



Bangladesh Test captain Mominul Haque (L) yesterday departed for Nagpur with the rest of the Test squad, (from L to R) featuring Ebadot Hossain, Abu Jayed and Saif Hassan, with the first of a two-match series against India set to begin on Thursday. PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

Tigers positive heading into decider

SPORTS REPORTER from Rajkot

After a chastening eight-wicket defeat in the second T20I against India in Rajkot, the Bangladesh contingent moved to Nagpur yesterday for the series decider on Sunday.

The flight to Nagpur was scheduled for yesterday morning and some players and coaching staff had boarded the team bus at their Rajkot hotel when they learned that the flight was delayed. They eventually took off from Rajkot at around 1:45pm local time and reached Nagpur an hour and a half later.

Before leaving the team hotel in Rajkot, Bangladesh pacer Shafiqul Islam spoke to the media present and reiterated that the Tigers still felt strong despite the setback of losing the second T20I, in which India skipper Rohit Sharma hammered a 43-ball 85.

"If we don't repeat the mistakes of the last match, of course we can win the series," Shafiqul told the reporters.

"We made a few mistakes with the bat and ball and we have to work on those departments. There is no reason to be morally down because of how Rohit Sharma played. I feel that he had a very good day. We are still strong. We still have an opportunity.

"Obviously we are disappointed since we could have clinched the series if we played well," he added.

Aminul proves his worth

ABDULLAH AL MEHDI from Rajkot

Bangladesh were swept aside by an aggressive Rohit Sharma on a flat batting track in the second T20I in Rajkot on Thursday after the Tigers' errors in batting led to a middling score, allowing the Indian captain to make things look easy during his 43-ball 85.

Life was difficult for the bowlers on that surface. Bangladesh had picked three seamers but once the Indian captain got going, he was finding the boundary on a regular basis. The pitch too played a part as the flat and hard surface allowed the batsmen to play their shots with ease. For Bangladesh, there was not much to take heart from except leg-spinner Aminul Islam's performance during that tough period while everyone else was going for runs.

The young leg-spinner, who got a surprise call-up during the home tri-series against Zimbabwe and Afghanistan in October, has remained a part of the T20I side ever since. The India series however is a big step up in terms of challenges and so far, Aminul has shown that

he can manage pressure situations and read the batsmen well. Having bagged two important wickets in the first T20I, Aminul turned out to be the only bowler who survived the Rohit storm. He also thwarted the India captain from scoring a ton in his 100th T20I.

Spinners Aff Hossain and Mosaddek Hossain could not be bowled for more than an over each, going for 13 and 21 runs respectively. Pacers Mustafizur Rahman and Shafiqul Islam went at over nine runs per over and in those circumstances, the young leggie picked up two wickets for 29 runs, figures closely resembling his Indian leggie counterpart Yuzvendra Chahal who bagged two wickets and conceded 28 runs.

He was praised by captain Mahmudullah Riyad after the game for showing courage. Aminul had flighted the ball while others around him were going for big sixes. "He bowled well in the first match and today also he showed lots of courage. I told him that if you can do well against strong opposition such as this, you will have more self-confidence," Mahmudullah said of Aminul.

"We all know how strong India's batting is

and I think his confidence level is good... it's in the right place. If he can continue and bring us a few wickets in the next match then it will be good for us," Mahmudullah added.

Not long ago, 20-year-old Aminul was playing for the emerging team and the Bangladesh A team. Not even recognised as a specialist spinner, he has proven to be a more than handy addition to a side craving leg-spinners. In T20 cricket, where batsmen take more chances, he has shown the ability to stick to his guns, and a surprising degree of accuracy. But things will however not remain rosy for the young wrist-spinner. So often in Bangladesh, a young player makes an early mark but falls away due to not being played and lacking in confidence.

With the BCB now mandating the use of leg-spinners in domestic leagues like the NCL, wrist-spinners will possibly have more exposure but only time will tell whether Aminul will make the cut. However, with the team now being formed for the upcoming T20 World Cup, the BCB think tank may look to Aminul for substance in the shortest form of the game.



Bangladesh leg-spinner Aminul Islam. PHOTO: STAR FILE



There is not much pressure on the team... we will play like we play against other teams. There will be some pressure without Shakib bhai. But Miraz and Tajjul are in the team; hopefully they can overcome his absence.

SHADMAN ISLAM
BANGLADESH BATSMAN

Khulna's chance to get a stranglehold

SPORTS REPORTER

The fifth round of the 21st edition of the National Cricket League (NCL) will commence today with Khulna Division sitting on top of the points table in Tier 1 after accumulating 26.46 points.

Khulna will play Rajshahi Division in Mirpur while Dhaka Division, second in the top tier with 20.6 points, will face Rangpur Division in Chattogram. Meanwhile, hosts Barisal Division will try to get the better of Chittagong Division and Dhaka Metropolitan will face Sylhet Division in Cox's Bazar.

However, with cyclone Bulbul looming, some of the fixtures might see the first day of play marred by inclement weather, especially the matches in Cox's Bazar, Chattogram and Barisal -- the places to be most affected by the cyclone.

If the weather remains favourable, it will

be the perfect opportunity for Khulna, who convincingly defeated Rajshahi by seven wickets in their previous meeting and also won their last fixture against Rangpur by one wicket, to get into a commanding position.

The leaders can gain a maximum of nine points for a win -- eight for a win and a bonus point for registering two consecutive victories and even more if they meet other conditions.

That would also make life difficult for Dhaka Division, who would then be required to win their fixture against Rangpur and also the following game to stay in the title race.

Rangpur, who are yet to register a win and sit bottom of the Tier 1 table, will be desperate to seal a victory and reduce their chances of being relegated. However, so far it seems all four Tier 2 teams have a chance to be promoted to the top tier with little separating them in terms of points.

Forhad sole Bangladeshi in Bengal Tigers

SPORTS REPORTER

All-rounder Forhad Reza is the only Bangladeshi cricketer who has been picked up by the Bengal Tigers for the upcoming T10 cricket league in Abu Dhabi.

The owners of the Bengal Tigers, who are mainly based in Chattogram, had earlier roped in Junaid Siddique, Mahedi Hasan, Abu Hider, Yasir Ali, Enamul Haque, Arafat Sunny and Forhad.

However, Bangladesh Cricket Board CEO Nizamuddin Chowdhury informed that apart from Forhad, the board did not grant No Objection Certificates for the other six professional cricketers.

Forhad will play alongside the likes of Thisara Perera, Colin Ingram, Andre Fletcher and others.

The T10 tournament is set to begin on November 15. Former Bangladesh cricketers Aftab Ahmed and Nafees Iqbal will act as head coach and team manager respectively for the Bengal Tigers.

Aus rout Pak to clinch series

AFP, Perth

Ruthless opening pair Aaron Finch and David Warner ran riot as Australia routed Pakistan by 10 wickets in Perth to wrap up their Twenty20 series 2-0 Friday in emphatic fashion.

After restricting the visitors to 106 for eight, Finch (52) and Warner (48) whacked five sixes and eight fours between them as they raced to the finish line without loss.

The home team won in Canberra by seven wickets, thanks to a brilliant 80 not out by Steve Smith, and were on track to also triumph in Sydney only for rain to save the visitors.

Their victory in Perth has them on an impressive eight-game winning streak in the short format as they build towards the T20 World Cup on home soil next year.

"Really proud of the boys with the way we applied ourselves in the last couple of weeks. Each time we turn up at training, we are improving ourselves and that is very important," said captain Finch.

"We are growing as a team and hopefully some big things to come."

In contrast, Pakistan are struggling and have now lost five of their last six.

Despite the poor run, which included an embarrassing 3-0 home series defeat to an under-strength Sri Lanka that cost Sarfaraz Ahmed the captaincy, they remain number one in the rankings.

But their cricket chiefs will be worried about the two Tests against Australia to come, starting this month in Brisbane.

"Very disappointed, but we lost to a good team. We have learnt a lot from this series and we'll take the positives and come back hard in the next series," said skipper Babar Azam.

"As captain, I learnt a lot personally too, but there's a long way to go."

After being sent in to bat at the Perth Arena, Iftekhar Ahmed's 45 was the only resistance by Pakistan in a repeat performance of poor batting against quality bowling, led by Kane Richardson who took three wickets.

SCORES IN BRIEF
PAKISTAN: 106 for 8 in 20 overs (Iftekhar 45; Starc 2-29, Richardson 3-18, Abbott 2-14)

AUSTRALIA: 109 for no loss in 11.5 overs (Finch 52 not out, Warner 48 not out)

Result: Australia won by 10 wickets and clinched 3-match series 2-0.

Player-of-the-match: Sean Abbott.
Player-of-the-series: Steven Smith.

Malan, Morgan maul NZ

AFP, Napier

A whirlwind century by Dawid Malan in a record-breaking stand with Eoin Morgan saw England crush New Zealand in the fourth Twenty20 by 76 runs in Napier on Friday to level the series with one game remaining.

Malan was unbeaten on 103 at the close of the England innings with Morgan out in the final over for 91 as England posted an imposing 241 for three and then rolled New Zealand for 165 with 19 balls remaining.

The overwhelming victory set up a winner-takes-all finale in the fifth and final game in Auckland on Sunday.

Malan's 48-ball century was the fastest T20 hundred by an Englishman, his 182-run stand with Morgan is the highest by an England pair and the 241 total is an England record.

Morgan's 21-ball 50 is also an

England record.

"The message is always the same, play aggressively and back yourself," Malan said. "It's not very often you have days like that when every time you have a hack at one it lands safe or goes for six. It's as good as it gets."

Between them, the two left-handers hit 13 sixes and 16 fours with Mitchell Santner and Trent Boult the only New Zealand bowlers to escape with a run rate below 10 an over.

New Zealand started their run chase at a fast clip reaching 54 in the fifth over when Martin Guptill was dismissed for 27 and wickets fell regularly after that.

Only Tim Southee (39) and Colin Munro (30) offered any further resistance while Matt Parkinson took four for 47 for England and Chris Jordan finished with two for 24.

Malan is only the second England player to score a T20 century after Alex Hales, who needed 60 balls to reach his hundred.

He advanced from 61 to 89 in a brutal attack in an Ish Sodhi over when he belted three sixes, two fours and a two, and reached his maiden century pulling Boult over the square-leg boundary for another six.

It was a much-needed confidence booster for England who won the first match in the series and were then well outplayed in the next two.

After losing the toss, England then lost early wickets with Santner removing Jonny Bairstow for eight and Tom Banton for 31 to have the impressive figures of two for five from his first two overs.

SCORES IN BRIEF
ENGLAND: 241 for 3 in 20 overs (Banton 31, Malan 103 not out, Morgan 91; Santner 2-32)

NEW ZEALAND: 165 all out in 16.5 overs (Guptill 27, Munro 30, Southee 39; Jordan 2-24, Parkinson 4-47)

Result: England won by 76 runs and 5-match series level 2-2.

Player-of-the-match: Dawid Malan.



England batsman Dawid Malan struck an unbeaten 51-ball 103, laced with nine boundaries and six maximums, to help his side secure a series levelling 76-run win over New Zealand in the fourth T20I between the sides in Napier yesterday. PHOTO: AFP

Balbirnie succeeds Porterfield

REUTERS, Dublin

William Porterfield has stepped down as Ireland's Test and one-day captain after more than 11 years at the helm with Andrew Balbirnie succeeding him, Cricket Ireland said on Friday.

Since taking over from former skipper Trent Johnston in 2008, Porterfield has led the senior team 253 times, including when Ireland debuted as a Test nation in May last year.

"It has been an incredible journey, and a fantastic honour to have captained my country over the past 11 and a half years," Porterfield said in a statement.