



'Easier if you have the intent'

SPORTS REPORTER from Sylhet

 Bangladesh cricketers took a day off yesterday as the series victory with one match in hand gave the home side a cushion to relax a bit. The players opted to stay at the team hotel and apparently were not in a mood to discuss Friday's third and final ODI against Zimbabwe. They were instead eager to know about the players' transfer for the upcoming Bangabandhu Dhaka Premier League as today would be their turn to confirm their respective clubs.

It is expected that the Sylhet will see a hike in excitement today when the transfer process for the national players take place in the city after the first two day's transfers ended in Dhaka yesterday.

Media personnel however were eagerly waiting for Bangladesh opener Tamim Iqbal, who had not turned up at the post-match press conference after his magnificent

hundred helped the Tigers clinch the series on Tuesday at the Sylhet International Stadium.

His 12th ODI hundred probably gave the prolific left-hander great relief following a lot of criticism regarding his batting approach across all formats. Tamim was able to come out from his shell after enduring a tough time in the recent past, with the 30-year-old batsman surpassing his own record for the highest individual ODI score for Bangladesh.

Although many saw a change in mindset behind the success, Tamim was not willing to accept it when talking to reporters at the team hotel. The experienced campaigner however admitted that he had been under pressure in recent times.

"Yes, I was obviously in some sort of pressure and it will be a lie if I don't agree with that. But I think it was a positive as I knew I was batting really well and maybe I was unable to score big. But [during] the score of 41 in the Test against Zimbabwe and the 34-ball

35 I made in Pakistan, I think I batted well. So, the belief was there that it's just a matter of time, but unfortunately it was not coming," said Tamim.

The cricketer also gave credit to his teammates and the board for having faith in him and giving the left-hander confidence, which also helped him immensely.

However, despite the criticism over his conservative batting approach in limited-overs cricket recently, Tamim said that he did not make any changes in his batting during his sublime 158 against Zimbabwe.

"To be honest I didn't make any changes in my batting yesterday (Tuesday). The thing that went in my favour was that I was able to get a couple more boundaries at the start of the innings. If you noticed, I got two deliveries in the same over right on my legs, which I flicked for boundaries. But apart from that, you may have noticed that I did not try to go down the wicket to the bowlers or tried anything different.

"All were cricketing strokes as at times you find the gaps, which was the case for me yesterday (Tuesday) and didn't happen for me in the first game. My strike rate in the second game was around hundred, which is the reason people think that I have changed a lot of things, which is wrong. I have batted with the same mindset as I did in the first game. I think if you have the intent, everything becomes easy so I wanted to play with that intent," he added.

When asked how he managed to overcome the bad patches in his career, the cricketer said that he tried to keep the process correct and added that it was important to enjoy the game and have self-belief.

"Talking of bad times, since 2015 to 2019 I was in very good form and even then, I said that my bad times will come again. I am still saying that my bad times will come again and its normal in cricket. What I can try is to make sure that the bad times comes as late as possible," said Tamim.



PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

Momentous milestone looms for Mashrafe

SPORTS REPORTER from Sylhet

 If Bangladesh win the third and final ODI against Zimbabwe in Sylhet tomorrow, it will be the 50th victory for Mashrafe Bin Mortaza as Bangladesh captain.

Having won the first two matches to secure the series, the momentum is firmly with Bangladesh and the hosts will eye a clean sweep when they take on the visitors at the Sylhet International Stadium.

Since 2010, Mashrafe has led Bangladesh in ODIs in two stints and is the country's most successful captain, with 49 wins in 87 matches.

The Narail cricketer is followed by former Bangladesh captain Habibul Bashar in the list. Now a member of the national selection panel, Bashar had led Bangladesh to 29 wins in 69 games during his tenure from 2004 to 2007.

"Personally, it is nothing special for me but a big achievement for the team for winning these many matches. But is nothing for me if you ask me. The next game will be like any other game. Will have the intention to win," said Mashrafe Bin Mortaza yesterday.

Opening batsman Tamim Iqbal was however thrilled with Mashrafe being on verge of the momentous milestone.

"It is a big achievement for both Mashrafe and the team. It is not easy to lead the team to 50 victories. It was once unimaginable for any of our captains. It is not only the 50 wins but everything that Mashrafe has done for our country, that will always be remembered," said Tamim.

Every game is a challenge: Mithun

MAZHAR UDDIN from Sylhet

 Centuries from Liton Das and Tamim Iqbal in the first two ODIs have taken all the limelight but Mohammad Mithun's contributions would also have pleased the Bangladesh team management as the right-hander played a crucial role at number six in both wins over Zimbabwe.

Bangladesh managed to post 321 for six in the first ODI -- the country's highest ODI score against Zimbabwe -- and apart from Liton's sublime 126 and Mohammad Saifuddin's cameo of three sixes, it was Mohammad Mithun's 41 ball fifty that helped the hosts post a big total.

The 29-year-old once again made a valuable contribution in the second ODI, hitting an unbeaten 32 off 18 balls which made up for Bangladesh losing too many wickets in the latter stages.

Mithun, who started his career back in 2014 as a top-order batsman, is now playing a vital role in the middle order and the right-hander is among the few players who plays in all the three formats for the Tigers.

According to Mithun, his role is a very challenging one and there are many times when his performance gets overshadowed but he is enjoying the role he has been given by the team management.

"Actually, every game is challenging as I am not in a stage where I will be rated as an upcoming player who will get more



PHOTO: STAR FILE

time [to settle into the team]. I am in the middle as I am not young, nor a senior, and played a lot of cricket. So, there is less room for me to make mistakes as I would have to pay heavily.

"So, I have to be more careful as you all know there are a few players whose performances gets highlighted even after doing a little, while few others don't get that despite doing well. If I don't play

well in one game people will say I am not in form but they forget what I did in the previous game. It is because of the stage of my career... not being a youngster. I may not get success all the time but I always try my best," Mithun told The Daily Star at the team hotel in Sylhet yesterday.

Clear instructions from the team management about his role has also worked well for the batsman.

"Right now, I am batting at number six in the ODIs and in that position, it will be a different situation every day. I have to realise that I can't bat in a fashion similar to an opener who can adapt to the conditions first and then play his own game.

"For me, the game totally depends on the scoreboard, like how many wickets fell and how many overs remain in the game. Coach [Russell Domingo] helped me a lot as he gave a clear view on what to do in particular situations. It actually makes me clear on what to do, so it gives you a direction and removes the confusion. It worked well for me in the two games against Zimbabwe and these small things help a lot," he said.

With no regrets about not getting as much limelight as others in the national team, Mithun said it is always a matter of pride for him to represent the country and contribute for the team and look to improve his game every day.

"When I started my career, I was young and I have learned as time went on. I think my career has changed after I got married in 2013 in terms of hard work and having a good mindset. I did not have the purpose in my cricket, which has changed immensely on my return to the ODI side in the [2018] Asia Cup. I have read somewhere that Sachin Tendulkar said that even when he retired from cricket, he felt there was still more to learn for him, and I also believe the same as you will improve as you play more," Mithun said.

Pak ODI rescheduled

SPORTS REPORTER

 The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) has stated in a press release yesterday that it accepted the Bangladesh Cricket Board's (BCB) request to reschedule the one-off ODI to an earlier date so that the Tigers have more time to prepare for the second Test at Karachi.

The ODI was originally planned for April 3 in Karachi, but will now be held on April 1 at the same venue with the Bangladesh team now scheduled to arrive on March 29 in Karachi. The second Test is slated for April 5 with Bangladesh 1-0 down having

lost the first Test by an innings and 44 runs.

"The PCB is always happy to facilitate wherever it can and will be delighted to host the Bangladesh men's national team for additional days in Karachi. There is already a lot of excitement and buzz about the upcoming international matches and the PCB expects the quality of cricket will live up to the expectations of the fans and followers," PCB director Zakir Khan was quoted as saying in the press release.

BCB media committee chairman Jalal Yunus confirmed the news to The Daily Star. "Yes, we had requested to the PCB and they have accepted our request," he said.

IPL prize money set to slash by 50%

PALLAB BHATTACHARYA from New Delhi

In an austerity measure, the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) has decided to halve the prize money for the champions and runners up of this year's Indian Premier League competition beginning on March 29.

In a circular sent to all IPL franchises, the BCCI has notified that instead of Rs 20 crore, the IPL champion team will now receive Rs 10 crore and the runners up will get Rs 6.25 crore instead of Rs 12.5 crore earlier.

"The financial rewards have been reworked as a part of the cost-cutting measures. The champions will get Rs 10 crore instead of Rs 20 crore. The runners-up will get Rs 6.25 crore from earlier Rs 12.5 crore," a BCCI notification said.

The two losing qualifiers will now get Rs 4.3 crore each.

"The franchises are all in good health. They also have multiple ways like sponsorship to bolster their income. Hence, the decision on prize money taken," a BCCI source said.

However, state associations hosting IPL games will get Rs 1 crore with franchises and BCCI contributing Rs 50 lakh each.



Bangladesh opener Soumya Sarkar (C), Test captain Mominul Haque (3rd from R) and Bangladesh Under-19 World Cup winning captain Akbar Ali (3rd from left) were acquired by Gazi Group Cricketers during the second day of the three-day players' transfers for the upcoming Bangabandhu Dhaka Premier League at the BCB headquarters in Mirpur yesterday. Soumya is set to return to action and was included in the squad for the third ODI against Zimbabwe after having taken time off for his wedding.

PHOTO: RAMIN TALUKDER



South Africa fast bowler Lungi Ngidi's (R) career-best figures of six for 58 restricted Australia to 271 all out in the second One Day International at the Mangaung Oval in Bloemfontein yesterday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Rain threatens today's semis

REUTERS, Sydney

 Australia's hopes of retaining the Women's Twenty20 World Cup in a blockbuster final on Sunday could fall foul of the Sydney weather, with heavy rain threatening to wash out Thursday's semifinals.

A shock loss to India in their tournament opener means Australia finished second in Group A, so would be knocked out by Group B winners South Africa if their semifinal clash at Sydney Cricket Ground (SCG) was

not completed.

Unbeaten India take on England in the first of Thursday's semifinals at the SCG and would progress to Sunday's final at the Melbourne Cricket Ground (MCG) if a minimum of 10 overs a side were not possible because of the weather.

Cricketer Australia (CA) had spoken with the International Cricket Council about the possibility of moving the matches to a reserve day, but had been told it was not possible under tournament rules, CA chief Kevin Roberts said.

"It's not part of the playing conditions and we respect that," Roberts told Melbourne's SEN radio on Wednesday.

Stormy weather is forecast by the Bureau of Meteorology throughout Thursday at the SCG, with the chance of rain in the evening when Australia are scheduled to take on the South Africans ranging from 50% to 70%.

The loss to the tournament of the four-times champions and hosts would be a major blow to hopes that Sunday's final will attract a crowd in excess of 90,000 to the MCG.