



Mahmudullah Riyad (R) and Mushfiqur Rahim (C) wear broad grins on their faces as they talk with New Zealand captain Tom Latham after guiding Bangladesh to a seven-wicket win against the visitors in the first T20I at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.

Tamim's class act sets an example

ABDULLAH AL MEHDI



Just a few hours before the first T20I between Bangladesh and New Zealand began yesterday, Tamim Iqbal, who had been missing in action from the T20I line-up for the past 17 months, went live from his Facebook page and announced that he will not be available for the upcoming T20 World Cup in UAE.

Tamim termed it as a 'small announcement' but it was anything but that. Since making his T20I debut in 2007, the dashing left-hander has held the position as Tigers' opener in all formats through dominating displays.

He has played in all six T20 World Cups for the Tigers till date and is also Bangladesh's only centurion in not only T20I World Cups but also in the format itself. Given his stature in Bangladesh cricket, Tamim not playing a World Cup was still pretty unthinkable given how he has led the side through his mentality and his ability throughout.

Tamim however, had his reasons. He cited that a key factor was his absence in the format for such an extended period of time, also adding that while injury issues have played a part in making up his mind, he expected to be fit in time before the mega event. The biggest reason was based on how Tamim felt about being an automatic choice in the format, thus setting a big example of professionalism and big-heartedness.

"I haven't played in the last 15-16 T20s and I don't think it would be fair to take the place of someone who was playing during this time period," he said. Tamim knew that he was going to be included in the World Cup side but he felt it would have been unjust. He also made it quite clear that he was not retiring from T20s yet, rather opting out

from the upcoming World Cup.

"I think the young players who are playing should get the chance and their preparation will be better than mine," he reiterated.

The 32-year-old last played a T20I in March 2020 and while the performances of his T20 career did not always match his calibre, he would have been a valuable asset nonetheless, due to his experience. But Tamim was also in the right frame of mind to take a difficult decision, which from his perspective was the best for the team.

The selectors had perhaps hung back, waiting to make a decision on Tamim or for him to take one for



them. As a senior player and one of the stalwarts in the side, Tamim had set the Tigers free ahead of a crucial tournament.

Usually in Bangladesh cricket's history, such matters often have bitter ends, but Tamim's announcement sets an example of a senior player taking a decision through his own realizations. What Tamim's decision essentially means is a show of confidence towards the younger players from a senior member and it remains to be seen if that confidence can reap rewards in the upcoming World Cup.

Winning momentum 'most important thing'

SPORTS REPORTER

New Zealand were welcomed by Bangladesh with the template that undid the Aussies as a slow and low Mirpur surface played its part behind the hosts registering their maiden T20I win over the Kiwis by seven wickets yesterday.

In fact, Bangladesh did it some style, bundling New Zealand out for 60 after Tom Latham elected to bat in the first of the five-match T20I series.

Shakib Al Hasan, the poster-boy of Bangladesh cricket, was instrumental. He first bagged two wickets while conceding just ten runs from four overs and then scored 25 in chase of a paltry 61 runs.

Questions may still linger about whether the Mirpur surface was ideal in terms of preparations for the batsmen ahead of the upcoming ICC T20 World Cup in the middle

Mahmudullah has become the most successful T20I captain for Bangladesh registering his 11th win from 23 matches. Former captain Mashrafe Bin Mortaza won 10 of his 28 matches while leading the side.

The Kiwis folded for 60; their joint-lowest total in men's T20Is, following a similar collapse against Sri Lanka in the 2014 T20 World Cup.

east next month, but Shakib believed the winning momentum would help them going into the World Cup.

"The most important thing is that we won the game, which is very good leading up to the World Cup. I can still remember when we did well in the 2007 World Cup. We won quite a few matches on the trot before the tournament in the fifty-over format. That helped us do well in the 2007 World Cup. So, I think this win will take us to a good position from where we will be able to do well in the World Cup," the man of the match told media after the game.

The 34-year-old requires four further wickets to surpass Sri Lanka pacer Lasith Malinga as the highest wicket-taker in T20Is. Although he said he does not think about such milestone, he enjoyed such feats when they came his way.

Meanwhile, skipper Mahmudullah praised his bowlers for the clinical showing and added that Bangladesh needed to make a statement after thrashings from New Zealand earlier this year.

"It's a good feeling after having lost a few matches against them. We need to come back again and do it again. The main thing was that the bowlers were hungry

and disciplined with their skills. They were not trying too much and that was important. I'd have batted first but it's always a tricky wicket," Mahmudullah said during the post-match presentation ceremony.

For Tom Latham and the inexperienced New Zealand side, it was always going to be a tough task to adapt and adjust to the alien Mirpur surface. That proved to be the case as the visitors were bundled out for joint-lowest total in the shortest format.

"Obviously slightly disappointed with the start. We knew it was going to be tough but we kept losing wickets at crucial times. For us, it's about finding a way in these conditions and to try to assess what a good score is. With runs on the board, it isn't easy. As I said, it's about working [out] what a good score is and trying and working our way around it. Proud of the effort the guys put in with the ball," said Latham.

'Trying to be the best version of myself'

AFP, New York

Novak Djokovic says staying in the moment and managing challenging situations are his secret weapons in coping with the emotions and pressure of trying to make tennis history.

The world number one advanced to the second round of the US Open on Tuesday by ousting Danish teen qualifier Holger Rune 6-1, 6-7 (5/7), 6-2, 6-1.

Djokovic is trying to win the US Open to complete the first men's singles calendar-year Grand Slam since Rod Laver in 1969 and reach a men's career record 21 major titles.

"You have tons of expectations and pressure from just the whole tennis community, including myself," Djokovic said. "Obviously I would like myself to win the title and make the history. Without



a doubt that's something that inspires me."

Handling the mental toughness means not getting ahead of himself during a two-week fight to reach the final, for only there can history be made.

"I am focused on trying to be the best version of myself every day," Djokovic said. "There's a great power in being present and working on mentally and emotionally being in the moment and trying to handle it in such way that would benefit you."

Tigers capitalise on unforgiving Mirpur

SPORTS REPORTER



Bangladesh thrashed New Zealand by seven wickets in the first T20I yesterday as the in-form Tigers made the most of the conditions against a Kiwi side that found it hard to adapt on an alien surface at Mirpur.

The pitch had been one of the focal points leading up to the Tigers' five-match T20I series against New Zealand and, after the inexperienced Kiwi side were bundled out for their joint-lowest T20I total of 60, the pitch was once again in the limelight.

The Australia series had been a unique feat for the Tigers, ending in a 4-1 humbling for the visitors. Bangladesh's score of 131 for seven was the highest total in that series and it was tough going for batsmen on both sides, who found the slowness and the irregular bounce hard to deal with.

With the New Zealand series being the Tigers' last opportunity to gauge their strengths and weaknesses ahead of the T20 World Cup in two months' time, coach Russell Domingo had hoped for wickets that offered around 150-160 runs in order to get a better understanding of his squad's batting abilities.

While T20 cricket is usually played on wickets that produces runs, the pitches at Mirpur deviated from that trend. It would not be unusual for the home sides' batters to fare better on such wickets but it was still tough going and very difficult to judge their performances.

Replying to a question about the wicket after the match, ace all-rounder

SCORES IN BRIEF

NEW ZEALAND:
60 all out in 16.5 overs (Latham 18, Nicholls 18; Mahedi 1-15, Nasum 2-5, Shakib 2-10, Mustafizur 3-13, Saifuddin 2-7)

BANGLADESH:
63 for 3 in 15.0 overs (Shakib 25, Mushfiqur 16 not out, Mahmudullah 14 not out; Patel 1-7, McConchie 1-19, Ravindra 1-21)
Result: Bangladesh won by 7 wickets.
Player-of-the-match: Shakib Al Hasan.

Shakib Al Hasan's smile said it all.

"I think that the wicket was even more difficult than the Australia series in this first game. Still I felt that we were able to bowl in good areas," Shakib said.

The visitors' inexperience, exemplified by the fact that none of their squad will

feature in the upcoming T20 World Cup, was clear to see. Often, they played their shots early, chipping it to fielders or struggled to adjust to the low bounce.

"New Zealand didn't have much experience of playing in these conditions so naturally they struggled a lot," Shakib reminded.

T20s may be viewed as a game of smash-and-grab shot-making, but Shakib emphasised the struggle of batting in these conditions further, saying: "The more you can focus on singles and put pressure with your running between the wickets here, the better it is. Hitting boundaries is very difficult so you have to be in a positive frame of mind to take singles and doubles. If you can get set and then capitalise on one or two bad deliveries, it will maybe be it is possible to score runs here," Shakib, who scored a team-high 33-ball 25, said.

"Very tough conditions, and the batsmen are going through a very challenging time, especially on such surfaces," Shakib said, driving his point home.

Ahead of the T20 World Cup, it remains to be seen how such surfaces can help prepare the team for conditions where runs will be abundant.

Root urges England to be 'ruthless'

AFP, LONDON



England captain Joe Root has urged his team to produce a "ruthless" display in the fourth Test against India at the Oval starting Thursday. England's innings and 76-run victory at Headingley last week has left the five-match series all square at 1-1.

"Now is when the hard work starts," said England captain Root. "We've got to look to go even further, dig deeper and really start to go through the gears," added Root, who replaced New Zealand counterpart Kane Williamson as the top-ranked Test batsman on Wednesday, riding his red-hot form in the ongoing five-Test series against India.

"A world-class side like India, led by Virat Kohli, I expect nothing less than a response. It would be naive to think otherwise. We've just got ourselves back to level and, if we find ourselves ahead of the game at any stage, we must get ruthless again."

A see-saw series -- a rain-affected draw in Nottingham was followed by India's 151-run win at Lord's before they collapsed to 78 all out at Leeds -- has left Kohli adamant his side will not be "demoralised" by last week's loss. "If what happens in one game



guarantees you the same thing in the next game, we should have smashed England again," the India captain added.

India were dismissed for just 36 while losing the first Test against Australia in Adelaide in December only for an injury-hit squad to claim

a memorable 2-1 series win.

"We like to be in this situation where people start coming at us with doubts and really start questioning the ability of our team," said Kohli. "That is the situation we love best."

With wicketkeeper-batsman Jos Buttler absent to attend the birth of his second child and concerns about the impact a gruelling schedule of three Tests in three weeks will have on their fast bowlers, England could still make as many as three changes to a winning side.

Jonny Bairstow will replace Buttler behind the stumps, with either Dan Lawrence or Ollie Pope filling the vacancy in the middle order.

The more awkward issue for England is whether they should rest either or both James Anderson and Ollie Robinson after the new-ball duo starred at Headingley.

Faced with an Oval pitch known to take turn, India must decide if they can continue to omit off-spinner Ravichandran Ashwin.

Barca's botched transfer window

REUTERS, Barcelona



Barca were full of optimism and hope when the transfer window opened, with new president Joan Laporta was saying all the right things.

Fast-forward to Sept. 1 and fans and pundits alike cannot quite believe what they have seen. Sergio Aguero, Eric Garcia, Emerson Royal and Memphis Depay all arrived early as a new squad took shape and optimism grew. However, it soon appeared all was not well.

Without those players, their wage bill was already astronomical - over 100% of their income and LaLiga's Financial Fair Play regulations meant they could not register their new arrivals.

Barca said Antoine Griezmann, a player they signed for 120 million euros in 2019 from Atletico Madrid, had been loaned back to his former club.

They managed to bring in a new signing, but in keeping with Barca's austere new reality it was Luuk de Jong, 31, on loan from Sevilla.

