

Tamim's captaincy scenario still unclear

SPORTS REPORTER from Chattogram

The ODI series ended 2-1 in favour of Afghanistan after Bangladesh's seven-wicket win in the dead rubber third and final match yesterday and the conclusion of an important series ahead of the Asia Cup and World Cup will now see the Tigers turn their attention to preparations for those events.

Key to those preparations will be how and in what form ODI captain Tamim Iqbal will return to the side following his break.

Tamim had shockingly retired a day after leading the team out for the first ODI, before being convinced to withdraw his retirement by Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina just before the second ODI, although with the caveat that the left-handed opener would be going on a one-and-a-half-month break.

There are questions about how things will shape up, at least planning-wise, given that Tamim will be outside the team atmosphere when preparations begin.

Preparation for the Asia Cup will begin after July 30, BCB cricket operations chairman Jalal Yunus informed yesterday.

"Everyone will get a rest till July 30. Some will go to play outside. Then we will begin our preparations with a conditioning camp," Jalal said.

While Tamim is still considered the captain of the team, whether he would return as captain was not cleared during Jalal's chat with the media. "Let him [Tamim] return first. We are discussing it with him. There is an issue regarding his fitness. So he told us to let him return first and then discuss these things," Jalal informed.

Tamim will be leaving for Dubai, before seeing specialists in the UK regarding fitness issues during his break.

"Tamim is going to Dubai and from there he will be going to the UK on July 25 or 26. He has appointments at two medical centres and will see doctors there. He will give me updates from there on what's happening," Jalal said.

The Tigers will form a preliminary squad for the Asia Cup and, depending on Tamim's fitness updates, it will be decided when he can join the side.

"We will provide a 25-26-member preliminary squad. We will be monitoring his fitness to decide on that and we will know when he can join," Jalal suggested.

The issue of former ODI captain Mashrafe Bin Mortaza going to the World Cup as a mentor also came up. "The decision is up to the board. He is supposed to come to discuss with us. Let us know formally and then we will take a decision," he concluded.



Bangladesh's star all-rounder Shakib Al Hasan shakes hand with Mohammad Nabi of Afghanistan after the Tigers' consolation seven-wicket victory in the final ODI in Chattogram yesterday. With two defeats in a row in the first two games, Bangladesh lost the series 2-1 but Shakib still had something to take away as he ended up reaching a unique milestone -- becoming the only cricketer with 14000 runs and 600 wickets in international cricket.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED



Shoriful finds balance in skill and aggression

ABDULLAH AL MEHEDI from Chattogram

Shoriful Islam thrived in his first outing in the Afghanistan ODI series, notching career-best figures to dismantle the Afghanistan top order in the third and final match of the series.

Aggression is what keeps fast bowlers ticking and when the left-arm paceman played the U-19 World Cup for Bangladesh there was plenty of that on view, especially in their triumph against India in the final. However, internationals give one a reality check. Shoriful had told this reporter ahead of the series: "Aggression is fine but you also need to put the ball in the right areas."

This time, he did that with great consistency and picked up a four-for.

Ibrahim Zadran and Rahmanullah Gurbaz had completely taken the game away from the Tigers in the second ODI with a 256-run partnership.

On this occasion, Shoriful, coming in with the new ball, created the angle from which the ball shaped away just enough to remove the dangerous Zadran in the first delivery of the third over.

"Ibrahim bhai is a good batsman. I tried to give my best delivery at that time since I got him out three times previously. I had confidence that maintaining line and length would get me the wicket," the pacer said at the press conference.

The extra bounce he often gets soon took the visiting top order by surprise.

Rahmat Shah would have been gone three deliveries into his innings when



SCORES IN BRIEF

Afghanistan: 126 all out in 45.2 overs (Shahidi 22, Omarzai 56; Shoriful 4-21, Taskin 2-23, Miraz 1-35, Shakib 1-13, Taijul 2-33)

Bangladesh: 129-3 in 23.3 overs (Liton 53 not out, Shakib 39, Hridoy 22 not out; Farooqi 2-26)
Result: Bangladesh won by seven wickets.

Player-of-the-match: Shoriful Islam

Player-of-the-series: Fazalhaq Farooqi

he top-edged a length delivery, but it just escaped Mehedi Miraz at backward point. There was no such respite for Rahmat off the next delivery.

A perfect back-of-a-length delivery left Rahmat without a clue about where the ball actually was. He hung his bat only to get an inside edge on to Mushfiqur Rahim's gloves.

Shoriful again found the angle to beat Mohammad Nabi's inside edge, shaping it in from just outside the off-stump to trap the batter in front. He would return to the attack later and bag Abdul Rahman, leaving Afghanistan seven down for 68.

The key point was how they planned and executed. When pace-bowling coach Allan Donald was asked if going short was the plan, he said: "Very much so. We felt we really undersold ourselves in the second ODI by not being that aggressive and by not going short. We needed to get the conservative thought process off our

shoulders and come in really hard today, which I thought we did very well."

Aggression was key to Shoriful's early success, but this time he used his arsenal to good effect. A career-best four for 21 in ODIs came from accuracy as well and he had worked on that with head coach Chandika Hathurusingha, especially the rising deliveries.

"In the last few days, I was practising quite a bit. I talked to Hathu sir and he worked with me especially, doing extra work. When I was at home, he provided me with bowling drill videos and I was doing those things in practice. By doing those again and again, I applied it in the match today with how I got them to rise," he said.

"It wasn't anger," he said of his performance. "Body language comes automatically no matter how I try to control myself," he pinpointed. This time it was about accuracy together with aggression.

Tigresses lose series after agonising defeat

SPORTS REPORTER

Despite managing to restrict India below the hundred run mark for the first time, Bangladesh women's cricket team suffered a top-order meltdown as the Tigresses lost by eight runs in their second T20I against India at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.

The agonising defeat also saw the Tigresses concede the three-match series 2-0 with a game in hand.

Chasing a paltry 96-run target, Bangladesh lost their last five wickets in seven deliveries while adding just a solitary run, collapsing to 87 all out in 20 overs from 86 for five in 18.5 overs.

Skipper Nigar Sultana remained the only standout performer for Bangladesh with the bat, scoring 38 off 55 deliveries, while no other batters were able to reach the double-figure mark. And as soon as Nigar was stumped off a Deepti Sharma delivery in the penultimate over, Bangladesh hit the panic button and collapsed.

Nahida Akter, who came to the press conference after the defeat, denied the fact that the Tigresses lacked in skills but rued the batting performance of her team, pointing out that the experienced batters should take more responsibility in the coming days.

"I don't think we lack skills since we trained enough. Our coach worked enough with the batters and I think we should use our experience more in such situations. Our senior batters who batted at number five and six should work on it. I think that's where we lacked," Nahida told the media yesterday. Bangladesh did really well with the bowl, restricting India to 95 for eight in 20 overs -- their lowest collection against Bangladesh in the format -- after the visitors elected to bat.

Nepal women arrive in Dhaka

SPORTS REPORTER

Nepal women's football team arrived in Dhaka yesterday to play to friendly matches against Bangladesh.

The two matches will be held at the Birshreshtha Shaheed Mostafa Kamal Stadium in Kamalapur on July 13 and 16, with both matches scheduled to kick off at 5:30pm.

Bangladesh had beaten Nepal 3-1 in the final of the SAFF Women's Championship in September last year which happened to be the last international match for the women in red and green.



The Bangladesh Football Federation failed to arrange an international match since then despite making contacts with Cambodia and Singapore a couple of times. A couple of players have already left the team while the federation's long-time coach Golam Rabbani Choton resigned from the coach's position in late May.

With assistant coach Mahbubur Rahman Litu guiding the team for the first time, it will be a challenge for the 140th-ranked Bangladesh against the 101st-ranked side from the Himalayas.



Ukrainian wildcard Elina Svitolina reached the semifinals of Wimbledon for the second time in four years after beating world number one Iga Swiatek 7-5, 6-7(5), 6-2 in the quarterfinals on Tuesday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Bangla Tigers begin camp in Chattogram

SPORTS REPORTER from Chattogram

The Bangla Tigers team started a three-week camp at Chattogram yesterday, training at the Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium (ZACS) before the third and final ODI between Bangladesh and Afghanistan.

BCB officials informed that the team was expected back in Dhaka on August 1. The camp features 24 members, but four of them, including Soumya Sarkar and Mahedi Hasan, are expected to join the camp following the Emerging Asia Cup in Sri Lanka.

Following fitness sessions for the first few days, the team will focus on a skills camp under Bangla Tigers head coach Sohel Islam. Batting consultant Jamie Siddons and fast-bowling coach Champaka Ramanayake will oversee and help with sessions.

"24 players were selected for the camp but four of them are currently with the Emerging Asia Cup squad in Sri Lanka. Thus there are 20 cricketers in the camp at the moment," a BCB official said.

Mosaddek Hossain posted a picture alongside Yasir Ali, Abu Haider Rony and a few others ahead of their departure for the camp yesterday.

India aim to extend Windies' 21-year misery

AFP, Roseau

India attempt to extend West Indies' 21 years of misery when they meet in the lush tropical setting of Windsor Park Stadium in Dominica on Wednesday in the first match of a two-Test series.

Rocked by the failure of the two-time winners to qualify for the World Cup in India in October-November this year, the Caribbean cricket community is unlikely to find solace in the shape of Kraigg Brathwaite's Test side.

The West Indies last won a Test match against India back in 2002.

This brief series, which ends in Trinidad the following week in what will be the 100th Test between the two teams, marks the start of the next two-year World Test Championship cycle leading to the final in 2025.

Beaten by New Zealand in the inaugural final in 2021 and then outplayed by Australia in the 2023 decider just four weeks ago, Rohit Sharma's team is likely to show no more than three changes from the side that lost the new Test cricket showpiece by 209 runs at The Oval.

Spinning all-rounder Ravichandran Ashwin, unlucky to have been omitted from last month's duel with Australia, should have the chance to add to his already impressive record against the West Indies.

In 11 Tests against these opponents he has taken 60 wickets and compiled four of his five



Ahead of the opening Test, India captain Rohit Sharma and his Windies counterpart Kraigg Brathwaite met the Dominican Minister for Culture, Youth, Sports & Community Development, Hon. Gretta Roberts.

PHOTO: TWITTER

Test centuries in averaging just over 50 with the bat.

Notwithstanding their obvious underdog status and especially concerns about the ability of the batting line-up to cope with the Indian attack, West Indies batting legend Brian Lara -- the performance mentor for the team -- was hopeful that the home side, and particularly the younger, inexperienced players, can offer more than a glimmer of encouragement at time of widespread cricketing gloom in the region.