

Tamim bears Tigers' burden

MAZHAR UDDIN

Tamim Iqbal will hold the key for Bangladesh at the top of the batting order and the team will depend on the experienced left-hander to make an impact in their upcoming two-match Test series in Sri Lanka.

Bangladesh have had a rough time since the resumption of international cricket after the Covid-19 pandemic halted the game and the Tigers are under tremendous pressure to put up better showings in the island nation.

Things started to unfold for Bangladesh, especially in Tests, following a 224-run humiliation against newest Test-playing nation Afghanistan, that too on home soil, in 2019. Bangladesh's dismal performance also resulted in a 2-0 whitewash at home against a relatively inexperienced West Indies side earlier this year.



Tamim Iqbal composed a patient 117-ball 82 and stitched a 109-run partnership with Sabbir Rahman for the third wicket to chase down 191 on the fifth and final day to celebrate their first Test win against Sri Lanka in memorable 100th Test appearance at the P Sara Oval in Colombo in March 2017.

PHOTO: ICC

TEST STATS

Tamim Iqbal against Sri Lanka (Home and Away)

| M | Inn | R | HS | Avg | 100s | 50s |
|---|-----|-----|----|-------|------|-----|
| 9 | 8 | 504 | 82 | 28.00 | 0 | 4 |

In Sri Lanka

| M | Inn | R | HS | Avg | 100s | 50s |
|---|-----|-----|----|-------|------|-----|
| 3 | 6 | 276 | 82 | 46.00 | 0 | 3 |

Overall batting (Home vs Away)

| | M | Inn | R | HS | Avg | 100s | 50s |
|------|----|-----|------|-----|-------|------|-----|
| Home | 27 | 70 | 2620 | 206 | 37.97 | 5 | 16 |
| Away | 25 | 49 | 1888 | 128 | 38.53 | 4 | 12 |

opening batsman over the years, to give his batting partner assurance as well.

However, Bangladesh's leading run-scorer across all formats will be looking to improve on some areas such as his conversion rate in regards to turning fifties into hundreds. With 28 fifties and nine hundred in 119 Test innings, Tamim generally scores a century once every four times he reaches a 50 in a Test and has even scored a double-century.

But, based on his calibre and the high standards that he sets among Bangladesh's batsmen, Tamim will definitely want to improve those stats. Since scoring his last hundred against New Zealand in Hamilton in 2019, Tamim reached fifty-plus runs three times. He also went past 40 twice and recorded one 30-plus knock in those 10 innings for Bangladesh.

It will be important for Tamim to utilise the starts that he has been

able to get in the recent past, but the left-hander has shown an inability to adjust the tempo of his innings and at times has been unable to check his shots, costing his wicket.

Tamim will also be looking to improve his stats against Sri Lanka, against whom he is yet to score a hundred. In nine Tests against them, Tamim has scored 506 runs at an average of 28 with four fifties.

In the absence of two of the most experienced cricketers, Shakib Al Hasan and Mahmudullah Riyad, Tamim will have to shoulder the responsibility for a rather demoralised Tigers and lead the charge.

The 32-year-old can take heart from the fact that he was the man of the match during a win in Bangladesh's historic 100th Test in the island nation. However, it was also the only time Bangladesh managed to win a Test match against their Lankan counterparts since 2017.

Jewel envisions better future for swimmers

ANISUR RAHMAN



Despite the return of sporting activities last September following a seven-month break due to the Covid-19 pandemic, swimming had not organised any events. But the swimmers, especially from services teams, have burst onto the limelight and are now a topic of discussion after producing 11 national records in the recently-concluded Bangabandhu 9th Bangladesh Games.

Jewel Ahmed of Bangladesh Army is among the crop of swimmer, having bagged four gold medals and setting two national records to go with his two silver medals. The 26-year-old, who won two silver medals in the last South Asian Games, held in Nepal in 2019, told The Daily Star yesterday about the problems posed by the Games' deferral.

"Swimmers were fully prepared for the 2020 Games in April, but it was suspended and then we again prepared for February

performance was good because I improved my timing in two events in which I made national records in 2019, but unfortunately I could not defend the gold medal in both events."

The swimmer from Kushtia, who thanked his Unit CEO for gifting him the Tk13,000 swimwear that he was sporting, added: "I had a target of defending all the five gold medals that I won in 2019, but I missed one of them. There is no sorrow about that because I improved my timing in that event but lost to a better swimmer."

Bangladesh Navy and Bangladesh Army shared all 42 gold medals up for grabs, underscoring the point that the pool was dominated by service teams and Jewel believes good training facilities is the reason service teams enjoy such success.

"I can tell you about the Army, which has good training facilities and coaches. So the swimmers can train whenever we want. Besides, our higher-ups also take care of our needs properly so we are doing well. But there are no such facilities at a district level and they can't get results," said Jewel, who first played for Bangladesh Ansar at junior level before joining Army in 2012.

On the gap with swimmers from India and Sri Lanka, Jewel said: "The swimmers from the sub-continent have been improving, but swimmers from India and Sri Lanka are moving ahead faster than Bangladeshi swimmers on the back of long-term training abroad. So we can't catch them despite improving our timing."

Jewel also praised the talent hunt programme, from which swimmers like Kajal Mia, Nur Alam and Anna have been unearthed and accelerated into mainstream swimming competitions, and emphasised the need for such long-term talent hunt programmes to take Bangladesh to new heights.

"As records are being made in each of the Games or swimming championships, we are moving forward and improving. I think a good future is ahead of us but we need long-term training under quality foreign coaches if we are not given training abroad," said Jewel, who possesses five national records.



but the Games were held two months later, in April, 2021. So, our preparation was interrupted and all the swimmers faced problems in terms of practice due to the of the Games," Jewel said.

"However, I think my individual

SA women leave after Covid fiasco

SPORTS REPORTER

Five members of South Africa Women's Emerging team boarded a flight back home from Dhaka on Tuesday evening after returning negative results in their second Covid-19 tests conducted in the capital earlier in the day.

The five individuals, who returned positive results in the first round of tests, stayed back as the rest of the team returned on the previous day. They were put in isolation at a hotel in Dhaka and went through the second tests.

"The results from Osmani Medical College [Monday] were wrong, it showed false positive results. The five individuals underwent tests in Dhaka today [Tuesday] and all of them have tested negative. They are taking a flight back home at 6:00pm today [Tuesday]," Bangladesh Cricket Board's (BCB) women's wing chairman Shafiq Alam Nadel told media on Tuesday.

The four players who had tested positive in the first round are: Sinalo Jafta, Leah Jones, Nobulumko Baneti, Robyn Searle. Team manager Marsia Letsoalo also tested positive.

The visitors lost the five-match one-day series against their Bangladeshi counterparts 4-0, with the last match cancelled in the wake of nationwide lockdown.

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE QUARTERFINALS

Los Blancos set out to finish the job at Anfield

City aim to keep quadruple hopes alive

AGENCIES



In need of another famous Champions League fightback, Liverpool cannot rely on a wave of passion, colour and noise from the stands at Anfield to inspire a comeback from 3-1 down against Real Madrid on Wednesday.

The Los Blancos produced a dominant display against Liverpool in the first leg and capped off a glorious week with a 2-1 win over bitter rivals Barcelona in El Clasico. Los Blancos have been in great form and are favourites to make it to the semi-finals over Liverpool, whose season is starting to get increasingly forgettable.

Real's midfielders were on top of their game last week and they ran the show with great authority. Their frontline has also joined the party in recent weeks and Vinicius Jr. bagged a brace while Marco Asensio got on the scoresheet as well.

If the English champions are to reach the semi-finals for the third time in four years, they will instead need their manager Jurgen



Klopp to conjure the motivation and tactical masterplan to once again eliminate one of Spanish football's giants.

Klopp has earned near God-like status on Merseyside for delivering a sixth European Cup and a first league title for 30 years to Liverpool. But the charismatic German has been unable to halt the Reds' fall from grace this season. With seven games to play in the Premier League, it is already mathematically impossible for Liverpool to retain their title as they lie 22 points adrift of Manchester City in fifth.

Hopes the Champions League could

prove the salvation of a disappointing season were also dashed as Real ran riot in the first 45 minutes in Madrid last week to open up a commanding first-leg lead.

Liverpool's deficit is not as steep as when Barcelona visited two years ago in the semi-finals in what turned out to be arguably the greatest of all the memorable European

HIGHLIGHTS

- Madrid were at their wily best in the first-leg, taking charge of the tie with a 3-1 win in the Spanish capital. The Merengues' canny midfield were at the heart of that victory, though two goals from Vinicius Junior and one from Marco Asensio ultimately did the damage.
- City head into the second leg 2-1 to the good thanks to Phil Foden's last-minute winner in Manchester. Kevin De Bruyne had given Josep Guardiola's in-form side a first-half lead, but Marco Reus' late effort looked to have forced a draw until City's young England midfielder poked in.

nights at Anfield.

Depleted by injuries, Klopp's men still rolled over Barca's stellar cast of star names 4-0 on their way to winning the trophy.

Meanwhile, Manchester City will be aiming to book their spot in the semi-finals when they take on Borussia Dortmund in the second leg of their quarter-final bout.

On a night where Borussia Dortmund's Erling Haaland was expected to show City what could be theirs if they play their cards right, the Norway international was unable to make the Etihad net ripple, although he must have thought that his assist for Marco Reus' 84th minute equaliser would be a game-defining moment last week.

As for Manchester City, Pep Guardiola's side suffered a shock defeat at the hands of Leeds United at the weekend. Guardiola will be hoping his side can move past that loss quickly and pick up where they left off against Dortmund.

City will wrap up the Premier League title in the coming weeks but this remains the competition they all want to win.

'Cricketers still see Test cricket as the pinnacle of the game'

PTI



New Zealand skipper Kane Williamson won his fourth Sir Richard Hadlee medal for excelling across formats and was also adjudged the 'Test Player of the Year' in the country's annual cricket awards on Tuesday.

Devon Conway won the men's ODI and T20 Player of the Year during the 2020-21 awards season which was conducted digitally for a second year running because of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Williamson's incredible home Test summer helped him clinch the two awards alongside the Redpath Cup for first-class batting, after he amassed a whopping 639 runs in just four innings at an average of 159. He claimed the big prize for the fourth time in last six years.

In bowler friendly conditions, Williamson, the number one ranked Test batsman in ICC standings, recorded his top international score

of 251 against the West Indies in Hamilton.

He also notched a Boxing Day Test century on his home ground of Bay Oval in Tauranga, before adding another double-century

against Pakistan at Hagley Oval in Christchurch - to help the Black Caps book their place in the ICC World Test Championship Final.

"Going into the Test summer - there was that Championship Final

carrot and there was a real drive there for the guys," Williamson told Sir Richard Hadlee upon receiving the news of the award on a phone call.

"Although it seemed a long way off, winning four Tests before you've started one is a pretty lofty goal and we knew we just had to try and play as well as we could and commit to what was in front of us.

"...certainly pretty proud as a leader and a player in this side that we were able to achieve some of those things and we're looking forward to that final," he added.

Williamson also made special mention of the international Test player of the year award.

"Test cricket is special in a big way to all the players and certainly to myself," he said. "Growing up watching the game, the tradition and history behind it - and I know all around the world cricketers still see it as the pinnacle of the game so it's an award I feel fortunate to receive."



Sunrisers Hyderabad captain David Warner was seen sharing something with Kane Williamson during a practice session. Sunrisers, who lost their opening fixture against Kolkata Knight Riders, take on Royal Challengers Bangalore in today's IPL fixture.

PHOTO: TWITTER

'I always get fed'

REUTERS, Oslo



The son of Manchester United manager Ole Gunnar Solskjaer has weighed in on his father's spat with Tottenham Hotspur boss Jose Mourinho after the Norwegian coach said he wouldn't feed his son if he simulated an injury.

The row erupted following Sunday's 3-1 win in the Premier League for United when Solskjaer senior criticised Spurs attacker Son Heung-min for exaggerating a blow to the face.

United had a goal disallowed after Son appeared to be struck by Scott McTominay in the build-up, with Solskjaer saying afterwards that if his son, who plays for Kristiansund in his native Norway, went down the way Son did, he wouldn't feed him.

That prompted an angry response from Mourinho, who said that Son's dad was a better father than Solskjaer, but Noah came to his father's defence in Tidens Krav, a local newspaper in Kristiansund.

"I always get fed, I can assure you of that," the 20-year-old midfielder told the paper with a smile, adding that his Norwegian team mates had teased him over the incident when he arrived for training



Manchester United manager Ole Gunnar Solskjaer poses with his sons Elijah Solskjaer and Kristiansund's Noah Solskjaer.

FILE PHOTO

on Monday, asking if he'd had breakfast. "I have never lain down the way Son did. Mourinho probably just wanted to take the focus away from the fact they had lost," he said.