



South Africa's Rassie van der Dussen and Temba Bavuma embrace each other after the winning runs were scored on the fourth day of the third and final Test against India in Cape Town on Friday. The Proteas won the Test by seven wickets to take the series 2-1.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Tigers return, await tough challenges

SPORTS REPORT

Mominul Haque and Co will reach Dhaka today following a successful tour of New Zealand, where Bangladesh registered a historic win in the first Test at the Bay Oval in Mount Maunganui and eventually shared a Test series with the Kiwis for the first time.

Team director Khaled Mahmud and experienced campaigner Mushfiqur Rahim, however, arrived in the country two days early.

The eight-wicket victory in the first Test will certainly boost the morale of the side ahead of a challenging year.

The cricketers will get busy as the upcoming (BPL) is set to begin on January 21.

The Tigers then host Afghanistan for three ODIs and two T20Is in February-March before embarking on a trip to South Africa after almost five years for three ODIs and two Tests.

REUTERS, CAPE TOWN

South Africa captain Dean Elgar admits he had to show some tough love to his players, which he believes was behind their turnaround in fortunes as they completed a seven-wicket victory over India at Newlands on Friday to claim the series 2-1.

The home side were well beaten by 113 runs in the first Test in Pretoria, but bounced back, against expectations with their young side, to win in both Johannesburg and Cape Town against the number one ranked team in the world.

"We have a young, talented group," Elgar told reporters. "The experience isn't there, but we are gaining it and getting better every day.

"It was unreal to see how a group that doesn't have the 'names' could gel together and play as one. This is a proper unit. It was a proper team win."

Elgar admits he did not pull any punches after the loss in Pretoria and says there were some tough conversations within the group.

"Ultimately if you want to operate at a high-performance level you need to have tough, hard chats. If guys don't like it, that

is up for them to deal with," he said.

"I am a bit of an old school mentality with a new school twist, but I laid down some proper challenges to some senior players to stand up and respond. It was brilliant to see the guys take the message on board."

"If you want to be world number one in the future, you have to compete and beat the best."

"Having collapses every now and then is not a good thing and we need to analyse and correct that moving forward."

Meanwhile, India captain Virat Kohli said the team's batting line up "must be looked into" for Tests away from home as he pinned the blame on their inability to cope in the unfamiliar conditions.

"One of the challenges we have faced touring abroad is to make sure we capitalise on the momentum when it is on our side. When we do that we have won

tests, but when we haven't it has cost us the match," Kohli told reporters.

"It (the reason for the series defeat) is batting, we can't pinpoint any other aspect of our game as a team. The batting has to be looked into, there is no running away from that."

"Having collapses every now and then is not a good thing and we need to analyse and correct that moving forward."

Kohli said the fact that his side were expected to win speaks volumes for their recent improvement on the road, but that will make this loss all the more disappointing as they still seek a first series victory in South Africa.

"We know how far we have come as a team. The fact that we came to South Africa and people expect us to win is testimony to what we have done in the past," he said.

"But that does not guarantee you results, you still have to come out and play hard cricket, which we failed to do this time round."

"I am not going to stand here and say, 'oh, we won in Australia and we won in England', we have to turn up to every series and try and win that one and we still haven't done that in South Africa."

'Competitive' BCL set for final showdown

SPORTS REPORTER

The Bangladesh Cricket League (BCL) Independence Cup final between Central Zone and South Zone will get underway at Sylhet International Cricket Stadium today in what would be a repeat of the BCL four-day format final.

The final would not have the established stars of the Bangladesh setup with Shakib Al Hasan opting not to play the final while the likes of North Zone's Mahmudullah Riyad and East Zone's Tamim Iqbal failing to make the final. Mustafizur Rahman of Central Zone may also miss the final due to a back injury but he was still a cause for hope in South Zone's attempt to turn the tables from the longer format final.

Despite that, there was no lack of competitive air as South Zone manager Jamal Babu reiterated to reporters that his team were out for revenge after losing the final of the four-day format between the two sides.

"We lost the four day match. We have come prepared and were able to beat them in the last match. We have a bowler like Mustafizur and hopefully we can become champions," he said.

While Central Zone lost their last match against South Zone, skipper Mosaddek Hossain was optimistic.

"We're not under any pressure. We took many lessons from our last game and hopefully we can use that to our advantage.

When the wickets are good it's better for bowlers and batters to improve on their skill. How the wicket was in the last game would help Bangladesh cricket as a whole," Mosaddek said ahead of the final.

While Mosaddek said that it was a folly to have a different plan for Mustafizur because of his exceptional skills, South Zone skipper Zakir Hasan was waiting for good news on the pacer's recovery. "We will wait for Mustafizur till the last minute," Zakir said of Mustafizur.

The players looked focused during an optional practice session yesterday with Soumya Sarkar, Mosaddek and Mohammad Mithun going through the motions ahead of the final. For selector Habibul Bashar, the tournament has been competitive.

"There are only four teams. Usually finalists are decided quickly but this time we had to wait till the last moment. It was very competitive and the strengths of the teams were equal. The players were very serious and they enjoyed their wins. They owned the team. It was good," he said.

The participation from the senior players in the national side also helped raise spirits.

"Definitely it's an added bonus [to have top national stars in these types of tournaments]. The top players play in three formats and their schedules are very busy. If they play even one or two games, the players outside national team get inspired. It's a huge boost for them to play with those stars," Bashar said.



Australia's Travis Head (R) celebrates scoring a century against England with teammate Cameron Green on the first day of the fifth Test in Hobart on Friday. Head scored 101 while Green added 74 as Australia recovered from a terrible start to post 241 for six at stumps.



It has taken me longer than I thought to be OK but I'm almost recovered and I'm looking forward to getting back on the field.

LIONEL MESSI

Djokovic to fight visa cancellation

REUTERS, MELBOURNE

Australia cancelled Novak Djokovic's visa on the grounds his presence in the country might excite anti-vaccination sentiment, and not because he posed a health threat being unvaccinated against COVID-19, his lawyers told a court on Friday night.

Immigration Minister Alex Hawke's decision was "patently irrational", Djokovic's lawyer Nicholas Wood told the Federal Circuit and Family Court of Australia, explaining that would be the main reason for asking the court to quash the second cancellation of his visa.

His lawyers are pressing for the case to be heard on Sunday, so that if he is successful and is allowed to stay, he will be able to compete in the Australian Open, which starts on Monday, in a bid to win a record 21st major title.

In the meantime the court said he would be put in detention from 8 am on Saturday, with allowance to attend his lawyers' offices under guard to prepare for the case and watch the court hearing, possibly on Sunday.

Djokovic was detained for several days after arriving in Australia more than a week ago, and was released last Monday when the same court quashed his visa cancellation on the grounds that the Australian Border Force had treated him unfairly. When he first arrived, immigration officials cancelled his visa on the grounds that he did not have enough evidence to back up a medical exemption from Australia's COVID-19 vaccination requirement for incoming travellers.



However the immigration minister's decision on Friday to cancel his visa again was based on a completely different reason, Djokovic's lawyers said. "The underlying new rationale is not a direct risk to others. It's that Mr Djokovic being in Australia, in Melbourne in particular, by being here will excite anti-vax sentiment – radically different approach," his lawyer Wood told the court.

In contrast to the Australian Border Force last week, Wood said, the minister had found that Djokovic complied with the law, he posed only a negligible risk to others, with natural immunity from recent infection, he had a medical reason for not being vaccinated and was a man of good standing. Wood said the jurisdictional error which should lead to the cancellation being revoked "might be explained as irrationality".

The government has agreed not to deport Djokovic at least until the case has concluded, Judge Anthony Kelly said.

PHOTO: AFP