



# Will Joy, Raja be left on the periphery?

NABID YEASIN



The Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) injected fresh blood into the squad for the Tigers' first World Test Championship fixture against Pakistan in the form of batter Mahmudul Hasan Joy and pacer Rejaur Rahman Raja.

The pertinent question now is whether these two be given fair opportunities or if they will be left to rot in the periphery.

If history is anything to go by, the latter could be a more likely answer and the case of Yasir Ali Rabbi is one that could shed some light in this regard.

For over two years, even as Bangladesh made a number of changes to their squads across the formats, the only consistent was Yasir Ali on the sidelines.

Since earning a maiden call-up to the national team in 2019, the right-handed middle-order batter has seen as many as three Test debutants, six new entrants to the ODI squad and a total of 10 players get T20 caps.

He probably thought his fate would change when the team was purported to be undergoing a massive overhaul after the T20 World Cup debacle. Even drills during practice sessions suggested that Yasir Ali was being moulded into a sought-after big-hitter for the Tigers' T20 side.

But the 25-year-old still remains uncapped across formats.

The fear of seeing the two new Test entrants endure a similarly endless wait on the sidelines is amplified considering their experience, or rather the lack thereof, in longer-version cricket. Both Raja and Joy have played only 16 first-class matches between them.

It should not require pointing out that the players have only been included in the squad since the likes of Tamim Iqbal, Shakib Al Hasan, Taskin Ahmed and Shoriful Islam have been left out due to injuries.

Although Joy secured a nod from the national selectors hot on the heels of two successive first-class tons while representing Chattogram Division in the ongoing National Cricket League (NCL), his background is as modest as Raja's, who took 12 wickets at an average of 16.91 in the NCL.

That begs the question whether their inclusion is another typical spur-of-the-moment decision by the BCB, taken only to show that the revamping process is a serious one.

That could be the case as the board pulled the same trick when they called up Parvez Hossain Emon and Kamrul Islam all of a sudden before the final Pakistan T20I, only to have them warm the bench on matchday.

Even if Raja and Joy make their way into the eleven, what happens if the youngsters with just a handful of domestic games under their belt crumble under pressure against the experienced lot of Shaheen Shah Afridi and Hasan Ali and the wiles of visiting captain Babar Azam?

Will it be another case like Saif Hassan's, who despite never exhibiting T20-like batting nor being around the T20 set up, was fielded for only two T20Is before being cast aside after his predictable failure?

All that is left to be seen is whether Joy and Raja have only been included to prolong the national team waiting list alongside Yasir Ali or if the BCB actually has a long-term plan regarding any of them.

## Ton-up Sharmin propels Tigresses

SPORTS REPORTER



Sharmin Akhter's unbeaten ton propelled Bangladesh to a crushing 269-run victory against the USA in their Group B encounter of the ICC Women's Cricket World Cup Qualifier in Harare yesterday.

Sharmin carried the bat during her unbeaten 141-ball 130, helping the Tigresses pile up a mammoth 322 for five before a united bowling effort bundled the USA out for a meagre 53 in 30.3 overs.

During an exquisite display of batting, Sharmin smashed a total of 11 boundaries and starred in stands of 96, 48 and 137 runs with Murshida Khatun, Nigar Sultana and Fargana Hoque respectively.

In defence of the mammoth total, the likes of Salma Khatun, Fahima Khatun and Rumana Ahmed scalped two wickets each and their concerted efforts allowed only two USA batters reach double figures.

Tara Norris top-scored for the USA, a



side still to get their ODI status, with a 27-ball 16 before becoming Jahanara Alam's only victim of the game.

Bangladesh, who pulled off an outstanding victory against Pakistan in their opening game of the qualifiers, now sit atop their group with four points from two games.

The Tigresses have an easy path ahead as they will now face Thailand and Zimbabwe in their remaining two group stage matches on November 25 and 29 respectively.

## What impact will investigation lead to?

SPORTS REPORTER



The Bangladesh Cricket Board's (BCB's) two-member committee entrusted to unearth the reasons behind the national team's dismal campaign in the T20 World Cup in Oman and UAE will finalise their report by the end of this month.

"We have already talked with a few players and officials. We are taking time because an international series is going on, but we will complete the report by the end of this month," BCB director Jalal Yunus, one of the members of the committee alongside Enayet Husain Siraj, said.

"Our main objective is to make a report that will help the board fix problems regarding our team. There were number of factors that played a role behind the World Cup failure and we want to identify those issues to create a healthy atmosphere in the

dressing room," Yunus added.

When asked how they, given their roles as BCB directors, would handle any failures from the board's side, he responded: "We have to be fair to make a fruitful report."

The BCB has taken some initiatives in the aftermath of the national team's abysmal performance in the T20 World Cup, among which the appointment of former national captain and current board director Khaled Mahmud as team director for the upcoming Pakistan series was the most visible one.

But the way the team management changed things in the just-concluded three-match T20 series against Pakistan gave the same old impression that there is hardly any scope to settle problems with quick-fix solutions.

Now it will be interesting to see whether two-member committee's report can have any impact when there has been a call for an independent committee to unearth the real facts following one debacle after another.

## 'Bowler' Mithun springs a surprise

SPORTS REPORTER

Mohammad Mithun, known as a middle-order-batter and wicketkeeper, can now be recognised as a bowler as well as he grabbed a seven-wicket haul for Khulna Division in their Tier-1 encounter against Dhaka Division on the third day of the final round of the 23rd National Cricket League at BKSP yesterday.

Dhaka got their second innings off to a flying start as Abdul Mazid and Rony Talukdar strung a 139-run opening partnership before both of them got picked by Mithun. Then Mithun ran through the entire batting line-up of Dhaka as seven out of the eight wickets of Dhaka division were collected by the occasional off-break bowler. Dhaka declared their second winnings posting 256 for eight.

Khulna will resume the final day on seven as they need 372 runs to win with all wickets remaining.

In another Tier-1 match in BKSP,

resuming the day on 90, Amit Hasan played a patient 186-run knock off 422 balls for Sylhet while putting an emphatic 243-run partnership with skipper Zakir Hasan, who scored 126 runs against Rangpur Division, who are topping the table of Tier-1. Sylhet posted 455 runs for five before stumps were called. Nasir Hossain scalped a couple of wickets for Rangpur.

Meanwhile, at Sylhet Academy Ground, Rajshahi posted 421 in their Tier-2 encounter against Barishal, leading by 88 runs ahead of the final day. Rajshahi's Farhad Reza scored 99 runs before being shown the way by Ruyel Miah, who scalped a fiver for Barishal.

In another match in Sylhet, Chattogram Division resumed the day on 24 runs against Dhaka Metropolis. Middle-order-batter Shahadat Hossain remained unbeaten on 97 as he guided his side to 221 for five. They now lead by 186 runs ahead of the final day as they look to get promoted to Tier-1.



## TIGERS SANS SHAKIB TURN FOCUS ON TESTS



Pakistan team reached Chattogram yesterday to play the first Test of the two-match series against Bangladesh, starting from November 26. The onus will now be on Bangladesh Test captain Mominul Haque to turn things around following the Tigers' long queue of debacles in the shortest format of the game. Bangladesh will return to the red-ball game after winning their last Test match against Zimbabwe in Harare in July this year. The challenge, however, will be huge for the hosts against high-flying Pakistan as Mominul mentioned during an interview with The Daily Star in August this year: "We won in Zimbabwe but that doesn't mean we have done a lot in Test cricket. I think we have bigger challenges like the two Tests against Pakistan." The bad news for the Tigers is that premier all-rounder Shakib Al Hasan will not be available for the Test as he is yet to recover from a hamstring injury, sustained during the T20 World Cup.



PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN

## Windies avoid follow-on

AFF, GALLE

Rain forced an early end with the West Indies tail still hanging on after avoiding the follow-on for day three of the first Test against Sri Lanka in Galle on Tuesday.

The Windies scored 224 for nine before stumps yesterday.

The West Indies added nine runs in 30 balls and lost Rahkeem Cornwall in a brief passage of play after lunch before the heavens opened. The forecast for the next two days was more wet weather.

With the new ball due, Suranga Lakmal was called up to bowl the 79th over of the West Indies innings from the City End and he dismissed Cornwall.

Lakmal bowled a short ball and Cornwall could not resist the pull shot, but got the execution wrong and was caught by Ramesh Mendis running backwards from mid-wicket. Cornwall made 39 off 58 balls with five fours and a six.

But the 49-run stand between Cornwall and Joshua da Silva ensured the West Indies avoided the follow-on.

After a brief pause in the rain, umpires inspected the field and decided to resume play. Another downpour soon washed out the final session before it began, threatening to spoil Sri Lanka's early advantage.

"We are hoping and praying the weather gods are kind to us," said Sri Lanka spin bowling coach Piya Wijetunga, who was disappointed his spinners had failed to dispatch the tourists before the rain, despite accounting for eight wickets between them.

Play will resume early for the final two days to make up lost time, with 98 overs scheduled for each.

## Abahani exact revenge on MSC

SPORTS REPORTER



Abahani exacted revenge for their first-leg defeat against archrivals Mohammedan with a 4-2 win in the Super Five stage of the Green Delta Insurance Premier Division Hockey League at the Maulana Bhasani Hockey Stadium yesterday.

Abahani, who lost the first-leg match 4-0, thwarted 12 out of 14 penalty corners taken by Gonzalo Peilet of Argentina, once regarded the best penalty corner flicker in the world, to come back in title race with 36 points from 14 matches.

The outcome of the match helped Mariner Youngs as they now need a single point from the two remaining matches against Abahani and Mohammedan to regain the prestigious title.

The Arambagh-based outfit, who defeated Bangladesh SC 7-1 in the day's second match, have 39 points from 13 matches while Mohammedan

have 33 points from 13 matches.

The Sky Blues dominated most of the match except for the third quarter and marked Argentine forward Joaquin Menini tightly to keep Mohammedan away from making any damage. They also brilliantly defended Mohammedan's attacks and corner kicks.

The Sky Blues led the first half 2-1 through strikes from Khorshedur Rahman and Arshad Hossain while Peilet scored one for Mohammedan in the first quarter.

After resumption, Abahani widened the margin 3-1 through another penalty corner from Khorshed before Mohammedan put tremendous pressure in the third quarter to reduce the margin 3-2 through a penalty-corner from Peilet.

The Argentine squandered a penalty stroke to blow a chance to draw Mohammedan level before Dutchman Bjorn Kellerman wrapped up the victory for Abahani two minutes from time.

