



'Sitting back to see how it pans out'

MAZHAR UDDIN from Chattogram

The sky became gloomy just as Bangladesh's training session ended and new Bangladesh head coach Russell Domingo was having a chat with skipper Shakib Al Hasan at the centre wicket of the Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium in Chattogram yesterday.

The South African looked enthusiastic, focused and determined two days ahead of the one-off Test against Afghanistan starting tomorrow. It will also be a test of sorts for Domingo as, in his first match in charge, he will begin grappling with the shortcomings of the Tigers' Test play, which generally lags far behind the standards displayed in ODI cricket.

Bangladesh will return to red-ball cricket after a gap of five months, with their last longest-format match taking place in New Zealand in March. On paper Bangladesh's challenge seems a simple one as, led by a Shakib Al Hasan who is much more involved since the World Cup, they will look to continue positive home results against a side playing just their third Test.

There are high expectations of Domingo too. He took charge at a time when the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) prematurely parted ways with previous head coach Steve Rhodes after a disappointing World Cup campaign that left the team at a crossroads.

For now, the former South African will just be looking to offer the odd suggestion as, just over two weeks into his job, he will first



With the one-off Test against Afghanistan being Russell Domingo's (R) first foray as Bangladesh head coach, he will likely rely on Test specialists Shadman Islam (L), Mominul Haque and the like to deliver a fine start to his tenure. (Bottom) Meanwhile, Bangladesh captain Shakib Al Hasan and Afghanistan skipper Rashid Khan seemed to get along swimmingly at the Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium in Chattogram yesterday.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

'We are under no illusions'

SPORTS REPORTER from Chattogram



Afghanistan has been an exciting unit in the limited-overs formats, with the best leg-spinner in the world Rashid Khan being a constant threat to any team in world cricket.

But it's a totally different ball game when it comes to cricket's most elite format, where Afghanistan would be desperate to prove their worth by adopting a style of play that requires a different attitude to their attacking style seen in the limited-overs formats.

Afghanistan are preparing to take part in their third ever Test match against the hosts tomorrow in Chattogram, where yesterday a man was seen walking on crutches and running the practice. It was none other than interim Afghan head coach Andy Moles, who lost part of the skin in the ball of his foot while taking a walk in Abu Dhabi 10 days ago.

Moles, who has been involved with Afghanistan cricket for over five years at different age-levels and as an A team coach, seemed practical when it came to facing a rather more experienced team like Bangladesh, who have had success in home Tests over the last three years, winning their last two series against Zimbabwe and West Indies.

According to the 54-year-old, it will be important for his charges to apply themselves and focused on the word 'concentration', which will be the key for his side.

"I am not concerned about any areas. We need to be more consistent in all departments. We are only playing our third Test. We need to bat for longer. We need to bowl better in our second and third spells. We need to make sure our concentration levels are higher. This is a form of the game in which we are very much in the infancy. But no excuses from me. If we don't play well, it will be a learning curve. We must get better in all aspects as we play more and more Test cricket.

"We have massive respect for the Bangladesh. They have played wonderful cricket at home for a long time and we have come here very much as the underdogs but we are looking for the challenge. Top sides have found it hard work playing in Bangladesh. We are under no illusion it's going to be easy. But if we can concentrate and do the right things, we are capable of doing something quite special over the next five days," he said.

Knowing that Bangladesh will have the home advantage as the curator at the Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium has prepared two pitches for the Test match to take place tomorrow, Moles informed that it would be a huge thing if Afghanistan could win the game.

"It will be a massive upturn in our fortune," said Moles when asked how important it will be if they managed to win the Test. "But I don't underestimate the strengths of Bangladesh; they are a level above us. If we can play well... I am not going to say we are going to play well as the boys need to apply themselves. We are not scared of Bangladesh but we respect them and as coach I will sit back and look forward to applying ourselves," said Moles.



ANDY MOLES



be looking to observe and diagnose areas to work on after he sees his charges perform for the first time in the international arena.

He was seen giving some tips to opener Shadman Islam about his batlift in the nets, where the Tigers spent most of the time yesterday. Domingo also cheered and appreciated every good stroke from the likes of Mushfiqur Rahim and Soumya Sarkar.

"It is going to be my first Test for Bangladesh. I want to see how they perform, and it is difficult to make wholesale changes to a system that has worked really well for them in the last couple of Tests. I am sitting back to see how things pan out for the first Test. The selectors and Shakib have led me to thinking in a certain way, and I am pretty comfortable with it before I can put my way on to the team," Domingo told reporters when asked whether the Tigers will stick with a spin-heavy attack, which has been the go-to strategy for them since 2016.

Famously known as a players' coach, Domingo was willing to put his faith on the existing set of players and the South African was also not shy in highlighting Shakib's instructions and plans to the media before making decisions, presumably because

Domingo knows how crucial Shakib's involvement, both as captain and player, will be behind his own success.

"He has been the leading all-rounder in world cricket for a long time. Expectations are always high. He sets high standards of himself too, he trained really hard. His performances in all formats have been fantastic. Our expectations from him as a leader and a player is very high," he said.

There is a lot to prove not just for Domingo but also his new coaching staff. The new pace bowling coach Charl Langeveldt was also busy with the three Bangladesh seamers Taskin Ahmed, Ebadot Hossain and Abu Jayed in the nets.

Domingo is well aware of the threat from Afghanistan and he certainly would not want to give them an inch, despite them being the newest Test member.

"Afghanistan are starting their Test journey, so they will be desperate to get a win. They will feel the conditions might help them, while it might be tougher for them in Australia, South Africa or England. They will be confident of springing us a surprise in the next couple of days," said Domingo.

No chance for BPL this year, says Kamal

SPORTS REPORTER

Finance Minister and former Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) president AHM Mustafa Kamal said yesterday that there is 'no chance' the Bangladesh Premier League (BPL) can be held this year, throwing a spanner into the BCB's plan of holding the seventh edition of the tournament from December 6.

Kamal said that the agreement signed between the board and franchises did not permit two editions in the same year.

"The BPL was created during my tenure [as BCB president]. According to the laws [bylaws], the tournament cannot be held twice in one year. So, by that logic, there is no chance for the BPL to be held this year," Kamal told reporters yesterday after attending a meeting regarding the Sheikh Kamal International Club Cup football tournament.

When contacted, BCB media committee chairman Jalal Yunus said he could not comment on the matter, saying: "Since our president [Nazmul Hassan] and out CEO [Nizamuddin Chowdhury] are not in the country [the pair are attending an Asian Cricket Council meeting abroad], I am not in a position to say anything about these comments. Once they return, you will get to know what we are planning."

Even before the comments, it was not all smooth sailing, with the BPL governing council announcing last month they would draft a new set of rules and regulations for the upcoming edition -- a decision that has seen a lot of pushback from franchises.

Australia look to Smith and the spirit of Ali

Fourth Ashes Test against England starts today

AGENCIES, Manchester



Australia head into the fourth Test at Old Trafford starting Wednesday hoping Steve Smith and the boxer Muhammad Ali can revive their campaign following the hurt they felt at having the Ashes "stolen" from them by England.

The tourists were on the brink of retaining the Ashes only for Ben Stokes's superb 135 not out delivered England a stunning one-wicket win in the third Test at Headingley.

Stokes's heroics have left the five-match series poised at 1-1 with two to play.

Australia coach Justin Langer said his Ashes-holders would now take heart from an incident in Ali's childhood.

"He got his bike stolen and that was the fire he needed to become the greatest boxer of all time," said Langer.

"We felt a bit like we got the Ashes stolen the other day. They won that Test match, so we felt a bit like it'd

been stolen from us.

"Now we've got to work out what we're going to do, and use that as fire. We're not going to feel sorry for ourselves and let it slip," added Langer, aiming to oversee Australia's first Ashes series win in England for 18 years.

'LITTLE DEMONS'
Australia will make at least one change, with star batsman Smith returning from the concussion he suffered after being hit by a 92mph Jofra Archer bouncer that ruled him out of the third Test.

Marnus Labuschagne, Smith's concussion substitute at Lord's, has made three successive Test fifties since his unexpected promotion into the side and retains his place with Usman Khawaja being dropped to make way for Smith's return.

Langer, hit several times on the head during his career as an Australia opening batsman, was confident Smith could overcome any doubts he may have felt after being felled by Archer.

"When you get hit, it's always a little

voice on your shoulder. You've got to have a good strategy and he works the game out better than anyone I've ever met in my life," said Langer.

"If anyone's going to get over any little demons it'll be Steven."

England will make one change from the team which beat Australia at Headingley, with Craig Overton replacing Chris Woakes in the seam attack.

Captain Joe Root said that Somerset seamer Overton would get his chance for a fourth Test appearance, having last featured in New Zealand in March 2018.

The only other adjustment England will make in the Test is in their batting order, with Joe Denly set to move up to open the batting, while Jason Roy moves down to number four.

England pacer Stuart Broad, the hosts' leading bowler this series with 14 wickets at 25.35, was eager to see Smith face Archer again.

"I'm sure when Steve comes in Jofra will be in (England captain) Joe Root's ear wanting the ball," Broad said.



England pacer Jofra Archer -- who took Australia lynchpin Steve Smith (R) out of the equation in the third Test -- and all-rounder Ben Stokes (C), who singlehandedly levelled the series in Headingley, have had a telling impact so far. But Smith, returning for the fourth Ashes Test starting today, will be looking to reassert his supremacy.

Tigresses beat Scots

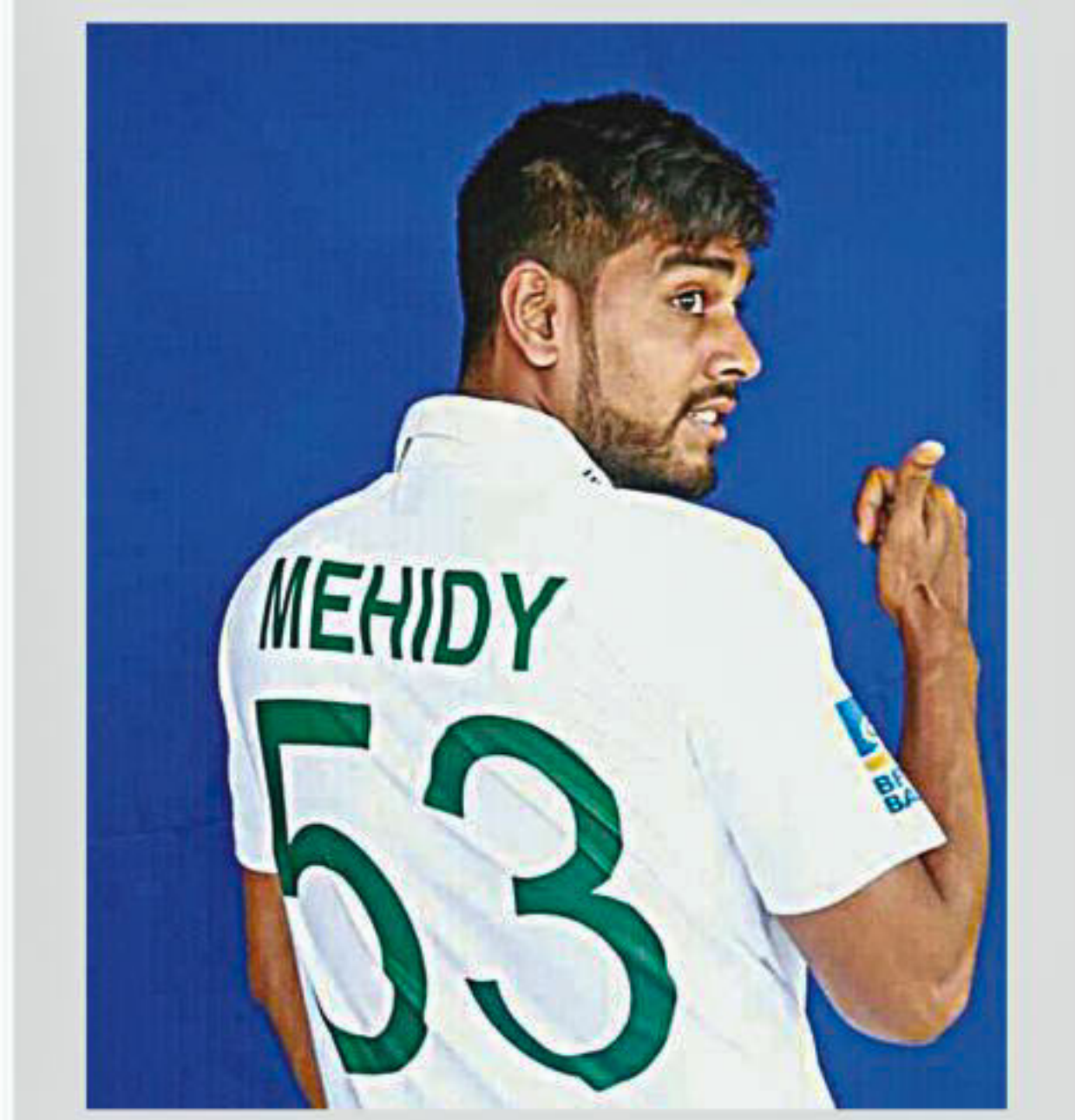
SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh secured a 13-run win on the DLS method during a rain-interrupted ICC Women's T20 World Cup Qualifier against Scotland yesterday.

Bangladesh had reached 104 for four in 17 overs before showers led to a premature end to their innings. Nigar Sultana was their top-scorer and remained unbeaten on a 37-ball 35, which featured two boundaries. Fargana Hoque made 23 while opener Murshida Khatun scored 26.

Scotland's target was again revised after rain had interrupted their innings and they were set 63 to win off 8 overs. However, they could only get to 49 for six in their allotted overs. Nahida Akter, Ritu Moni and Khadija Tul Kubra took one wicket each.

TIGERS' NEW TEST JERSEY



The BCB yesterday unveiled the national team's new Test jersey, featuring the players' surnames on the back for the first time. The Tigers will don the new apparel during the one-off Test against Afghanistan starting tomorrow. PHOTO: COLLECTED

Booters lose first practice game 2-0

SPORTS REPORTER

The Bangladesh national football team started the 2022 World Cup and 2023 Asian Cup preparation on the wrong foot, suffering a 2-0 defeat to FC Kuktosh in their first practice match in Dushanbe yesterday.

Jamie Day's opted to start with a young team featuring only three senior players -- captain Jamal Bhuiyan, defender Yeasin Khan and goalkeeper Ashraf Islam Rana -- in the match against the Tajikistan Premier League club.

He also rested all the Abahani players, who had joined the team immediately after playing their AFC Cup inter-zone semifinal against April 25 SC. The other starters were Riyadhul Hasan, Arifur Rahman,

Mohammad Ibrahim, Rabiul Hasan, Rahmat Mia, Bishwanath Gosh, Biplul Ahmed and Matin Mia.

The British coach made 10 changes to the team in the second half, leaving only Riyadhul for the full 90 minutes. He sent on goalkeeper Anisur Rahman Zico, Sushanta Tripura, Sohel Rana, Tutul Hossain Badsha, Jewel Rana, Saad Uddin, Nabib Newaj Jibon and Mamunul Islam.

Despite that, Bangladesh could not come back into the match after having gone a goal behind earlier. Instead, FC Kuktosh -- who finished third in last edition of Tajikistan Premier League -- scored a second in the 63rd minute.

Bangladesh will play their second and final practice match against CSKA Pampir tomorrow before facing Afghanistan on September 10.



PHOTO: REUTERS