

Tigers get nine days to regather

SPORTS REPORTER FROM DUBAI

The Bangladesh team are expected to land in Dhaka in the early hours of Saturday following their exit from the 2022 Asia Cup in the UAE.

The Tigers slumped to a two-wicket defeat in the do-or-die fixture against Sri Lanka on Thursday despite having put up a good fight with the bat.

Shakib Al Hasan's will now gear up for the upcoming T20 tri-nation series in New Zealand, which will serve as a crucial building block for the T20 World Cup in October.

The Tigers will hold a three-day camp in Mirpur, conducted by technical consultant Sridharan Sriram, from September 12.

"Most of the coaching staff will join the team in New Zealand. Sriram will arrive by 11th September. The camp will be for pace bowlers and batters. A few players will join [from outside the Asia Cup squad] and he will oversee them," cricket operations chairman Jalal Yunus told the media yesterday.

"Since Sriram had to leave for the Asia Cup immediately after coming to Dhaka, he did not get the chance to get a good look at the players. He will look at players who were in the squad before, but are maybe not here with the squad now," he added.

The cut-off date for announcing the World Cup squad is September 15 and Jalal informed that the Tigers would submit theirs before then. The management is also keen to go to New Zealand earlier than initially planned, especially after a plan to conduct a camp in Australia before the tri-series in New Zealand was scratched.

"September 15th is the last date for providing the [World Cup] squad. We will give the squad before that. We had initially talked about going [to New Zealand] on September 30. We are now trying to go before then to acclimatise to the conditions. So we are eying the 24th or 25th. [Batting coach] Jamie Siddons will join the team there," Jalal said.

T20 skipper Shakib Al Hasan will not join the three-day camp in Mirpur from the September 12 although he is expected to arrive with the team. "Shakib will not be with the squad in the preparation camp," Jalal informed.

Shakib had already been handed an NOC to play in the CPL, which began on August 31. Shakib will join the Guyana Amazon Warriors this season as a replacement for South African left-arm wrist spinner Tabraiz Shamsi.

The Bangladesh T20 skipper is expected to join the team in New Zealand after playing the CPL.



(Top) The performance of some of the senior players such as Mahmudullah Riyad and Mushfiqur Rahim and the issues over death bowling will remain serious causes of concern as Bangladesh try to regather after an early Asia Cup exit. (Bottom) However, the form of Mosaddek Hossain and Afif Hossain will give the team management some idea about their next course of action leading up to the T20 world Cup in Australia in November.

PHOTO: AFP/TWITTER

Asia Cup highlights areas of concern

SPORTS REPORTER FROM DUBAI

Bangladesh put in a good shift in the match against Sri Lanka, but the manner of their exit remained disappointing and highlighted the need to focus on some key areas to produce a better showing leading up to the T20 World Cup in Australia in October.

The Tigers' mindset, opening slot problems and death-over bowling were all brought to the limelight yet again in the big match against the Lankans.

When the situation was tight during the death overs, the Bangladesh bowlers could not bowl to their strengths. The opening problems could not be solved thus the team management brought in Mehedi Hasan Miraz and Sabbir Hossain into the playing eleven against Sri Lanka.

The approach of the batters lacked conviction but the batting effort in the Powerplay overs against Sri Lanka indicated that the message regarding intent had begun to sink in to a certain degree.

Yet, the middle-order's strike rate and the seniors' roles in it is still a big debate in Bangladesh cricket, especially given the overall contribution of seniors such as Mushfiqur Rahim and Mahmudullah Riyad.

While both have struggled for runs, Riyad has chipped in with some important scores. Still, the duo's strike-rates are a hot topic of debate.

When compared to the strike-rate of the younger batters, the veterans and their roles will certainly come into question in the coming

days. Mushfiqur's missed catch behind the stumps certainly adds to the debate.

Legendary Pakistan pacer Wasim Akram was critical of Mushfiqur's strike-rate while commentating on the game during the right-hander's brief stay at the crease against Sri Lanka.

"Not the best strike-rate, I must say. He's an experienced campaigner, he really is. But in this format, if you see the strike-rate of the top players in the world, it has to be, in my opinion, more than 130. Ideally, in this format," Wasim said.

Given that players such as Liton Das,



Yasir Ali, Nurul Hasan Sohan and Hasan Mahmud will soon join the side when preparations begin, the places of few veterans will certainly be threatened.

Mosaddek Hossain and Afif Hossain's performances in the Asia Cup were certainly geared towards the approach the team management had been asking for, which puts further doubts on the veteran



pair's T20 future.

Pace bowlers will have to find their feet again after Mohammad Saifuddin, Mustafizur Rahman and Ebadot Hossain all leaked runs during the two Asia Cup matches. A failure to execute certainly worried Shakib, although Taskin Ahmed had shown great heart during the tournament.

"You expect 10-12 good overs from pacers [in Australia] and the pacers will have to deliver. Those who will be able to deliver will stay with the team," Skipper Shakib Al Hasan had said at a press conference on Thursday. "We looked at four fast bowlers here, and we will look at more in the tri-series in New Zealand so that we have a clearer idea who can do well in Australia."

Asked if new players would come in, the skipper said that there were not many players available, but 'five to seven players from outside the team' would also be in contention when it comes to World Cup selection.

Patel replaces injured Jadeja

AFP, Dubai

Indian all-rounder Ravindra Jadeja has been ruled out of the Asia Cup Twenty20 tournament with a knee injury, the country's cricket board said Friday.

Jadeja, a left-hander who bats in the middle-order and bowls spin, played a key role in India's victories over Pakistan and Hong Kong to make the Super Four stage.

Left-arm spinner Axar Patel will replace Jadeja in the squad ahead of Sunday's clash against either Pakistan or Hong Kong.

"Jadeja has sustained a right knee injury and is ruled out of the tournament," the Board of Cricket for Control in India (BCCI) said in a statement.

They added Patel would join the team soon in Dubai.

Jadeja made 35 and put on a key 52-run stand with Hardik Pandya as India chased down 148 with two balls to spare against Pakistan.

He then returned figures of 1-15 while bowling in his side's 40-run win over Hong Kong.

The six-nation Asia Cup tournament, hosted by the United Emirates, is a warm-up for this year's T20 World Cup in Australia starting next month.

Can buoyant Lankans get their revenge?

SPORTS REPORTER

Tuning in to watch the Asia Cup game today would only deepen the woes of Bangladeshi cricketers and fans as Sri Lanka and Afghanistan – the two sides that beat and knocked the Tigers out of the continental tournament from the group stage – face each other in a Super 4 clash in Sharjah.

If Afghanistan's seven-wicket win over Bangladesh was a hard pill to swallow, the agonising two-wicket defeat against Sri Lanka in a high-voltage do-or-die contest on Thursday only added to a rather unfortunate list of heartbreaks for Bangladesh in the Asia Cup.

Sri Lanka skipper Dasun Shanaka and Afghanistan captain Mohammad Nabi are scheduled to walk out to the ground for the toss at 7:30pm tonight, the time by which the members of the Bangladesh's Asia Cup contingent are expected to be at their homes in the country.

However, Shanaka and Nabi will only have their eyes set on getting a win in order to move a step closer to the all-important final, scheduled for September 11 in Dubai.

The Lankans will also be looking to avenge their humiliating defeat at the hands of Nabi's troops in the opener of the Asia Cup just a mere week ago. In that game in Dubai, the likes of Kusal Mendis, Bhanuka Rajapaksa and Wanindu Hasaranga could not even pose any sorts of threat against a confident and aggressive Afghan attack.

Sri Lanka were bundled out for a meagre 105, a total that Afghanistan overcame with 59 balls to spare.

While Afghanistan remain favourites to win the tie once again, given the number of T20 specialists in their side, Sri Lanka would want to carry their fighting momentum from their game against Bangladesh in this game as well.

INFO				ZONE			
AFGHANISTAN				SRI LANKA			

M W L NR
2 1 1 0

HEAD TO HEAD
IN ASIA CUP

M W L NR
2 1 1 0

M W L NR
2 1 1 0

HEAD TO HEAD
IN T20IS

M W L NR
2 1 1 0

LAST MEETING IN ASIA CUP: ABU DHABI, SEPTEMBER 17, 2018. AFGHANISTAN WON BY 91 RUNS.
LAST MEETING IN T20IS: DUBAI, AUGUST 27, 2022. AFGHANISTAN WON BY 8 WICKETS.



Najibullah Zadran (Afghanistan)

BATTING
MATCHES: 80
RUNS: 1532
AVERAGE: 34.04
HS: 73
SR: 143.44
50S: 8



Dasun Shanaka (Sri Lanka)

BOWLING
MATCHES: 70
WICKETS: 18
AVERAGE: 24.00
ECONOMY: 7.85
BEST BOWLING: 3/16

BATTING
MATCHES: 70
RUNS: 1060
AVERAGE: 20.78
HS: 74*
SR: 117.25
50S: 4



Afghanistan players play a bit of football during training yesterday ahead of today's first Super 4 match of the Asia Cup against Sri Lanka. Having beaten the Lankans comfortably in the first match of the tournament, the Afghans will be confident of repeating the feat. PHOTO: TWITTER