

Chandimal grateful to family

AFP, GALLE

Former Sri Lanka captain Dinesh Chandimal on Saturday credited support from friends and family in helping him get back among the runs after being in and out of the national side.

Chandimal, 32, hit an attacking 76 in Sri Lanka's 222 all out on day one of the opening Test against Pakistan in Galle to lead his team's fightback.

His knock comes after an unbeaten 206 – his maiden Test double century – set up a series-levelling win over Australia earlier this week.

"You have got to be mentally strong if you are playing Test cricket," said Chandimal, who averages more than 42 in 68 Tests, after an absorbing day's play.

"I have been out of the side at times. That makes me stronger. You have to score runs to remain in the side. So I thought about the technique and how to keep myself not distracted and grab the opportunity when it came."

Chandimal has had a rough time after being sacked as Sri Lanka skipper in 2019 following his team's thrashing in Australia.



The senior batsman has since failed to secure a regular place in the side in all formats, but his recent return to form has allowed him to reflect on his struggles.

"You need help during those tough times. I get a lot of support from my family, my wife, coaches, team mates and my friends. I am glad I got that," he said.

"When you are down you need support like that. If people are criticising it's difficult. We don't want to fail and we need support. Happy that I contributed."

Chandimal put on 44 runs for the ninth wicket with Maheesh Theekshana, who made 38 and added 89 runs for the last two wickets after Sri Lanka were had been tottering at 133-8.

"Not happy with what we did. If we had got to 300 we could have been happy," said Chandimal.

"But we can catch up if we bowl right tomorrow and we have an opening to bounce back."

Pakistan will resume on Sunday at 24 for two after their pace bowler Shaheen Shah Afridi stood out by taking four Sri Lankan wickets on a track expected to favour the spinners.



PHOTO: AFP

Left-arm spinner Tajjul Islam, back in the side after 28 months, celebrates one of his two wickets as Bangladesh put early pressure on the West Indies in the third and final ODI of the three-match series at the Guyana National Stadium in Providence on Saturday. Bangladesh were looking for a clean sweep of the home side.

Not the end of the world for Anamul

SPORTS REPORTER

There was talk that Bangladesh should test their bench strength in the third ODI against the West Indies on Saturday after they won the three-match series with a game to spare and Anamul Haque, who made a return to the national side after seven years during the tour of the Caribbean,

Anamul had a phenomenal time with the bat in the domestic 50-over Dhaka Premier League, registering a record 1,138 runs in the List A competition in the last season for Prime Bank Limited, to force his way into the limited-overs side.

Despite scoring the bulk of his runs in the 50-over cricket, Anamul made his comeback through the Test format after former Test skipper Mominul Haque was dropped for the second Test due to a prolonged run of poor form.

Anamul failed to utilise that opportunity, scoring 23 in the first innings and managing just four runs in the second

innings. The wicketkeeper-batter also featured in all the three matches of the T20I series against the hosts, but once again Anamul failed with scores of 16, three and 10 respectively.

ODI skipper Tamim Iqbal preferred Najmul Hossain Shanto ahead of Anamul during the first two ODIs, with the left-hander promoted to open the innings in the second game.

After the game, Tamim said that he wanted to give opportunities to the existing member of the squad, indicating Najmul would be picked ahead of someone like Anamul, who had only made a comeback to the team, in order to keep the selection process fair.

As Bangladesh had already won the series and Najmul had been unable to perform significantly in the first two ODIs with knocks of 37 and 20, there was speculation the team management could give Anamul an opportunity in the third ODI.

It would have also been the ideal platform for Anamul and, more importantly, could have provided the confidence after a disappointing comeback to international cricket.

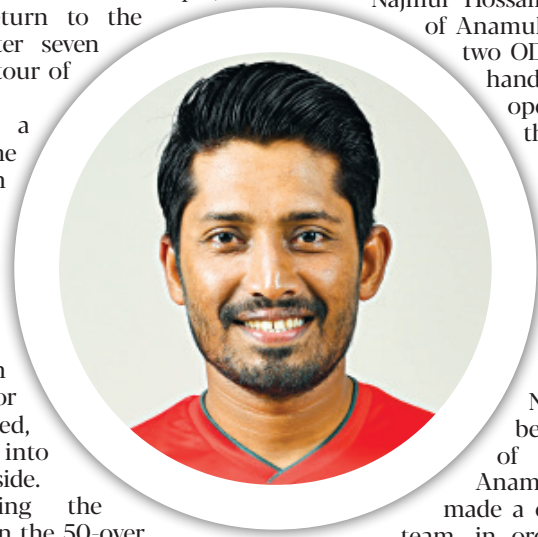
Surprisingly, Anamul was not included for the third ODI as Bangladesh for just one change, including Tajjul Islam in place of pacer Shoriful Islam.

"I think it's the team management's call whether they pick Anamul in the playing eleven or not. Obviously the team management had their own plans and they have done whatever they felt was best with the conditions and pitch in mind," chief selector Minhajul Abedin told The Daily Star.

Many believe it is another example of the lack of foresight in the selection process that Anamul, who was included for good performances in the 50-over format, would play the other two formats while not being given a chance in ODIs.

However, Minhajul informed that Anamul is still in their plan for the ODI format and urged patience.

"It's not that Anamul is not in our plans. We are planning to have him for the upcoming Zimbabwe tour. I think we need to show some patience and have faith in the team management's decision. We have a long-term plan for Anamul, who made a comeback by scoring runs heavily. It's not the end of the world for Anamul because he didn't feature in the ODI series in West Indies," he said.



Barcelona close in on Lewandowski

REUTERS

Poland striker Robert Lewandowski is set to join Barcelona after Bayern Munich reached a verbal agreement with the LaLiga side on a transfer, the Bundesliga champions said on Saturday.

The 33-year-old has 12 months remaining on his Bayern contract and multiple media reports had said he was expected to sign a three-year deal with the 26-times Spanish champions.

"We have come to a verbal agreement with Barcelona," Bayern president Herbert Hainer said in a statement.

"It's good to have clarity for all parties. Robert is an incredible player and he won everything with us. We are incredibly grateful to him."

Spanish media reported that Barcelona would pay around 45 million euros (\$45.4 million) plus another 5 million in add-ons for the striker.

Lewandowski joined Bayern in 2014 from Borussia Dortmund and has won the Bundesliga every year since then, as well as the Champions League in 2020.

Named FIFA Best Men's Player for the second straight year in January, Lewandowski said in May that his story with Bayern was over and he could not imagine staying on with the German champions. Read full story



The club were not eager to let the Bundesliga's second-highest all-time scorer go, but Bayern sports director Hasan Salihamidzic had confirmed Lewandowski did not accept an offer to extend his contract and was looking for new experience elsewhere.

Bayern also announced that German international Serge Gnabry, who had been linked by the British media with a return to the Premier League, had extended his contract until 2026.



Shaheen Afridi spreads his arms as his teammates join him in celebration after one of four wickets for the Pakistan pacer during their first Test against Sri Lanka at the Galle National Stadium yesterday. Pakistan bowled out the opposition for 222 runs before losing two wickets for 24 runs at the end of the first day's play.

PHOTO: AFP

Robinho staying at Kings

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Premier League champions Bashundhara Kings have extended contract with their talismanic Brazilian forward Robson Robinho by two more years.

The 26-year-old signed the contract extension in presence of the club's chairman Imrul Hasan at the club headquarters on Saturday afternoon.

The attacking midfielder joined Bashundhara Kings in August, 2020, on loan from Brazil's Fluminense before making the move permanent at the end of the season. He scored 24 goals in his first season. This season the Brazilian has scored 13 goals in the league so far as the Bashundhara-based club are on the verge of winning a third consecutive BPL title.

Xavi denied US visa

AFP, BARCELONA

Coach Xavi was not allowed to board Barcelona's flight to the United States on Saturday because of his history of visits to Iran.

Sports daily El Mundo Deportivo reported Xavi went to Iran three times while he was playing for Qatari club Al Sadd, and so needed to apply for special permission to visit the United States.

Xavi played the last game of his career in Tehran.

Barca only realised they had a problem on Friday. They thought they had found a solution, but when they arrived at the airport, Xavi was not allowed on the plane and the team had to travel without him.

Reports said Xavi should be able to fly on Monday and arrive in Miami in time to lead the final training session before the friendly against Inter Miami on Tuesday evening.

Barcelona's recent signings Raphinha, Andreas Christensen and Franck Kessie all travelled with the squad.

Bernardeschi signs for Toronto

REUTERS

Toronto FC have signed Italy international and free agent Federico Bernardeschi, the Major League Soccer side said, adding to its Italian lineup after it signed Bernardeschi's Italy teammate Lorenzo Insigne and former Italy international Domenico Criscito.

Bernardeschi spent five seasons with Serie A side Juventus but his contract expired in June, paving the way for a move to the MLS side as a Designated Player on a four-year contract.

"We are thrilled to add Federico to our team. As a player and a person, we believe he's exactly what we need right now, both on the field and in the locker room," Toronto FC President Bill Manning said in a statement.

"Federico has proven himself to be a champion and a leader at Juventus and for the Italian national team and brings a pedigree to Toronto that's second to none."

Bernardeschi won three league titles and two Coppa Italia trophies with Juventus.