

'Chance for others to make statement'

SPORTS REPORTER

The national selectors will now shift their focus to upcoming home series against Afghanistan after completion of the three-match ODI series against Ireland in Chelmsford.

Bangladesh Test and T20I captain Shakib Al Hasan would likely miss out on the one-off Test against Afghanistan, starting from June 14, as the all-rounder suffered a fracture at the base of index finger while attempting a catch during the second ODI against Ireland on Friday. Such injuries usually take around six weeks to heal.

"We are hopeful that he [Shakib] will be back for the limited-over series. It's always difficult to replace someone like Shakib but it's a chance for others to make a statement," said selector Habibul Bashar yesterday.

The Afghanistan series will be played in two phases. Following the lone Test, the visitors will head to India for a white ball series before returning to Bangladesh to play the three-match ODI and two-match T20I series.

Bashar further informed they will take time before announcing squad for the Afghanistan series as they will be assessing performers of Bangladesh A who are set to take on West Indies A series in Sylhet, with the first of the three four-day 'Tests' scheduled to begin on May 16.



SCORES IN BRIEF

BANGLADESH

274 all out in 48.5 overs (Tamim 69, Mushfiqur 45, Miraz 37, Shanto 35, Liton 35; Adair 4-40, McBrine 2-39, Dockrell 2-31)

IRELAND

269 for nine in 50 overs (Stirling 60, Balbirnie 53, Tucker 50; Mustafizur 4-44, Mahmud 2-44)

Result: Bangladesh won the match by 5 runs and took the series 2-0

PLAYER-OF-THE-MATCH

Mustafizur Rahman

PLAYER-OF-THE-SERIES

Najmul Hossain Shanto

Mustafizur Rahman, who sat out the first two games, took four wickets to swing the third ODI in favour of Bangladesh. The Tigers, after being bowled out for 274, restricted the hosts to 269 for nine to register a five-run win and a 2-0 series victory. PHOTO: CRICKET IRELAND

Fizz, Shanto snatch victory as Tigers prevail

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh were the first international side to visit England this summer and they were tested in two edge-of-the-seat games against Ireland at Chelmsford but they have come through with more strength and adventure, securing a 2-0 sweep with a five-run margin win with Mustafizur Rahman turning the screws on the Irish side with a four-fer. When it mattered, the younger stars shone through.

"If I tell you we had the belief we'd win, I'd be lying. But cricket is a funny game, wickets fall and scoreboard pressure is bad to have. When the Fizz got two wickets, we thought we had a chance," skipper Tamim Iqbal conceded at post-match ceremony and that is how close it was.

It came down to death overs in the end but before that, Ireland looked like they were fully in control in chase of Bangladesh's 274. Paul Stirling took captain Andrew Balbirnie along in slowly setting up the platform for a surge at some point. The 109-run third-wicket stand got Ireland where they needed to be after Mustafizur had got the first breakthrough with the wicket of Stephen Doherty.

Ebadot Hossain came up with the much-needed wicket of Balbirnie, out for 53 off 78, holed out at deep mid-wicket. Mehedi Miraz had been pegging away and his effort bore fruit, removing Stirling after 60.

Yet, with Harry Tector and Lorcan Tucker at the crease, Ireland were flowing. Debutant Mritunjay Chowdhury had bowled without luck and in a dreadful 37th over, Ireland took him for 21 runs which changed the complexion of the game. 80 needed off 78 deliveries, Miraz finished his spell and skipper Tamim Iqbal had to turn to Najmul Hossain Shanto's part-time off-spin

and the gamble paid off. Tector miscued a pull slightly which Liton Das at long on did well to hold on to to break the 65-ball 79-run stand.

Yet, needing 49 from eight overs, the game was firmly in Ireland's hand until Mustafizur worked his magic in the very next over. Curtis Campher skied one for a dolly at mid-off before Mustafizur struck again as George Dockrell bludgeoned one to substitute Yasir Ali. Tucker battled away with a fifty before the left-armers squeezed one under his lap shot to disturb the stumps.

Mark Adair raged in the penultimate over as Mritunjay was put under the cosh but Hasan Mahmud prevailed in the final over, picking up two wickets and defending 10 runs successfully.

Tamim tugged along Mustafizur, who bagged player-of-the-match, to the ceremony and there Fizz nonchalantly put it that he 'was thinking of bagging five wickets before the match.' One short maybe but it was a statement performance from the master bowler after much criticism. Wicket of Tucker gave Shanto his first international scalp and bagged the player-of-the-series for his performances in the three games.

Earlier, Bangladesh batting turned out to be a little disappointing despite Tamim's return to runs with a fifty after nine innings. Partnerships grew, first with Shanto, then Liton of 44 and 70 respectively with Tamim at the wicket. Shanto and Liton got good starts but fell short of expectations. When Tamim fell after an 82-ball 69, Mushfiqur Rahim and Miraz kept things ticking. When the time for acceleration came, Mushfiqur fell to McBrine after a 54-ball 45. The last five Bangladesh wickets fell for 14 runs which should give food for thought but in the end, the young side prevailed in another confidence-boosting win.



Bangladesh in handball finals

SPORTS REPORTER

Hosts Bangladesh confirmed final berths in both youth and junior sections of Bangabandhu IHF Challenge Women's Trophy after notching up back-to-back victories at Shaheed M Mansur Ali National Handball Stadium yesterday.

Bangladesh's preliminary target was to play in the final of the U-17 youth section, but the U-19 junior women's team did not disappoint either despite being a depleted side due to the unavailability of four key players, who are busy with HSC examinations.

Pre-tournament favourites India also booked final berths and they would square off against the hosts in dress rehearsal for the finals during today's last group matches.

Coming from a comprehensive 48-10 win over Maldives in the opening match in the youth section, Bangladesh dominated over Nepal and handed them a massive 50-4 goals defeat while the junior side, who beat Maldives 38-21, thrashed their Nepalese counterparts 23-09 to ensure the final berth.

Despite notching up comfortable victory over Nepal, Bangladesh youth team's coach Dalia Akter expressed her dissatisfaction about the quality of the opposition.

"Though we got a big win, it would have been better to have strong opponents ahead of the match against India, who are a strong side with world-class players," Dalia told reporters after the match.

Bangladesh junior team's coach Amjad Hossain said, "We tested some of our bench players and I'm happy to have seen them in the match. India are an experienced side and it is a good opportunity for us to meet them in group stage before the final. India youth and junior teams beat their Maldivian counterparts 42-14 and 55-09 respectively to confirm the finals."



Extending his single-season Premier League scoring record to 36 goals, Manchester City striker Erling Haaland leaps and thumps a header to score the game's final goal following a brace from Ilkay Gundogan as City maintains their lead ahead of Arsenal with a 3-0 win at Everton yesterday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Nadal turns down claycourt event wildcard

REUTERS



Rafa Nadal has turned down a wildcard offer for next week's Challenger tournament in Bordeaux as the Spaniard's participation in the French Open hangs in the balance, the claycourt event director said on Sunday.

Nadal has been struggling with a hip injury he suffered at the Australian Open in January, and fears the Spaniard may miss the Paris Grand Slam after he pulled out of this week's Italian Open.

"I offered him (Nadal's agent Carlos Costa) one of the wildcards. He very kindly told me that Nadal was continuing his preparation at home in Manacor, that he was not ready and was in a race against time to be ready for the French Open," Jean Baptiste Perlant told French sports daily L'Equipe.

Nadal skipped last week's Madrid Open and missed tournaments at Indian Wells, Miami, Monte Carlo and Barcelona.

The French Open, which Nadal has won a record 14 times including last year, starts on May 28.



Inter-bank football tourney kicks off

SPORTS REPORTER

City Bank beat Islami Bank 3-0 as the first ever Sheikh Hasina Inter Bank Football Tournament got underway on Saturday at the Army Stadium in Dhaka.

A total of 34 bank teams are taking part in the meet, organised by Bangladesh Association of Banks. Chief of Army Staff General SM Shafiuddin Ahmed inaugurated the event, which was presided over by BAB chairman Nazrul Islam Mazumder.

Ex-FBCCI president Kazi Akram Uddin Ahmed was also present alongside senior officials of Bangladesh Army, chairman, director, managing director and senior executives of BAB member banks.

ITF U-12 tennis from Tuesday

SPORTS REPORTER

ITF Asia Under-12 team competition - South Asia Regional Qualifying Event will be held at the Sheikh Jamal National Tennis Complex in Ramna from May 16 to 20.

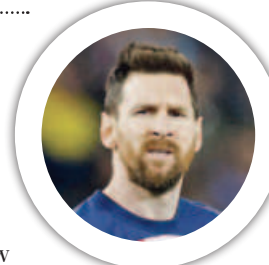
Hosts Bangladesh will compete against India, Nepal, Bhutan, Maldives and Sri Lanka with a total of 17 boys and 11 girls taking part in the competition, revealed organisers at a press conference yesterday.

Bangladesh will field two teams - a three-member boys' team and a three-member girls' team, with Amol Roy and Rajnita Chowdhury the captains of the two teams. One boys' team and one girls' team from this meet will qualify for the ITF Asia Under-12 competition final round in Kazakhstan later this year.

Messi unfazed amid 'whistles'

STAR SPORTS DESK

Kylian Mbappe struck twice and Paris Saint-Germain resumed normality with their 5-0 demolition of Ajaccio in a Ligue 1 fixture on Saturday but Lionel Messi predictably drew a mixed reception from own fans at home.



PSG coach Christophe Galtier said the Argentine, however, "stayed focused to live up to the game" and is familiar with handling "difficult situations" after Messi's unsanctioned trip to Saudi Arabia amplified the growing tension between him and the Parisian club.

"There were whistles but very quickly a large part of the stadium made sure to drown them out to support Leo," said Galtier after match.

Despite Messi's apology following Saudi visit, rumours of his possible move to the Middle Eastern nation had likely fueled fire among a section of PSG fans.

PSG midfielder Renato Sanches termed the situation as "weird" and "hard for Messi, for the team, and for the club" as they need a win in three remaining matches to secure title defense.