

Riyad wants positivity and aggression

SPORTS REPORTER

T20I skipper Mahmudullah Riyad wanted more positivity and aggression as Bangladesh take on West Indies in the first of the three-match T20I series in Dominica today with an eye on getting their preparations right for the T20 World Cup in Australia. With four months till the mega-event, the series could give much-needed direction.

"I think the preparation comes from here [points to his head]. In T20Is, you have very little time in the game so you need to be very aware of the conditions that will be provided. Game sense has to be applied. Our motto will be to be very positive and aggressive at the same time," he said during the press conference yesterday.

The Tigers did not even fare that well on a cruise that was supposed to relax them after quite a few players fell prey to seasickness. Some of the players even asked for a different mode of transport during a break in the island of Martinique midway through their journey. But that could not be arranged as managing visas and other documents proved difficult since the island is French territory.

While on safer landscape, Bangladesh's T20I fate still appear to be dwindling with top-order, especially the opening slot being one of the issues.

Bangladesh have used three different opening pairs following that World Cup debacle in the UAE, with Munim Shahriar getting his debut against Afghanistan at home while Mohammad Naim Sheikh, Saif Hassan and Nazmul Hossain Shanto have also been used in the



opening slot.

Riyad said his job would be to ensure players could play with ease instead of feeling uneasy about their spots in the team.

"Munim is still new and [Anamul] Bijoy is just coming in. They will have to be given the right opportunity. At the same time, the team management and I must ensure that they can play with peace of mind and get opportunities the correct way," he said.

The Test series defeat also leaves baggage ahead of the shorter formats but the Tigers found themselves in a similar position during their last tour of Windies in 2018, when they won the ODI and T20I series after losing the Tests thanks to Mashrafe Bin Mortaza's ability to rally the side's morale.

"I think it's a different ball game now," Riyad said of the T20Is. "We're keeping the red ball things aside and trying to focus on our T20 games as we're preparing for the World Cup. So, it will be very good opportunity to play West Indies in their home soil and we're looking forward to it."

"Shakib is there, Liton [Das] too. Me, Afif [Hossain], [Nurul Hasan] Sohan and Mosaddek [Hossain] are there and Sheikh Mahedi too. I think we've got very good batting depth and our bowling attack is good with variety."

The Tigers have happy memories of beating West Indies twice in Dominica in the ODI series in 2009. The likes of Shakib Al Hasan and Mahmudullah Riyad got runs during that tour over a decade ago and they might have to do the heavy lifting as Tigers look to get their T20 compass on track.



Australia spinner Nathan Lyon, who finished with a match haul of nine wickets, celebrates the dismissal of Sri Lanka captain Dimuth Karunaratne with captain Pat Cummins during the third day of the first Test in Galle yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

Semi-automated offside in place for World Cup

AFP, LAUSANNE

FIFA confirmed on Friday that a semi-automated offside system will be used at this year's World Cup in Qatar.

The optical tracking system was trialled at the FIFA Club World Cup in Abu Dhabi earlier this year and had also been tested at the Arab Cup in Qatar last December.

"Semi-automated offside technology is an evolution of the VAR systems that have been implemented across the world," FIFA president Gianni Infantino said.

The data-driven, limb-tracking technology uses both dedicated and broadcast cameras around the stadium to give the exact position of players on the pitch, offering referees precise information within seconds. The term "semi-automated" is used because FIFA insist match officials will still make the final call, with a dedicated VAR assistant in place to monitor offside.

Cummins lauds 'unplayable' Lyon

AFP, GALLE

Australia skipper Pat Cummins said Nathan Lyon's nine wickets "showed his class" in the team's Friday thrashing of Sri Lanka in the opening Test.

Lyon bamboozled the opposition batsmen with his off-spin in a match that ended before lunch on day three in Galle, with the hosts bowled out for 212 and 113.

The champion off-spinner pushed past former Indian fast bowler Kapil Dev's 434 wicket tally in the morning to break into the top-10 ranking of all-time Test bowlers.

"Nathan Lyon showed his class, he looked unplayable out there and built off the back of a really good batting day," Cummins told reporters after play wrapped up.

Lyon, 34, led the charge with his five-wicket haul in the first innings and then took four on the third morning to flatten the Sri Lankan batting in their own

den.

He was ably supported by Mitchell Swepson, a leg-spinner, and occasional spinner Travis Head who got his maiden Test wicket and then took three more.

"He's unplayable for left or right handers," Cummins said of Lyon, who has now made 436 wickets across 109 Test matches.

"Sometimes out here, bounce of spinners is spoken about as something that's not desirable, but he showed here with that bounce he was unplayable," he added.

Batsman Cameron Green was named man of the match in a bowler-dominated Test, handling Sri Lanka's spin roster with confidence for a first innings showing of 77.

Cummins said his younger batters like the 23-year-old Green had played in sub-continent conditions before, but that had given little preparation for the turn on Galle's

notoriously tricky wicket.

"I think we had Marnus [Labuschagne], Travis Head, Cameron Green, Alex Carey (but they) hadn't played Test matches in conditions that have spun this much," said Cummins.

"We have a big series next year in India, so this can only help develop and fast-track our batters," he added. "Absolutely you learn so much from these tours."

Green had always been a "fast learner", Cummins said.

"But it's even surprised us how fast he's learnt out there. From ball one, really sharp (with) a really clear method."

Australia were five down for 157 when opener Usman Khawaja departed on day two.

Green put on an 84-run stand with Carey to put the team on course to its 109-run lead at the end of the innings.

The second and final Test begins July 8 at the same venue.

No red ball in my bag, says Buttler

AFP, BIRMINGHAM

Newly-appointed England limited-overs captain Jos Buttler accepts his Test cricket career is on hold, with "no red ball in my bag", as he prepares to concentrate on white-ball internationals.

Buttler succeeded Eoin Morgan as England skipper in the one-day international and Twenty20 formats after the 2019 50-over World Cup winning captain announced his retirement from international cricket on Tuesday.

It had been suggested Buttler — a middle-order batsman in red-ball cricket — could replace struggling opener Zak Crawley in an England Test side now being captained by multi-format all-rounder Ben Stokes.

And while he hasn't gone as far as Morgan in ending his Test career, Buttler told the BBC at Edgbaston on Friday: "I thought someone had written the wrong story, to be honest. I don't think there is much merit in that (opening in Tests)."

"It was Kumar (Sangakkara), wasn't it? Maybe he was just promoting Rajasthan Royals openers!" said Buttler of his IPL franchise boss.

"I've just been enjoying watching the Test side recently. There is no red ball in my bag at the moment."

Meanwhile, England Test captain Ben Stokes will skip the Twenty20 series against India but will return for the one-day internationals.

England host India in three T20s from July 7 followed by three ODIs.



'So far, so good'

AGENCIES

Three-time defending champion Novak Djokovic reached the Wimbledon fourth round for the 14th time on Friday with a straight-sets demolition of Serbian compatriot Miomir Kecmanovic.

Djokovic, looking to pull level with Pete Sampras as a seven-time Wimbledon champion, triumphed 6-0, 6-3, 6-4.

Friday's win was the 330th of Djokovic's Grand Slam career. "So far, so good," said the 35-year-old top seed, who has now reached the last 16 of a major for the 55th time. "I expect high standards from myself. You always want to raise the level and things are shaping up well."

Waiting in the fourth round will be Dutch wild card Tim van Rijthoven, who continued his fairytale grasscourt run on Friday, claiming his eight straight victory on the surface to storm into the Wimbledon fourth round on his Grand Slam main draw debut.

"From the outside it obviously looks like a fairytale because it came out of nowhere for a lot of people," Van Rijthoven told reporters after defeating 22nd seed Nikoloz Basilashvili of Georgia 6-4, 6-3, 6-4 in the third round.

Van Rijthoven defeated big-serving American Reilly Opelka, seeded 15th, in his previous round and Friday's victory made him the first men's wildcard to reach the round of 16 at Wimbledon since Denis Kudla in 2015.



India batter Rishabh Pant gave Ben Stokes' England a taste of their own medicine with a superb counter-attacking century as India recovered from a top-order collapse on Friday's opening day of the delayed fifth Test at Edgbaston. Recalled England great James Anderson and fledgling quick Matthew Potts shared five wickets between them to reduce India to 98-5 after Stokes won the toss under overcast skies in Birmingham. But Pant responded with a brilliant 146 and together with fellow left-hander Ravindra Jadeja, 83 not out, shared a sixth-wicket partnership of 222 that helped India to 338-7 at stumps.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Salahuddin set for fourth term as SAFF chief

SPORTS REPORTER

Kazi Salahuddin is all set to become SAFF president for consecutive fourth term as the Bangladesh Football Federation president been the lone candidate for the electoral congress of the regional game's governing body to be held at a city hotel today.

As per the new constitution of South Asian Football Federation, the executive committee will consist only seven members — one president, two vice presidents and four members in which one woman member and one member to represent the SAFF at the Asian Football Federation committee.

"Of seven posts, five had submitted their nominations in five posts — president, two vice presidents and two members — one month before but those candidates who submitted their nominations for vice presidents are no longer with the respective federations at the moment and the respective federations [India and Nepal] have already withdrawn and cancelled their nominations," said SAFF general secretary Anwarul Haque Helal.

"I think the rest of three candidates will be elected unopposed tomorrow (Saturday) and the Congress and the electoral committee will decide how to fulfil the vacuum the seven-member committee," said Helal adding the representatives from Nepal, Sri Lanka Bhutan have already reached Dhaka while representatives from Maldives were scheduled to land in early hours today.

Helal also informed one representative from Pakistan was supposed to come as observer but that he did not get the visa.