



Bangladesh batting mainstay Mushfiqur Rahim joyfully plays football during a training session while another batting stalwart, Tamim Iqbal, returns from a gruelling net practice yesterday at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur. Both the batters will look forward to continue their good form in the second Test, starting today, after returning to form with hundreds in Chattogram Test.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

Tigers hopeful of Mirpur turnaround

“I don’t think this is going to be an easy game at all. Both teams want to win this game. I think the last game [in Chattogram] was a close-fought contest. I think this will be similar. The game will go forward at a quicker pace. We have to be ready for that. I’m looking forward to some exciting cricket.”

Chris Silverwood
Sri Lanka head coach



SPORTS REPORTER

The conditions in Mirpur, the added spin threat and Bangladesh’s record in the past few Tests in Mirpur against spin all come into view as the Tigers gear up for the second Test in Dhaka today. Injuries in the pace and spin department further dampened the outlook and the Tigers will be wary of just how favourable home conditions turn out to be.

Conditions in Mirpur have remained stable over the course of the past five years, but results fluctuate wildly. At times the hosts have won handsomely. Other times results have been nothing short of embarrassing. Bangladesh lost the last two Tests in Dhaka, to the West Indies and Pakistan.

The last time Sri Lanka toured Bangladesh before this series, there was a high-scoring, albeit largely uneventful, draw in Chattogram despite Mominul Haque’s tons in both innings. Bangladesh then suffered a 215-run defeat in Dhaka to lose the series 1-0.

Asked if he was hopeful of a positive result, Mominul said he was, given Tests in Mirpur usually produce results. The last time a draw played out in Mirpur was against South Africa in 2015, but that was only because no play was possible after the first day.

“I feel that we have a good opportunity. We have to start from scratch, without thinking of what happened in Chattogram.

As you said, we are trying to get out of that scenario,” Bangladesh skipper Mominul said at the press conference yesterday.

Mominul had been spotted in discussion with coach Russell Domingo and curator Gamini Silva ahead of the press conference yesterday. Conditions will play a big part in the second Test and Mominul perhaps wanted to get his coordinates right.

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The last two times Bangladesh have played Tests in Mirpur, they lost the toss. On both occasions, the away team batted first and put the squeeze on Bangladesh in the latter stages of the game with spin. So, even at home and on a surface where the Tigers play a majority of matches, Mominul was wary of calling it his side’s best opportunity to get a win.

“Considering conditions and everything else, it is a good opportunity. It’s not the best opportunity but it is another opportunity for us to win a series. There are rarely matches at Mirpur which do not see a result,” he said.

West Indies’ Rakheem Cornwall got nine wickets and Pakistan’s Sajid Khan scalped 12 in the last two Tests in Mirpur, which is as much an example of Mirpur’s spin-friendliness as it is of Bangladesh’s batting instability.

On top of that, Bangladesh have injuries to off-spinners Nayeem Hasan and Mehedi Hasan Miraz.

Mominul, who now realistically has to go with four front-line bowlers due to Shoriful Islam’s injury as well, admitted that Mosaddek Hossain had a good chance of making the playing eleven. With pacers not amongst the wickets in Chattogram, the burden of shouldering the lion’s share of overs will fall squarely on Taijul Islam and Shakib Al Hasan.

“If Mosaddek plays, his role will be different. It’s important to use him intelligently. At times you have to deal with situations like this [injuries] and you have to face up to them accordingly. Since they [Taijul and Shakib] are there, hopefully it won’t be too much of a problem,” Mominul said, knowing full well that the Test can go either way but given Sri Lanka’s batting depth, it will be a difficult task for the Bangladesh bowlers.

Familiar faces back into squads

SPORTS REPORTER

The Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) named the squads for all three formats for the upcoming tour of West Indies with Mustafizur Rahman returning to the Test squad for the first time since February 2021.

Mustafizur has only appeared sporadically in Tests in recent years since his debut in 2015 and was included last time in one home Test against Windies in Chattogram in 2021.

Mushfiqur Rahim had opted out of the whole tour while Mehedi Hasan Miraz returned to the Test setup after missing the ongoing Test series against Sri Lanka through injury.

Anamul Haque Bijoy has been included in the ODIs and T20Is following his performances in the recently-concluded Dhaka Premier League. Mohammad Saifuddin also returned in the white-ball formats since featuring for Bangladesh in the T20 World Cup while Nurul Hasan has been included as Mushfiqur’s replacement.

Mahmudul Hasan Joy and Khaled Ahmed has been excluded from the ODI setup. Having been included in the Sri Lanka series, Mosaddek Hossain found his way into the shorter format squads too while regular T20I opener Mohammad Naim has been left out due to poor form.

Shoriful Islam was only included in the white-ball formats while Taskin Ahmed has been left out of the T20I series.

There have been speculations that Shakib Al Hasan will opt out of the ODI series but he has been named in the 17-member squad.



TEST SQUAD: Mominul Haque (Captain), Tamim Iqbal, Mahmudul Hasan Joy, Najmul Hossain Shanto, Shakib Al Hasan, Liton Das, Mosaddek Hossain Saikat, Yasir Ali Rabbi, Taijul Islam, Mehedi Hasan Miraz, Ebadot Hossain, Khaled Ahmed, Rejaur Rahman Raja, Shohidul Islam, Mustafizur Rahman and Nurul Hasan Sohan.

ODI SQUAD: Tamim Iqbal (Captain), Liton Das, Najmul Hossain Shanto, Shakib Al Hasan, Mahmud Ullah Riyad, Mosaddek Hossain Saikat, Yasir Ali Rabbi, Afif Hossain Dhrubo, Mehedi Hasan Miraz, Ebadot Hossain, Nasum Ahmed, Mustafizur Rahman, Nurul Hasan Sohan, Anamul Haque Bijoy, Mohammad Saifuddin, Taskin Ahmed and Shoriful Islam.

T20I SQUAD: Mahmud Ullah Riyad (Captain), Munim Shahriar, Liton Das, Anamul Haque Bijoy, Shakib Al Hasan, Afif Hossain Dhrubo, Mosaddek Hossain Saikat, Yasir Ali Rabbi, Sheikh Mehedi, Nasum Ahmed, Shohidul Islam, Mustafizur Rahman, Nurul Hasan Sohan, Mohammad Saifuddin and Shoriful Islam.

“If he asks for a leave, it will be handled by cricket operations department,” chief selector Minhajul Abedin told The Daily Star yesterday.

“Mustafizur returning to the Test side is good news since he is very experienced and has played in those conditions before. Anamul was spectacular in domestic cricket and he was rewarded for that,” Minhajul said about Fizz and Anamul’s inclusions. “Taskin will be with the T20 side and we will take a decision on him after seeing his condition, he has not been altogether excluded,” he said while adding that Saifuddin and Miraz’s return gives balance to the side.

ASIA CUP HOCKEY

Korea test first up

SPORTS REPORTER

Having played against similar-or-lower-strength sides in the Asian Games Qualifiers a week ago in Bangkok, Bangladesh hockey team are now set to compete against superior opponents in the Asia Cup, with their first match against South Korea in Indonesia today.

The men in red and green performed well throughout the Asian Games Qualifiers to extend their winning record to 10 matches before being thrashed 6-2 in the final by Oman.

The team’s coach Iman Gobinathan Krishnamurthy will want to see his charges shrug off that disappointment and put up an improved performance against the Koreans.

“We want to improve our game [against Korea]. Tournament in Bangkok was a rollercoaster for a few players,” Krishnamurthy told The Daily Star yesterday. “Mentally the players are all right but I’m a bit concerned about the physical part of the players because any team, even world champions, will have a problem playing the back-to-back tournaments within a week. So it will be physically a challenging tournament.”

Although Bangladesh lost 3-2 against Korea in the 2021 Asian Champions Trophy in Dhaka, they were thrashed by big margins by the four-time Asia Cup champions in their previous three meetings – two 7-0 defeats in the 2014 and the 2018 Asian Games and 9-0 defeat in the 2013 Asia Cup.

“Korea have won more tournaments than India in Asia in the last four years. They won the Azlan Shah Trophy in 2019 and ACT 2021. They also brought back most of their important players to boost the team,” informed Krishnamurthy, hoping that his players will get the tactic right against Korea, especially after playing two practice matches against Indonesia and India.

‘Very happy’ Mbappe stays with PSG until 2025

Kylian Mbappe has signed a contract extension with Paris St Germain that will keep the France forward tied with the Ligue 1 side until 2025. “I am very happy to stay in France, in Paris, in my city,” Mbappe told supporters, standing next to PSG president Nasser al-Khelaifi, on the Parc des Princes pitch before he marked his new deal with a hat-trick in PSG’s 5-0 win over Metz in their final Ligue 1 match of the season in Saturday. The World Cup winner, who rejected Real Madrid to remain in France, took his total of league goals for the season to 28 as he finished as Ligue 1’s leading scorer for a fourth straight campaign.



In-form Jabeur exits French Open

AGENCIES

Tunisian Ons Jabeur became the first major casualty on the opening day of the French Open on Sunday when the in-form sixth seed crashed out with a 3-6, 7-6(4), 7-5 loss to Poland’s Magda Linette.

Jabeur, seen as one of the big threats to world number one Iga Swiatek at the claycourt Grand Slam, came to Paris at a career-high ranking and with a tour-leading 17 wins on the surface this season.

Former French Open champion Garbine Muguruza was knocked out in the first round on Sunday, losing 2-6, 6-3, 6-4 to Estonia’s Kaia Kanepi, the oldest woman in the tournament.

Twice French Open finalist Dominic Thiem crashed out of the tournament in the first round on Sunday, losing in straight sets to Bolivian world number 87 Hugo Dellien.

Austrian Thiem, who has failed to win a match at any of the tournaments he has played since his wrist injury comeback in March, made 42 unforced errors as his once dominant claycourt game deserted him.