

## 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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## '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. "But I think I wouldn't have had as many wickets as I do had it not been for Wade's hands."

Zampa also voiced his role as a wrist-spinner in the middle overs while giving credit to his bowling attack in the powerplay.

"I think the quicks have been quite difficult to score off in the powerplay. Guys like Maxwell [Glenn] have also bowled really well", Zampa added. "Teams are coming harder during the middle overs, so that gives wicket-taking opportunities for guys like Adil Rashid and me," he added.

In absence of left-arm spinner Ashton Agar, Zampa was the only spin specialist

against Bangladesh. However, the responsibility didn't intimidate the leg-spinner in the game.

"It does change my role a little bit, but I don't feel any extra pressure even when Ashton plays. My job is to take wickets through the middle, and that doesn't change."

Australia skipper Aaron Finch praised his leggie's performance, during the post-match ceremony. "Zampa's 5 for 19 was outstanding; to get wickets through the



middle against some really good players, the spin is really crucial for us," Finch stated.

Australia and South Africa are vying to grab the second semi-final spot from Group 1, behind leaders England, and Aaron Finch's team needed a net run-rate boost to go with a victory and their bowlers rose to the occasion. The Aussies are now second in the Group 1 table with six points as their net run-rate has accumulated to +1.031.

## Coetzer recalls when Dravid was a Scotsman

AFP, Dubai

Scotland skipper Kyle Coetzer hopes to engineer a World Cup upset of India today, fired up by memories of playing alongside honorary Scotsman Rahul Dravid, the new coach of the Asian giants.

Batting legend Dravid, who will officially take over as India coach from Ravi Shastri at the end of the T20 World Cup, played for the Scottish Saltires in the English one-day tournament in 2003. Hired as a marquee overseas player, Dravid and Coetzer, then a fresh-faced 19-year-old taking his first steps in the sport, were teammates. One of their first games together was at Northampton. Dravid made a fluid 114; Coetzer was run out first ball. "We were involved in a run out, and I was the person who was run out and he wasn't," said Coetzer on Thursday. "I think that was fair enough considering that he was the mainstay of the Scotland team then and making sure that he performed well and scored runs."

"So I remember the day pretty clearly. I got a clear 'no' and got sent back." Eighteen years later, Coetzer has only fond memories of his time playing with Dravid who scored 13,288 runs in 164 Tests, second only to the legendary Sachin Tendulkar for India. Dravid's brief three-month deal with Scotland saw him make 600 runs at an average of over 66 in 11 games.

"He's a very humble person, someone who's so very respectful and speaks so highly and so well to all the players. He's a fine individual," said Coetzer.

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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.

### TODAY'S MATCHES

**New Zealand Vs Namibia**  
4pm (BST)

**India Vs Scotland**  
8pm (BST)

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"Really clinical performance. Mitchell Starc set the tone and Hazlewood followed with that in the second over. We thought we would take the opportunity to win big if we got the chance, but you can't plan for that."

AARON FINCH  
AUSTRALIA CAPTAIN

## 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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## 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 are aiming to go out on a high in their last two Super 12 games without bothering too much about run-rate scenario or their

semi-final 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.