

Tigers seek IMPACTFUL DISPLAYS

SPORTS REPORTER

In drizzly conditions, Anamul Haque Bijoy came barefooted to the Sher-e-Bangla National Cricket Stadium turf yesterday afternoon to get a feel of the wicket before the first of three ODIs between Bangladesh and New Zealand, slated to begin today. The weather conditions hindered Bangladesh's practice sessions before the start of the series but, like Anamul, many would look to make their mark.

Ahead of the World Cup, this series provides the perfect platform for a few players to return to some form. One of them is Liton Das, who will be captaining the ODI side for the third time over the course of the previous five series.

"When I was given the responsibility of captaining the side, my first objective was to win matches," Liton said at the press conference yesterday.

Liton, captaining the side in absence of regular skipper and all-rounder Shakib Al Hasan, reckons that performing as a batch, with one or two highlight performances, is the way forward for his side.

The pressure ahead of the series is minimal with both teams resting



key players. From Bangladesh's perspective, though, the opening slot would see competition as apart from Liton, who said he was looking to get back into form, there are Tanzid Hasan, Anamul, Soumya Sarkar and Tamim Iqbal available.

Meanwhile, Mahmudullah Riyad and Tamim Iqbal's return are the biggest focus going into the series. The former had been dropped following the series against New Zealand while

Tamim had not played since his retirement saga in the middle of the Afghanistan series. Mahmudullah would have to show both form and fitness in order to stake a claim for the World Cup squad. Tamim, meanwhile, will be looking to gauge his fitness and batting form in the series.

"Having two senior stars helps us in every way... I don't want to create any pressure on them. When Bangladesh enjoy the game, the possibility of success increases," he felt.

The Tigers have had difficulty in coming up with sound decisions in key phases of certain games. On the batting front, Liton felt the idea would be to score runs as per situation.

"If we lose quick wickets and [Mahmudullah] Riyad goes out to bat with 30-35 overs of game left, he will play his own game. There is nothing to tell him, he is very mature. The same applies to Soumya... It's not just them, every batter's responsibility is to score runs," Liton said.

With overcast conditions in forecast today as well, the Mirpur wicket is likely to be on the slower side. Thus, playing conditions and lack of practice will add to Bangladesh batters' challenges.



PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

Booters look to bounce back

SPORTS REPORTER from Hangzhou

Smarting from a 1-0 defeat at the hands of Myanmar, Bangladesh Olympic football team will hope to bounce against India in their second match of Hangzhou Asian Games at Xiaoshan Sports Complex Stadium today.

The match will get underway at 2:00pm (Bangladesh time).

Before the crucial do-or-die match against neighbouring India, the men in red and green had their final preparation for nearly two hours at Zhenjiang Sci-Tech University Athletics field yesterday, defying heavy showers, as a victory over India will keep Bangladesh in the race for the Round of 16.

Bangladesh played against India three times in the Asian Games in 1978, in 1982 and in 2002 – losing on all three occasions.

"We are ready for tomorrow's match," midfielder Mohammad Ridoy said yesterday. "We are expecting something good if we can implement the plan prepared by the coach."

"Our first target is to not concede any goals against India and then go into attack," the 21-year-old midfielder said. "I think India could not recover after coming to China the day before their match (5-1 defeat) but they are not a bad team. However, we are looking forward to a positive result."

U-19s take on India

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh will take on India in their first match of the SAFF Under-19 Championship in Kathmandu, Nepal today, with the match scheduled to kick off at 1:45pm.

Bangladesh have participated in all four editions of the event, but failed to win any of those occasions, despite making the final the last three times, and it remains the only SAFF trophy missing from Bangladesh's cabinet.

Bangladesh will play their first match against defending champions India on the opening day and play against Bhutan, the other team in Group B, two days later.

"The first match against India is obviously a very tough match. All of our focus is on that match. If we can win the match, we will clearly be in the semifinals. Even if we draw that game, we will have an advantage," Bangladesh coach Rashed Ahmed Pappu had said before leaving for Nepal.

Bangladesh will play against Bhutan in their second match of Group B on September 23 while Group A features Nepal, Pakistan and Maldives. The top two teams from each group will play the semifinals and the final will be held on September 30.



A Bangladesh player tries to win the ball from two Vietnam players during their first match of the AFC U-17 Women's Asian Cup Qualifiers in Hanoi yesterday. Bangladesh lost the match 2-0 after Australia thrashed Philippines 6-2 in the first match of Group B. Two teams each from the two groups will qualify for the final round of the competition to be held in Indonesia next year.

PHOTO: AFP

'Several challenges' await Tamim

MAZHAR UDDIN

The three-match ODI series between hosts Bangladesh and New Zealand beginning today is set to mark the return of Tamim Iqbal to international cricket following a lot of controversies surrounding the cricketer over the past few months.

A lot has changed for the Tigers since Tamim announced his shock retirement from international cricket in July before taking a U-turn. The 34-year-old, however, went on to step down from the ODI captaincy since he felt that his lingering injury concern might hamper the Tigers' chances in the upcoming World Cup.

The dashing left-hander later underwent treatment and now faces the challenge to transform the team's vulnerable scenario at the top of batting order.

Prominent coach Nazmul Abedeen Fahim, who was also Tamim's mentor during his developmental years, believes that the veteran campaigner will face "several challenges" after having been away from competitive action.

"There will be an impact from the recent controversies, and he will be under pressure to perform," Fahim told The Daily Star yesterday.

"Even if he didn't play, I'm sure



he worked on certain aspects of his technique, but it will be important to see how well he adapts to how he used to play in the past."

One of the biggest reasons for Tamim's sudden retirement, according to sources, was tied to his deteriorating relationship with head coach Chandika Hathurusingha in recent times.

Fahim, though, considers Tamim an "emotional guy" and believes "a lot of negativities around him could have been self-created" and that he may have gathered doubts about his own batting abilities.

"I think he needs to show that he can perform to those who want to see him fail, so this is additional pressure on him," he explained.

Moreover, Tamim will reunite with the team in a different setting, with Liton Das in charge, while Hathurusingha and regular captain Shakib Al Hasan will be on leave for the series; although the Sri Lankan coach is expected to join the team before the third fixture.

Fahim also stated that Tamim should "play at his own pace initially because it's a fifty-over game," and that the squad should be patient with him.

"Our team must also recognize that when a player returns from injury, it is a gradual process to regain pace [of his game]."



We know how strong Bangladesh are in their home conditions, so it's a good challenge for us against them. And it's my first time playing here, so certainly plenty to learn on my behalf. But the boys are really looking forward to tomorrow and getting underway. I have seen some highlights from when England was here [in March] and there were a lot of wickets taken by pacers.

LOCKIE FERGUSON, the New Zealand skipper for the series

From exile to Europa League

AFP, London

Brighton's "incredible" journey from homeless exiles facing oblivion to their current status as Premier League trendsetters will reach a memorable climax when they host AEK Athens in their first-ever European match on Thursday.

For a generation of Brighton fans, AEK's visit to the Amex Stadium in the Europa League group stage is the kind of occasion that would have been unthinkable in the dark days, when the club appeared set to implode.

Once as decrepit as the fire-ravaged West Pier on the south coast city's pebble beach, Brighton, under coach Roberto De Zerbi, now possess one of the most admired business models in world football.

Clubs seek to emulate Brighton's ability to scour the globe for obscure youngsters such as

Moises Caicedo, Alexis Mac Allister and Marc Cucurella, all developed into assets that commanded huge transfer fees in relation to their initial cost.

The innovative formula helped the Seagulls defy the odds with a sixth-place finish in the Premier League last season.

They have made another a strong start this term, including Saturday's 3-1 embarrassment of Manchester United at Old Trafford.

"This has been an incredible project. There is definitely a broader awareness of Brighton now," said Albion chief executive Paul Barber.

"One European club I spoke to takes a feed of all our games, and their coaching staff sit down on Monday mornings and watch them from start to finish."

It is an unprecedented position of strength for a club that 26 years ago came within a whisker of crashing out of the English Football League and did not have a stadium of their own.

When Steve Gritt was hired as Brighton manager in December 1996 the team were languishing 11 points adrift at the bottom of the fourth tier, with a catastrophic relegation to non-league football looming.

They achieved the point they needed to survive but despite their

great escape, Brighton's problems were only just beginning.

The Goldstone Ground, Brighton's stadium for 95 years, was sold for property development in 1997.

Brighton were cast into exile, forced to endure a 150-mile round trip by road for every 'home' fixture as they ground shared at Gillingham's Priestfield Stadium.

Attendances dropped as low as 1,025 during Brighton's two seasons there and it seemed the club might not survive the wilderness years.

Crucially, in 1999, the club secured a lease to play at the Withdean Stadium, a converted athletics stadium two miles north of the city centre.

With a limited capacity and little covered seating, Withdean was hardly a glamorous setting, but the emotion generated by Brighton's return home allowed the club to rediscover its sense of self.

Professional poker player Tony Bloom bought the club in 2009, betting that a purpose-built new stadium, which opened two years later on the city's outskirts, would fast-track the team's revival.

The gamble paid off handsomely and, after a 34-year absence, Brighton were promoted to the Premier League in 2017.



After Kylian Mbappe gave Paris Saint-Germain the lead early in the second half, Vitinha and Achraf Hakimi combined as the latter doubled the lead in the 58th minute in their 2-0 win at home over Borussia Dortmund in the Champions League on Wednesday. Apart from Hakimi flooring Mats Hummels with a slick move for their second, the goal also ensured a smooth start for the French side in the early weeks of a new era following the departures of Lionel Messi, Neymar, and Marco Verratti, and the arrival of coach Luis Enrique.

