

### Babar-Rizwan's maxim for Liton

SPORTS REPORTER

Liton Das was in excellent touch during a 42-ball 69 against Pakistan yesterday but he might have been disappointed to get out in the 15th over after an 88-run stand with Bangladesh skipper Shakib Al Hasan.

Liton was later seen speaking to Pakistan openers Mohammad Rizwan and skipper Babar Azam in a video posted by the Pakistan Cricket Board on Facebook, titled 'Learning never stops'.

Liton had a few queries, especially relating to mentality, after the two Pakistani batters put on a 101-run stand to help their side to a seven-wicket win against the Tigers in Christchurch yesterday.

It appeared Babar Azam had a few sharp pieces of advice for Liton. "The less you listen and do what you feel, it will be right. Because even if you don't want, you will start doubting yourself listening to everyone," the Pakistan skipper was heard telling Liton.

Rizwan, currently the number one-ranked T20I batter, divulged tips for a few mental aspects too. The Pakistani duo had built their innings calmly and prescribed confidence in one's own abilities.

"You may score zero, 10 or even a century, but nothing is possible



Captain Shakib Al Hasan and Liton Das stitched an 88-run third-wicket stand to help Bangladesh to a decent total but Mohammad Rizwan and Babar Azam once again set the platform with a 101-run opening stand to see Pakistan secure a seven-wicket victory in Christchurch yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

## Could Hathurusingha tonic work on Soumya again?

SPORTS REPORTER

When Soumya Sarkar came onto the international scene, his impact was felt fairly quickly. His ability to dictate terms and put fear in the opposition ranks were traits that best showcased his attributes.

Eight years down the line, the carnage that he wrought against the likes of South Africa and Pakistan seems to be missing a few punches. The definitive factor is the confidence level that the left-hander has portrayed, oftentimes being moved down the order for the purpose of the team or following off-colour performances.

Sri Lankan coach Chandika Hathurusingha, who oversaw the Tigers as head coach from 2014 to 2017, was able to get the best out of Soumya with a tonic of confidence. It appears current technical consultant Sridharan Sriram might replicate such a remedy.

Chandika was known as a strict professional, micro-managing various details during his tenure and keeping a tight leash on things. However, he had a simple message regarding the left-hander's approach. "You may get out, but don't change your approach" was the gist of that message.

Soumya, given the licence to play his natural game, was able to become a match-winner for the Tigers during that period.

So, with limited options and a crisis at the top becoming apparent even to the team management at this point, Soumya made a return to the Tigers' line up in the tri-nation T20I series in New Zealand despite only making the squad for the upcoming T20 World Cup as a standby player.



He started well in the New Zealand game despite struggling with the pace and bounce on offer, but he was keen on his own approach. In the second game against Pakistan yesterday, when Bangladesh slumped to a seven-wicket loss, he got just four runs. But Sriram defended his intent.

"He played a shot and got out. That's intent. I think he was selfless and played for the team. He tried to get going in the first few overs when we got only six or seven runs. He tried to force the pace and got out, but it happens. He played a good knock at number three in the last game so I think there are good signs. With a player like him, we need to really instill confidence," Sriram said after the game yesterday.

It is evident that Soumya is being backed to go about his natural game. Whether that confidence boost can work its way to him making the T20 World Cup squad remains to be seen, but Sriram was open to change.

"We still have time. We have two more days. There will definitely be discussions and I said this earlier, we're open to changes but we're very clear in our heads as to what we want. We will let you know in a few days," he said about whether there were any impending changes to the World Cup squad.

"We do have trust. This is our best group. Those who are here with us are the best from Bangladesh and we have complete faith in that."

The Tigers finished without a win in the tri-nation series but played both Soumya and pacer Shoriful Islam, both of whom are stand-by options for the T20 World Cup, leading to Sriram maintaining that combinations were still being worked out.

He clarified that the opening slots and batting position did not matter because they would keep "modifying" and "adapting" according to conditions and scenarios. There is every bit of chance of changes taking place, especially with Sabbir Rahman not having produced the necessary impact. For Soumya meanwhile, the Sriram tonic could be a chance to revive his game.

The Tigers will head to Australia and play two World Cup warm-up matches on October 17 and 19 against Afghanistan and South Africa respectively. They take the positives of skipper Shakib Al Hasan and Liton Das's form at the top. Soumya's fast hand could just add that X-factor.

without hard work. If you do something different with your team, results might be different. Then there are those who are mentally strong, like Shakib," Rizwan explained.

"You and I know that catches will be dropped and centuries will be made. And you will become a big player. Liton Das is a big player. Rizwan was dropped and he became player of the match. But if the catch was taken, that wouldn't have happened."

Liton then asked how to banish a lean phase. "You get ready for one thing, which is that there will be 10 innings that will make you sweat. There will also be 10 innings where I can score 20 runs in 12 balls if needed. But the big player, due to their calmness, will be successful in six out of 10 innings."

Mohammad Rizwan

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