

## Mashrafe’s much-awaited return today?

SPORTS REPORTER

Former Bangladesh captain and pacer Mashrafe Bin Mortaza was seen bowling at the nets for the first time since the cricketer had suffered a back injury on January 18. The inspirational cricketer missed out on the first two games for his side Minister Dhaka and is expected to make a return to the Bangladesh Premier League today.

The 38-year-old started bowling with a short run-up yesterday at the BCB Academy ground and gradually moved to the full run-up. According to Dhaka team physio Enamul Haque, Mashrafe has no issues regarding his fitness and could probably feature against Fortune Barishal in today’s first game.

“Mashrafe has bowled with a full run-up today (yesterday) and so far we haven’t seen any problem. There is a high chance for him to feature in the third game as there is no issue in terms of his fitness,” Enamul told the media yesterday.

Mashrafe, whose inclusion will certainly boost his side’s morale after losing both games so far, last featured in a competitive game back in December 2020 for Gemcon Khulna in the final of the Bangabandhu T20 Cup. The cricketer was expected to participate in the one-day version of the Bangladesh Cricket League earlier this month but eventually missed out due to his fitness issues.



The bond between former national teammates typically remains unfettered, and it became somewhat apparent again in Mirpur yesterday as the head coach of Fortune Barishal Khaled Mahmud appears to be guiding Mashrafe Bin Mortaza of Minister Dhaka even though the two will have completely separate interests with Dhaka clashing against Barishal at the Bangladesh Premier League today. And Mashrafe, despite his fitness issue, might just make a comeback.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

# Mahmud coy on TAMIM ISSUE

SPORTS REPORTER

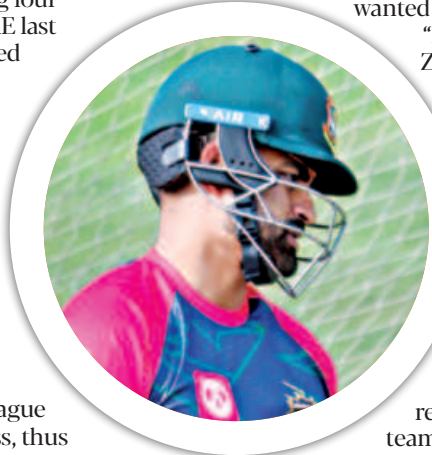
Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) president Nazmul Hassan Papon said on Saturday that Tamim Iqbal had confided in him about not being interested in playing T20Is and while it was not exactly a bombshell revelation – with Tamim skipping four T20I series ahead of the T20 World Cup in UAE last year before eventually opting out of the coveted tournament – the player himself had not said anything about retirement from the game’s shortest format.

That World Cup debacle only worsened Bangladesh cricket’s woes in the shortest format. The crisis in the opening slots and their roles deepened due to Liton not getting into his flow alongside Mohammad Naim, playing his debut World Cup. Tamim, who himself had been battling injury issues, was quick to get into his groove, hitting two fifties in Minister Group Dhaka’s first two games in the ongoing Bangladesh Premier League (BPL). There is value in his experience and class, thus Tamim opting not to play T20Is caused an uproar.

The left-hander possesses one of Bangladesh’s most attacking mentalities, but his role in T20Is as well as that of other openers in the team has often been foggy. Bangladesh trying out Saif Hassan as an opener in the T20Is against Pakistan further showcased the lack of depth in opening slots. All this brings focus back to Tamim, who has consistency by his side in terms of scoring runs.

Bangladesh team director Khaled Mahmud is charged with handling matters within the team and he gave credence to some

of the issues disrupting the team that had been floating around in the media while speaking at Mirpur’s Academy Ground yesterday. Mahmud, who is in charge of Fortune Barishal in the BPL, was surprised by what BCB president had relayed. Tamim, who did not practice yesterday, could not be reached when The Daily Star wanted to query him.



“I was a bit surprised. Before leaving for New Zealand, I asked Tamim why he doesn’t want to play T20Is and the reasons behind his decision. But I haven’t talked to him yet. I saw that [Nazmul Hassan] Papon bhai has already talked about his conversation with Tamim,” Mahmud told reporters.

“It’s clear that we don’t have top-order batter of his calibre that are ready to play. But it’s a personal issue. If he doesn’t want to, no one can force him. But we have to move forward because Bangladesh cricket won’t sit still,” he added.

“I will of course [deal with it] since it’s my responsibility. I want Bangladesh to play their best teams in all three formats, right? I want to focus on the next year very hard. I want to talk to him face to face,” he added.

“My task is to solve little problems, especially misunderstandings. It happens. Sometimes egos can cause issues.

“I understand that there is some distance in the group but solving it is a responsibility. We want to play with their best players,” he added, but it remains to be seen whether Bangladesh management will find the solution they need in Tamim or whether the player will find the urge to carry the load in the format.

## What to WATCH

T SPORTS

BPL  
Fortune Barishal vs Minister Group Dhaka  
Live from 12:30 pm  
Chattogram Challengers vs Khulna Tigers  
Live from 05:30 pm

TEN 2 & SONY SIX

Australian Open 2022  
Round 4  
Live from 06:00 am onwards

## ‘Rashford among the best strikers in England’



REUTERS

Manchester United interim manager Ralf Rangnick hailed Marcus Rashford as “one of the top strikers in England” after the substitute scored a stoppage-time winner against West Ham United on Saturday.

It was Rashford’s second goal in as many games following a barren run of matches that saw him go 11 without scoring.

“Marcus is one of the top strikers in England and has everything you need for a modern forward – pace, skills, size and physicality,” said Rangnick.

“In the end it is all about confidence and I am pretty sure those two goals will have raised his confidence. It’s now about him taking the right steps and continuing. I think he will play an important role for the

rest of the season.”

The 24-year-old Rashford finished off a slick team move with the last play of the game, tapping home from Edinson Cavani’s low cross. The 1-0 win lifted United into fourth with 38 points from 22 games.

Asked if “Fergie Time” was now “Ralfie Time”, Rangnick added: “I don’t know how long ‘Fergie Time’ was. Was that the last five minutes? I wouldn’t mind if that happened.

“But we would also like to have more games like Brentford when we were 3-0 up. But if you score in the last seconds the big advantage is there is no time for the team to reply.”

United next host Middlesbrough in the fourth round of the FA Cup on Feb. 4.



Canadian Denis Shapovalov upset an out-of-sorts Alexander Zverev 6-3, 7-6(5), 6-3 in broiling heat on Sunday to reach his first Australian Open quarter-final and set up a showdown with fellow lefthander Rafa Nadal, who was pushed all the way by Adrian Mannarino in an 81-minute first set before breaking the Frenchman’s resolve in a 7-6 (16/14), 6-2, 6-2 victory. Nadal is chasing a men’s record 21st Grand Slam title.

PHOTO: AFP/REUTERS



## Young Tigers to meet India in quarters

SPORTS REPORTER

After a seven-wicket thrashing against England to begin their ICC Under-19 World Cup campaign, defending champions Bangladesh bounced back and clinched commanding victories over Canada and the UAE in their next two group games to qualify for the quarterfinal of the mega-event.

Rakibul Hasan and Co secured a quarterfinal spot by finishing as runners-up in Group A after a nine-wicket win over UAE (DLS method) on a rain-affected encounter in Basseterre on Sunday.

Bangladesh, meanwhile, will be up against Group B champions India, who however are struggling after a Covid-19 outbreak in their camp has forced them to draft in five reserve players ahead of the quarterfinal against Bangladesh on January 29.

There has been an intense rivalry between India and Bangladesh, especially in youth cricket in recent years. The Akbar Ali-led Bangladesh side had gone on to lift a maiden World Cup trophy by beating India in the final of the previous edition in 2020 in South Africa.

India have always posed a significant hurdle for the young Tigers. Bangladesh U-19 team won a triangular series involving two India U-19 teams in October last year but Rakibul and his troops also lost to India by 103 runs in the semifinal of the ACC Under-19 Asia Cup in December last year.

## Women set up virtual final against SL

SPORTS REPORTER

With five teams competing for just one spot of the women’s cricket event at the 2022 Commonwealth Games, a virtual final has taken shape with the winner of the last group game between Bangladesh and Sri Lanka at the Kinrara Oval in Malaysia today set to seal a place in next year’s tournament in Birmingham. Bangladesh and Sri Lanka have already won their first three games and the in-form Lankans will be the biggest hurdle for Nigar Sultana and Co. so far. Bangladesh defeated Scotland in their third group game by nine wickets yesterday.

## Kaiser, Biplab in Cabrera’s coaching panel

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh national football team’s head coach Javier Cabrera will have local coaches Masud Parvez Kaiser and Biplab Bhattacharjee along with fitness and performance coach Ivan Razlog in his coaching panel.

The Spaniard, who had a meeting with these coaches at the BFF House yesterday, said it is important for him to have people who have local football knowledge assisting him in the national team job.

Kaiser and Biplab, both former national team players, have been involved with coaching senior national, age-group and women’s teams for the last few years. Kaiser will be acting as assistant coach while Biplab will be the goalkeeping coach under Cabrera.