the deadly Easter attacks, which claimed the lives of 258 people, on April 21 earlier this year.

"Recently a security team from Bangladesh visited Sri Lanka and we got positive responses from our High Commission and the security team. We have got assurance regarding highest security for our team from the Sri Lankan Government during the visit. An advice from our security team was to play the series at one venue. So, we are going ahead with this series," Bangladesh Cricket Board CEO Nizamuddin Chowdhury told The Daily Star over phone yesterday.

"We didn't prefer to play any practice match ahead of the tour as the team just returned after a long time abroad," he added.

Initially, Sri Lanka had previously expected New Zealand to be the first foreign sporting visit as the Kiwis are set to arrive next month to play two Tests and three Twenty20 matches.

Since the suicide bombings on three hotels and three churches by Islamist extremists, Sri Lanka has been in a state of emergency which gives sweeping powers to police and troops to arrest and detain suspects.

The first Test between New Zealand and the hosts will begin on August 14 in Galle while the final Test match will be played in Colombo's P. Sara stadium from August 22, according to the SLC.

The first two T20 games will be in Colombo on August 31 and September 2 respectively at the Premadasa Stadium while the final match will be on September 6 in Kandy.

Battle for the middle overs

SAKEB SUBHAN from Manchester

On paper it is a face-off between the group-stage champions and the team that made the last-four cut as the fourth member, but today's World Cup semifinal at Old Trafford between India and New Zealand will pit sides more evenly matched than their table positions suggest.

Both teams are reliant on two batsmen to score runs -- Rohit Sharma and skipper Virat Kohli for India while New Zealand depend heavily on skipper Kane Williamson and Ross Taylor. It will also be a match-up between two of the tournament's best bowling attacks.

India have only been beaten once in eight completed group matches. Their one washed out game was against New Zealand, who got the better of India in their last encounter -- the World Cup warm-up game in May -- but the Kiwis since lost three games out of eight in the group stage.

Both teams are well versed in World Cup semifinals. India have played six and won three. New Zealand, on the other hand, have been serial semifinalists but have lost seven of the eight they have played -- the exception being the 2015 World Cup, when they ended as runners-up to Australia.

Despite a 5-4 win/loss record against India in World Cups, New Zealand will start as underdogs

given India's group-stage performance. They will, however, be looking for early wickets today to get into India's weaker suit -- their lower-middle order. New Zealand have also been the most difficult side to score off in the



INDIA CAPTAIN VIRAT KOHLI

middle overs, conceding runs at 4.74 runs per over from overs 11 to 40. On the other hand, India have found it difficult to score in the last 10 overs and count on their top six giving them the momentum, so the middle-overs battle between the two sides will be crucial.

New Zealand's attack, with variety in seam provided by the

medium-paced cutters of Colin de Grandhomme and the high pace of Lockie Ferguson, has also been the most economical of the World Cup.

"Our attack's performed really well on a variety of surfaces where

Sharma -- who has hit a record five centuries in this edition -- and Kohli early, but that is a difficult task as India have lost just four wickets in the first 10 overs in the World Cup so far.

While New Zealand will be looking to burst through the top, India's attack will be eager to gnaw through the middle and get Williamson -- top scorer for his side with 481 runs -- and Taylor out as soon as possible. In contrast to India, New Zealand have lost 13 wickets in the batting Powerplay and with the soft top order, if they lose Williamson and Taylor -- or indeed either -- without a big partnership, it may well be a difficult semifinal. And the top order have their task cut out for them against a seam-bowling group -- led by the feared Jasprit Bumrah -- that has been the most incisive of the tournament.

"Well, according to me, our bowling attack has been up there with the best, if not the best bowling attack in the competition," Kohli said. "Those two guys have shared the load so far and a lot will depend on them obviously because they have been playing well and according to us, getting both of them early will be crucial because we know how strong they can be together in a partnership. Kane and Ross are probably their main guys in the batting line-up."

The Kohli and Dhoni show

SAKEB SUBHAN from Manchester

Coming from Bangladesh, the fanfare surrounding cricket and cricketers is par for the course, especially during big events. Media presence around the Bangladesh team, too, is one of the heaviest around the world. But there is a difference between 'one of the heaviest' and 'heaviest', and that difference was apparent at Old Trafford yesterday.

India skipper Virat Kohli was holding court in the press conference room at Manchester's premier venue. The room was one of the bigger media spaces seen throughout this World Cup, but even those arriving in time could not secure seats, and many were standing outside the door, stealing peeks, shaky pictures and blurry videos over clustered heads. It almost seemed like media personnel were fans, kept at bay, trying to get a glimpse of their heroes. That 'almost' was removed when Kohli made his way out of the half-hour long presser.

Indian reporters crowded him as he headed towards the elevators and he was inundated with selfie and autograph requests, granting and signing all of them as he backed into the lift.

At the adjacent practice ground, it was

Mahendra Singh Dhoni who commanded much of the attention. He batted against throwdowns in the nets for a while and then had a long chat with coach Ravi Shastri. A sizeable media contingent was watching the team's practice, but when Dhoni ambled out of the practice area, at least half of the reporters and photographers followed him. Belated birthday wishes floated through for Dhoni, who celebrated his 38th on July 7, and this being in all likelihood his last World Cup, there was special interest surrounding the 2011 World Cup winning captain.

He strode out onto the Old Trafford grass on his way to the dressing room and asked for the football from teammates who were warming up. He unleashed two powerful kicks, with bat-wings still on.

As he went up to the dressing room, reporters again crowded him for selfies and autographs and, like Kohli, he obliged. There was an invitation for biriyani if he went to Kolkata, and Dhoni smilingly said that he would treat them to biriyani if he came to Kolkata.

"75 tomorrow," came a cry from one of the assembled reporters as Dhoni went up the stairs. "Five sixes, over that side."

Dhoni just looked down, smiled and went into the dressing room.



India wicketkeeper-batsman Mahendra Singh Dhoni was swamped by reporters during practice at Old Trafford yesterday, where they will face off against New Zealand in a World Cup semifinal match today. With this being his final foray in cricket's showpiece event, the attention placed on him was well earned.

PHOTO: SAKEB SUBHAN