

BANGLADESH V IRELAND

HEAD-TO-HEAD IN ODIs

Matches 10

Bangladesh 7, Ireland 2

No result 1

Bangladesh have won all four ODIs in Sylhet, with three wins against Zimbabwe and a solitary win against the West Indies.

Shakib Al Hasan has taken more ODI wickets than all Irish players in this squad put together.

Shakib Al Hasan is just 24 short of 7000 ODI runs. He will become only the second Bangladesh player to reach this landmark after Tamim Iqbal.

Harry Tector has been the man-in-form for Ireland as he scored three hundreds and four fifties in his last 8 ODI innings.

Liton Das smashed two centuries in the three ODIs against Zimbabwe in Sylhet in 2020.

Bangladesh won their latest ODI encounter against Ireland in Dublin in 2019 in a tri-series involving the West Indies.

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If we win a game, great, if we don't that's fine as long as we are playing a certain way and we are enjoying our cricket.



Ireland skipper **Andrew Balbirnie** said he was okay with losing in Bangladesh ahead of their three-match ODI series, starting today in Sylhet.

BCB to discuss Shakib controversy after Ireland series

SPORTS REPORTER

The Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) is unwilling to comment on the ongoing controversy surrounding Shakib Al Hasan after the premier all-rounder went Dubai alongside some other celebrities for the inauguration of Arav Jewellers, owned by Arav Khan, on Wednesday.

Rabiul Islam, alias Arav Khan, of Gopalganj's Kotalipara upazila, is a fugitive accused in the murder of a police official.

The star all-rounder joined Bangladesh's training camp in Sylhet on Friday, a day before the three-match ODI series against Ireland commences at the Sylhet International Cricket Stadium.

"First of all, we were not aware of why and where Shakib went since he had not informed us anything regarding that issue. Like the others, we also got to know about the controversy through media. Since there was a break after the England series, Shakib was not in touch with us during that period," BCB cricket operations chairman Jalal Yunus told The Daily Star yesterday.

According to the BCB director, the board was yet to discuss the issue with Shakib given the impending start of the Ireland series. However, Jalal said that they would not be able to comment without first unearthing all the facts.

"We are yet to talk with Shakib since the Ireland series is going to start from tomorrow. Since our board president is out of the country to attend the ICC meeting, we will discuss the matter with the president after his return on March 21. At the moment, we can't comment," he added.

Mohammad Harun Or Rashid, chief of the Detective Branch of the Dhaka Metropolitan Police, said that they had informed Shakib and other celebrities in attendance of Arav's criminal record, but that did not deter them from fulfilling his business commitments.

He also informed that the detective branch would interrogate Shakib and the other celebrities. On the other hand, Jalal informed that the detective branch had not yet contacted the BCB regarding the issue.



Bangladesh ODI skipper Tamim Iqbal, T20I and Test captain Shakib Al Hasan, head coach Chandika Hathurusingha and veteran batter Mushfiqur Rahim were probably discussing ways to carry their recent form from the shortest format to ODIs in practice at the Sylhet International Cricket Stadium on Friday. The Tigers begin their full series against Ireland with the first of the three ODIs in Sylhet today.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

Focus on character and 'game within game'

ABDULLAH AL MEHEDI from Sylhet

In overcast conditions mimicking the 'English weather', the Tigers went about their practice session at the Sylhet International Cricket Stadium yesterday with individuals looking to build on the confidence from the England series as they geared up for the ODI series against Ireland, slated to begin today.

Towhid Hridoy, Rony Talukdar, Najmul Hossain or Mushfiqur Rahim were following up on their routine of getting the style and technique right.

Shakib Al Hasan gave Chandika Hathurusingha some food for thought regarding batting stances and was soon talking to Shanto at the nets about getting onto the back foot in one fluid movement while clearing the front foot. "The ball will go further," Shakib was seen telling Shanto.

If reinvention is the necessity going forward, adding skills will be the priority. But match scenarios remain important for real growth to take place. "Cricket is the only game where you can't practice the way you want to play," Hathurusingha said in the press conference ahead of the net session yesterday.

The management were looking to increase the pool of players ahead of the ODI World Cup in India. Following the 2-1 ODI series loss to England, the Ireland series presented an opportunity to do

just that. For Hathurusingha, it was about finding the 'character' to rise to match scenarios.

Asked about his experience with the side over the past four weeks, Hathurusingha emphasised the quality of his experience through the two white-ball series against England. England are the best in business and the performances spoke to the Sri Lankan.



"Regardless of the win or loss, I look at different things like character, how they handle situations in the middle and who stands up under pressure. Performance can go up and down. [Jos] Buttler is the best batter in the world in white-ball cricket. We really put him under pressure. We were very happy with our attitude, body language and fielding. Even if we had lost both series but I saw those things, I would know that going forward, we were in the right direction," he said.

He said he was trying to

introduce how the 'game within the game' impacted the team. While talking about Hasan Mahmud, he highlighted how the pacer removed Jos Buttler with an outstanding yorker and opened the doors for Mehedi Hasan Miraz to bowl to the lefties in the England line-up. Miraz bagged a career-best four-for in that game.

"He [Mahmud] opened the game for us in the second T20I by getting Buttler out. If you look at the game within the game, that allowed us to bring Miraz into the game. The wicket brought out all their left-handers. If Buttler was still there, it would have been a different kind of a game in the end," he said.

"Those games within the game are very important. I am looking for people to stand up and do things. They get confidence from doing these things regularly. The team has confidence in their roles and trust each other to do things. Fizz's two big overs changed the momentum in the third T20I," he added on players turning up with key performances.

Essentially, players will be measuring this series based on how they face up to situations. Mahmudullah Riyad was left out of the squad and although Chandika reminded Riyad 'is still in the mix', performances will now be judged according to match scenarios and new inclusions will get opportunities.

Nagelsmann relishing City clash

REUTERS, Munich

Bayern Munich's Champions League quarterfinal clash against Manchester City next month is a massive challenge for the Bavarians but as contenders they need to eliminate big clubs en route to the title, coach Julian Nagelsmann said on Friday.

Bayern, aiming to become European champions for the seventh time, will face a City side whose Spanish coach Pep Guardiola sat on the Bundesliga club's bench from 2013-16 following the draw made in Nyon, Switzerland earlier in the day.

"We watched the draw together with the coaching staff and I think it is a challenging tie but I think it is good because if you end up winning the title ... no one can accuse you of having the luck of the draw," Nagelsmann told a news conference.

"Should there be a Champions League title at the end of the season it would be a great triumph," he said.

Bayern, who came through a group

that included Inter Milan and Barcelona, eliminated star-studded Paris St Germain with a 3-0 aggregate win over two legs in the Round of 16 with PSG's leading striker Kylian Mbappe shut out.

The winners of Bayern's quarterfinal will face either Real Madrid or Chelsea in the semifinals. Real and Chelsea will meet in another exciting quarterfinal clash.

"You have to eliminate these teams if you want to win," Nagelsmann added. "It was PSG, then it would be Manchester City then maybe Real or Chelsea and then in the final either a Portuguese or an Italian team."

"It would be a triumph which would have a high value, one of great mentality and quality."

AC Milan face Napoli and Inter take on Benfica in the other two quarterfinals.

"I take a lot of energy and joy. It is challenging but we will prepare for it. We want to advance even further so we have to win the game against City," Nagelsmann said.

Champions League Quarterfinal Fixtures

Real Madrid v Chelsea

Benfica v Inter Milan

Manchester City v Bayern Munich

AC Milan v Napoli

* First legs: April 11-12

* Second legs: April 18-19

Hakim-Diya to fight for gold

SPORTS REPORTER

Hakim Ahmed Rubel and Diya Siddiqui pair of Bangladesh moved into the final of recurve mixed team event in the Asia Cup World Ranking Tournament, beating their Australian opponents in the semifinals in Taiwan yesterday.

Hakim and Diya beat Australia by 5-1 sets in the semifinal after getting the better of Malaysia in the quarterfinals by 6-2 sets victory. The Bangladeshi pair will take on Kazakhstan in the final on Sunday.

However, the other events, especially the individual ones, did not quite go according to Bangladesh's expectations. Both Hakim and Diya lost their semifinal matches in their respective individual events.

Diya lost to Lin of Chinese Taipei in 6-0 sets in the women's individual recurve semifinal. Hakim, meanwhile, lost against Rahul of India by 6-4 sets.

While Hakim and Diya will compete for a gold medal in team event, they will have to fight for bronze in individual events.

In the compound group, Ashikuzzaman lost in pre-quarterfinals of men's individual event while Shyamoli Roy reached quarterfinals.

Hosts storm into semifinals

SPORTS REPORTER



Defending champions Bangladesh stormed into the semifinals of Bangabandhu Cup International Kabaddi tournament with an emphatic 55-27 points victory over England in their fourth match at the Shaheed Noor

Hossain National Volleyball Stadium yesterday.

Four straight wins put Bangladesh on top of Group A and they will face Iraq tomorrow in group-deciding match.

Like the previous matches against Poland, Argentina and Nepal, the men in red and green were unstoppable despite two crucial players -- Roman Hossain and Rasel Hasan -- sustaining head injuries following a collision between them while defending an opponent player in their own half.

Captain Tuhin Taralder began the campaign with a point from raid but soon the hosts suffered a blow as Roman and Rasel were ruled out with cuts in their foreheads. However, the hosts secured points by earning two lonas in the first half, putting them in the driving seat with a 29-10 points lead.

Raiders Al Amin and Mizanur Rahman carried the momentum in the second half with their successful raids which helped Bangladesh pile on the points. Mizanur collected 14 points in this match to raise his individual points tally to 54 in four matches.

"I dedicate the victory to the Father of the Nation and we have attained our first goal of reaching the semifinals. Now we are more confident to turn our next goal into reality; we will now focus on reaching the final" said Bangladesh captain Tuhin.

Guardiola up for good Kompany

AFP, London

Pep Guardiola says managing against Vincent Kompany makes him feel old as the Manchester City manager prepares to face his former captain, now in charge of Burnley, in the FA Cup quarterfinals.

Kompany, who left City after more than a decade's service in 2019, has made a huge impact since taking charge of second-tier Burnley last year.

"He was an incredible figure here," said Guardiola, 52, whose club hosts the Championship side on Saturday. "He is one of the biggest legends I have had."

"On the other side, I'm concerned because when you start to play a game and the opponent on the touchline is a player that you had, you realise how old you are becoming."

"That is a little bit frustrating, but it's nice to see him. He wants to win, we want to win, and we will take it seriously."

Kompany lifted the Premier League trophy four times during a glittering career with City in which he also won two FA Cups and four League Cups.

He was an inspirational leader and remained highly influential even in his latter years at the club, when his game time was often limited by injury.

Spanish boss Guardiola, who took charge at City in 2016, also said Friday: "I have one little pity that he was injured for a lot of time when we were together, but the important thing was from day one how he helped me."

"I arrived here from another country, I didn't know the Premier League and he used to make a step forward in the locker room in the bad moments to help the team, and personally to me say the things he believed was best for the club."

"He was an exceptional captain, a top human being, and I'm really pleased (for him)."



Having caught Arsenal goalkeeper Aaron Ramsdale off his line, Sporting Lisbon's Pedro Goncalves found the net with a breathtaking strike from 46 yards out to force extra-time, and an eventual penalty shootout that ended in the visitors' favour at Emirates Stadium on Thursday. The round of 16 second leg Europa League encounter ended level at 1-1 on the night and 3-3 on aggregate as Sporting sealed a spot in the quarterfinals.

PHOTO: REUTERS