

What lies in Mustafizur's Test future?

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh drafted Shoriful Islam into the squad for the second Test against West Indies, with the pace bowler joining up with the team in St. Lucia on Tuesday. Despite bowling being one of the positive aspects of the Tigers' performances in the first Test in Antigua, the decision to call on Shoriful leaves Mustafizur Rahman's participation in the second Test in question.

24-year-old Shoriful's Test career is just four games old, but the left-armner has already garnered praise for his efforts with the ball, especially in the Test series against New Zealand this year. On the other hand, Mustafizur's availability was murky ahead of the series after a few exchanges of words in the media between the board and the player while Fizz was playing in the IPL.

The pacer had cited workload management as reason he wanted to stay away from Test cricket and focus solely on white-ball cricket. For a long time, Fizz was overlooked in the longer format. Russell Domingo cited that the bowler had to learn to bring the ball back into right-handed batters in order to find his way back into the Test line-up.

Between 2019 and 2021, Fizz played just one Test. He returned to the side more than a year later for the first Test against West Indies in Antigua, having last appeared against West Indies at home in February 2021.

For a long time, however, Fizz had been allowed to pick and choose formats. But the BCB's decision to dictate who will opt out of which series saw them send a letter asking him to clear his stance on Test cricket. With Taskin Ahmed and Shoriful Islam



both having been initially ruled out of the Tests, the BCB had little room to manoeuvre in terms of replacements and Fizz was drafted back in despite not being handed a Test contract for 2022.

Fizz's reluctance was perhaps evident before and skipper Shakib Al Hasan opined that no one could be inspired out of the blue to appear in Tests.

"I don't think anyone can be inspired out of nowhere," Shakib had said ahead of the series. "As he [Mustafizur] is in the series, I'm sure he is motivated to play these two matches. That is important for us. As captain, I'm focused on these two matches and he looked very motivated to play," he added.

Fizz bowled 18 overs in the first innings in Antigua, giving away just 30 runs while bagging the very first wicket at an economy of 1.66 on his return. He was hard to get away and, in the first day's play, his 12 overs saw just 10 runs conceded.

His rhythm had been great in the beginning and he was right in the zone, getting the ball to shape back into the right-handed Kraigg Brathwaite on quite a few occasions. However, his average pace would drop between the first session and third and, despite a good line and length, he did not threaten as greatly as the effects of not playing in the format for a long time perhaps showed.

While Ebadot Hossain had bowled 28 overs in that first innings, Fizz could be used for just 18. However, it was the absence of wickets with the new ball, together with Fizz's workload management, which may very well see the pacer rested for the second Test in St. Lucia.

However, as pace bowling coach Alan Donald previously said about Fizz, the decision about whether he wants to keep playing Tests in the future remains a personal issue because of the impact it could have on his performances in the white-ball formats.



An injury forced Taskin Ahmed out of Bangladesh's ongoing Test series against the West Indies, which the Tigers now trail 1-0 after a seven-wicket defeat in the first of the two-match series in Antigua. However, the pacer is raring to go with the rest of the Tigers' white-ball contingent for their upcoming T20I and ODI series against the Windies.

PHOTO: BCB

Yet another challenge for an aspirant Taskin

SPORTS REPORTER

Fitness has always been an issue for Bangladesh pacer Taskin Ahmed. The 27-year-old's susceptibility to injuries has often seen him start the process of getting back to the rhythm from the ground up ahead of series and tours.

Taskin suffered a shoulder injury during Bangladesh's tour of South Africa in March-April this year which eventually forced him out of the following Test series at home against Sri Lanka in May.

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After recovering from the shoulder injury, the 27-year-old hurt his back during a gym session and was a doubt for the upcoming ODI series in the West Indies. However, having recovered from the back injury, the right-arm pacer is now all set to travel to the Caribbean tomorrow with the Tigers' white-ball contingent.

Taskin, who has turned himself into one of the main cogs in the Tigers' pace-bowling unit, once again faces the challenge of finding his feet after a layoff.

"I hurt my back a few days ago while in a gym

session. I bowled in the nets the past two days. I tried to give my 100 per cent on both days. The physio, and selectors were there as well. They were satisfied and so was I," Taskin said after training at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.

The pacer bowled around seven overs and also underwent a fitness test yesterday.

After the end of the ongoing Test series, Bangladesh will play three T20Is and three ODIs in the Caribbean. And Taskin mentioned that he is up to taking the challenge of getting back into the rhythm with the Windies ODIs.

"Actually, all the series are tough irrespective of my injury concerns. This is also a challenge and I need to take it. So I will proceed in that way. I will give my everything. And even if I get injured after that, I can console myself saying that I had given my all," the pacer said.

Taskin, who has been only included in Bangladesh's ODI squad for the Windies series due to his injury concerns, also stated his willingness to keep playing all three formats of the game.

"I want to play all the formats. If at any point [of my career] I see that I am not being able to, I will let everyone know. But I don't think now is the time [to exclude myself from any particular format]. Now it is actually the right time to be fit and play [all formats] as well as I can.

"My dream is to be a world class bowler. I don't think it is the time that I would need rest. If at any time I feel that I am not able to manage the workload, I will say it. But I don't feel that way yet," Taskin added.

Abahani thump Mohammedan

SPORTS REPORTER

Brazilian forward Dorielton Gomes celebrated his return to Bangladesh Premier League with a brace, powering Abahani to an emphatic 4-2 win over archrivals Mohammedan in an action-packed encounter at the Shaheed Dhirendranath Datta Stadium in Cumilla yesterday.

The triumph means the Sky Blues stretched their unbeaten run against the Black and Whites to six league matches and also saw them reach 35 points from 16 matches, shrinking the gap with leaders Bashundhara Kings to six points. Meanwhile, sixth-placed Mohammedan remained glued to 22 points.

Having missed the last six matches, including the AFC Cup encounter against Mohun Bagan, fit-again Dorielton returned to the starting eleven for the Sky Blues and immediately demonstrated his prowess again, as he did by scoring in his last league outing against Bashundhara Kings in a 2-2 draw in April.

The



32-year-old picked up where he left off, slotting home a brace after Costa Rican forward Daniel Colindres opened the scoring in the eighth minute to set the tone for the high-voltage match, which saw all six goals scored in the first half and also saw Abahani go down to 10 men for the last 10 minutes.

Colindres provided a seventh-minute lead by scoring directly from a corner kick before Dorielton latched onto a pass into the box and fired in at the near post to double the lead.

Despite those setbacks in the first 10 minutes, Mohammedan appeared determined to fight and pulled one goal back in the 18th minute. After exchanging over 20 passes, a cross from Alamgir Molla found Malian striker Souleymane Diabate at the far post, who cushioned the ball into the far post with an outstretched leg.

Abahani regained their two-goal cushion 25 minutes later, when substitute Emon Babu drove home from the six-yard box after the goalkeeper parried an effort from Colindres straight to him.

But Mohammedan again sparked excitement by scoring two minutes into stoppage time as Shahriar Emon perfectly met a sweeping cross-field ball from Anik Hossain inside the box. Emon went past the first defender with his first touch before bamboozling two more and firing powerfully into the net.

However, their joy was short-lived as Abahani struck their fourth in the last minute of stoppage time, with Dorielton rising high at the near post and heading home a Colindres corner.

Abahani played the last 10 minutes with 10 players after defender Rezaul Islam picked up his second yellow card but Mohammedan could not hit back, eventually succumbing to their 13th defeat in 28 league matches against Abahani.

In the day's other match, Bangladesh Police defeated Uttar Baridhara 3-2 to join Mohammedan on 22 points. Baridhara are tenth with 12 points from 16 matches.

England eye same aggression

REUTERS, Leeds

England Test captain Ben Stokes has challenged his team to play without fear and put on a show against New Zealand at Headingley despite taking an unassailable 2-0 lead into the final match of the three-match series.

"We've obviously won the series but there are World Test Championship points to play for. We want to carry on with the way we've played," Stokes told reporters on the eve of the third test.

"I was pretty simple and clear in the dressing room. Let's try and think like we're in the entertainment business rather than the sporting business... there's a reason why 20,000 people came out to watch us at Trent Bridge last week.

"So I set a challenge to the team to be even more fearless, positive and aggressive than last week."



Bangladesh women's football team players train at the Birshreshtha Mostafa Kamal Stadium in Kamalapur ahead of today's FIFA friendly match against Malaysia. The match kicks off at 6:00pm. The 146th-ranked side will host Malaysia, ranked 85th in the world, in two friendly matches, the second of which takes place on June 26.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED