



PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

'A lot will depend on how well we utilise our skills'

SPORTS REPORTER

In spite of the fact that Bangladesh will be facing Australia for the very first time in a bilateral T20I series, the first question the Tigers skipper Mahmudullah Riyad had to face was related to his recent retirement from Tests, made in Zimbabwe.

The 35-year-old however avoided answering his version over the issue as much as he was reluctant to go over the top when it came to the buzzing prospect of the Tigers to clinch their first-ever T20I win over the Aussies in the absence of some of their key players.

The two sides will take on each other in the first of the five-match T20I series at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur today where Tigers skipper Mahmudullah pressed the issue of following the process right as the key towards possible success against the Aussies.

"It's difficult to say whether or not it's the best opportunity to beat Australia. A lot will depend on how well we utilise our skills in the games and confidence from the Zimbabwe tour," said Mahmudullah during the pre-match virtual press conference yesterday.

However, the experienced cricketer did admit that a series win against the Aussies will certainly amplify the confidence of the Tigers to a great deal but for that, the hosts need to play smart.

There were talks over the probable threats from the Australian bowling attack, coming from Mitchell Starc and Josh Hazlewood, especially with the new ball, but according to Mahmudullah the openers Soumya Sarkar and Naim Sheikh have the license to play their natural game.

"I think assessing the wicket is vital no matter which format you are playing, especially in Mirpur. It's important for the openers to play with freedom so that we can carry the momentum in the next few overs."

Australia on the other hand, announced Matthew Wade as their captain for the series following regular skipper Aaron Finch's injury at the last moment in West Indies.

The visitors, coming from the bashing 4-1 T20I series defeat from their Caribbean tour, are bound to be under pressure and more importantly, Australia will be desperate to return to winning ways after having lost their last four T20 series on the trot.

"Our focus won't change too much after a lot of cricket of late. It took us a few games to get going against the Windies where things would've looked different had we managed to win the first game there. We feel pretty good now after playing eight games of international cricket. Wickets have been slow with a little bit of spin as well and the boys have trained really well to expect good results here," Wade told the media yesterday.

England's tour of Bangladesh postponed, say reports

SPORTS REPORTER

The Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) CEO Nizamuddin Chowdhury informed that the board is still awaiting a decision regarding England's upcoming tour of the country after reports emerged that the tour has been 'postponed indefinitely'.

England's upcoming tour of Bangladesh, scheduled for September-October this year, has been postponed indefinitely, reported ESPNcricinfo yesterday.

Nizamuddin informed that the board has not yet reached any official conclusion. "Yes, we are discussing this issue with them [ECB]. You know both teams have been playing international cricket under bio-bubble for a long period of time. Considering the past busy schedules and the upcoming big events [ICC T20 World Cup], we are working to find a good solution. If both boards agree and come to a good solution regarding rescheduling the tour, then a joint statement will come very soon," said Nizamuddin.

England were scheduled to play three ODIs -- part of the ICC ODI Super League -- and as many T20Is during that tour. According to ESPNcricinfo's report, the postponement of the tour will allow English players, who were part of the IPL that was postponed in May this year due to a surge in Covid-19 cases in India, to take part in the tournament when it resumes in the UAE on September 19.

TIGERS sniff blood in the water

MAZHAR UDDIN

The five-match T20I series against Australia starting from today can prove to be the turning point for Bangladesh to evolve further as a team, especially in the shortest format of the game.

Bangladesh's approach towards the T20I format has remained questionable over the years where, more often than not, the Tigers had struggled to display a combined team effort.

The recent 2-1 series win against Zimbabwe was a total confidence booster. Still the Tigers will have no option but to step up their game when they take on the mighty Aussies despite the men from Down Under having arrived without some of their key players following a thrashing 4-1 series defeat in their tour of the Caribbean.

The scenario also presents a huge platform for the Bangladesh team who are set to play their first-ever five-match bilateral series in the shortest format, and the first-ever against the Aussies.

And head coach Russell Domingo and his troop have their work cut out in coming up with a proper game plan first, not just to register their first-ever T20I win over the Aussies but also to develop the unit ahead of the upcoming ICC World T20 later this year.

Mahmudullah Riyad's side are yet to win a T20I against a higher-ranked side since their seven-wicket win against India in 2019, after which the Tigers went on to face convincing defeats against Pakistan in the two-match series last year along with a 3-0 whitewash in New Zealand earlier this year.

On the plus side, Bangladesh have won four T20Is during this period, albeit all of those came

against Zimbabwe, a relatively weaker side.

Whenever the Tigers faced a better opponent, the gulf in quality had been evident and so the Tigers think tank will aim to minimize that aspect when they take on Australia on their home soil. Another key challenge for Bangladesh will be to rectify one of their most prominent issues -- related to inconsistency.

And Australia, on the other hand, consecutively lost their last four T20I series and are desperately seeking their first series win since the resumption of cricket post-pandemic. Even with a relatively inexperienced squad in Bangladesh, the quality of players in their rank is evident with the likes of Mitchell Starc, Josh Hazlewood, Dan Christian, Adam Zampa, and Ashton Agar in the bowling line-up, while skipper Matthew Wade, Mitchell Marsh and Moises Henriques will back themselves to

outperform with the bat.

Much like the Tigers, Australian head coach Justin Langer would also be banking on his fringe players -- the likes of Josh Philippe, Ben McDermott and Ashton Turner -- who will look to shine and make their presence felt for the future.

Bangladesh may feel unlucky to miss out on their experienced players such as Mushfiqur Rahim and Tamim Iqbal this series but on the flip side, it also gives a great opportunity to the likes of Soumya Sarkar, Naim Sheikh, Afif Hossain, Mohammad Saifuddin.

Last but not the least, champion all-rounder Shakib Al Hasan will have to play a big part, both on and off the field, in guiding the Tigers under the leadership of Mahmudullah. The two veterans of the game can transform their vast experience out in the middle to make the most out of this rare opportunity against the Aussies.



TENOGLOU GRABS LONG JUMP TITLE

Miltiadis Tentoglou of Greece won the men's long jump title in an action-packed Monday morning at the Olympic Stadium. There was drama in the men's long jump as Tentoglou won with his last leap of 8.41 metres which tied with Cuba's Juan Miguel Echevarria's jump, but the Greek secured the title on a countback with his next-best effort of 8.15m ahead of the Cuban's 8.09. "What an incredible competition. What an incredible jump, the last jump," Tentoglou said after the final. "In the end I managed to pull something out to get the medal."

PHOTO: REUTERS



Sifan begins bid for Tokyo treble

REUTERS, Tokyo

Netherlands' Sifan Hassan won the women's 5,000 metres gold on Monday to kick off her bid for an unprecedented Olympic treble at the Tokyo Games.

Hassan, who has also confirmed her participation in the 1,500m and 10,000m races in Tokyo, sped away from the leading pack in the last lap to take victory in 14:36.79.

The 28-year-old Hassan also won the 1,500m and 10,000m world championship titles in Doha in 2019.

Kenya's Hellen Obiri, a double world champion and Olympic silver medalist five years ago in Rio, took the silver ahead of Ethiopian Gudaf Tsegay, who clinched bronze.

OLYMPICS MEDALS TABLE (TOP FIVE)

COUNTRY	GOLD	SILVER	BRONZE	TOTAL
China	29	17	16	62
USA	22	25	17	64
Japan	17	6	10	33
Australia	14	4	15	33
ROC	12	21	17	50

Hubbard becomes first transgender Olympian

REUTERS

New Zealand's Laurel Hubbard made history on Monday by becoming the first openly transgender athlete to compete at an Olympic Games, but she suffered disappointment with an early exit from the women's +87 kg final after three no lifts in the snatch.

At 43, Hubbard was the oldest competitor in the weightlifting event in Tokyo, in which her inclusion had ignited a fierce debate about fairness for women and about gender identification and inclusivity.



American Jade Carey produced a series of high-flying tumbling combinations to win gold on the floor exercise at the Tokyo Games on Monday, while Mai Murakami became the first Japanese woman to win an individual Olympic gymnastics medal. The absence of 2016 floor champion Simone Biles from the final due to mental health struggles had left the field wide open and Carey made the most of her opportunity to grab gold with a score of 14.366 points. Biles however will compete in the balance beam competition today, in what would be the U.S. superstar gymnast's last chance for gold in Tokyo.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Belarus athlete subject of intense diplomatic wrangling

AGENCIES

Krystsina Tsimanouskaya, a Belarusian Olympic athlete who claimed her team tried to force her to leave Japan, will likely travel to Poland, her husband told AFP on Monday, adding he himself had left Belarus. She has been granted a humanitarian visa by the Warsaw government.

"She will likely go to Poland," Arseny Zdanevich told AFP from the Ukrainian capital Kiev where he said he had fled to.

He also said that he was hoping to join his wife "in the near future." The 24-year-old sprinter spent the night in a Japanese airport hotel after asking Tokyo Olympics officials to help her avoid being put on a flight back to Belarus.

She was supposed to be in the Olympic Stadium on Monday, competing in the 200 metres heats, but was instead the subject of intense diplomatic wrangling over her future.

Tsimanouskaya walked into the Polish embassy, a day after refusing to board a flight in Tokyo that she said she was taken to against her wishes by her team.

In a brewing diplomatic incident on the sidelines of the Olympics, Tsimanouskaya's refusal to board the plane, first reported by Reuters, has thrown a harsh spotlight on discord in Belarus, a former Soviet state that is run with a tight grip by President Alexander Lukashenko.

The sprinter had her Games cut short when she said she was taken to the airport to board a Turkish Airlines flight. She told a Reuters reporter via Telegram that the Belarusian head coach had turned up at her room on Sunday at the athletes village and told her she had to leave.

But she refused to board the flight, telling Reuters: "I will not return to Belarus."

She then sought the protection of Japanese police at the airport.



Camacho-Quinn dazzles in 100m hurdles gold

REUTERS

Puerto Rico's Jasmine Camacho-Quinn capped a dazzling performance in the 100 metres hurdles in Tokyo with a gold medal at the Olympic Stadium yesterday.

A day earlier, Camacho-Quinn shattered the Olympic record in her semi-final and on Monday she exploded off the blocks and stormed through the finish line, clocking 12.37 seconds to secure her first Olympic gold.

American Kendra Harrison, the world record holder, won silver in 12.52 and Jamaican Megan Tapper grabbed bronze in 12.55.

"At this point I was really running for the world record. I hit the hurdle, but everything happens for a reason. I came through with the gold. My first gold medal," Camacho-Quinn said after the race.