

Hassan perplexed by Shakib's allegations and the timing

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) president Nazmul Hassan yesterday said that he is yet to see the interview that Shakib Al Hasan gave to Cricfrenzy, an online news portal, on Saturday.

"I don't know. They [board directors who were at a meeting with Nazmul at his residence in Gulshan on Sunday night] told me about it [the interview] but I did not see it, heard it or read about it. They came to the meeting about the New Zealand tour and then said that Shakib said this and that. I told them that I do not have any other thoughts except for the New Zealand tour as the next ODI is tomorrow (Tuesday). I cannot say anything about it now. Let the series finish or at least let tomorrow's match end and then I will talk about it [Shakib issue]," Hassan told The Daily Star.

But Hassan heard bits and pieces of that interview in the media and from board directors, and the BCB boss questioned how a national player can say anything against any of the former national team members.

"He [Shakib] is the team's best player. Now, being a national player who was also the team's captain once, he cannot say anything



against the team. According to the rules, he cannot do that. He has signed an agreement with us and it clearly mentions that he cannot say anything against the board or any board member. This is what the rules entail. Forget the rules, as a person, one should have minimum respect towards the seniors. Why would I, being a national player, say anything against players like Akram [Khan] or [Naimur Rahman] Durjoy? Just because you [Shakib] are a good player, does that give you the authority to say anything against them? If he had anything to say, he could have said it in person to them," added Hassan.

The BCB president also wondered why the issue of Shakib participating in the upcoming Indian Premier League (IPL) and skipping the Sri Lanka Tests has suddenly resurfaced after he had already been given an NOC.

"I don't know why he said all these things all of a sudden. According to myself, there is no basis for these things coming to the fore now. Many supported this and many did not [Shakib skipping Sri Lanka Tests for IPL]. But all those discussions stopped and the whole topic came to an end. I actually don't find any logic behind bringing this topic back and blaming board directors by name.

"What has happened suddenly that he had to say things by naming Akram or Durjoy and by questioning Durjoy's performance for the development of HP squad? I don't understand the ill-timing of this topic. It came up just after Bangladesh lost to New Zealand [in their first ODI]? I actually can't believe it."

Hassan also wondered why players always inform the board of their intentions regarding skipping a tour right at the last moment.

"When he [Shakib] said that he did not want to tour South Africa [back in 2017], we were a bit shocked. We needed to think and get a few players ready beforehand. We needed to play a few other players before that to make them ready for such a series. We were also shocked when we heard about his ban at the last moment just before the India series. Now he shocked us by saying at the last moment that he does not want to go to Sri Lanka. These things are actually unexpected. And then, Tamim, after going to New Zealand, is saying he won't pay T20s. I mean what is the problem if they let us know beforehand?" said Hassan.

And according to Hassan, while players have the right to choose which format or which series they want to play, it still is the foremost duty of a player to put his national team before any franchise league.

Can batsmen land a punch in Round 2?

SPORTS REPORTER



All eyes will be on the batsmen after a disappointing showing in the first game when Bangladesh take on New Zealand in the second ODI at the Hagley Oval today, fighting to stay alive in the three-match series.

Tamim Iqbal and his men will not find much inspiration from Bangladesh's record at the Hagley Oval, which has been the case in all venues in New Zealand.

The Tigers suffered thrashing defeats in the two ODIs they played in Christchurch, losing by 77 runs and eight wickets back in 2016 and 2019 respectively.

On their latest sojourn, things have not changed much. In the first ODI in Dunedin the visitors were bundled out for 131, the first time they had been shut out below 150 since September 2018.

Bangladesh's top order, and in particular skipper Tamim, will have to come up with a better approach. Opener Liton Das and number three Soumya Sarkar also need to find a way to provide a solid start that has remained missing against the Kiwis in their own backyard.

A lot has been said over the seam-friendly conditions in New Zealand and the Hagley Oval is also expected to offer some bounce and swing for the pacers, and the home side will be expected to have an advantage on that front as Trent Boult broke the Tigers' backs with four wickets in the first ODI.

"Batters need to take more responsibility and all the players, from top to bottom, will have to give their best," said middle-order batsman Mohammad Mithun through a video message to the media yesterday. "There's always the discussion [about] where the game tends to slip away from us in the first 10 overs, especially in the batting department.

"Generally, pitches in New Zealand offer high-scoring games and definitely we have to score around 260-270 or else it's always difficult to put up a fight against New Zealand. No matter how the pitch behaves, we have to adjust to win the game and give something for the bowlers to defend."

It will be interesting to see whether the team management includes pace bowling all-rounder Mohammad Saifuddin in place of pacer Hasan Mahmud. Apart from that, head coach Russell Domingo might want to give one more opportunity to the batsmen who looked clueless and

BANGLADESH V NEW ZEALAND IN ODIS AT HAGLEY OVAL, CHRISTCHURCH

2016: Bangladesh were all-out for 264 runs in reply to New Zealand's 341. Tom Latham hit 137 as the hosts won by 77 runs.

2019: Bangladesh were all out for 226 runs. Martin Guptill scored 118 runs to reach the target with eight-wicket in hand.

were prone to soft dismissals in the first game.

For the hosts, they will be without their experienced batsman Ross Taylor for the second consecutive game today after the right-hander suffered a hamstring tear while playing domestic leagues ahead of the series.

On a poignant note, Bangladesh will be playing in Christchurch for the first time since the horrific mosque shootings back on March 15, 2019, which then touring Bangladesh team narrowly escaped. The third and final Test at the Hagley Oval between was cancelled due to the incident.



'Relaxed' booters take on Kyrgyzstan U-23s

SPORTS REPORTER



The Bangladesh national football team will perhaps start an international tournament without the pressure of winning it for the first time when they take on Kyrgyzstan U-23 team in the opening match of the Three Nations Cup at the Dasharath Rangasala in Kathmandu today.

The match will get underway at 5:45pm Bangladesh time and will be telecast live on T Sports.

Winning trophies or at least making it to the final have always been the talking points whenever the men in red and green have taken part in regional or invitational tournaments, but this time around coach Jamie Day has removed all the pressure from the shoulders of his charges by terming the tournament as a platform for youngsters to prove their worth ahead of June's World Cup Qualifiers.

While not thinking about the outcome, the 41-year-old coach will definitely hope that his players execute his plans properly, leading to positive results.

The coach will not have everything in place due to the absence of experienced campaigners such as Tapu Barman, Yeasin Khan, Nabib Newaj Jibon and Rahmat Mia. Captain Jamal Bhuiyan, who reached Nepal yesterday, will not be available for the first match either.

Day will, however, welcome the return of midfielder Masuk Mia Jonny and Matain Mia along with in-form midfielder Mohammad Abdullah. In any case, he would like to see the new ones fill in those big shoes and grab the opportunities.

While the coach is encouraging his players to enjoy the game without thinking about the title, the players are seemingly motivated to do something special.

"They have all trained very well, so hopefully they can take that into the

matches," Day told The Daily Star from Nepal. "My message to the players is to enjoy the game and play relaxed."

The English coach also explained his philosophy of relaxed display, saying: "Everyone will play over two matches. My focus is on seeing all the players play."

Midfielder Sohel Rana, though, believes the players will not take to the field just to enjoy the matches, instead they are thinking of leaving the pitch with victories.

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SOHEL RANA
BANGLADESH MIDFIELDER

matches because as players we want to do well," Sohel told The Daily Star.

The charges of Day have gone through light training, mostly involving technical aspects as the players had a hectic domestic schedule where they even played two matches in a week.

The Abahani midfielder also believes that if they can implement coach's plan properly, they can win every match. He also sees the possibility of young players stepping up to secure a place for the final squad of World Cup Qualifiers.

Bangladesh senior national side have never beaten their Kyrgyzstan counterparts in four meetings so far. During the 2018 World Cup Qualifiers, Bangladesh suffered a 3-1 defeat at home and a 2-0 defeat away.

India look to ride on momentum

AGENCIES



Virat Kohli-led Indian team will look to ride on the winning momentum when they take on World Champion England in a three-match ODI series starting today in Pune.

The series is also part of ICC cricket world Super League, also known as ODI super league, which will help to determine the teams for ICC ODI World Cup 2023. The top seven teams on ICC ODI Super League, apart from the hosts, automatically making to ICC World Cup 2023 in India.

England's three one-day internationals against India starting today will be a fresh opportunity for players to make the case for World Cup places this year, skipper Eoin Morgan said. England lost a hard-fought Twenty20 series against India 3-2. But Morgan and coach Chris Silverwood say the tour is still providing valuable lessons about the tough conditions in the country where the T20 World Cup will be staged in October-November. And more will be learned from the ODIs in Pune, said to the captain.

"Given the World Cup round the corner, playing any international cricket at all is a huge opportunity for guys who have been on the fringes and not made selection so far," Morgan told reporters.



Bangladesh cricketers had their final practice session yesterday at the Hagley Park ahead of today's second ODI against New Zealand.

PHOTO: BCB

Saif takes form to BNCL

SPORTS REPORTER



Opener Saif Hassan took his impeccable form to the Bangabandhu 22nd National Cricket League (BNCL) through which regular domestic cricket returned in the country yesterday after a long coronavirus-induced gap.

The right-hander, who was the player-of-the-series in Bangladesh Emerging Team's recently-concluded multi-format series against Ireland Wolves, scored a century, helping Dhaka Division amass a total of 297 for eight against Rangpur Division on the opening day of the country's oldest first-class domestic competition at the BKSP-4 ground in Savar.

Had it not been for Saif's 233-ball 127, things could have taken a bleak turn for Dhaka. After electing to bat, Dhaka lost both their openers -- Abdul Mazid and Rony Talukdar -- inside first three overs to pacers Mukidul Islam and Alauddin Babu

without adding anything on the scoreboard.

Saif then strung together a 79-run stand with Mahidul Islam to steady the rocking ship. But after Mahidul (47 off 91) fell prey to Mahmudul Hasan in the 28th over, Dhaka once again lost two quick wickets -- those of Taibur Rahman and Shuvagata Hom -- and were staring at a batting collapse.

It once again took a crucial 137-run sixth-wicket stand between Saif and skipper Nadif Chowdhury for Dhaka to get back into the game. However, Rangpur's star bowler Babu removed both Saif and Nadif (69 off 105) in one over before stumps and tilted the momentum back towards Rangpur. Babu finished with impressive figures of four for 25.

Meanwhile, at the Sheikh Abu Naser Stadium in Khulna, veterans Imrul Kayes and Tushar Imran missed out on centuries by agonising margins but helped Khulna score 308 for seven against Sylhet Division. Kayes was removed by pacer Abu

Jayed after a 127-ball 90 in the 44th over while Tushar was run-out in the final session of the day on 99.

At the Shaheed Kamruzzaman Stadium in Rajshahi, young Shahadat Hossain's unbeaten 88 and fifties from Yasir Ali (63 off 119) and Mahedi Hasan Rana (55 off 101)

SCORES IN BRIEF

TIER 1

Khulna Division v Sylhet Division
Khulna 308 for 7 in 83.3 overs (Tushar 99, Imrul 90; Ebadot 2/46, Jayed 2/73)
Dhaka Division v Rangpur Division
Dhaka 297 for 8 in 90 overs (Saif 127, Nadif 69; Babu 4/25)

TIER 2

Barishal Division v Dhaka Metropolis
Barishal 241 all-out (Ashraf 48, Sayeed 46; Hider 3/34, Rakibul 3/76)
Dhaka Metropolis 29 for 1 in 12 overs (Shamsur 12 not out; Monir 1/9)
Chattogram Division v Rajshahi Division
Chattogram 256 for 7 in 90 overs (Shahadat 88, Yasir 63; Farhad 2/36)



Saif Hassan.....127

at the death spared the blushes of Chattogram Division as they finished with a respectable score of 256 for seven against Rajshahi in Tier 2.

In the other Tier 2 game, Barishal were bundled out for a small total of 241 after electing to bat against Dhaka Metropolis. Mohammad Ashraf top-scored with 48 for Barishal while pacer Abu Hider and spinner Rakibul Hasan bagged three wickets each.

Dhaka, in reply, lost the wicket of Anisul Islam and will resume the second day on 29 for one, trailing by 212 runs.

Juve decide to keep Ronaldo

AGENCIES

Juventus managing director Fabio Paratici said that the club have no intention of allowing Cristiano Ronaldo to leave the club.

Speculation continues to swirl over the Portuguese star's future, with concern about the value for money he brings to the team given his reported €55 million-per-year (£47m/\$65m) wages.

Paratici also gave head coach Andrea Pirlo a vote of confidence after a 1-0 home loss to struggling Benevento.

"We've decided to keep Cristiano Ronaldo. He's the best player in the world and we are holding on tight," the director stated at full time.

"We have a project that we started from last season, one game will not change our views or our strategy. This line continues and we are very happy with what we've done, so we'll continue working to improve."

Meanwhile, Juventus awarded Ronaldo a special shirt hailing him as the greatest player of all time and celebrating his latest goal landmark ahead of their Serie A match against Benevento on Sunday.