

Tigers to depart for UAE today

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh are set to fly for the UAE today evening, having participated in two practice matches at the Sher-e-Bangla National Cricket Stadium on Sunday and Monday respectively.

Injuries have plagued the Tigers in the build up to the Asia Cup and there were a few changes to the Asia Cup-bound team, with left-handed opener Mohammad Naim included in the side yesterday to bolster the opening slot after Liton Das was ruled out of the Asia Cup. Anamul Haque Bijoy and Parvez Hossain Emon are the other recognised openers in the squad.

Naim, who played his last T20I match at home against Afghanistan before being dropped for poor form, got into the side following his ton with the Bangladesh A side in the West Indies. He will join the side in Dubai on Tuesday.

Pacer Hasan Mahmud, who suffered an injury to his right ankle while training on August 20th, was ruled out of the Asia Cup after being sidelined for up to three weeks. Wicketkeeper-batter Nurul Hasan Sohan was also been ruled out following surgery on the index finger on his left hand. The practice match played between Bangladesh Green and Bangladesh Red, should provide the team some cause for relief before flying to UAE.

Shakib Al Hasan's Reds won the toss and put up 219 runs on the board against the likes of Taskin Ahmed, Shoriful Islam, Ebadot Hossain and Nasum Ahmed. The Powerplay produced 67 runs for a wicket as Mehedi Hasan Miraz (46 off 34) and Shakib (30 off 19) put on a 60-run stand. Afif Hossain powered to a fifty off just 28 deliveries before Mosaddek Hossain put the finishing touches to the innings with a 20-ball 48.



Domingo fine with reduced role

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Russell Domingo is probably the only head coach in world cricket who has been given a break over his duty from T20 format in order to focus on ODI and Test cricket after the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) decided to apply drastic measures to change the fortunes of the Tigers in the shortest format.

The BCB appointed Sridharan Sriram as the Technical Consultant of the Tigers T20 side, and despite having the different designation, the former India all-rounder is going to lead the coaching panel in Domingo's absence in the upcoming Asia Cup later this month.

Domingo took the split-coaching idea positively despite his uncertain future. The South African said it will help him focus on Test and ODI formats in the coming days.

"I think it's a great idea. It gives me nice focus on the Test match and 50-overs stuff," Domingo told the media.

"We have had some great results, and bad results in T20s. I don't think it is a bad idea to make a fresh approach in T20s. I am very open-minded about it," Domingo said.

"It's not my team. It's not about me. I am all for making the team better. It gives me clarity with the 50-over WC coming. We know there's a lot of work with the Test team.



Bangladesh's T20 captain Shakib Al Hasan wears a broad grin as he interacts with the media during a press conference at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.

PHOTO: BCB

ECONOMIST, ENTREPRENEUR, ENTERTAINER

MAZHAR UDDIN

Whether on the field or off it, Shakib Al Hasan has remained the biggest attraction in Bangladesh cricket for his unconventionally bold attitude over the years.

After drama and controversy related to the all-rounder signing a contract with Betwinner News, the star cricketer terminated the contract and was rewarded with captaincy of the T20I team. Although Shakib had provided a reaction to that news during a commercial engagement, yesterday the star faced the media at the home of cricket in Mirpur for the first time since taking up the role.

Keeping aside questions about his plans and expectations ahead of the upcoming Asia Cup, it was a phenomenal sight to observe how calmly Shakib handled the barrage of questions during a media interaction that lasted for more than half an hour.

At times, he sounded like an astute economist, aware of the greater world context, eloquently speaking about the need to make better use of existing resources. He related a question about long-term goals to the necessity to switch from oil to gas when it is more efficient.

"The main area of focus for the next two and half months is to see how much we can improve during this period. We have a lot of injury

concerns and, with the current scenario in mind and the number of matches we are going to play, they will persist. But despite such hurdles, it is important how we improve. We can't change our physical structure and make it bigger overnight. But we need to ensure we utilise the resources at our disposal," Shakib told the media yesterday.

"Suppose I don't have oil at the moment. There would be no point in thinking about what could be done with oil. But I could have gas. So it becomes important how I utilise the gas and see where I can make it work. I believe we can be a good team if we are able to utilise our resources properly."

After that, Shakib the businessman, known for ventures and investments from importing and selling gold bars to owning a brokerage house, made a brief appearance, speaking about getting the best possible return on investment when asked about the things he wants to change on his return as the captain.

"I don't think it would be wise to think that I will come and change everything overnight. When an organisation gives someone a responsibility, that person has to do some specific work and I will try to do those things. It's not that I will have to make changes and I don't think we don't need to change. It is important how we utilise our resources to get the best return

on investment, I am only thinking about that," he said.

Normally a compulsive puller of the cricket ball whenever he gets the opportunity on the field, Shakib also showed good judgement outside off stump when a question was asked about how he viewed the saga of going from a controversial contract to becoming T20 captain.

"It's how you guys (media) started and finished the entire thing. That is how it is. I don't have much to say about this," Shakib replied with a smile.

The poster boy of Bangladesh cricket, however, continued to ensure that he would never become monotonous, employing his sense of humour to perfection and keeping everyone in a packed press conference room mesmerised by his aura.

Shakib joked about his training methods when asked how he was able to perform better than his teammates despite training less than them, replying: "I won't say I have any less preparation [than others]. I do the exact amount of training I need. If you see me training in Mirpur for three days, that doesn't mean I only trained for those three days. Maybe I trained for ten days, just not in Mirpur," he said, before unleashing a one-liner left the room in stitches. "I don't post many videos on social media, so not everyone knows whether I am training or not."

Pakistan call up Hasnain

AFP, KARACHI

Express pacer Mohammad Hasnain will replace injured Shaheen Shah Afridi in Pakistan's squad for this week's Asia Cup, the country's cricket board said on Monday.

Pakistan suffered a major blow at the weekend when Shaheen was ruled out of the Twenty20 tournament in the UAE and the following T20 international home series against England with a knee injury.

The 22-year-old Hasnain will join the squad from Britain, where he has been playing in The Hundred tournament.

He was banned from bowling internationally in January after his action was reported during a stint in Australia's domestic Big Bash League, but was cleared to return in June after remodelling his action.

Hasnain was again embroiled in controversy last week when Australian allrounder Marcus Stoinis appeared to question the legality of his action during a match in The Hundred.

Jibon, Shohel likely to be sidelined

SPORTS REPORTER

Country's top striker Nabib Newaj Jibon and experienced goalkeeper Shahidul Alam Shohel are likely to be punished again for the disciplinary ground as the preliminary squad of national football team ahead of two FIFA friendlies is supposed to be disclosed today without the Abahani duo.

Ahead of next month's two matches against Cambodia and Nepal, Spanish coach Javier Cabrera has already placed a 27-member preliminary squad to the local's game governing body for the final approval as the residential camp is scheduled to get underway on August 26.

Jibon was dropped from the preliminary squad of the Asian Cup Qualifiers following his act of reporting to the team manager just an hour before the first training session. Meanwhile, Shohel did not turn up for the camp after informing the goalkeeping coach, citing injury but later provided the medical documents of his severe groin pain that took him four weeks to recover.

In the recently concluded season, Jibon was the top scorer among the local players by scoring nine goals – five goals in the league and two goals each in Independence Cup and Federation Cup.



Abahani's Shohel, on the other hand, has been a long-serving experienced goalkeeper of the national team and is still considered the second-best goalkeeper after Anisur Rahman Zico.

According to a source within the BFF, the 37-year-old Spanish coach does not want to recall either Jibon or Shohel, citing disciplinary grounds. However, others smelled something fishy behind this move.

When this reporter communicated with Jibon and Shohel, the duo informed that the federation did not communicate with them until yesterday but a few players, who were not part of the national team during Asian Cup Qualifiers due to injuries, have already received text messages to join the national camp.

Interestingly, both Jibon and Shohel replied to the show-cause notices served by the BFF but the board did not take any further actions against them. Thus, the duo's status in the matter was not clear.

The BFF general secretary, Abu Nayeem Shohag, said: "The national teams committee discussed Jibon and Shohel at that time and instructed them to make the players more aware by communicating with the players directly, so that they don't hesitate [to communicate] in future."

"The coach will place his preliminary squad for the final approval from the national teams committee, which can give its opinion about the squad if it has any observations."

The men in red and green are supposed to leave for Cambodia on September 16 to play the first friendly match in Phnom Penh on September 22.

After playing the first match, the charges of Cabrera will fly to Kanthamndu to play their second match against Nepal on September 27.

PSG RUN RIOT AT LILLE

Paris Saint-Germain players celebrate one of their seven goals during a 7-1 thrashing of Lille in their Ligue 1 fixture on Sunday. Mbappe scored the fastest Ligue 1 goal for 30 years to set the champions on their way to the victory as they kept up their 100% start to the new season. Mbappe took only eight seconds to lob the ball into the Lille net after being teed up by Lionel Messi, equalling the record set in 1992 by Michel Rio for Caen against Cannes. The France World Cup star completed a hat-trick while there were two for Neymar, one for Messi and another for flying fullback Achraf Hakimi in a devastating display of their prowess and dominance in the French league.

PHOTO: TWITTER

