

SPORT

Will things improve beyond ZIMBABWE?

MAZHAR UDDIN

Zimbabwe have over the years been the ideal opposition for Bangladesh whenever the Tigers have been looking to gain confidence and return to winning ways following a string of defeats across formats.

Regardless of the strength of the opposition, a win always gives confidence to any team and inspires them to improve, but things have never gone right for Bangladesh despite the gains in confidence from defeating Zimbabwe.

The Tigers had previously returned to winning ways in the Test format by defeating Zimbabwe following a string of six consecutive losses, including a shock defeat to Afghanistan at home in 2019.

But after that convincing innings-and-106-run win, Bangladesh could not capitalise on the momentum and went on to lose their next two Test series. The Tigers first lost a two-match Test series 2-0 at home to an inexperienced West Indies side earlier this year and followed that with a 1-0 series defeat in Sri Lanka in May.

After those losses, Bangladesh left for Zimbabwe and registered a comprehensive 220-run win in the lone Test, presumably bolstering confidence ahead of a three-match



Wicketkeeper batsman Mushfiqur Rahim tries to catch a ball during practice yesterday in Harare. Mushfiqur has reportedly made himself available for the T20 series against Zimbabwe, retreating from his previous position of skipping the shortest format during the tour.

ODI and three-match T20I series on their current tour.

The trend in T20Is is similar to the Test tale. Bangladesh lost four games straight before getting back to winning ways by defeating

Zimbabwe 2-0 in March last year. They then went on to lose the next series 3-0 against New Zealand.

ODIs are the Tigers' favoured format and Tamim Iqbal's side managed to clinch the last three-

match series 2-1 against an inexperienced Sri Lankan side at home after being whitewashed in a three-match ODI series in New Zealand.

The visitors will take part in a warm-up game today ahead of the crucial ODI series, starting from July 16, which is part of the ICC Men's World Cup Super League.

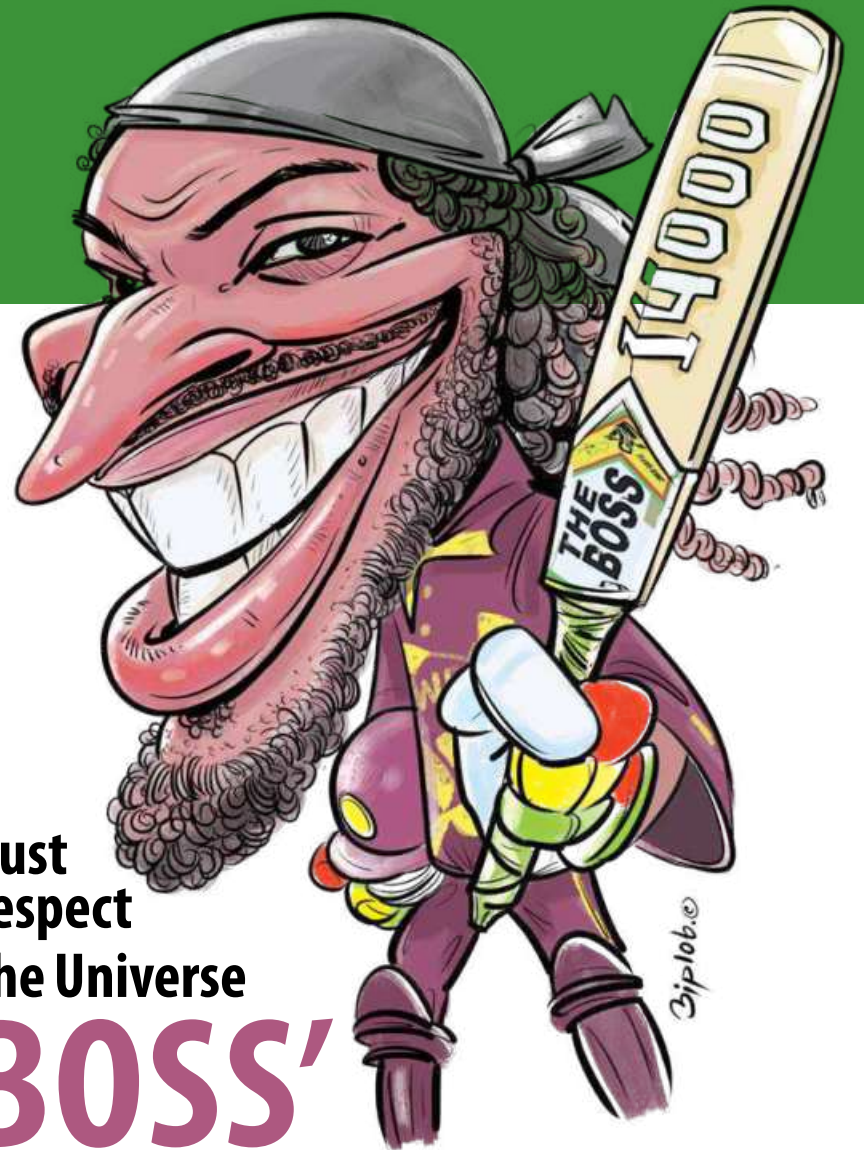
Bangladesh will be desperate to gain the maximum number of points from this series, but will win the confidence gained from wins against help Bangladesh when the opponents are tougher and stronger?

Disappointingly, the answer remains has always been in the negative. And it is not because the Tigers have beaten a relatively weaker opponent, it is also because of the lack of foresight within the Bangladesh think-tank that hinders them from working on tougher challenges that await.

There is no scope to undermine Zimbabwe as a team nor any victory against them, but it is also important for Bangladesh to develop a culture of learning not just from their defeats, but from the wins as well.

There are once again bigger and tougher challenges for the Tigers on the horizon. The Tigers will host Australia for a five-match T20 series, which will be followed by series against England and New Zealand.

PHOTO: COLLECTED



'Just respect the Universe BOSS'

AGENCIES



Chris Gayle made a stunning return to form as Windies condemned Australia to a third straight defeat in the third Twenty20 international in St Lucia on Monday and take an unassailable 3-0 lead in the five-match series.

Chris Gayle hit 67 off 38 balls as the West Indies sealed a six-wicket win over Australia in the third Twenty20 international in St Lucia on Monday to take an unassailable 3-0 lead in their five-match series.

Gayle, months away from his 42nd birthday, emerged from a form slump to recapture his magnificent best in brutal onslaught featuring seven sixes during his

38-ball 67.

Gayle also became the first player to reach the milestone of 14,000 T20 runs.

"Don't mind the numbers ... you guys should be happy to see Chris Gayle on the field still. Hopefully Chris will last as long as possible. Cherish those moments ... just respect the Universe Boss and let him play cricket and have some fun," said Chris Gayle.

"ICC don't want me to use the Universe Boss. So I have shortened it and just put 'The Boss'. I am the boss (laughs)," Gayle said in a video posted by Cricket.com.au. On being asked whether ICC has the copyright over the term 'Universe Boss', an animated Gayle said, "Well, I have to copyright it. Not ICC, I am technically the Boss."

OBITUARY



Former hockey star Naveed passes away

AGENCIES

Naveed Alam, a noted Pakistani hockey player and former coach of the Bangladesh national team, passed away in Lahore on Tuesday after a battle with cancer.

The 47-year-old Olympian and Hockey World Cup winner was a familiar name in Bangladesh hockey as he played in the Dhaka Premier League for Usha Kriira Chakra in 1990s.

Later he coached Bangladesh team in 2013 and 2014.

Yashpal Sharma dies of cardiac arrest

AGENCIES

India's 1983 World Cup hero Yashpal Sharma died on Tuesday after suffering a massive cardiac arrest here. He was 66 and is survived by his wife, two daughters and a son.



In his international career, Yashpal played 37 Tests, scoring 1606 runs, and 42 ODIs in which he scored 883.

He was known for his gutsy attitude and his stroke-filled half century in the semifinal against England in the 1983 campaign at the Old Trafford will forever be etched in the public memory.

WHAT TO WATCH

T SPORTS

Bangladesh Premier League
Muktijoddha vs Sheikh Russel
Live from 4:00 pm

'We love you'

REUTERS, Manchester



England soccer fans stepped up to defend striker Marcus Rashford on Tuesday by covering the racist abuse scrawled on a mural to the Black player in his hometown with messages of love and support for a "hero" who they said was a national role model.

Black players Rashford, 23, Jadon Sancho, 21, and Bukayo Saka, 19, were racially abused after they missed penalties in a shootout with Italy which settled Sunday's final.

Fans covered up racist abuse scrawled on the mural to Rashford in the Withington area of Manchester with hundreds of small messages of support. "We love you!", read one of the messages. One pink heart was affixed on the mural with the simple word: "Hero".

"You have stood up for us

repeatedly, now its time for us to stand up for you!" read another. Rashford posted photographs of letters from children who said they were proud of him.

Rashford, who was born in Manchester and brought up by his single mother in the Wythenshawe area of the city, has used his experiences of hunger as a child to campaign for better provision for children to be given free food.

"My penalty was not good enough, it should have gone in but I will never apologise for who I am and where I came from," Rashford said in a statement. "Seeing the response in Withington had me on the verge of tears. The communities that always wrapped their arms around me continue to hold me up. I'm Marcus Rashford, 23-year-old, black man from Withington and Wythenshawe, South Manchester. If I have nothing else I have that."



ITALY BASKS IN GLORY

Italy's President Sergio Mattarella poses with Giorgio Chiellini, who successfully led Italy to Euro 2020 glory, and his teammates and Matteo Berrettini, who became the first Italian to reach the Wimbledon men's singles final, at the Quirinale Palace in Rome on Monday. After 18 months of pandemic hell, Italy revelled in some soccer heaven on Monday after its national team brought back the European Championship trophy for the first time since 1968 following victory over England at Wembley. Led by coach Roberto Mancini, the players landed shortly after dawn to find many fans were still celebrating in the early morning cool, with the smell of fireworks lingering in the streets and flags flapping out of car windows. Meanwhile, Berrettini made a history for his country despite a defeat against Novak Djokovic in the final. Although world number one Djokovic was the overwhelming favourite to win the title, an upset victory for the 25-year-old Berrettini had not been completely ruled out by pundits.

PHOTO: REUTERS

2021 SAFF Championship increasingly unlikely

ANISUR RAHMAN



With fans still reeling from the excitement of Copa America and Euros, any enthusiasm regarding the SAFF Championship -- South Asia's biggest football carnival -- is likely to be kicked due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

The SAFF Championship, a biennial tournament featuring seven South Asian nations, was rescheduled to be held this year in September in Bangladesh after it had been delayed by a year due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

But uncertainty over the 13th edition of the championship is looming large as the Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) is having trouble roping in sponsors and still awaiting assurances from concerned authorities amidst the 'second wave', which has seen record deaths and infections almost every day in Bangladesh.

Bhutan, one of the participating nations, already informed the SAFF secretariat on July 1 that they would not be allowed by their government to participate in the SAFF Championship beyond their territory, leaving five sides in the tournament as Pakistan are currently suspended from international matches by FIFA.

"No country can tell us anything confidently because of lockdown, pandemic, etc. For instance, Bhutan won't be able to come out of their territory while other participating teams have also been hesitant, telling us that they will let us know later as they need to talk to their governments about developing situations. It is indecisive. There are also financial matters. Those who promised to sponsor the championship have kept us waiting by asking us to wait and see. It is now a very uncertain situation because the situation is not as it was when they made promises," BFF and SAFF president Kazi Salahuddin told The Daily

Star on Friday.

Asked whether there is any realistic chance to hold the championship, Salahuddin said: "I can't answer at the moment because no one tells me 'no'. Everyone tells me to wait and see



how the situation goes. No one can give me guarantees and that is the problem."

Moving the championship to Sylhet from Dhaka, where the Bangabandhu National Stadium is undergoing renovation works, was discussed at a meeting between the SAFF general secretary and the

general secretaries of the seven participating nations on July 1 and no one raised the objection to playing in Sylhet.

"The financial problem is not only the obstruction to hold the tournament. There are many other problems like travel restrictions, quarantine. If the government doesn't wave those things due to the ongoing pandemic, then it is really difficult to stage the SAFF Championship," Helal said.

The BFF president still wants to stay positive about holding the tournament -- which was last held in Dhaka in 2018 -- but sees no possibility of staging it this year if they cannot do so in the August-September slot.

"There is no possibility of holding the SAFF Championship this year if we can't hold it within August-September. We don't have a stadium in Dhaka, it is also problem. We need this month to take the final decision about the SAFF Championship," Salahuddin concluded.



Bangshundhara Kings players celebrate after an empathic 3-0 victory over their nearest rivals Ataur Rahman Bhuiyan College SC in the Women's Football League, which resumed at Birshreshtha Shaheed Mostafa Kamal Stadium in Kamalapur yesterday following a coronavirus-induced 13-day break. Captain Sabina Khatun struck twice to improve her goals tally to 50 for her club as Bangshundhara went one more step closer to defending their title, requiring four points from three remaining games.

PHOTO: BFF