

SPORT



A NEW TEST FOR BOTH BANGLADESH AND INDIA



(Clockwise from L) Bangladesh skipper Mominul Haque and coach Russell Domingo were all smiles yesterday but it remains to be seen whether they will be able to hold on to their jolly moods during their maiden pink ball Test against India at Eden Gardens today. The fans are all pumped up for an enthralling contest where Virat Kohli and his troops will look for the kill in the two-match series. However, much will depend on how pacers Abu Jayed and Mustafizur Rahman, who will likely be picked for the historic Test, utilise the extra swing the pink ball is expected to offer.

PHOTO: BCB/AFP

Mominul eager to learn lessons from Indore

ABDULLAH AL MEHDI from Kolkata

Ahead of the second Test against India -- a day-night affair with a pink ball to start from today -- Bangladesh captain Mominul Haque wanted to correct the mistakes that undid his team during the first Test in Indore. The lack of preparation leading up to the first Test had brought Bangladesh's mentality in the longest format under question. Bundled out twice inside three days for scores of 150 and 213 and suffering an innings defeat showed the gulf between the two countries in experience and ability. Bangladesh have played Test cricket for 19 years but there was a lack of comprehension about what was needed in the longest and the hardest format of the game.

Bangladesh's batsmen lacked footwork against the moving ball. Most found things uncomfortable, with technical flaws coming to the fore, while others lacked the patience to grind things out. Mominul did not want to take the pressure of losing the first match on his shoulders before the historic Test in Kolkata.

"When you are all set to play another match, you can't think much about the previous match, whether you won or lost," he told reporters during a

press conference yesterday. One of the missteps in Indore was not picking more than two seamers on a pitch that offered extra seam movement. Their reliance on an extra batsman in the squad to compensate for an inconsistent top order away from home also did not pay off. "Whatever the result was in

the previous match, win or lose, you can take lessons to focus on for the next match. I hope we will learn from our mistakes from the previous match and

proper shot selection to bat longer against a formidable pace attack. "[Abu Jayed] Rahi and Ebadot [Hossain] bowled well in Indore. Mushfiqur [Rahim] did well in both the innings. We could not put on big partnerships. We had small partnerships but we need partnerships like 100, 150, 200.

"There are some worries about our shot selection. We need to be more focused for that. We needed to be mentally strong and needed to be more prepared. They have three very good pacers and we need to be patient against them."

Preparation was still a factor for the pink ball with India captain Virat Kohli saying "you can't just, two days before you get on a plane, say "play a pink ball Test" in a week's time". That was essentially what happened to the Tigers.

"We didn't play any practice match ahead of the tour. There was none for the pink-ball match as well. We are focusing on our mental preparation. Of course, there should have been a practice match," Mominul said, pointing out that the time they got at the nets was inadequate to prepare for a real match.

will work on the lessons," he said.

However, in the pink-ball Test, Bangladesh's problems could turn out to be more acute. It is difficult to argue against the lack of preparations ahead of the second Test. Mominul said that the first Test held some positives and that they needed

'Fielding the pink ball will be challenging'

SPORTS REPORTER



The pink-ball Test between Bangladesh and India at the Eden Gardens in Kolkata that will start from today has already created massive hype among players and fans of both teams. There has been a lot of speculation ahead of the historic event.

While it has already been established that the pacers are going to be aided by the extra movement that the ball is said to offer, the batsmen need to be more cautious in order to survive the initial sessions if they are to score big later on. Meanwhile, spinners may have a new set of challenges once the sun sets.

And while all these are certain elements of excitement expected to unfold over the next few days, India skipper Virat Kohli mentioned that fans may be excited by the different sorts of challenges in fielding that only the pink ball is going to offer.

The Indian captain said that fielding more than any other aspect needed special concentration during practice sessions.

"As batsmen, we were in the mindset of solidifying our games and our techniques. We were pretty fine with that. But the one thing that surprised me were the fielding sessions. How in the slips the ball hit your hand so hard, it almost felt like a heavy hockey ball or those synthetic balls we've played with when we were younger. It really felt like that on the hand and it's definitely because of the extra glaze of the ball. It's definitely much harder, and it felt a little heavier," Kohli told reporters yesterday.

According to the 31-year-old, fielders need to be extra cautious while taking high catches with the pink ball.

"Obviously it can't be a difference of weight, but for some reason it felt heavier. Even the

throws took a lot more effort than the red ball to reach the keeper. And again, the dip perception was very difficult when the ball went up in the air so I think during the day high catches will be very difficult. We had to watch the balls straight into our palms more often than not. With the red ball and white ball, you catch with the idea of how fast the ball is coming down, but this time if you don't look down at the ball in your palms, it's gone. I think fielding is going to be... people are going to



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IMPROVED CONTRACTS HELPED INDIA'S TEST CRICKET

Virat Kohli talked about 'total commitment' from the players but also reiterated the importance of matching that with improved contract for Test players in the country.

be surprised by how challenging fielding with this ball can be."

Kohli was also of the opinion that while the pink-ball Test can be an excellent way of adding excitement to Test cricket, it should not be a regular occurrence as that would take away the vintage taste of Test cricket.

"In my opinion, this should not become the only way Test cricket is played because then you're losing that nervousness in the first session in the morning. Yes, you can bring excitement into Test cricket but you can't purely make Test cricket based on just entertaining people."

Hasina to grace historic 2nd Test

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina will depart for Kolkata in the morning today to witness the second of a two-match Test series between Bangladesh and India, set to begin later in the day at Eden Gardens.

India Prime Minister Narendra Modi had earlier extended an invitation to his Bangladeshi counterpart to attend the historic day-night Test, where the pink ball will be used for the first time by either side. Before that, the president of the Board of Control for Cricket in India, Sourav Ganguly, issued the same invitation to both heads of state.

During her trip, Sheikh Hasina will attend a ceremonial programme at the airport before travelling to the Hotel Taj Bengal Kolkata, where she will stay during her short visit.

The Prime Minister will then head to Eden Gardens at 12:30pm local time to ring the ceremonial bell alongside the Chief Minister of West Bengal, Mamata Banerjee, to commemorate the Test.

Sheikh Hasina will watch the first session before returning later in the day to attend a cultural programme which will be followed by a felicitation programme arranged by the Cricket Association of Bengal, where she will deliver a speech. Sheikh Hasina will then depart from Kolkata at 10:00pm local time.



It was an all-round performance from Soumya Sarkar in Mirpur yesterday that ensured Bangladesh Emerging Team a spot in the final of the ACC Emerging Teams Asia Cup.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

All-round Soumya takes Bangladesh to final

SPORTS REPORTER



A fine all-round performance from Soumya Sarkar cancelled out Darwish Rasool's brilliant hundred as Bangladesh romped into the final of the Emerging Teams Asia Cup with an emphatic seven-wicket victory over Afghanistan in the second semifinal at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.

The spirited Bangladesh, who took only 39.5 overs to overtake Afghan's 228 runs with seven wickets in hand, will face Pakistan in tomorrow's final at the same venue.

Soumya hit 61 runs off 59 balls, featuring three fours and as many sixes, after taking three wickets to be adjudged player-of-the-match. Bangladesh captain Nazmul Hossain exuded confidence after making their maiden final birth a memorable one.

"We started the tournament with a target to win the trophy. Now we are very near to it but no way can we think about the trophy, rather we have to execute our plans and maintain the right process," said Nazmul after the match.

"Pakistan's bowling attack is very good, which we also saw during their semifinal game against India. We are not thinking about it but we want to play our own game by maintaining the right process," he added.

Back to the match, pacer Hasan Mahmud made the most of the morning conditions, tattering the Afghanistan top order after the home team decided to field first. Hasan took three wickets as Afghanistan were reduced to 73 for five before Rasool brought back his side into contention with a 128-ball 114, including seven fours and as many sixes.

In reply, Bangladesh lost Naim Sheikh early on but Nazmul and Soumya shared 107 runs for the second wicket. Nazmul was dismissed for 59 runs off 68 balls and after that, Afif Hossain (45 not out) and Yasir Ali (39 not out) carried the team to easy win.

SCORES IN BRIEF

AFGHANISTAN: 228 for 9 in 50 overs (Rasool 114, Sayed 34, Tariq 33; Hasan Mahmud 3-48, Soumya 3-58, Tanvir 2-33)

BANGLADESH: 229 for 3 in 39.5 overs (Soumya 61, Shanto 59, Afif 45 not out, Yasir Ali 39 not out; Abdul 2-29, Omarzai 1-40)

Result: Bangladesh won by 7 wickets. Player-of-the-match: Soumya Sarkar.