

Smarter approach needed to save series

SPORTS REPORTER

Before the first ODI, Bangladesh skipper Tamim Iqbal was of the opinion that the Tigers were favourites going into the three-match series against Zimbabwe. But he did warn that Bangladesh would have to play their best cricket to beat the hosts.

That warning foreshadowed what happened in the first game, when the visitors lost the series opener on Friday by a convincing five-wickets margin, a result that brought an end to Bangladesh's 19-match winning streak in ODIs against Zimbabwe stretching back nine years.

However, as Bangladesh prepare for the second ODI today in a bid to rescue the series, it is important to not only play their best cricket but also smart cricket in order to outwit Zimbabwe. On paper, Bangladesh are a better side than a Zimbabwe team missing around 7-8 of their regular players. Yet, the Tigers are the ones under pressure.

It is the ODI format that has been the comfort zone for Bangladesh recently. But with a sudden and unprecedented defeat to a side ranked eight places below them in the ICC ODI Rankings, their confidence seems to have been dented.

The fact that a defeat today would see Bangladesh surrender a bilateral ODI series against Zimbabwe for the first time since 2013, thereby bringing an end to a winning streak of five series in a row, will only add to that pressure.

If Bangladesh are to shrug off that pressure and emerge as winners today, they definitely need to do things



Kenya's Abraham Kibiwot (R) and India's Avinash Mukund Sable cross a hurdle during the men's 3000m steeplechase final at the Alexander Stadium in Birmingham on Saturday. The Kenyan athlete won the gold while Sable settled for the silver. PHOTO: REUTERS

Fenerbahce fined for Putin chants

AFP, PARIS

Turkish side Fenerbahce were fined 50,000 euros (\$50,900) by UEFA on Friday after their fans chanted Russian president Vladimir Putin's name during a Champions League match against Ukraine's Dynamo Kyiv.

Supporters sang the name of Putin after Vitaliy Buyalskiy's goal for Dynamo in the Ukrainian club's 2-1 extra-time victory, which dumped the Turks out of the Champions League last month.

The first leg had ended 0-0 in a game played in Poland because of Russia's invasion.

As well as the fine, UEFA ordered a partial closure of the Fenerbahce stadium in its next European campaign.

A statement said that the UEFA Appeals Body had decided to "fine Fenerbahce 50,000 euros and to order the partial closure of Fenerbahce stadium, which shall consist of at least 5,000 seats, during the next UEFA club competition match."



differently. While Sikandar Raza and Innocent Kaia's heroics to propelled Zimbabwe in Harare in the first ODI on Friday, it is undeniable that Bangladesh's bland approach impacted the outcome heavily.

To begin with, the visiting players made an error in judgement when it came to reading the pitch and conditions for the game and the team combination needed for such conditions. With batters not facing much trouble negotiating deliveries, a much more aggressive approach was needed from the batting line-up -- especially considering the Tigers had eight wickets in hand when they concluded their innings.

Meanwhile, Bangladesh's decision to not include a left-arm spinner in the eleven not only made them yearn for variation when needed, but also aided the Zimbabwe batters during a smooth sail in chase.

To make matters worse, Bangladesh's fielders ensured the momentum would not swing back their way with another typically bad display, dropping a total of four important catches and squandering a stumping opportunity.

With the series on the line, Bangladesh will have to rectify their mistakes and come up with a renewed attitude for today's game even as they contend with added challenges of injuries, including to key batsman Liton Das.

Injury woes leave BCB in a quandry

SPORTS REPORTER

The Bangladesh Cricket Board's desire to reform and start afresh in the T20 format appears to have taken a backseat, with disaster management more of a concern ahead of this month's T20 Asia Cup as the national team's injury list continues to grow.

Three Bangladeshi cricketers were injured in the first ODI of the three-match series on Friday, when Zimbabwe beat the Tigers for the first time in over nine years in the 50-over format.

Three other cricketers are yet to get the green signal as they undergo rehabilitation, which has posed a dilemma for the team management when it comes to even forming a squad for the Asia Cup, starting August 27 in the UAE.

The BCB already petitioned for three extra days to submit their squad for the Asia Cup squad and the Asian Cricket Council (ACC) granted them permission to submit the squad on August 11 instead of the cut-off date on August 8.

"As quite a few players are injured, it became difficult to submit the squad for the Asia Cup on time. Our request to extend the cut-off date was granted by the ACC," BCB cricket operations chairman Jalal Yunus told The Daily Star yesterday.

Nurul Hasan Sohan, who was appointed as captain for the three-match T20I series in Zimbabwe, was ruled out of the tour with a finger injury ahead of the third T20I while in-form opener Liton Das was ruled out of the tour after suffering a grade-2 tear while batting in the first ODI on Friday.

Liton is expected to undergo a scan on August 7 after returning to Bangladesh. Generally, grade-2 tears take about four weeks to fully recover from. With Bangladesh set to begin their Asia Cup campaign on August 30, it seems selectors are willing to wait till the eleventh hour to make a call.

Left-arm seamer Shoriful Islam also sustained a knee injury while trying to take a return catch in the

first ODI and had to leave the ground, prompting selectors to name Ebadot Hossain and Naim Sheikh as replacements for Liton and Shoriful for the third and final ODI.

The experienced Mushfiqur Rahim also raised injury concerns after the first ODI alongside 'Cutter Master' Mustafizur Rahman, who complained about niggles. Mohammad Saifuddin and Yasir Ali are also dealing with injuries.



The growing list has made it tough for the team management to even form a playing eleven for the second and series-saving ODI against Zimbabwe today.

According to sources, the BCB is expected to get medical reports on the injured players today.

There was further upheaval off the field as Shakib Al Hasan was almost announced as the captain of the T20I side ahead of the Asia Cup, but the board had to postpone the announcement after confusion related to a sponsorship deal between Shakib and betting site Betwinner's sister concern Betwinner news on his verified Facebook page on August 2.

It was learned that the board relayed the message to Shakib that he would only be made captain for the T20I format if the star all-rounder decides to back out from that deal.

No 'divorce papers' despite squash duel

AFP, Birmingham

Australia's Donna Lobban said she and her Scottish husband Greg Lobban would not be signing "divorce papers" after she beat him in mixed-doubles squash competition at the Commonwealth Games on Friday.

Donna and her partner Cameron Pillely came back from a game down to win 9-11, 11-8, 11-8 and reach the semi-finals in Birmingham. The defending champion, 35, said she was braced for her husband's reaction. "I might have to put up with him being in a terrible mood for a while, but if I had lost it would have been him putting up with me being in a terrible mood," she said.

But she added: "He is still the main person who is there for me and I'm there for him in tough times too. We won't be signing any divorce papers after today. We're still all right."

Speaking about a pre-match bet for the loser to cook dinner for a month, she joked: "I don't know if I want him to cook dinner, actually. It's pretty grim. I should have made a bet that if I win, I get to shave off his mullet and moustache. I don't know why I didn't think of that. I'm gutted we're the ones who put them out of the tournament. It doesn't feel good."



Borrowed clothes maketh the woman

REUTERS

As a professional golfer Jessica Korda is used to living out of a suitcase but the American has had to borrow clothes from her rivals at the Women's British Open in Scotland this week after her luggage failed to arrive from Zurich.

Korda said her suitcase carrying clothes, hats and hand warmers is stranded at Zurich airport.

"If anyone knows anyone at the Zurich airport that would like to put my suitcase on the one flight a day that they have coming into Edinburgh, I'd deeply appreciate it," Korda told reporters on Thursday.

Korda borrowed outfits from other players, including her sister and world number three Nelly Korda, for the practice days but was relieved to get a new set of clothes from sponsor FootJoy ahead of the first round.

"Monday, I wore Megan Khang's pants. Tuesday, I wore my sister's pants and Wednesday I wore Alison Lee's pants. And today I'm wearing FootJoy pants," she said. "I gave up on it by Wednesday. If it comes here, great, but if not, it is what it is."



Fulham striker Aleksandar Mitrovic (C) heads home the opening goal of their Premier League match against Liverpool at Craven Cottage in London on Saturday. The Serbian later scored another as the match ended in a 2-2 draw. PHOTO: AFP



Fulham hold Liverpool to 2-2 draw

REUTERS, LONDON

Aleksandar Mitrovic's brace of goals was cancelled out by strikes from Darwin Nunez and Mohamed Salah as newly promoted Fulham held Liverpool to a 2-2 draw in the sides' opening game of the Premier League season at Craven Cottage on Saturday.

The home side took the lead on 32 minutes when they broke down the right, and Kenny Tete's cross was met by the bustling Mitrovic.

Liverpool introduced Nunez in the second half, and he levelled with a brilliant flicked finish just after the hour mark. Fulham were soon back in front as Mitrovic, who scored 43 goals in 44 Championship games last season, stroke home a spot kick to make it 2-1.

However, Salah put Liverpool level again, poking home from close range.