



Mashrafe sees equal contest in Sri Lanka

SPORTS REPORTER

It seemed as though Bangladesh ODI skipper Mashrafe Bin Mortaza was all set to remain at the helm for the upcoming tour of Sri Lanka when the inspirational cricketer attended the official pre-tour press conference yesterday. However, bad news arrived later in the day as it turned out Mashrafe suffered a hamstring injury while bowling at the nets during a training session at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur.

The news came as a shock for the team management while chief selector Minhajul Abedin later confirmed that Farhad Reza will replace Mashrafe for the three-match ODI series in Sri Lanka.

During the press conference, Mashrafe mentioned that the absence of their best performer of the World Cup, Shakib Al Hasan, is a big loss for the team but little did he know that within a few hours, he too would miss the series due to an injury.

Before being ruled out of the series, Mashrafe shared his observation that the Sri Lanka tour would be one where both Bangladesh and Sri Lanka start on equal footing while adding that it would be a challenging tour.

"Both the teams will be equal as Sri Lanka will be playing at home where they always play well and at the same time their players have been playing together for long time. They also have some good memories in the World Cup. There has been intense rivalry between the two sides since the Nidahas Trophy and these things also count. Both teams will be equal and whoever does well on the given day will win," Mashrafe told reporters during the pre-tour press conference at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.

Questions regarding his retirement have become a regular feature which only intensified after his poor performance in the World Cup, where he bagged just two wickets from eight games. Asked whether he feels any extra pressure the 36-year-old had said: "To be honest, as a player I have to take the responsibility and when I took up the captaincy, I had the same feeling. Considering the backdrop of Bangladesh, people started to raise questions pretty early but after surviving for four-five years I don't feel this is difficult. But as a player there will always be a good or bad feeling and obviously, I will be disappointed when the expectations from me as a player and also as the team are not fulfilled.

Many are consoling me that 'don't be disheartened' but it will be a shame if I am not upset since its natural if I am unable to fulfil my expectations. But to be honest, pressure has always been there and it will remain as long as I play. Ultimately, I am very upset which, if you ask me, is very normal but I have that courage and mentality to comeback."

There were also concerns over whether the seniors could have been rested in order to give younger players an opportunity in this series as a part of their preparations for the next World Cup. Mashrafe did reiterate this ideal but at the same time said that it is important for Bangladesh cricket to win the upcoming series in Sri Lanka.

"I think four years is long time and if we can produce a few players it would be good as apart from me, most of the existing players have the ability to play in the next World Cup. I think it is more important to focus on the Under-19 and A team than the national team as if we want to do well in the next World Cup, we have to produce some players from now," he said.



Bangladesh team's interim coach Khaled Mahmud and ODI captain Mashrafe Bin Mortaza brief the media yesterday on the eve of the team's departure for a three-match ODI series in Sri Lanka, which begins on the 26th.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED



Bangladesh skipper Mashrafe Bin Mortaza grimaces after suffering a hamstring injury during the team's last practice session at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium yesterday evening. The injury ruled Mashrafe out of the upcoming Sri Lanka tour.

PHOTO: PROTHOM ALO

Late injury rules Mash out

Tamim to captain; Taskin, Forhad included as Mashrafe and Saifuddin's replacements

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh ODI skipper Mashrafe Bin Mortaza was in one of his usual nonchalant moods when he arrived for a press conference yesterday to field questions regarding the team's upcoming tour of Sri Lanka. It was the last day of training for the players with the team set to board a flight for Sri Lanka today and when the day began, no one would have predicted the grim turn of events that came after the press conference as the ODI skipper was ruled out of the Sri Lanka series following an injury he suffered during a net bowling session.

The Bangladesh players were undergoing a relaxed training session when Mashrafe walked into the press conference with the likes of Tamim Iqbal, Mustafizur Rahman and Co. engrossed in a keepie-uppie session.

There were questions about Mashrafe's fitness throughout the World Cup and it was only natural that he had to field questions about his fitness from the beginning of the press conference.

"I have practiced for two days now

without any problems. I am hoping that everything is well," Mashrafe reiterated.

He answered questions about his retirement plans and the team's focus and planning for the upcoming series in Sri Lanka, slated to begin from July 26. The skipper undertook those questions with his natural charisma while maintaining that he had the focus to bounce back after dismal World Cup performances.

It was in the evening following the press conference that news began to surface that Mashrafe had suffered an injury during a net session. He had niggling injuries even prior to the World Cup but it did not affect his ability to play for the Tigers. During the net session, he pulled a hamstring -- an injury that is familiar to the speedster -- and was subsequently ruled out of the Sri Lanka series.

Later Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) chief selector Minhajul Abedin confirmed that all-rounder Forhad Reza, who was in Chattogram participating in a one-day series against the Afghanistan A team, was included in the 14-member squad as Mashrafe's replacement.

"He pulled his hamstring during training today. We are yet to receive

the medical report but at the moment it looks difficult for him to play in the series. We have decided to include Forhad Reza as his replacement," chief selector Minhajul Abedin told The Daily Star yesterday.

A BCB media release later confirmed that Mashrafe sustained a Grade-1 injury.

"He received an immediate MSK ultrasound examination which revealed a Grade-1 injury. It is a recurring injury that could take around three to four weeks to recover. Therefore, he was ruled out from participation in sporting activities for a month," BCB chief physician Debashish Chowdhury was quoted as saying in the BCB release.

Later yesterday, the management decided that Tamim Iqbal would captain the side for the tour. With Shakib Al Hasan allowed a break for the tour's duration, the loss of the skipper will come as a big blow for the Tigers. Since becoming Bangladesh captain back in 2014, this is the first series he will miss through injury. To make matters worse, late yesterday, Mohammad Saifuddin was also ruled out with a lower back injury with fast bowler Taskin Ahmed replacing him in the squad.

SL pick 22 for Bangladesh ODIs

AFP, Colombo

Sri Lanka on Friday named a 22-member ODI squad led by Dimuth Karunaratna for the upcoming Bangladesh tour of the island.

The first of the three one-day internationals will be played on July 26, the second two days later and the final match on July 31. All three games will be played at the Premadasa Stadium in Colombo.

Squad: Dimuth Karunaratna (captain), Kusal Perera, Avishka Fernando, Kusal Mendis, Angelo Mathews, Lahiru Thirimane, Shehan Jayasuriya, Dhananjaya de Silva, Niroshan Dickwella, Danushka Gunathilleke, Dasun Shanaka, Wanindu Hasaranga, Akila Dananjaya, Amila Aponso, Lakshan Sandakan, Lasith Malinga, Nuwan Pradeep, Kasun Rajitha, Lahiru Kumara, Thisara Perera, Isuru Udana, Lahiru Madusanka.

Zimbabwe minister's denial

AFP, Harare

Zimbabwe Sports Minister Kirsty Coventry on Friday denied that the government had been interfering in the running of the country's cricket.

Coventry, a former Olympic swimming champion, said in a tweet she was "devastated" by the effect on players of a decision by the International Cricket Council (ICC) to suspend Zimbabwe Cricket because of alleged political interference.

Thursday's ICC action followed the suspension by Zimbabwe's Sports and Recreation Commission (SRC) of the Zimbabwe Cricket board elected in June. The SRC appointed an interim committee. The ICC demanded that the elected board be reinstated within three months.

Coventry said in her tweet that although the SRC was appointed by the sports minister, "SRC is not government -- they are a public body."

She said in another tweet: "There is need for good governance at ZC for the international success we all want to see."

Coventry added that she would meet the country's men's and women's captains on Friday.

Chandika to be sacked

AFP, Colombo

Sri Lanka's sports minister has ordered the sacking of the national cricket coach after a lacklustre World Cup campaign that saw just three wins from nine games, officials said Friday.

Chandika Hathurusingha and his assistants would be fired after Sri Lanka's upcoming one-day series against Bangladesh, a Sri Lanka Cricket source told AFP.

Sports minister Harin Fernando has ordered the coaches "should go after the Bangladesh tournament," the official said, adding that Fernando had wanted to make the changes before the World Cup.

Under-pressure Hathurusingha had insisted last week he would stay to see out his contract.

"I have another 16 months," he told reporters after returning to Colombo from the tournament where Sri Lanka finished a disappointing sixth. "I hope to remain until my contract runs out."

Hathurusingha also acknowledged that team management had to "accept responsibility for what happened."

Bangladesh arrive in Sri Lanka on Saturday to become the first foreign sports team to visit the island since the April 21 suicide bombings that killed 258 people.

The series starts on July 26 and ends on August 1 at the Premadasa Stadium in Colombo.

The contracts of fielding coach Steve Rixon, batting coach Jon Lewis and fast bowling coach Ramesh Ratnayake will also not be renewed when they end, according to Sri Lanka Cricket officials.

Sri Lanka cricket was in crisis when Hathurusingha was appointed in December 2017, after a successful three-year spell in charge of Bangladesh.

They had just been hammered in Tests by India at home and away, and played poorly in one-day internationals. Under Hathurusingha, Sri Lanka notched up Test wins against England and Australia.



ICC HALL OF FAME

Tendulkar, Donald inducted

PTI, London

Indian batting icon Sachin Tendulkar has been inducted into the International Cricket Council's Hall of Fame alongside South African pace legend Allan Donald.

Joining Tendulkar and Donald in the Hall of Fame was two-time World Cup-winning Australian woman cricketer Cathryn Fitzpatrick.

"It's a huge honour for me," Tendulkar said at the induction ceremony held here on Sunday night.

The 46-year-old former right-hand batsman is regarded the greatest to have played the game along with Sir Donald Bradman and remains the top run-accumulator in both Tests and ODIs.

He has 34,357 runs across formats and is the only batsman to have 100 internationals hundreds under his belt.

The 52-year-old Donald is one of the finest bowlers to have played the game and had 330 Test and 272 ODI wickets to his credit before calling it quits in 2003.

Fitzpatrick is the second highest wicket-taker of all time in women's cricket with 180 ODI scalps and 60 in Tests.



The Bangladesh A team suffered a 10-wicket thrashing from their Afghan counterparts in the first of a five-match one-day series in Chattogram yesterday. Rahmunullah Gurbaz (L) scored 105 while Ibrahim Zadran scored 86 to see their side easily win the encounter.

PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN

BD A keep crumbling

SPORTS REPORTER

After drawing one match while losing the other in a two-match four-day series against the Afghanistan A team, the Bangladesh A team succumbed to a

10-wicket mauling in the first of five one-dayers against the same opposition at the Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium in Chattogram yesterday.

The only thing that went Bangladesh's way on the day was when the home side won the toss and elected to bat. It was all downhill after that as Bangladesh could only manage a modest 201 for eight total in 50 overs. Opener Imrul Kayes was the first to fall but not before adding 28 off 40 balls to leave the score at 52 for one in nine overs. Bangladesh then suffered

a batting collapse, losing their next five wickets for just 54 runs.

The intensive damage could not be undone despite a 67-run stand for seventh-wicket between all-rounder Forhad Reza and Afif Hossain with the former falling prey to Naveenul Haq after scoring a 65-ball 30 in the 45th over. However, a valiant 71-ball 59 from Afif did help Bangladesh at least scrape past the 200-run mark.

Coming in to chase the modest total, Afghanistan romped to victory with all 10 of their wickets intact, reaching the target in just 43.5 overs. Rahmunullah Gurbaz remained unbeaten on 105 runs off 138 balls while his partner at the other end, Ibrahim Zadran amassed an unbeaten 86 off 125 balls to help their side reach the target with 37 balls to spare.

Stokes to be New Zealander of the year?

REUTERS, Wellington

After ripping the heart out of New Zealand's bleary-eyed cricket fans on Sunday with a player-of-the-match performance in the Cricket World Cup final, England all-rounder Ben Stokes has now been nominated for the New Zealander of the Year award.

The 28-year-old Stokes was born in New Zealand but grew up in England when his father Gerard moved there to take a rugby league coaching job.

Stokes remained in England when his parents returned home and carved out a successful cricketing career, scoring 84 not out in the final that helped his side to their maiden 50-over World Cup title at Lord's on Sunday. His exploits in the final earned some early nominations for the awards, as did New Zealand captain Kane Williamson, local media reported on Friday.

"The way he (Williamson) conducted himself, not only in the face of such devastating disappointment at Lord's but throughout the tournament, resonated powerfully with Kiwis from all walks of life," the award's chief judge Cameron Bennett told the New Zealand Herald on Friday.

"Interesting to see some character having a bob each way: we also received nominations for England's ... Ben Stokes.