



Cricket's most vulnerable aspect

MAZHAR UDDIN



Can you name a current Bangladesh fast bowler who is yet to undergo surgery? Probably not as the likes of Mustafizur Rahman, Taskin Ahmed, Rubel Hossain and of course Mashrafe Bin Mortaza have all gone under the knife at one point or the other in their careers.

Naturally, pace bowling is such a vulnerable department in cricket that it requires extra work and superb management for any individual to maintain form when considering the workload of a fast bowler.

Bangladesh ODI skipper Mashrafe Bin Mortaza and young Mohammad Saifuddin are the two of the latest fast bowlers to be ruled out of the three-match ODI series in Sri Lanka due to injuries. This came as a huge blow for cricket fans in the country.

The case of Mashrafe is exceptional as the inspirational cricketer, despite having undergone seven surgeries on his legs, has still managed to continue playing cricket.

Ultimately though, Mashrafe had to miss the Sri Lanka tour following a hamstring injury sustained while bowling at the nets a day before the Tigers' departure for Sri Lanka. According to Bangladesh Cricket Board chief physician Debashish Chowdhury, it is not a fresh injury and will require a total of six to seven weeks to heal.

"We think it's a re-injury as it was there in the past and flared up now. We gave him three weeks rest to let the injury heal, we will take him to rehab for another three weeks so it's a total of six to seven weeks for him to fully recover," Debashish told The Daily Star yesterday.

On the other hand, surprisingly a rather young Saifuddin, who has been struggling with back pain for over nine years now, was also ruled out at the last moment from the Sri Lanka tour.

"Saifuddin's injury is almost nine years old so he often suffers back pain. Nine years back he was around 13-14 years old. Normally the pace bowlers in Bangladesh, if not everyone, have such injuries. Normally when a 13-14-year-old kid bowls fast everyone praises him, prompting the young kid to try to bowl faster. However, that is not an age for one to try to bowl fast as the muscles have not matured enough at that stage, leaving the bones to take the brunt," The Tigers' chief physician said. "What we are doing now is damage control as the injury is already there. We diagnosed that Saifuddin has a lumbar facet joint injury. We have even diagnosed that when he was in England and they said the same thing. He was injected there but you can't continue injecting him for a longer period."

According to Debashish, Saifuddin has to manage his workload and although his injury will persist until he stops bowling, he added that this is a part of a fast bowler's career.

"He has manage his workload as he has to figure out the exact number of balls he can bowl on a weekly basis. He needs to increase the easy days and minimize the training days," explained Debashish.

Debashish added that while it is important for the fast bowlers to take extra care of themselves, at the same time it is their responsibility to work extra hard.

"If you talk about fast bowlers, aside from the training he does daily, he needs to do some individual drills. It won't be enough for a fast bowler to do the same warm up as he needs to do something extra as the work is different. So, it depends on the individual as it's not possible for someone to monitor you constantly. Another thing is to carefully look after the small injuries as sometime they try to hide that and take pain killers to recover. Most of the time we get the cases where the players come after the injury gets worse as they initially try to manage on their own," said Debashish.

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DEBASHISH CHOWDHURY
BCB CHIEF PHYSICIAN



The Bangladesh team reached Sri Lanka, where they will play a three-match ODI series against the hosts, amid tight security yesterday. The Tigers are the first international cricket team to visit the island nation since the deadly Easter attacks in April, which claimed the lives of more than 250 people.

PHOTO: AFP

Captaincy role poses challenge for Tamim

SPORTS REPORTER



When it comes to the leadership role, Tamim Iqbal has been so close yet so far from filling the position over the years in Bangladesh cricket.

However, regular ODI captain Mashrafe Bin Mortaza was ruled out of the upcoming tour of Sri Lanka following a hamstring injury sustained during the Tigers' final training session on the eve of their departure for the island nation on Friday.

Vice-captain Shakib Al Hasan is also unavailable for the tour as the star all-rounder had earlier requested a break on personal grounds. This left the Bangladesh Cricket Board with little choice to fill the captain's shoes other than Tamim.

The dashing opener has been a core member of the Bangladesh team's leadership for quite some time but with a couple of members of that core group missing out on the tour, it comes as a special challenge for Tamim to lead the side in the three-match ODI series in Sri Lanka, which will be his first full tour as skipper.

Although this is not the first time that Tamim has taken up the role, having led Bangladesh in the second Test against New Zealand at Christchurch after regular skipper Mushfiqur Rahim injured his finger and missed the match, which Bangladesh lost by nine wickets.

However, the series in Sri Lanka will be a big test for Tamim as both a captain and batsman as the left hander had a below-par World Cup campaign considering the standards he has set for himself over the past three years.

According to Tamim, the tour of Sri Lanka will be a challenging one but at the same time, the thirty-year-old added that he does not see any reason for the team to not do well.

"The decision of appointing a captain generally comes from the board and I will try to fulfil the responsibility given to me. I think this series is very important for us as those who are going with the team have a lot to prove. The experienced members on the side are not going on this tour due to injuries and other reasons so, I think the series will be very challenging. Sri Lanka is a very strong side on their home soil but we did see that we played well in the previous series," Tamim told reporters before their departure for Sri Lanka yesterday.

It will be interesting to see how Tamim will cope with the responsibility of leading the side with the absence of two of the more experienced cricketers in the likes of Shakib and Mashrafe. In addition, the team will probably look to use this series to overcome their failures in the just concluded World Cup, where the Tigers finished in eighth position.



MCC to review overthrow rules

AGENCIES

The Marylebone Cricket Club (MCC), custodians of the Laws of Cricket, is considering reviewing the overthrow rules in light of the incidents that occurred in the 2019 World Cup final.

According to The Times, the MCC feels that overthrows are worth taking a look whenever it next reviews the laws of the game which is the responsibility of the MCC Laws sub-committee.

Significant attention has been drawn to the rule after New Zealand's Martin Guptill's throw took a deflection off England's Ben Stokes and went to the boundary.

Moreover, umpires Kumar Dharmasena and Marais Erasmus erroneously gave England six runs instead of five as they had not noticed that Stokes and his partner Adil Rashid had not crossed over when Guptill was making the throw. England needed nine runs from the last three balls before that and the overthrows brought the deficit down to three needed off two.

Jayed, victim of a flawed process?

NABID YEASIN



The whole concept of nurturing something seems to be lost on the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB). While this affects the entire team overall, the fast bowling unit -- which needs the most grooming in a team that lags miles behind in the department when compared to other international teams -- has been the most affected by such a mentality from the high-ups.

Right-arm pacer Abu Jayed, who was left-out of the initial squad for the Sri Lanka tour, must have hoped to make the squad after Bangladesh were hit with injuries on Friday -- just the day before the team were scheduled to depart for Sri Lanka for a three-match ODI series.

Jayed's inclusion would have made sense, given that he featured in the Tigers' 15-member World Cup squad. However, stretching Jayed's wait and also raising serious questions about Bangladesh's abysmal selection process, the BCB announced all-rounder Forhad Reza as a replacement for injured Mashrafe Bin Mortaza while pacer Taskin Ahmed was called on as Mohammad Saifuddin's stand-in.

Bangladesh's mentality of looking for temporary and more instantaneous solutions to problems was yet again proved when chief selector Minhajul Abedin mentioned the 'conditions' as the

reason behind Jayed's exclusion.

It seems as though Jayed was more of a stand-by for Taskin Ahmed in the world cup.

"[Abu Jayed] Rahi was not considered due to conditions. He was included in the World Cup squad as the ball gets more swing in English conditions. And also because Taskin was injured, we opted for Rahi. But

against the hosts, paving the team's way to their first ever multi-team ODI triumph.

Even after that though, Jayed was not considered for any of the World Cup matches in England, where his style of bowling was most suited. Bangladesh's first ever ODI captain, Gazi Ashraf Hossain Lipu said that the exclusion of Jayed actually puts



now as Taskin is fit and the series is in Sri Lanka, we did not take Rahi in the team." Minhajul told The Daily Star yesterday.

Jayed -- known for his ability to swing the ball in both directions -- had proved himself when given the opportunity in Ireland during Bangladesh's triangular series in May this year. Jayed bagged a fiver

the board's decision to include him in the Ireland series -- in the lead-up to World Cup -- under the spotlight.

"This actually puts the selector's previous decision under questions. But I would say that not getting a single match out of Bangladesh's eight matches [in the World Cup] even after taking five wickets [in the triangular series] raises a lot of

questions regarding his importance at the highest level," Lipu said. "I think it is most unfortunate for him to not get a chance in the World Cup rather than not being selected for the Sri Lanka series."

Meanwhile, Aminul Islam, who led Bangladesh in their first ever World Cup in 1999, was more vocal regarding the disarray in the BCB's selection process, labelling it as 'flawed'.

"Actually who are the selectors? We say there are two selectors. But it is seen that the manager also acts as the selector, sometimes the coach is the selector and sometimes the Board president also acts as selector. A team is announced through a process and it is once again proven that the process is flawed."

A player needs to be nurtured and the best way to do that is to stick with your preferred choice for a longer period. Jayed, who was simply there during the World Cup, has been dropped rather harshly without being provided with enough opportunities. Such has been the case for another prospect -- Yasir Ali -- who had toured with the side in Ireland in May after a blistering show in the Bangladesh Premier League in January-February this year. And the hilarious decision to include Reza -- a player way past his prime -- in a series that could be the perfect platform to nurture players like Jayed and Yasir shows that Aminul was right on money when he called BCB's selection process a flawed one.

India's selectors face questions over life after Dhoni

REUTERS, Mumbai



Mahendra Singh Dhoni has opted out of India's tour of West Indies as the selectors embark on their search for his successor once the long-serving wicketkeeper-batsman hangs up his boots for good.

Dhoni is an honorary lieutenant colonel in India's territorial army and has pulled out of the tour to serve his regiment, according to a Press Trust of India report carried by local media.

"Dhoni has made himself unavailable for the tour of West Indies as he will be spending two months with his paramilitary regiment," the report quoted an unidentified Indian cricket board (BCCI) source as saying.

Finding a replacement for 38-year old Dhoni will top the agenda when India's selectors meet in Mumbai on Sunday to pick the squad for the tour of West Indies.

"He is not retiring from cricket right now. He is taking a two month sabbatical to serve his paramilitary regiment which he had committed much earlier," a BCCI official said.

