



Under the watchful eyes of Bangladesh head coach Russell Domingo (L), may be batting consultant Neil McKenzie was explaining the fine adjustments that the star opener Tamim Iqbal (R) requires to convert his starts to big ones in Tigers' second ODI against Zimbabwe in Sylhet today and also in upcoming matches. PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

'Seeking hitters at 5, 6 and 7'

SPORTS REPORTER from Sylhet

Primarily an opening batsman, Liton Das had batted at number five during the Bangladesh's World Cup campaign in England last year, when the stylish right-hander had scored a magnificent, unbeaten 94 against West Indies.

Although Liton had scored a big knock in the middle order, the cricketer would want to bat at his actual top-order position because of his expertise in negotiating the new ball.

The 25-year-old struck his second hundred in the fifty-over format against Zimbabwe on Sunday in Sylhet. That and his brilliant century against India in the final of the Asia Cup in Dubai in 2018 showed his comfort while opening the innings.

"He [Liton] is the better person to talk about it. I think he has just matured. He has taken on the responsibility and scored his second ODI hundred, which is pleasing. He looks like he knows where he wants to take his batting, and looks very hungry," said Bangladesh's batting consultant Neil McKenzie about Liton's transformation as a batsman.

There have been many instances in the past where players have been confused after being given roles that were different from their preferred or familiar ones, which eventually had a negative impact on their games.

But much like the current buzz around creating a good cricket culture in Bangladesh cricket, with head coach Russell Domingo and the selectors already having prepared a separate fast bowling unit for Test and limited-overs formats, the Bangladesh batting department under McKenzie is also looking to provide opportunities for players suited to their roles.

According to the South African, the Bangladesh think tank is looking to create opportunities for specific batting orders, which could help in having a balanced line-up in the coming days.

"I think we have a few ideas to get forward and [are] trying to give a few guys chances. There are obviously different batting line-ups we could install. The biggest thing in Bangladesh cricket is that there are a lot of number one, two and three batters, especially in the T20s. It's just to find the number five, six and seven who could clear the fence and who want to play that role. Not everybody can bat at one, two and three. It's actually someone who wants to bat at five, six or seven in the T20s," he said.

However, despite batting in his specialist opening position the experienced Tamim Iqbal is struggling to find his rhythm as the left-hander seemed to be in two minds about the approach he should take during his 43-ball 24 against a weak Zimbabwean bowling attack in the first ODI.

McKenzie however backed Tamim and even urged the media to show some patience towards the experienced cricketer.

"In Bangladesh, there's a lot of media. A lot of pressure on the players to perform. Everybody is under scrutiny the whole time. Sometimes it is about giving guys a little bit of benefit of doubt. I just look at a guy who practises like he does, it is a matter of time. I think a lot of the young guys are feeding off him. You can't always get hundreds but when it is going well or bad for you, it is important for you to keep the same personality. Keep your emotions at the same level. Cricketers are very high when things are going well, and when things are down, we are very down."

Can Tamim rediscover the joy?

MAZHAR UDDIN from Sylhet

The weather was gloomy and the overcast conditions were favouring the seamers. The likes of Mitchell Starc, Josh Hazlewood and Pat Cummins were charging in with a deadly combination of pace, swing and bounce, making life hell for the Bangladesh batsman during the ICC Champions Trophy game in 2017 at the Oval.

It was serious business at the flagship event where the likes of Soumya Sarkar, Imrul Kayes, Mushfiqur Rahim had all failed to negotiate the furious fast bowling.

But there was one Bangladesh batsman at the other end who looked totally different. Tamim Iqbal went down the track to Hazlewood, who was bowling at an average speed of over 140 kmph, and hammered a flat-batted slap off a length delivery which zipped past his partner's head for a boundary.

In the very next over the left-hander played a gorgeous straight drive off Starc, which was followed by a powerful square cut for a boundary. From checking the pull shots perfectly along the ground, ensuring

they do not fly to the fielder's hands at deep square leg, to watching the ball right till the end, Tamim was coolness personified.

Bangladesh were all out for 182 and only three batsmen managed to reach double figures. Tamim's share was a courageous 95 off 114 balls, which also featured six fours and three sixes.

That Tamim three years back -- the fearless opening batsman with a clear mindset -- is in stark contrast to the one that has been seen recently.

The 30-year-old experienced cricketer at one point had all the Bangladesh records under his belt and had taken himself to a new height as a world-class opening batsman in the four years following a dismal 2015 World Cup.

But in recent times, Tamim seems to be overthinking his batting approach, and the effect of that has been visible since the start of the ICC World Cup in England last summer.

While there are no issues with his technique or ability, there seems to be something that has been stuck in the left hander's mind, and in his past few innings in the limited-overs formats it has reflected badly on his batting.

He (Tamim) knows his game plans. We are not schoolmasters here. We don't tell anybody what to learn or what to do. We give opinions, thoughts and technical advice, and then it is up to the player to implement it into his game.

NEIL MCKENZIE
BANGLADESH BATTING CONSULTANT

And so, questions have been raised about whether he has withdrawn too much into a shell and is not able to break the shackles of conservative batting. While the case may be that his role in the side is to anchor the innings and bat deep, but when he adopts the same approach against a rather weak and inexperienced Zimbabwe bowling attack, as he did while scoring 24 off 43 balls in the first ODI on Sunday, it indicates that the player is putting extra

pressure on himself. That in turn prevents him from playing his normal game, which is what would serve him and Bangladesh best.

"He knows his game plans. We are not schoolmasters here. We don't tell anybody what to learn or what to do. We give opinions, thoughts and technical advice, and then it is up to the player to implement it into his game," said Bangladesh's batting consultant Neil McKenzie to reporters at the Sylhet International Stadium yesterday. "We are not talking about a young guy. We are talking about a senior man. Believe me, he knows it before you guys or any of us do that he has made a mistake. Tamim puts a lot of pressure on himself. He values his wicket a lot. It is what has made him successful. Maybe it is about trying to loosen him up for one or two balls. If he can get one or two more boundaries, all you guys will get off his back."

Tamim is known as someone who pays great attention to statistics. Even if he scores a hundred today in the second ODI, it will be important that he actually enjoys his game and not get bogged down in the little things, or else things may remain the same in the coming days.

'Need to improve power cricket'

Tigresses end campaign with 9-wkt defeat against SL

STAR SPORT DESK

Bangladesh captain Salma Khatun emphasised upon the importance of improving their power cricket and fitness levels after her side ended their ICC Women's T20 World Cup campaign with four straight losses.

Bangladesh lost their last group match against Sri Lanka by nine wickets following a dismal batting performance as Sri Lanka spinner Shashikala Siriwardena bowled out of international cricket with four wickets for 16, the best figures of this edition to date, during an easy victory over the Tigresses at the Junction Oval in

Melbourne yesterday.

Shashikala helped Sri Lanka restrict Bangladesh to 91 for eight in their last Group A match. Sri Lanka reached the target in 15.3 overs with nine wickets in hand.

"This experience will help us move forward. The most important things we need to improve on are our power cricket and level of fitness. Our fitness is the main thing that will help us improve our skills and performance," Salma said during the post-match conference.

"We need to keep playing the top-ranked teams regularly in order to improve. The more we play them, the more we'll improve. That's the key

for us. In one match we batted well, in another we bowled well but our fielding has been a constant concern," she added.

Meanwhile, the semifinal line-up has been completed after Australia overcame New Zealand with a four-run win to join India, South Africa and England in the last four.

SCORES IN BRIEF
BANGLADESH: 91-8 in 20 overs (Nigar Sultana Joty 39; Shashikala Siriwardena 4-16, Achini Kulasuriya 2-19)

SRI LANKA: 92-1 in 15.3 overs (Hasini Perera 39 not out, Chamari Athapaththu 30; Nahida Akter 1-18)
Result: Sri Lanka won by nine wickets.

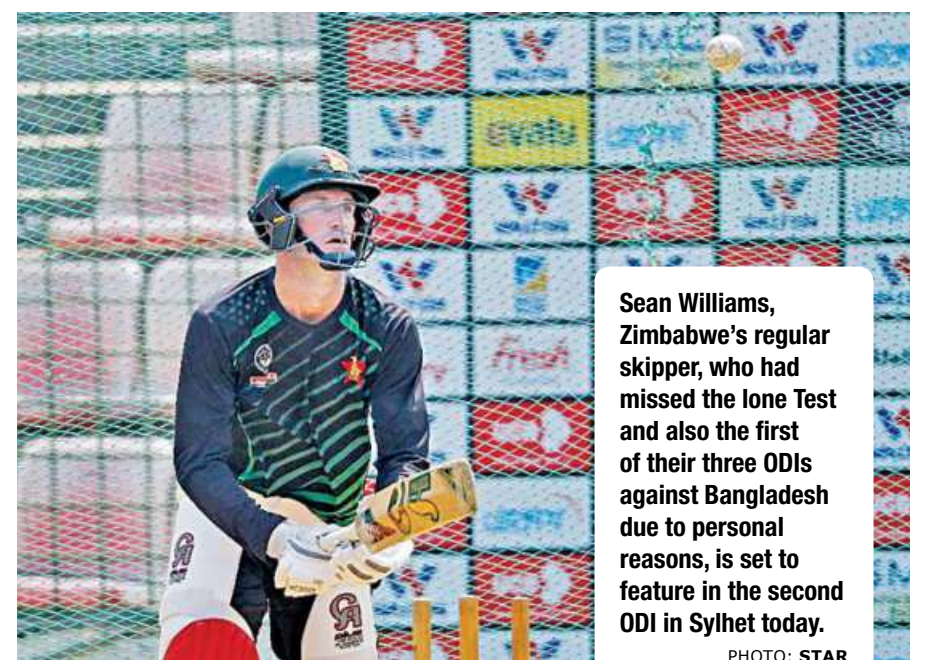
DPL transfers start today

SPORTS REPORTER

The three-day players' transfers for the Dhaka Premier League (DPL), slated to begin from March 15 next month, will start today at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur from 10am.

The last day of transfers will take place in Sylhet to facilitate the signings of national players, who are now playing a three-match ODI series against Zimbabwe.

After a player-by-choice system in last two seasons, the transfers will return to open-market players' transfers this season.



Sean Williams, Zimbabwe's regular skipper, who had missed the lone Test and also the first of their three ODIs against Bangladesh due to personal reasons, is set to feature in the second ODI in Sylhet today. PHOTO: STAR

'Being 1-0 down is tough mentally'

SPORTS REPORTER

For Zimbabwe, it will be a tough ask to get a high-flying Bangladesh off their feet and take the series to a decider by winning the second ODI of the three-match series at the Sylhet International Stadium today.

Bangladesh lead the series 1-0 after registering a thumping 169-run victory -- their biggest in ODIs in terms of runs -- on Sunday. While the Tigers will be in high spirits, Zimbabwe might find a bit of relief in the fact that two of their pivotal figures -- Sean Williams and Craig Ervine -- are likely to bolster their ranks for today's encounter.

All-rounder Williams, the regular Zimbabwe captain, joined the squad on Sunday after missing the one-off Test and the first ODI to be with his family for the birth of his first child. Meanwhile, Ervine played the lone Test in Dhaka but missed the ODI series opener owing to injury.

"I think being 1-0 down is mentally tough for the guys. It was disappointing yesterday [Sunday] in all aspects. Moving forward, having a plan tomorrow [Tuesday] would be key. Hopefully I can bring a bit of energy and calm. Craig Ervine is getting there too, so he will be ready to play," said Williams during the pre-match press conference in Sylhet yesterday.

Williams also thought that winning a game is not about lifting a mental block, but about implementation and execution of plans.

"I don't think it's a mental block. I think it is a simple thing of applying ourselves and getting runs on the board. I think our batsmen get in and get out, after getting fifties or sixties. Bangladesh batsmen have got hundreds against us. I think getting hundreds is extremely important, especially from the senior players. Guys like Brendan [Taylor] and [Sikandar] Raza play a massive role in our team. Having them firing is going to be extremely important for us," concluded Williams.

Black Caps sweep series

AGENCIES, Christchurch

The whitewash in New Zealand ended India's flawless World Test Championship campaign as New Zealand won the second Test by seven wickets inside three days on Monday.

Home skipper Kane Williamson celebrated "an outstanding

We were completely outplayed in this series, and obviously did not play the kind of cricket that we do play as a team. We were not positive enough, we were not brave enough.

VIRAT KOHLI
INDIA CAPTAIN



India captain Virat Kohli (L) talks to his New Zealand counterpart Kane Williamson after the hosts won the second Test yesterday. PHOTO: AFP

performance". But it left India sparring with a journalist, who was captain Virat Kohli frustrated and caught making a foul-mouthed

outburst to the crowd during day two, disappointed with his top-ranked side.

The irritation was clear from the current holder of the "spirit of cricket" award as he lost his world number one batting ranking following a string of low scores.

Kohli gave Williamson a very animated send-off in the first innings and he was caught on camera yelling an obscenity at a group of New Zealand supporters on Sunday. But he refused to answer questions about his behaviour after the Test.

SCORES IN BRIEF
INDIA: 1st innings 242 and 2nd innings 124 all out (Pujara 24; Southee 3-36, Boult 4-28)
NEW ZEALAND: 1st innings 235 and 2nd innings 132 for 3 (Latham 52, Blundell 55; Bumrah 2-39)
Result: New Zealand won by 7 wickets and clinched two-match series 2-0.