

SPORT



Bangladesh skipper Shakib Al Hasan (R) and head coach Russell Domingo may have been pondering some experimental changes yesterday for their T20I tri-series match against Afghanistan today in Chattogram before they take on the same opponents in the final in Mirpur on Tuesday.

Chance to fine-tune before title clash

MAZHAR UDDIN from Chattogram

Ahead of the T20I tri-series final on September 23, both Bangladesh and Afghanistan will have one more chance to tinker with and work on their game plans as the two teams face off today in what will be a dress rehearsal of the final in the last round-robin game at the Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury stadium in Chattogram.

Bangladesh won both their games against Zimbabwe and confirmed their place in the final. With Zimbabwe losing both their first-round matches, that also confirmed Afghanistan's place in the title-decider, but Rashid Khan's team will be smarting after the defeat to Zimbabwe last in the dead-rubber game last night. Likewise, Shakib Al Hasan's Bangladesh will also be looking to correct course after losing their first game to Afghanistan in Mirpur.

Afghanistan had a chance to experiment with their playing eleven during yesterday's game. They made three changes from their previous match and tried to test their bench strength by including Shafiqullah, Fazal Niazi and Dawlat Zadran.

Bangladesh will similarly be looking to make a few changes to the eleven that clinched the 39-run win over Zimbabwe on Wednesday.

Despite an impressive by young leg-spinner Aminul Islam, the 19-year-old is highly unlikely to take part in today's game as he had to have three stitches on his left hand because of an injury during sustained during Wednesday's math. The youngster did bowl a few overs in the nets yesterday with a bandaged left hand, but the team management would not want to risk further injury in a non-consequential match today.

The top order has been the major concern for Afghanistan in the series, with yesterday's game being an exception, and the Bangladesh think tank will be targeting the weakest part of the opposition and will likely look to strengthen their bowling department.

As Afghanistan mostly bank on their power hitting in the middle order to post fighting totals and later test the opposition with their strength in spin bowling, it will be important for Bangladesh to bat solidly themselves and try to restrict the Afghan batsmen.

The likes of pacer Rubel Hossain may be included for today's game while left-arm spinner Taijul Islam could replace the injured Aminul.

Pacer Shafiqullah Islam also made a good comeback to T20Is, picking up three wickets against Zimbabwe, while another seamer Mohammad Saifuddin is in good form, which means the team management will have the luxury to rest Mustafizur Rahman ahead of the final.

There is also talk that head coach Russell Domingo may want to test another newcomer in left-handed opener Nayeem Sheikh, who was included in the squad for

the last two group games.

However, Nazmul Hossain Shanto, who was involved in a promising opening partnership with Liton Das on T20I debut but missed out as his contribution was just nine, may get another opportunity.

There may well be some experimentation, but skipper Shakib would also want to hold on to the winning momentum to take some confidence into the final.

"Tomorrow's [Saturday's] game is important for all of us because if we can play well it will boost our confidence and the winning habit will help us to play better in the final," Shafiqullah told reporters yesterday.

Bangladesh, who have lost their last four T20Is against Afghanistan, will surely want to snap the losing streak but for that the Tigers will have to come up with a better approach and game plan to outplay the high-flying Afghans.



Against a spin-heavy Afghanistan, Bangladesh bowlers like pacers Shafiqullah Islam (L), Mohammad Saifuddin (2nd from R) and Rubel Hossain (R) will be looking to exploit the weaknesses in the Afghan batting line-up to yield a positive result today in Chattogram.

BCB to foot Zim's bills

SPORTS REPORTER

The Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) will pay the hotel bill for four additional days that the touring Zimbabwe team will stay in the country after their last match ended yesterday in a consolation T20I tri-series win against Afghanistan in Chattogram.

Having lost the first three games, Zimbabwe were already out of the tournament and the visitors were scheduled to fly from Dhaka to Singapore, where they will participate in a tri-nation series, on September 25.

As per standard practice, the host board is supposed to pay the hotel bill of touring teams till the day after their last match. If Zimbabwe had

made the final on September 24, the arrangement would have been the usual with the team set to fly out the following day.

Since Zimbabwe's last match was yesterday, they will need to stay an additional four days as they are set to conduct a small camp in Dhaka before departing.

It was also learned that the BCB have paid the plane fare of the Zimbabwe team, for which Zimbabwe will reimburse the BCB later.

"It is standard practice that a home board bears all the expenses of the touring teams. Even if there are some financial issues of the touring party, the home board tackles it and later sends an invoice to the respective boards. It's an internal matter between the boards," BCB CEO Nizamuddin Chowdhury told The Daily Star yesterday.

U-23s fall to 34-run loss

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Under-23 suffered a 34-run defeat at the hands of their Indian counterparts in the first of their five-match one-day series at the Ekana Cricket Stadium in Lucknow yesterday on the allocated reserve day for the game after the scheduled match day was washed out on Thursday.

In chase of India's total of 192 for nine, Bangladesh could only manage 158 for nine in 48.4 overs. However, things could have been different for the visitors had Zakir Hasan not retired hurt due to a muscle cramp after scoring a team high of a 67-ball 48. BCB selector Habibur Bashar -- on tour with the U-23s -- informed that Zakir, who was taken to hospital shortly after the incident, is fine.

"He suffered a muscle cramp due to dehydration. He was taken to hospital, where he was given a saline drip. He is fine now and is at the team hotel. He might not play tomorrow's [Saturday's] game as a precautionary measure but he can play the next game [on Monday]," Bashar told The Daily Star yesterday.

Earlier, Aryan Juyal's 86-ball 69 and BR Sharath's 57-ball 42 helped India's cause. Off-spinner Mahedi Hasan was the pick of the bowlers for the visitors, returning figures of three for 29. Meanwhile, left-arm pacer Abu Hider, who was not in the initial list of players for the squad, featured for Bangladesh and returned figures of two for 37.

'It's been a blessing'

SPORTS REPORTER from Chattogram

Hamilton Masakadza made his last international game a memorable one as the Zimbabwe skipper led from the front by smashing a blistering, match-winning knock of 71 to help clinch a consolation win in the T20I tri-series -- their maiden T20I win over Afghanistan -- by seven wickets at the Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium in Chattogram yesterday.

Terming Bangladesh as his second home, Masakadza said that it was a very special way for him to end his international career.

"Bangladesh, where I made so many friends, has always been very special to me and very close to my heart. I really love the passion of the people of this country. It's really been a blessing to come here," Masakadza, a familiar face in the domestic circuit, told reporters yesterday.

"Fortunately, today [Friday] there were no tears on the field but I started tearing up in the morning when I tried to go through the team talk. On the day when I announced my official retirement to my teammates, I could barely speak three sentences, so yes, it's been a really emotional time for me," Masakadza, the second-youngest to score a century on Test debut, said.

According to the 36-year-old losing the Test series in 2005, which was Bangladesh's first ever Test series win, is his darkest memory in Bangladesh.



Zimbabwe skipper Hamilton Masakadza made his last international game memorable as he struck a magnificent 42-ball 71 against Afghanistan during their encounter in the ongoing T20I tri-series in Chattogram yesterday. Zimbabwe won by 7 wickets.

He praised Bangladesh ODI skipper Mashrafe Bin Mortaza, with whom he played in the Dhaka Premier League for Kalabagan Krira Chakra. "I think a lot of people don't really know his story and what he has been through. I remember I was

talking to him and said that he needs to write a book on his life as he is such an inspiration. He is one guy that everyone doesn't know what he has given to Bangladesh. It was a blessing and a really good time that I spent with him."

AFG-ZIM SCOREBOARD

AFGHANISTAN	R/B	4s/6s		
Gurbaz b Williams	61/47	4/4		
Zazai b Mutumbami				
b Mutumbami	31/24	3/2		
Shafiqullah lbw b Mpofo	16/13	1/1		
Najibullah c Madziva				
b Mutumbami	5/8	0/0		
Nabi c Jarvis b Mpofo	4/2	1/0		
Naib c Ndlovu b Jarvis	10/7	0/1		
Niazai c Burl b Mpofo	12/15	1/0		
Rashid not out	9/6	0/1		
Asghar c Ndlovu b Mpofo	0/1	0/0		
Dawlat not out	0/0	0/0		
Extras: (b-4, nb-3)		7		
Total: (For 8 wickets in 20 overs)		155		
Did not bat: Mujeeb Ur Rahman				
Fall of wickets: 1-83, 2-107, 3-116, 4-121, 5-124, 6-140, 7-154, 8-155.				
Bowler	O	M	R	W
Ndlovu	4	0	23	0
Jarvis	3	0	27	1
Williams	4	0	34	1
Mpofo	4	0	30	4
Burl	1	0	13	0
Madziva	1	0	6	0
Mutumbami	3	0	18	2
ZIMBABWE	R/B	4s/6s		
Taylor c Najibullah b Mujeeb	19/17	2/1		
Masakadza c Nabi b Dawlat	71/42	4/5		
Chakabva c Rashid b Mujeeb	39/32	1/2		
Williams not out	21/24	2/0		
Mutumbami not out	1/2	0/0		
Extras: (w-5)		5		
Total: (For 3 wickets in 19.3 overs)		156		
Did not bat: Burl, Mutumbami, Madziva, Jarvis, Ndlovu, Mpofo.				
Fall of wickets: 1-40, 2-110, 3-139.				
Bowler	O	M	R	W
Mujeeb	4	0	28	2
Dawlat	3.3	0	27	1
Naib	3	0	19	0
Nabi	4	0	40	0
Rashid	4	0	29	0
Niazai	1	0	13	0
Result: Zimbabwe won by 7 wickets.				
Player-of-the-match: Chris Mpofo.				

Archer gets ECB contract

AFP, London

England pacer Jofra Archer has been awarded a central contract for Test and white-ball cricket for the first time after making an impact during the World Cup and the Ashes.

Archer, 24, was England's leading wicket-taker in their triumphant World Cup campaign. He then took 22 wickets at an average of 20.27 in four Tests against Australia. His bowling touched speeds in the mid-90-miles-per-hour range in a scintillating debut international summer.

The Barbados-born Archer, who only became England qualified earlier this year, is one of 10 players to receive a Test deal for the 2019/20 season. Another is opener Rory Burns, who cemented his spot at the top of the order with some battling performances in the Ashes.

Spin duo Moeen Ali and Adil Rashid have lost their central Test contracts but are in a list of 12, also including Joe Denly, to be handed less lucrative white-ball deals.

Moeen was dropped from the World Cup squad towards the end of the group stage before a dismal showing in the Ashes opener. He did not appear for the rest of the series.

Rashid was a regular for England in the Test side last year but lost his place during the winter tour of the West Indies and was unused against Australia, although he is a regular in captain Eoin Morgan's



white-ball set-up.

Test contracts: James Anderson, Jofra Archer, Jonny Bairstow, Stuart Broad, Rory Burns, Jos Buttler, Sam Curran, Joe Root, Ben Stokes, Chris Woakes. **Limited-overs contracts:** Moeen Ali, Jofra Archer, Jonny Bairstow, Jos Buttler, Joe Denly, Eoin Morgan, Adil Rashid, Joe Root, Jason Roy, Ben Stokes, Chris Woakes, Mark Wood.

MS should go without being pushed: Gavaskar

REUTERS, Mumbai

The time has come for India's long-serving wicketkeeper-batsman Mahendra Singh Dhoni to bow out of international cricket - and he should go before he's pushed, batting great Sunil Gavaskar said.

Former captain Dhoni has been the subject of intense speculation among fans, ex-players and pundits over when he will retire from international cricket since India's semi-final exit from the World Cup.

The veteran of 350 one-dayers, who quit playing Tests at the end of 2014, has not provided any hint of what his plans are.

However, he made himself unavailable for India's tour of the West Indies and instead opted to spend 15 days with India's territorial army, a reservist force that draws on civilians who can do short stints to assist the military.



Only he can clarify what he thinks his future with Indian cricket is," former India captain and opening batsman Gavaskar told India Today.

"But he's now 38, by the time the next T20 World Cup comes he will be over 39 years old. I think India should be looking ahead."

Dhoni captained India to the World Twenty20 crown in 2007, and the 50-over World Cup title at home four years later, and enjoys cult status in the cricket-mad country. At his prime Dhoni was widely

considered the best "finisher" in the game but his electrifying ability to put bowlers to the sword at the end of innings has waned of late, while he has also struggled to make solid starts. Dhoni's glove-work, however, still remains top-class.

The next 50-over World Cup is still four years away but the World Twenty20 will be held in 2020 and Dhoni enjoys unwavering support from India captain Virat Kohli who has publicly backed him on numerous occasions.

"His value to the side is always going to be fantastic. It's not just the runs he will score or the catches and the stumpings he will effect," said Gavaskar, who once held the record for most Test runs and centuries in the longest format of the game.

"His overall presence is so calming on the field, it's fantastic for the captain because the captain gets the benefit of his views. So that's a huge plus.

"But I think the time has come. Everybody has a shelf life," he added. "He should be going without being pushed out. He should be going on his own terms."