



Ever the diligent trainer, Bangladesh batsman Mushfiqur Rahim was hard at work honing his considerable batting skills to prepare for the upcoming National Cricket League at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

'Only the injured will be excused'

SPORTS REPORTER



The 21st edition of the National Cricket League (NCL) is set to begin from October 10 and, at least inferring from the Bangladesh Cricket Board's (BCB's) stated plan regarding the first-class tournament so far, it can be expected that this edition will see the start of a more intense brand of cricket.

It now seems that the board will be a bit sterner in ensuring the participation of national team players in the domestic league, the implementation of which has been long due.

"The instructions are given. If some players have any injury concern and cannot play then it is different. But other than that, all [national] players are instructed to play. Liton [Das] and Shakib [Al Hasan] might not be able to play the first game [as they are playing the CPL] but the other players who are available will have to play. And what I see is that the players are actually very eager to play this time as we will be entering the Test Championship from the India tour [in November]," BCB selector Habibul Bashar told The Daily Star yesterday.

Wickets not being sporting enough in the domestic circuit has also been an issue in previous years. This time however, Bashar hoped for better wickets that would

aid both pacers and spinners while the batsmen would also be able to enjoy themselves after some hard work.

"The wickets outside Dhaka last year -- such as in Bogura and Rajshahi -- were green in the beginning. And sometimes, it is also good to prepare spinning tracks as it seems like we are forgetting how to play spin. So, there should be one or two spinning tracks as spin is our strongest suit. And I hope that we will be getting some green wickets in the beginning. All these instructions are already given to groundsmen so I hope that it will be a lively season," added Bashar.

Fitness levels, especially in longer-version cricket, has been problematic and Bashar said that 'it sometimes happen that players struggle on the fourth day'.

Addressing this, the BCB had announced an increase in fitness level requirements -- a leap from last year's required score of nine to 11 this year as the minimum beep test score for players in order to be considered -- last month. Although the BCB seemed to have backtracked from their hard line after criticism from some senior players, the initiative did see improved numbers in the overall fitness of players.

Bashar informed that the BCB may consider some senior players with a score of 10 or 10.5 this time around, but the board will be stricter in the future in this regard as they are set to instil a new culture in Bangladesh cricket.

Shakib, Tamim in The Hundred for 100k

STAR SPORT DESK



Bangladesh cricket superstars Shakib Al Hasan and Tamim Iqbal were among six Bangladesh players to have registered for England and Wales Cricket Board's (ECB's) inaugural draft for The Hundred.

The four other Bangladesh players who have signed up were Mohammad Mithun, Mohammad Saifuddin, Mustafizur Rahman and Mushfiqur Rahim.

The Hundred is a new competition in a novel 100-ball format in which eight freshly formed teams, representing seven cities from around the UK, compete against each



other. Each team has both a men's and women's side.

165 overseas players were registered in the full list before the main draft on October 20 with the likes of Rashid Khan, Chris Gayle, David Warner, Aaron Finch and Babar Azam some of the major names who have already signed up.

Both Shakib and Tamim entered with a reserve price of 100,000 pounds, alongside other star names such as Andre Russell, Glenn Maxwell, Rashid Khan, Sandeep Lamichhane, Shahid Afridi, Dwayne Bravo, Sunil Narine and Kieron Pollard.

There were four reserve price brackets -- 125,000, 100,000, 75,000, 50,000 and 40,000 pounds.

67 players have not set a reserve price and the four other Bangladesh players in Mushfiqur, Mustafizur, Saifuddin and Mithun are expected to be among them.

Elgar, De Kock keep SA afloat despite Ashwin's 5-for

AFP, Visakhapatnam



Dean Elgar and Quinton de Kock centuries helped South Africa fight back Friday as the tourists reached 385 for eight in response to India's mammoth first-innings 502.

De Kock, a wicketkeeper-batsman, made 111 and put on a key 164-run stand with Elgar, who scored 160, to thwart the Indian bowling attack on day three of the first Test in Visakhapatnam.

Champion off-spinner Ravichandran Ashwin though kept chipping away to claim his 27th five-wicket haul and first since August 2017 in 66 Tests.

At stumps, the Proteas still trail by 117 runs as they chase India's first innings score of 502 for seven declared.

Debutant Senuran Muthusamy, on 12, and Keshav Maharaj, on three, were at the crease at stumps as 98 overs were bowled in the day to make up for lost time due to thunderstorms on day one.

De Kock completed his fifth Test hundred in the final session with a six off Ashwin before eventually being bowled by the off-spinner.

Ashwin, who rattled the South African top-order with his twin strikes on day two, struck again with the wicket of Vernon Philander for nought.

The left-handed Elgar, who started the day on 27, led his team's revival after they slipped to 63 for four in the morning session.



South Africa opener Dean Elgar acknowledges the applause after completing his 12th ton on the third day of the first Test against India in Visakhapatnam yesterday. India off-spinner Ravichandran Ashwin (R) picked up his 27th five-wicket haul to put the hosts in front.

PHOTO: AFP

Elgar put on 115 runs with skipper Faf du Plessis for the fifth wicket to take the attack to the opposition bowlers with some positive batting.

Ashwin's spin partner Ravindra Jadeja also made it count with Elgar's wicket in the final session as he moved to 200 Test scalps.

South Africa started the day on 39-3 but fast bowler Ishant Sharma struck early, taking overnight batsman Temba Bavuma low for 18.

Jadeja also posed problems and nearly got Elgar on 74 but

wicketkeeper Wriddhiman Saha spilled the chance.

Indian opener Mayank Agarwal set the tone for the hosts' dominance of the game with his 215 and a 317-run opening stand with Rohit Sharma, who hit 176 of India's giant score.

An over-enthusiastic fan caused a brief security scare in the afternoon session as he rushed on the field to get a selfie with the India captain Virat Kohli.

Kohli, who is treated as a national hero, was taken by surprise by the intrusion in between overs when the youth tried to hug him before



taking a picture and touching the star player's feet.

Kohli tried to order the teenager off and vice-captain Ajinkya Rahane also intervened but the persistent fan stayed on the field for more than two minutes.

Security officers eventually overpowered him as he ran off, while the crowd roared and clapped.

SCORES IN BRIEF

INDIA: First innings 502 for 7
SOUTH AFRICA: First innings 385 for 8 (Elgar 160, De Kock 111, Du Plessis 55; Ashwin 5-128, Jadeja 2-116)

Pak-SL first T20I today

AFP, Lahore

World number one Twenty20 team Pakistan take on an inexperienced Sri Lanka in the first of a three-match series in Lahore on Saturday, starting their preparation for next year's World Cup in the shortest format.

Pakistan will also play three Twenty20 matches in Australia next month before hosting Bangladesh and later travelling to Ireland and England, all ahead of the Twenty20 Asia Cup.

That gives them ideal preparation for the Twenty20 World Cup to be held in Australia in October and November next year.

Pakistan captain Sarfaraz Ahmed said the preparation was good but he was keeping his eye on the ball: Sri Lanka.

"We will not take them lightly," said Sarfaraz.

"A Twenty20 match can be won by one good performance in batting and one in bowling, so we need to work hard to win the series."

The remaining matches will be played on Monday and Wednesday, also in Lahore.

Pakistan enjoy a superior record against Sri Lanka, having beaten them in eight of 13 matches. They beat Sri Lanka in the final to win the 2009 Twenty20 World Cup in England.

India A crush hapless BD

SPORTS REPORTER

The Bangladesh women's A team suffered an eight-wicket hammering at the hands of their Indian counterparts in the first of a three-match one-day series at the Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium in Chattogram yesterday.

Electing to bat, Bangladesh could only score 104 in 45.3 overs before being bundled out. The home side never looked comfortable as only four batters could attain double figure scores. Nigar Sultana and Fahima Khatun were the top contributors, each scoring 17.

After the exchange, an unbeaten 108-ball 51 from opener Nuzhat Parveen helped India romp to victory in just 37.5 overs with eight wickets to spare.



The Bangladesh Under-19 squad on tour in New Zealand visited the Al-Noor mosque in Christchurch for Jumma prayers yesterday. The mosque was the site of a mass shooting on March 15, 2019, which the Bangladesh senior team had narrowly escaped.

PHOTO: BCB

Root wants new coach to focus more on Tests

ICC



Joe Root, England's Test captain, has not been involved in the selection of a new coach for the team, but knows what he wants from any prospective candidate:

a focus on Test cricket and the infusion of new energy.

Trevor Bayliss stepped down as coach after the Ashes at home. While under him England grew into a limited-overs force, winning the ICC Men's Cricket World Cup 2019, they had mixed success in Test cricket. They recorded a historic series sweep in Sri Lanka and won against India at home, but also struggled in Australia, New Zealand and West Indies, and conceded the Ashes at home for the first time in 18 years.

Root, a part of the World Cup-winning side, now hopes that the team can turn its focus back on red-ball cricket.

"One thing you always want from a new coach is a bit of energy and a slightly

different way of going about things," he told PA. "Trevor did a brilliant job managing English cricket, but I'm sure whoever comes in will want to put their stamp on it quite early.

"Personally, I'm looking forward to Test cricket being slightly more of a priority than it has been for the past few years."

Gary Kirsten, the former South Africa batsman, who coached India to a World Cup win in 2011, is being seen as a front-runner to replace Bayliss. Root made it clear that he isn't involved in the selection process, but had polite praise for Kirsten.

"You look at the list and I'm thrilled with the names involved," he said. "There's a lot of noise around certain individuals, but the group have all done special things and could bring good things to English cricket."

"Gary has obviously had a fantastic time in international cricket, he's done some wonderful things with India and South Africa -- domestically done some good stuff, recently in Twenty20 cricket. He's obviously a very accomplished, all-round coach."

Mehedi boosts BD A again

SPORTS REPORTER



Bangladesh A team all-rounder Mehedi Hasan Miraz, who finished their first four-day on a high by bagging a fiver, also started the second and final four-day match against their Sri Lankan counterparts positively at the Mahinda Rajapaksa International Cricket Stadium in Hambantota yesterday.

On a day when Sri Lanka managed a decent score of 223 for five in 74 overs, it was Mehedi who scalped three of the five wickets while conceding just 66 runs in his 31 overs, which included 12 maidens.

The 21-year old began the proceedings well by dismissing Sri Lanka opener Sangeeth Cooray in the 14th over with the score on 32. However, Sri Lanka's batsmen did not lose their way as Pathum Nissanka and Kamindu Mendis strung together a crucial 121-run second-wicket stand. This partnership was also again broken by Mehedi when he had Kamindu, on 62 off 121 balls, caught behind in the 48th over.

Mehedi also ousted the most dangerous batsman of the day, Nissanka, who scored a team-high 166-ball 85 before being trapped in front by the off-spinner in the 58th over. Pacer Ebadot Hossain picked up the remaining two wickets that fell on the day, returning figures of two for 51.