

Shoriful flies for 2nd Test

SPORTS REPORTER

Left-arm seamer Shoriful Islam left for St Lucia yesterday after being included in Bangladesh's squad for the second and final Test against the West Indies, starting from 24 June.

The 21-year-old, who fractured his right hand and was ruled out of the first Test against Sri Lanka in Chattogram last month, made a comeback after the visitors suffered a seven-wicket defeat in the first Test.

Shoriful was initially only named for the white-ball formats for the Caribbean tour and he revealed that Bangladesh Cricket Board president Nazmul Hassan was the one who informed him of his inclusion.

"I am very excited because I was eager to play a Test in the West Indies. Let's see what happens, but I think I am in good shape. I learned about my inclusion yesterday [Sunday] night after [Nazmul Hassan] Papon sir called me. I was mentally prepared. Papon sir told me that I was in and I said I would go," Shoriful said before boarding his flight last night.

There was speculation that Shoriful may replace Mustafizur Rahman, who made a comeback to the longest format in the first Test in Antigua but picked up just one wicket.

"Shoriful has been a regular member of the



Former captain Mominul Haque will need to do something extraordinary, if he gets into the playing eleven against West Indies in the second Test, to keep hold of his place in the side in the long run.

PHOTO: AFP FILE

More than rest, Mominul needs a solution

SPORTS REPORTER

Mominul Haque not finding runs has become a major issue for Bangladesh going forward as the St. Lucia Test looms on the horizon. His current stretch encompasses the longest period that the left-hander -- hailed as arguably Bangladesh's best Test batter -- has not hit a fifty. More to the point, Mominul's confidence in his abilities appears have hit an all-time low.

Since scoring 88 and then an unbeaten 13 in the Mount Maunganui Test in New Zealand this year, Mominul's run of knocks without a fifty has stretched to 11. Before this, a period in 2018 saw him go through eight innings without a fifty. Mominul, who has 11 tons -- the most by a Bangladesh batsman in Tests -- used to have his batting average in the high 40s, but currently averages just 37.54. He has not reached double digits in his last nine innings.

That lean patch of his has seen the Bangladesh batting line-up in a spot of bother, as evidenced by the many batting debacles that the Tigers have faced during this year.

On Sunday, Test skipper Shakib Al Hasan was asked following the first Test whether a rest would help Mominul overcome his barriers.

"It's difficult for me to say. I always talk to him and will talk again. If he thinks that he needs a break, it can happen. But at this moment it's not good to take a decision or think about something right after a match," Shakib said.

"You can't guarantee that a lot of changes [to the side] will bring a lot of good."

The manner of Mominul's dismissal in his latest outing, in the second innings at Antigua, was difficult to fathom. A straightforward delivery from Kyle Mayers came in at an angle, but Mominul missed the line completely, caught in his crease in front of his stumps.

The left-hander worked with Nazmul Abedeen Fahim before departing for West Indies tour. Asked about the situation right now, Fahim replied: "Difficult. The last two failures will definitely shake him. Maybe he wasn't thinking too much before but he might be after these two innings."

Asked whether the problem was technical or mental, Fahim said: "Technical

problems can stem from mental aspects. He looked good in the nets the last time I saw him. Maybe past dismissals create a disturbance during matches. He came across a lot and did not leave space to swing his bat during his last dismissal. It appeared indecisive. That delivery should not be difficult to deal with for an established batsman."

Fahim opined that rest was not the solution since batters could repeat flawed approaches even after rest.

"Rest will not do anything. He has to do the right things. He can repeat the same pattern after rest too. You have to make him do the right thing and the coaches who are watching him in a competitive environment can give Mominul proper feedback. They have to know what his mental situation is. You have to be very brave in such a situation and Mominul's advantage is that he knows his capabilities. Somehow he lost that connection. Confidence is naturally bad due to performance and since confidence is low, it can affect technique. But his return to form is very necessary for Bangladesh cricket. We will not get another batter like him out of the blue," Fahim said.

Russian changes nationality to avoid Wimbledon ban

AFP, London



A Russian tennis player has avoided a Wimbledon ban on all competitors from her country by changing her nationality to Georgian, according to a report in The Times newspaper.

Natela Dzalamidze, a 29-year-old doubles player ranked No 44 in the world, will compete in the women's doubles with Serbia's Aleksandra Krunic when the tournament starts on June 27.

Wimbledon organisers the All England Club announced in April that players from Russia and Belarus would be barred from competing this year following Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

But an All England Club spokesman told The Times they were powerless to interfere in Dzalamidze's change of nationality, as this was a matter for the Women's Tennis Association (WTA) and the International Tennis Federation (ITF), and that she had satisfied the entry requirements.

"Player nationality, defined as the flag they play under at professional events, is an agreed process that is governed by tours and the ITF," the spokesman said.

Wimbledon's ban has ruled out a swathe of top players, including Daniil Medvedev, the men's world number one and the reigning US Open champion, as well as two-time major winner Victoria Azarenka.



Fitzpatrick's sensational US Open win

AFP, Brookline

England's Matt Fitzpatrick captured his first major title on Sunday by winning the US Open in dramatic fashion, making spectacular shots as rivals crumbled under final-round pressure.

After a thrilling three-man fight down the back nine at The Country Club, Fitzpatrick fired a two-under-par 68 to finish on six-under-par 274 and defeat Americans Scottie Scheffler and Will Zalatoris by one stroke.

"I'm going to say it because I won but I hit some unbelievable shots coming down the stretch and that's what I work for," Fitzpatrick said.

With perseverance, Fitzpatrick delivered his first professional US victory for a long-sought major trophy.

"It's what you grow up dreaming of," Fitzpatrick said. "It's something I've worked so hard for for such a long time. There was a big monkey on my back trying to win over here and everyone, all they ever talked about was that. To do it as a major for my first win -- there's nothing better."

Coaches anxious as BPL resumes today

SPORTS REPORTER

With the Bangladesh Premier League set to resume today, top teams were wondering whether they would be able to maintain the form they showed before the league was put on hiatus five weeks ago due to AFC Cup and Asian Cup Qualifiers engagements.

Clubs stopped training to give players a break and only restarted their camps about two weeks ago, leaving coaches anxious about displaying consistency in the coming days, especially with heavy rainy muddying grounds.

League leaders Bashundhara Kings and fourth-placed Saif Sporting Club were in fantastic form before the break, posting four straight wins after the mid-season transfer window, while top teams such as Abahani and Sheikh Jamal had also been in fine form, only dropping points in one game each in that time.

"The break hurt us a lot because we had found our rhythm. Then, not only did we have five players leave for national team duties, we were not even able to play friendly matches," Saif SC's Argentinian coach Diego Andres Cruciani told The Daily Star yesterday.

Bashundhara Kings coach Oscar Bruzon was concerned about another issue ahead of his side's game against Rahmatganj in Munshiganj today, emphasising that



Robson Robinho would like to power Bashundhara Kings to victory when they take on Rahmatganj today as the Bangladesh Premier League resumes following a five-week break. (R) Two Sheikh Jamal players take a tumble at the club training ground during a training session yesterday on the eve of their match against Sheikh Russel.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED



pitches in Bangladesh were not equipped to deal with heavy rain.

"Football pitches in Bangladesh lack drainage and appropriate soil so games

often become physical battles [when it rains heavily]. The abilities of creative and talented players are neutralised," the Spaniard told The Daily Star. "In

my opinion, the rainy season should be excluded to make a more attractive league. Or at least have pitches that allow play in rainy weather."