



Champion all-rounder Shakib Al Hasan arrives in Chattogram along with the rest of the team ahead of the third and final ODI at the Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium tomorrow. Test captain Mominul Haque also joined the squad as the ODI series will be followed by the first of two Tests, starting in Chattogram on February 3.

PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN

Changes in the offing

SPORTS REPORTER from Chattogram

After clinching the three-match ODI series against the West Indies with a game in hand in Dhaka, both Bangladesh and the visitors arrived in Chattogram with the intention of testing their depth in the third and final match of the series, scheduled for tomorrow.

ODI skipper Tamim hinted that they were planning to tinker with the playing eleven for the third match, with players like all-rounder Mohammad Saifuddin, left-arm spinner Taijul Islam, pacer Taskin

Ahmed, off-spinning all-rounder Mahedi Hasan and young left-arm seamer Shoriful Islam fighting to get a shot in the third game.

"Players like Taskin and Saifuddin were not in the playing eleven in the first two games but there is a competitiveness in the team. Everyone should get an opportunity to play because those who didn't play have all the ability to do well. I am sure that we are going to make a few changes for the third ODI. Whoever gets a chance, I hope they play well," Tamim said after the second game on Friday.

Bangladesh were clinical with the ball in the first two games on

the back of strong performances from spinners Shakib Al Hasan and Mehedi Hasan Miraz and bundled the West Indies out for 122 and 148 respectively.

However, pacers are also making an impact. Left-arm seamer Mustafizur Rahman looked in fine rhythm and picked up two of wickets each in the ODIs and the team management will surely be relieved to see Fizz gaining momentum and managing to take the ball into the right-handers after a long time.

Young pacer Hasan Mahmud, who picked up three wickets on his debut in the first game, also

impressed with the pace and carry that he was able to generate. But head coach Russell Domingo would probably want his batters to step on the gas, especially Liton Das, who missed out in both the ODIs despite getting the starts.

Another young batsman Nazmul Hossain Shanto, who was given a new role at number three, also failed to grab the opportunity and was dismissed in soft fashion in the two matches. The team management will really want to see the youngsters gain confidence against a rather weak West Indies side, who will be desperate to put a better show in the final ODI.

Arsenal knocked out of FA Cup

REUTERS, London

Holders Arsenal bowed out of the FA Cup in the fourth round as Gabriel's first-half own goal condemned them to a disappointing 1-0 defeat at Southampton.

The Gunners' defence of the trophy they won by beating Chelsea last August ended with something of a whimper as Mikel Arteta's side struggled with repeatedly sloppy defending on Sunday.

Southampton deservedly took the lead in the 24th minute when Kyle Walker-Peters drilled a low cross into the area and Gabriel inadvertently touched it past keeper Bernd Leno.



COUNTRY'S FIRST ALL-FUNCTIONAL CRICKET COMPLEX

With a vision to build the country's first all-functional cricket complex, the outer stadium of the Sylhet International Cricket Stadium (SICS) was inaugurated on Saturday. The outer stadium, which is an extended part of the SICS, with a green gallery and a pavilion consisting four dressing rooms -- two for international matches and two for other domestic games -- is constructed over a three-acre land spending around 28 crore Taka. A complete cricket complex consisting dormitory, extended practice ground, cricket academy, cricket museum, school and other facilities are being planned to be built. The ground is being planned to be declared as 'Sylhet Ground-2' with the SICS being named as 'Sylhet Ground-1', Shafiqul Alam Chowdhury Nadel, director of Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) said.

REPORT: DWOHA CHOWDHURY, PHOTO: SHEIKH NASIR

Kings stay perfect

SPORTS REPORTER



Leaders Bashundhara Kings and Abahani continued their winning streak, but were made to work hard for their victories in the third round of matches of the Bangladesh Premier League yesterday.

Defending champions Kings were kept at bay in the first half by a determined Brothers Union at the Shaheed Dharendraanath Datta Stadium in Cumilla -- Kings' adopted home venue -- but a couple of tactical changes in the second half from Kings coach Oscar Bruzon changed the complexion of the game completely.

victory in three matches with a 1-0 win over Rahmatganj MFS at the Bangabandhu National Stadium in the second match of the day.

The six-time professional league champions were given a run for their money by Rahmatganj, who had collected a point in their previous two matches.

The Sky Blues had better ball possession and shots on goal, but the Old Dhaka outfit, too, had their moments in the game.

Former national team skipper Mamunul Islam swung in two early corner kicks, but those were headed wide by Nasiruddin Chowdhury and Francisco Rodrigues.

The Brazilian then had a superb



Bashundhara Kings players celebrate Robson Robinho's (3rd from L) decisive goal against Brothers Union in front of the home crowd at the Shaheed Dharendraanath Datta Stadium in Cumilla yesterday.

PHOTO: BFF

Mohammad Ibrahim came in for Mahbubur Rahman Sufil and the speedy winger created havoc for the Brothers defence. His darting run down the left on 64 minutes proved too much to handle for the Brothers defence and the cut-back at the end of the run was stabbed home by Robson Robinho, who got his third goal in three matches.

Ibrahim had another menacing run 15 minutes later, but this time his low shot was kept out by Brothers goalkeeper Titumir Chowdhury, who denied Raul Becerra from the edge of the box in the following minute.

Titumir came up with another save against the Argentine seven minutes later to keep his side in the game but the Gopebagh outfit created next to nothing in terms of attack to cause any threat to Kings' victory.

The win moved the defending champions to nine points from three matches while Brothers, despite showing signs of improvement in the league, are still without a point after three matches.

ABAHANI LEAVE IT LATE

Abahani left it real late to clinch their third

reverse-shot from inside the box after the half-hour mark, but the effort was kept well out by Rahmatganj goalkeeper Rasel Mahmud Liton. Like the first match, substitutions made an impact in this game too. Abahani's double substitutes Jewel Rana and Raihan Hasan combined to get the decisive goal in the 79th minute, with Jewel heading home from in front of goal after Raihan's long throw-in was headed towards him by Kervens Belfort.

The former champions held on to their lead for the rest of the time and were relieved to go level on nine points with Kings at the top of the table.

POLICE OFF THE MARK

Bangladesh Police got their first points on the board with a 1-0 win over Uttar Baridhara in the third match of the day, thanks to an 81st-minute header from the Ivorian midfielder Federic Pouda.

The Ivorian forward scrambled the ball across the goal line with a diving header off a cross from Faisal Ahmed as the newcomers bagged all three points in their third match, leaving Baridhara without a point from two matches.

Pogba's renaissance at perfect time for Man Utd

AFP, London



Paul Pogba is back in form for Manchester United at just the right time as the Premier League leaders prepare for today's FA Cup showdown with bitter rivals Liverpool.

Pogba has been a constant source of friction during his second spell with United and recent suggestions that he was keen to engineer a close-season transfer came as little surprise.

Mino Raiola, the France midfielder's agent, infuriated United manager Ole Gunnar Solskjaer in December by giving an interview in which he suggested Pogba wanted to leave because he was "unhappy" with the lack of freedom granted to him at Old Trafford.

At the time, Pogba's form was so erratic and his team's results so concerning, that some United fans would gladly have helped him to the exit door. Perceived in some quarters to be a bad influence on some of his younger United team-mates, Pogba's stock could not have been any lower when Solskjaer's side crashed out of the Champions League in the same week Raiola made his inflammatory claims.

At that point, a move to his former club Juventus or a possible switch to Paris Saint Germain or Real Madrid seemed inevitable.

But from the ashes of what looked like a season-defining calamity, both Pogba and United have unexpectedly returned to prominence. Finally showing signs of knuckling down and putting his focus on football rather than his image and commercial interests, Pogba has played a key role in United's surge to the top of the Premier League.

Solskjaer reportedly made his displeasure known to Pogba about Raiola's intervention, but did not lose his cool with the 27-year-old.

Pogba has repaid that show of faith with match-winning goals in United's league victories at Burnley and then Fulham on Wednesday.

The World Cup winner's superb curler against Fulham was only his fourth goal of the season but, with Pogba back in the groove, United are a far more formidable force.



SL tail frustrates England

REUTERS



James Anderson took six wickets to help bowl Sri Lanka out for 381, but England's openers failed again as the tourists closed the second day of the second and final Test on 98 for two in reply at Galle International Stadium on Saturday.

Joe Root scored a breezy, unbeaten 67 and will resume on the third morning with Jonny Bairstow, who has 24.

The pair have put on 93 for the third wicket at a rate of more than four runs per over to dig the tourists out of some early strife. Sibley was trapped leg before wicket and Crawley edged to first slip. The two have managed just 28 runs in six innings between them this series, a worry for the tourists as they head to India for four tests on completion of this match.

Bairstow and Root employed the sweep to excellent effect as a counter-attack measure, the latter having also punished Sri Lanka with the stroke in his 228 in the first Test.

Sri Lanka left-arm spinner Lasith Embuldeniya (2-33) quickly bagged the wickets of England openers Dom Sibley (0) and Zak Crawley (5), maintaining his dominance over the pair having also dismissed them in both innings in the first test.

Meanwhile, it took England 139.3 overs to finally dismiss the home side after they elected to bat, with Anderson the chief wicket-taker with 6-40 in 29 overs. Sri Lanka had frustrated the tourists with their tail, the final four wickets adding 138.

Anderson removed centurion Angelo Mathews (110) early in the day after a review by Root for a caught behind that nobody else seemed particularly interested in.

But any thoughts that it would precipitate a Sri Lanka collapse were ended by strong innings from Niroshan Dickwella (92) and Dilruwan Perera (67). Left-hander Dickwella was denied a first Test century when he tried to launch a wider Anderson delivery over mid-off but was caught in that position by a diving Jack Leach.

Fast bowler Mark Wood (3-84) was also among the wickets as he ensured a test debut duck for Ramesh Mendis and induced an edge from Lasith Embuldeniya to Root at first slip.



PHOTO: TWITTER

England pacer James Anderson picked his 30th five-wicket haul in Test cricket during the second day of the second and final Test against Sri Lanka at Galle yesterday. The experienced pacer showed excellent control and guile to claim 6-40 in 29 overs, strangling the Sri Lanka batsmen with his tight line and length, and forcing them into errors. Anderson is the fourth highest wicket-taker in Test cricket and the best among pace bowlers with 606 scalps. The 38-year-old pace bowler needs 14 more to get past leg-spinner Anil Kumble as the third highest wicket-taker in Test cricket. Among pace bowlers, only Richard Hadlee has more five-wicket hauls (36) than Anderson in Test cricket.

Azhar tells youngsters to overcome fear

REUTERS, Lahore

Senior Pakistan batsman Azhar Ali has advised his younger team mates to overcome any fear of failure and do their best in the two-Test home series against South Africa beginning in Karachi on Tuesday.

Smarting from their 2-0 whitewash in New Zealand, Pakistan have included nine uncapped players in their 20-member squad for the matches in Karachi and Rawalpindi.

"Obviously for a new player, it's a challenge to handle pressure and then there are insecurities in our culture around what if they are dropped," former captain Azhar told local media on Friday.

"As a senior player, my advice to them is to trust their skills and stick with that to do well because that is what is going to give them the best chance to perform. "If you think too much that will bring negativity and hold you back from doing well. So be positive and grab the opportunity."

Batting coach Younis Khan has urged fans to be patient with the new members, saying the youngsters needed at least two-three series to find their feet in international cricket.