

‘A LOT OF THINGS NEED TO BE ACHIEVED’

After suddenly retiring from Test cricket in the middle of a match in Zimbabwe, Mahmudullah Riyad appeared a man on a mission over the following three series, which culminated in him becoming Bangladesh's most successful T20I captain. The 35-year-old will be aiming to script more history under his leadership in the upcoming T20 World Cup and he spoke about his plans and other topics during an interview with The Daily Star's Mazhar Uddin. The excerpts are below:

The Daily Star (DS): You have been having the time of your life as captain. Do you believe there is a good balance of youth and experience heading into your maiden T20 World Cup as a captain?

Mahmudullah Riyad (MR): Alhamdulillah I am enjoying my captaincy and the matter of fact is that I always enjoy this role. I think this is as a positive challenge for me and I like taking on such challenges. At the same time, our team is in very good shape after winning a few good series recently. All credit goes to the team because when the team does well, it becomes easy for the captain. More importantly, the bond between the players and the mentality of helping each other and appreciating each other is a very good sign. We had something to prove, especially in the T20 format, and I hope the boys are looking forward to the World Cup and looking forward to doing well.

DS: Winning the last three T20I series must have boosted the team's morale. Realistically, what are Bangladesh's chances at the upcoming T20 World Cup?

MR: I think a lot of things need to be achieved as a team at this

World Cup. The most important thing is to let the world know that we are becoming a good side in this format. I hope we can deliver some good results. As captain, I expect teammates and the team management to also want to achieve some memorable wins that will help us to move forward as a team.

DS: Openers normally tend to utilise the Powerplay in T20 cricket. Will that trend hold true

Bangladesh to adapt to the pitches at the World Cup?

MR: There will be different opinions when it comes to the pitches but it was very important for Bangladesh to win games and to win series as well. It is also important to have that winning habit. It was important for me and also for the team management. Having said that, we still don't know what's waiting for us at the World Cup. We don't know if it's

order at the World Cup?

MR: I have been feeling really well with the bat in the last few series and I hope that I will be able to contribute to my team in the coming days as well. The batting order depends on the requirements of the situation. If the situation requires me to, then why not promote myself up the order?

DS: Is the batting department still an area of concern?

MR: Not really. Once, we start to score runs, our batting unit will grow in confidence and hopefully that will reflect on our batting.

DS: The bowling department has been gaining confidence, but how challenging is it going to be for your bowlers considering the sporting pitches at the World Cup?

MR: It will be challenging for any bowling unit to play in batting-friendly conditions. It depends on how you apply yourself and how you use your variations on that particular day. Our bowling unit has been doing really well and I hope they will deliver their best bowling spells at the World Cup. I am confident of my bowling unit.

DS: After retiring from Tests and not speaking a word about the issue to the media, is Mahmudullah a man on a mission now?

MR: (Smiles) That's my answer.

“The most important thing is to let the world know that we are becoming a good side in this format.”

for Bangladesh's openers at the World Cup?

MR: The openers obviously know their role in using the Powerplay to maximise our score. We have had to adjust at times and take some time initially, but if the wicket is batting-friendly and the conditions favour batters, I think our openers will have a good time in the middle.

DS: There has been a lot of talk about the pitches at home recently. How crucial will it be for

going to be sporting wickets or whether the pitch will slow down. You never know. So it's important to have that adaptability and to be able to identify the conditions. That can dictate what sort of score would be good enough for a particular pitch or how to bowl on a different track. It will be important to quickly identify the pitch and conditions to get results.

DS: As a batsman, you have been in fine form. Are you thinking of promoting yourself up the batting

Confidence soars under Bruzon

SPORTS REPORTER



Goalkeeper Anisur Rahman Zico is optimistic of good results at the SAFF Championship after the national team switched from their usual counter-attacking strategy to more attacking football under interim coach Oscar Bruzon.

“Bruzon asked us to hold possession, which is the style we used at our club, Bashundhara Kings. That means the coach is trying to play the same attacking football we try at the club level,” Zico said after completing the second day of training under the Spaniard at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

“Jamie liked to play on the counter but Bruzon builds up from the back so the goalkeeper has also a role in the build-up. Goalkeepers have to play a role. If we can take things match-by-match, we can do something good in the SAFF Championship,” Zico hoped, adding that had Bruzon tailored training to different opponents. “Bruzon has been working in South Asian nations like India, Maldives and Bangladesh for a long time, so he has good knowledge of South Asian football

and he is working with us based on the style of our opponents.”

Bangladesh Football Federation president Kazi Salahuddin yesterday observed practice from the VIP box and praised the training session.

“I expected this sort of practice,” Salahuddin said. “I had three to four meetings with Bruzon and I wanted to know what kind of football he wants to play and what he wants to do on the field because I had some experience as a player and coach.”

The technical aspects that we discussed matched my ideologies, barring a couple of things. So we are thinking along the same lines and methods,” Salahuddin added, hoping players would not have trouble adapting to style of play in such a short time.

“Most of the players are from Bashundhara and the rest are mature enough to understand Bruzon's playing style. So I think it won't be a problem. I think we have taken the right decision. The thing I like most about Bruzon is that he owns the team from the first day. I did not see feel that from previous coaches. I am hopeful that the team will produce good results in SAFF Championship.”



Newly appointed Bangladesh coach Oscar Bruzon instructs his charges during training at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED



‘What I take away is the attitude’

REUTERS



Barcelona manager Ronald Koeman had no complaints about the attitude and commitment of his team after Thursday's 0-0 draw with Cadiz and instead lamented the raft of injuries that robbed him of several first-choice players.

Barcelona's stumbling form continued and ended the game with 10 men after Frenkie de Jong was sent off.

To compound their misery, coach Ronald Koeman was dismissed in the dying seconds for dissent after Sergio Busquets had kicked a second ball that was on the pitch into an opposition player to get the game stopped.

The goalless draw left Barca seventh in LaLiga on nine points from five games, already seven points behind leaders Real Madrid, and heaped more pressure on Koeman.

Barcelona President Joan Laporta had backed Koeman as manager before the match but also said he had to start producing better football and that the board would not shirk tough decisions if they needed to be made.

While disappointed that Barca had failed to pick up all three points for a second successive match, Koeman said it was more important to look at how the team had played overall.

“It's not always down to a result. We have to analyse what the team did, the attitude of the team, the commitment of the team and I can't complain about any of that from this game,” the Dutchman told reporters.

“I'm not happy, of course, because we had four or five clear chances and we didn't score any goals,” he said, adding that the sending off of Frenkie de Jong made it even more difficult.

“What I take away is the attitude, not my own personal situation. Because if we win it looks like we carry on, and if not we look for another coach – and that's a question for you.”

Koeman said the absence of a number of first team players had contributed to their lacklustre display. Barca, who were held to a 1-1 draw at home against lowly Granada on Monday, were missing Jordi Alba, Sergio Aguero and Pedri among others.

Chelsea face Man City test

AFP, London



Chelsea host Premier League champions Manchester City in a stiff test of the leaders' title credentials on Saturday as Liverpool and Manchester United bid to keep pace with Thomas Tuchel's side.

The Blues look well-equipped to end the season as English champions for the first time since 2017 after signing Romelu Lukaku to add a cutting edge to their attack.

But Liverpool, the 2020 title winners, and Manchester United are matching them, with all three teams locked on 13 points after five games. Manchester United face Aston Villa while Liverpool take on Brentford today.

Manchester City will have more than just revenge on their minds against Chelsea on Saturday, with Pep Guardiola's men at risk of leaving themselves with a mountain to climb in the Premier League title race.

A frustrating 0-0 draw at home to Southampton last week lent weight to the argument that they lack the predatory striker needed to keep pace with a stronger batch of title contenders than they faced last season.

Guardiola's champions are just three points behind Chelsea,

Manchester United and Liverpool after five games of the season. But that gap could easily grow over the course of a demanding week that ends with a trip to face Liverpool at Anfield after a midweek date against Paris Saint-Germain in the Champions League.

Thomas Tuchel denied Guardiola the crowning achievement of his



time at City by coming out on top in the tactical battle as the Blues won the Champions League final in May.

Victory in Porto completed a hat-trick of wins for Chelsea over City towards the end of last season that set the foundations for a tilt at the Premier League for the Stamford Bridge side.



All in-form players of their respective sides -- Chelsea's Romelu Lukaku, Manchester City's Jack Grealish, and [Top] Liverpool's Mohammad Salah – set to light up the English Premier League today as joint-leaders Chelsea host City while Liverpool travel to Brentford.

PHOTO: TWITTER

NEWS IN BRIEF

Prantik, Aich give U-19s lead

A fifty from Prantik Nawrose Nabil (76) and an unbeaten 40-run knock from skipper Aich Mollah helped Bangladesh Under-19 end the third day of their lone four-day with a 51-run lead in the second innings against their Afghan counterparts at the Sylhet International Cricket Stadium yesterday. Afghanistan, who had resumed the day on 226 for eight, were bundled out for 281 in 134.3 overs with a 119-run lead. Bangladesh were 170 for four at stumps.

Girls to take on Uzbekistan

Bangladesh women's national football team will play a friendly match against their Uzbekistan counterparts on Sunday, informed head coach Golam Rabbani Choton. The women's football team, currently in Uzbekistan to play the AFC Women's Asian Cup Qualifiers, recently played the Asian Cup Qualifiers but could not go past the group stage, having suffered heavy defeats against Jordan and Iran.

Maruf in charge of national U-23 team

Country's lone UEFA A licensed coach Maruful Haque is all set to take charge of Bangladesh Under-23 national football team ahead of AFC U-23 Asian Cup Qualifiers next month in Kuwait. Maruf had coached the senior national team previously in 2015 SAFF Championship and Bangabandhu Gold Cup Bangladesh were drawn in Group D alongside strong Saudi Arabia, Uzbekistan and hosts Kuwait. The group champions from 11 groups will feature in the 12-team finals, to be played in Uzbekistan in 2022.



Ruman disappoints, Rubel outshines

Ruman Sana bowed out from the first round of the Men's Recurve event at the World Archery Championships in the United State of America while youngster Hakim Ahmed Rubel exceeded expectations to reach the third round of the same event yesterday. Ruman, who bagged the bronze medal in the previous edition in Netherlands in 2019 and qualified for 2020 Tokyo Olympics directly, surrendered to a 0-6 defeat at the hands of Italian Musolesi Federico. Rubel however, advanced far into the third round where he lost 4-6 against 12-ranked Dutch archer Wijler Steve, after a fighting display. All Bangladeshi archers were eliminated from individual events yesterday.