

## Sabbir, Miraz to open against Sri Lanka?

SPORTS REPORTER from Dubai

The Bangladesh team management are thinking of sending in Sabbir Rahman and Mehedi Hasan Miraz, neither of whom featured in the match against Afghanistan, as openers in the do-or-die fixture against Sri Lanka in Dubai today.

Sources close to the board confirmed that Sabbir and Miraz are likely to feature as openers due to the poor performance of Anamul Haque Bijoy and Mohammad Naim Sheikh in the seven-wicket defeat to Afghanistan.

During yesterday's press conference on the eve of the game, team director Khaled Mahmud too was left unhappy with the lack of intent shown by the batters in the Afghanistan game.

"In the top order, our biggest problem is that our opening pair is not clicking in any way. We have tried many pairs," Mahmud said at the press conference yesterday.

"Maybe we are missing Liton Das a lot this tournament. But we can't do anything about it since we aren't getting many players this tournament due to injuries

"I am hoping that those who bat in the opening slots will bat according to their plans. You can get out trying to hit the very first delivery, but when we don't see that intent, it pains us greatly. I want to see that intent and I want that mindset to be honest," he added.

Despite getting quite a few loose deliveries, Bijoy, who came into the side having played his last T20I in 2015, failed to put most of them away. The 29-year-old has managed 90 runs in his seven innings at an average of 12.8 in T20Is since returning to the team.

"He can't even get ball on bat," a source close to the board opined.

Naim had also been dropped after a poor run of form, but did not make his mark after returning for the Afghanistan game.

The Tigers had an optional training session yesterday and only Sabbir, Mehedi, Parvez Hossain Emon, Nasum Ahmed and Ebadot Hossain came in, accompanied by nets bowlers.

Sabbir was hitting the ball quite well in the nets yesterday, sending deliveries over the ropes on quite a few instances. The 30-year-old played his last T20I in 2019 at home.

The move to send in Sabbir appears to be a gamble but given the team's performances, the management are in disarray.

Meanwhile, changes to the bowling line-up could also be on offer as Bangladesh look to secure qualification with a win against Sri Lanka. The team management will be hoping some of their calls turn to gold.



Mehedi Hasan Miraz and Sabbir Rahman (bottom) sat out the first game which Bangladesh lost against Afghanistan by seven wickets on Tuesday. With Super 4 qualification on the line, these two players may get in the eleven when the Tigers take on Sri Lanka in Dubai today.

PHOTO: BCB

## 'If someone said they didn't get the message, they are lying'

ABDULLAH AL MEHDI from Dubai

The Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) and team management were left disappointed by the performance against Afghanistan but tried to remain positive about the outcomes of the match ahead of a do-or-die fixture against Sri Lanka today.

The team had a meeting yesterday afternoon in the presence of board president Nazmul Hassan Papon, but one player claimed that there was no anger boiling over onto the players as the team's Asia Cup fate hangs in the balance.

While the Afghan spinners ran riot early in the first game on Tuesday, the Bangladesh bowlers were not able to keep the Afghan batters at bay in the death overs as the match slipped away.

"The players are still in high spirits. They know their roles and we talked about those sorts of things. It's a very important game and the players are focusing on what they have to do," BCB cricket operations chairman Jalal Yunus said yesterday.

However, the board's frustration was evident from team director Khaled Mahmud's statements to the media during the press conference yesterday.

Technical consultant Sridharan Sriram had said in a recent press conference that the communication from the management's side had been clear about the roles of the players. He said that sort of clarity was important but the batting performance did not show that clarity.

"Foreign coaches talk in foreign languages. Some speak English while some speak Hindi. But I speak Bangla. If they don't understand what I am saying, then I don't



know what language I should speak," a frustrated Mahmud said in relation to the lack of clarity among the players regarding their roles.

Mahmud said that the communication from the management had been very clear but the team lacked execution of the plans.

"It's not that they don't understand what is being said. They all understood and I keep reiterating to them. They are used to Bangla so there is nothing that

they should not understand. I think they understood all of it. Making plans come to fruition is their responsibility and it's also their responsibility to play. Providing assistance and organising training sessions is what we [team management] can do. They are the ones who have to go out and perform. If someone said they did not get the message, they are lying.

"Truth be told, we tried these things in training. If you have seen the preparation matches in Dhaka, maybe we got out, but the boys had clear message of how we wanted to bat," he said about the lack of aggression and losing wickets.

"If you are afraid of losing your place in the side, you will never perform in international matches."

Sri Lanka have their own spin arsenal featuring Wahindu Hasaranga and Maheesh Theekshana and while the Mahmud did not want to compare the Sri Lankan spin threat to Afghanistan's. "Just because they have leg-spinners does not mean we can't bat last," the team director said.

Mustafizur Rahman's form was a concern as well. Asked if the tendency to count on Mustafizur as an automatic choice should end after poor performances away from home, Mahmud said: "Maybe. I don't know. It's a good question and we are worried."

However, he reiterated the management still believed in the left-arm pacer and said the bowler would win matches for Bangladesh again.

In a do-or-die fixture, the Tigers will want all their key players performing in order to now go through to the Super Four stage.

## BCB receives 9 EOIs for BPL

SPORTS REPORTER

The Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) received nine Expression of Interest (EOI) for franchise ownership rights of the Bangladesh Premier League for the next three years as the last date of submission ended on August 30.

However, according to sources, three time champions Comilla Victorians and Gemcon Group-owned Khulna Titans, who have been a regular feature in the franchise T20 league over the years, have not yet handed in EOI to the board.

Beximco Group-owned Dhaka Dynamites was also rumoured to be not taking part in the upcoming edition of BPL. However, it was later learned that the franchise was in fact interested to continue participating in the T20 league.

UAE's inaugural International League T20 (ILT20) is expected to start from January next year while the South African CSA T20 Challenge league is scheduled for February 2023.

According to BCB's schedule, the 2023 BPL is slated to begin on January 5 and run till February 16 next year. Hence, it is expected to directly clash with the UAE and South African T20 leagues.

It was learned the lack of availability of quality overseas T20 players is one of the reasons why some BPL franchises were not eager to feature in the upcoming edition of BPL.

The BCB had previously rejected the request of Emirates Cricket Board to shift the dates of the tournament.



## 'Ready for the heavyweights'

AFP, Sharjah

Skipper Mohammad Nabi said Afghanistan is ready for the big guns after they became the first team to qualify for the Super Four stage of the Asia Cup following victories over Bangladesh and Sri Lanka.

"As a team in this Asia Cup we are showing that Afghanistan have quality batsmen, quality bowlers and quality fielders," said all-rounder Nabi after Afghanistan thrashed Bangladesh by seven wickets on Tuesday.

"In these two games we showed we can chase totals. Earlier opposition used to say that Afghanistan cannot chase.

"But we were quite good (in the two chases), were not under pressure and had proper balance and hopefully we do well in the next round against big teams," added the 37-year-old.

Afghanistan's victory over Bangladesh in Sharjah put them into the next round of the six-nation Twenty20 tournament.

Fast bowler Fazalhaq Farooqi starred in his team's opening win against Sri Lanka last week with figures of 3-11 and Nabi said the team has covered all the bases going to the Super Four where they are expected to meet India and Pakistan.

"We are not targeting anyone, we are just playing proper cricket," said Nabi.

INFO				ZONE			
BANGLADESH				SRI LANKA			
M	W	L	NR	M	W	L	NR
13	2	11	0	13	11	2	0

HEAD TO HEAD IN ASIA CUP				HEAD TO HEAD IN T20IS			
M	W	L	NR	M	W	L	NR
12	4	8	0	12	8	4	0

LAST MEETING IN ASIA CUP: DUBAI, SEPTEMBER 15, 2018. BANGLADESH WON BY 137 RUNS.  
LAST MEETING IN T20IS: SHARJAH, OCTOBER 24, 2021. SRI LANKA WON BY 5 WICKETS.

KEY PLAYERS	
<b>Mosaddek Hossain (Bangladesh)</b>	<b>Wanindu Hasaranga (Sri Lanka)</b>
<b>BOWLING</b>	<b>BATTING</b>
MATCHES: 22	MATCHES: 22
RUNS: 286	WICKETS: 14
AVERAGE: 22.00	AVERAGE: 19.21
HS: 48*	ECONOMY: 6.69
SR: 115.32	BEST BOWLING: 5/20
SOS: 0	



India fans cheer for a boundary during the team's Asia Cup match against Hong Kong at the Dubai International Cricket Stadium on Thursday. After being asked to bat first, India scored 192 for two in 20 overs.

PHOTO: AFP