

Mahmudullah also 'looking for answers'

MAZHAR UDDIN FROM DUBAI

A dejected Bangladesh captain Mahmudullah Riyad walked into the press conference area after competing in a disastrous ICC T20 World Cup campaign, in which the Tigers went on to lose all the five Super 12 games after their crushing eight-wicket defeat to Australia in Dubai yesterday.

There was no outrage or tendency to blame the surroundings; rather Mahmudullah opted to play on the backfoot while facing the barrage of bouncers from the media over their dreadful display in the marquee event.

The first question that Mahmudullah faced was whether he is considering stepping down from the T20I captaincy following Tigers' abysmal campaign, to which Bangladesh skipper had replied, "Well the decision will depend on the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB). From my point of view, I have always tried to hold the team together but probably there was some lacking on my captaincy to bring out the performance from the players."

Apart from a few individual heroics, there was no significant performance as a unit from Bangladesh throughout the flagship event. The question was there on what are the



reasons behind the poor show from the team, and quite interestingly, Mahmudullah has been searching for the answers himself.

"Especially in the two games against Sri Lanka and West Indies, our performance throughout the tournament was poor. Even I was looking for the answers on what went wrong and what was missing. We sat together, talked to each other and tried to find out the reasons for not being able to perform," said Mahmudullah.

The 35-year-old was also reminded of his decision to retire from Test cricket in the

middle of the Zimbabwe Test earlier this year and the question was whether Mahmudullah would be inclined to retire from T20Is. Mahmudullah, with a smile on his face, replied: "At the moment I am not thinking about this."

The Tigers' captain pointed out that batting has remained one of the biggest reasons behind the downfall in the tournament, where the Tigers were bundled out for 84 and 73 against South Africa and Australia, respectively.

But interestingly, Mahmudullah backed the decision of exploiting the home conditions to win series against Australia and New Zealand, saying that the Tigers needed the winning momentum before heading to the World Cup.

"I would still repeat that those wins were important before coming into this tournament. We are such a team where the momentum is very important and the fact is that we didn't get the flow initially in the tournament and so we struggled throughout the tournament," he added.

Mahmudullah informed that there is no gap between the board and the players despite the fact that the BCB president Nazmul Hassan lashed out at the team followed by the defeat against Scotland in the qualifying stage.

"I think I got a bit emotional after the game against Oman and it was an outburst of my frustration," said Mahmudullah as he went on to add that the bio-bubble fatigue has also played an adverse effect on the players' mental state.



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SCORES IN BRIEF

BANGLADESH
73 all out in 15 overs (Shamim 19, Naim 17, Mahmudullah 16; Zampa 5-19, Starc 2-21, Hazlewood 2-8)

AUSTRALIA
78 for 2 in 6.2 overs (Finch 40, Warner 18, Taskin 1-36, Shoriful 1-9)

RESULT
Australia won by 8 wickets.
Player-of-the-match: Adam Zampa

SRI LANKA
189 for 3 in 20 overs (Nissanka 51, Perera 29, Asalanka 68, Shanaka 25 not out; Russell 2-33)

WEST INDIES
169 for 8 in 20 overs (Poooran 46, Hetmyer 81 not out; Fernando 2-24, Chamika 2-43, Hasaranga 2-19)

RESULT
Sri Lanka won by 20 runs.
Player-of-the-match: Charith Asalanka

PAKISTAN'S TOUR OF BANGLADESH

Will BCB opt for overhaul or same old gambit?

SPORTS REPORTER from Dubai

Following a dreadful outing at the ICC T20 World Cup in Dubai where they lost all five Super 12 games, a demoralised Bangladesh team will board a return flight today.

Bangladesh's disastrous World Cup campaign ended with a comprehensive eight-wicket defeat to Australia after Mahmudullah Riyad's team were bundled out for just 73 runs -- their second-lowest total in the game's shortest format.

The Tigers will not get time for a deep dive into the mistakes at the event as they will begin to gear up for the next home series, against Pakistan starting from November 19. That series will feature three T20Is.

After the three-match T20I series, Bangladesh will take part in two Tests against Pakistan, who have already confirmed a semifinal berth in the flagship event by winning their first four Super 12 games.

One of the hot favorites in the ongoing ICC T20 World Cup, Pakistan will fly directly for Bangladesh after their World Cup campaign.

For Bangladesh, it will be a humongous task to regroup following a forgettable outing and, more importantly, it will be interesting to see whether the team management can come up with a fresh approach and move away from their strategy of exploiting home conditions.

There has been discussion of a massive overhaul in the Bangladesh team after their virtual no-show at the T20 World Cup, but questions still remain about whether the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) can solve the problem.

It is important for the BCB to realise the cricketing aspects behind Bangladesh's downfall, such as the need to develop players by providing equal opportunities to both batsmen and bowlers on sporting tracks at home.

Although there is not enough time for the Tigers to prepare ahead of the Pakistan series, it is important for the team management to have a long-term plan and pave the way for a new beginning. But considering what has happened in the past and the tendency to overlook broader aspects, it would not be a surprise if the BCB opted to go down the same route yet again.

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Sri Lanka KO holders West Indies

AFP, Abu Dhabi

Sri Lanka defeated West Indies by 20 runs at the T20 World Cup on Thursday, confirming the defending champions' elimination from the tournament.

Chasing 190 to win, West Indies reached 169-8 in their 20 overs, leaving Australia and South Africa to fight for the final semifinal spot from Group 1 where leaders England are already effectively through.

Charith Asalanka (68) and Pathum Nissanka (51) led already-eliminated Sri Lanka to 189-3 before Shimron Hetmyer top-scored for West Indies with a career-best unbeaten 81. Sri Lanka ended their campaign with two wins in five games while the West Indies have one victory in four ahead of their final pool clash with Australia on Saturday.

"They have a long career ahead and a lot of good cricket to come," Sri Lanka captain Dasun Shanaka said of Asalanka, 24, and 23-year-old Nissanka. "Anywhere they go, they'll have a special place in the team. I think the team is going in the right direction

at the moment." Asalanka, coming in at number three, reached his half-century off 33 balls with a stylish innings boasting six fours. Opener Nissanka made 51 with his fifty coming off 39 balls with five fours.

Asalanka was eventually out for 68 in the 19th over of Sri Lanka's innings, caught by Hetmyer at deep square leg off Andre Russell having hit a total of eight fours and a six. In reply, only Hetmyer and Nicholas Poooran reached double figures for the West Indies. Hetmyer's 81 came off 54 balls with eight fours and four sixes. Poooran's 46 came from 34 deliveries and featured six fours and a six.

"We have spoken time and time again especially from a batting perspective what we need to do as individuals and we have not done well," said West Indies skipper Kieran Pollard. "A couple of young guys are putting up their hands but the experienced guys, myself included, have not done well."

"We are not going to hide from the fact that it's been disappointing for us. I'm sure all the guys are hurting in that dressing room."



'First fifer is always a nice feeling'

AGENCIES

Even though Australia dominated on all fronts in their latest encounter against Bangladesh, it was the leg-spinner Adam Zampa who stood out for the Aussies, leading them to a resounding eight-wicket victory over the Tigers in their latest Super 12 contest in Dubai on Thursday.

Despite having displayed an average performance against Bangladesh in the T20I series in August in Mirpur, in which he collected five wickets in four matches, Zampa ended up scalping his first fifer of his T20I career and in the process, skittled out Bangladesh for



73 in 15 overs. "First fifer is always a nice feeling," Zampa said while receiving the player-of-the-match award at the post-match ceremony. "Playing for 5-6 overs and nice to get one [fifer]," he added.

However, the 29-year-old leggie could have achieved another landmark in his career, if Mathew Wade did not spill Taskin's catch on the first ball of the 15th over. Zampa was on the verge of his maiden T20I hat-trick as he grabbed wickets of Shamim Hossain and Mahedi Hasan in the last two deliveries of his previous over.

"I had three overs between that ball and the next one; I don't know if anybody else knew," Zampa said on his hat-trick opportunity.



Another must-win game for India

AGENCIES

Their fate still not in their own hands, India will again go for broke when they resume their battle for survival in the T20 World Cup in another must-win contest, against Scotland in Dubai, UAE on Friday. The pre-tournament favourites, the inaugural winners of the 2007 edition, are staring at an early exit following comprehensive defeats by Pakistan and New Zealand.

India registered a big win against Afghanistan on Wednesday but also need to win their last two Super 12 games while hoping other results go their way to help them reach the semi-finals. The situation remains do or die for Virat Kohli's band of superstars as they head into their fourth match.

India spinner Ravichandran Ashwin said yesterday that India is aiming to go out on a high in their last two Super 12 games without bothering too much about run-rate scenario or their semifinal chances.

"I think there are hardly any discussions with regards to that (semi-finals)," Ashwin told reporters on the eve of their penultimate Group Two match against Scotland in Dubai.

"The discussion we need to have is how we're going to go about the couple of games we have left, and everyone's planning and wanting to go (out) on a real high for the last two games. "That is stuff

that's not in our control. It's fingers crossed." Pakistan have already made the semifinals with four straight wins and New Zealand are favoured to join the Men in Green in the last-four stage from Group 2. However, a loss for the Kiwis against either Namibia on Friday or Afghanistan next week, and India will have their tails up.

After their twin failures against arch-rivals Pakistan and bogey team New Zealand, the Indian batters struck form against an Afghanistan bowling attack considered pretty good by the cricket fraternity. Days after the questionable move to demote him to number three, Rohit Sharma was back to where he belongs, and he showed his class in signs that are ominous for India's upcoming opponents in Scotland and Namibia.

Rohit did admit that some of the "decision making" wasn't correct and attributed it to the fatigue factor with the team being on the road for at least a week. As far as Scotland are concerned, wicketkeeper Matthew Cross was caught on the stump-mic during their match against New Zealand, reminding his fellow teammate and bowler Chris Greaves that the whole of India is backing him.

The Kiwis beat them by 16 runs but a shock win for Scotland would have made India's task lot easier. At the Dubai International Stadium on Friday, it will be a different ball game, though.