

Rohit [Sharma] is the number one player in the country. We spoke to him and he's absolutely OK (to lead the team in all formats). Under a player as experienced as Rohit, we can also groom future leaders of the team.



Chief selector Chetan Sharma praises India's new Test captain.

Focus shifts to ODIs

SPORTS REPORTER

After being involved in almost a month-long T20 action in the recently-concluded Bangabandhu Bangladesh Premier League, the focus of national cricketers will now turn to the fifty-over format of the game as Bangladesh are set to host Afghanistan for a bilateral three-match ODI series followed by a two-match T20 series.

As Bangladesh shift their focus to the format that is arguably their most preferred one, however, this time the Tigers will have some additional challenges to overcome when they step onto the Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium in Chattogram for the first ODI on February 23.

Bangladesh will be returning to the format after over a seven-month gap, and that too with wholesale changes incorporated in their ranks. As many as seven players from the 16-member ODI series against Zimbabwe in July last year – the last ODI series for the Tigers – lost their places while four uncapped players have been included in the side this time around.

Given that the ODI series is a part of the ICC Men's Cricket World Cup Super League, it will present additional incentives for the Tigers led by skipper Tamim Iqbal, who will be returning to international cricket after a long time as well.

The national team coaching set-up has also gone through a massive overhaul. Head coach Russell Domingo has already arrived in Dhaka yesterday following his vacation but the South African will now have to work and gel with a totally different crew as batting coach Ashwell Prince and fast bowling coach Otis Gibson have left their roles recently.

However, the BCB has already appointed a new batting coach in Jamie Siddons and the whole coaching staff will head to Chattogram with the squad on Sunday, provided they return negative on their Covid-19 tests.

Four prospects to BANK ON

SPORTS REPORTER

The eighth edition of the Bangabandhu Bangladesh Premier League emerged to be a great platform for the young uncapped local cricketers, who punched above their weights. It came as a breath of fresh air to witness some bright prospects in action, who must have caught the eyes of the selectors with their performances and potential to represent the national team in the future.

The Daily Star attempted to assess four uncapped players who dazzled the most in the 2022 BPL.

Mrittunjoy Chowdhury (Chattogram Challengers): The young left-arm seamer is right up there as one of the biggest finds in the BPL's eighth edition. Having battled with a series of injuries, Mrittunjoy drew attention while playing his first game of the tournament against Sylhet Sunrisers, in which he registered the first and only hat-trick of the eighth edition. The 20-year-old kept on impressing onwards, be it with the new ball or even coming into the death overs. He eventually ended up among the top five wicket-takers list, scalping 15 wickets in eight games, with figures of 4 for 12 against Fortune Barishal remained the best of the lot.

Tanvir Islam (Comilla Victorians): Left-arm spinner Tanvir Islam has played a vital role behind Comilla becoming champions this season. The 25-year-old, who has been a prolific performer in the domestic circuit in recent times, picked up 16 wickets in 12 games to become the fourth-highest wicket-taker in the BPL, while boasting a 7.65 economy rate. More importantly, in pressure situations, Tanvir had displayed great maturity, a feature of his game seen in the BPL this season, while his ability to keep the batters quiet in the powerplay is surely one of his major strengths.

Mehedi Hasan Rana (Fortune Barishal): Another left-arm seamer Mehedi Hasan Rana



caught the eyes with his bowling performance for Barishal this season. The 25-year-old was among the break-through bowlers for Shakib Al Hasan whenever Barishal desperately looked for a wicket or two. Figures of 4 for 17 against Khulna Tigers remained his best performance, as Rana went on to bag 11 wickets in eight games. The cricketer from Chandpur was the player of the match in the first Qualifier against Comilla, where he bowled brilliantly in the death overs and picked up two crucial wickets, conceding only 15 runs from his three overs.

Munim Shahriar (Fortune Barishal): The young right-handed opener is undoubtedly the most vital discovery for Bangladesh cricket in the recently-concluded BPL. With his fearless attitude and hard-hitting ability, Munim showed great glimpses of his talent which the selectors have been searching for some time now. The 23-year-old managed to give Barishal some flying starts, during which someone like Chris Gayle had to play the second fiddle as his opening partner from the other end. With one fifty in six games, Munim scored 178 runs at a staggering strike-rate of 152.13. Even Shakib praised the youngster and termed Munim as a future prospect.

Left-arm pacer Mrittunjoy Chowdhury, who claimed 15 wickets at 14.93 average, became the most exciting bowling talent in the just concluded Bangladesh Premier League (BPL).

PHOTO: STAR FILE



New Zealand end long drought

REUTERS, WELLINGTON

New Zealand captain Tom Latham hailed a "perfect performance" after his team completed a one-sided demolition of a pitiful South Africa, winning the first Test by an innings and 276 runs before lunch on day three on Saturday.

Tim Southee took five wickets as New Zealand bowled out South Africa for 111 in their second innings, a paltry total that was nonetheless more than their first innings haul.

The result ended a 16-match winless streak by the Blackcaps in Tests between the two nations, stretching back to 2004.

The reigning world Test champions have never won a series against South Africa but will break their duck barring a major turnaround in the second test of the two-match series.

Pace bowler Matt Henry was named Player of the Match after picking up nine wickets overall, including 7-23 in the first innings at Hagley Oval in Christchurch.

He also made a swashbuckling 58 not out batting at No. 11.

"You've got to give credit to the bowling group," Henry said, deflecting praise. "We created pressure at both ends for a long period and I was the one that got the rewards at the other end."

Latham, captain in the absence of injured Kane Williamson, acknowledged that the toss had been crucial, but heaped praise on the way his bowlers had clinically exploited the helpful conditions.

"To back up the performance with the bat on a wicket that was a little tricky, you look back and it was probably the perfect performance really."

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