



## A reluctant acceptance of World Cup failure

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"It's the responsibility because we have disappointed the fans and ourselves," said Bangladesh coach Chandika Hathurusingha at a press conference yesterday in an apparent admittance of his role in what has been a disastrous World Cup campaign for the Tigers.

In a cricketing culture where people in charge usually resort to any and all excuses to deflect blame, his plain acceptance of responsibility was somewhat refreshing.

However, as one reads between the lines of what he said, it becomes obvious that instead of accepting the blame, the Sri Lankan was busy listing out reasons of why he should be absolved of any criticism for this trainwreck of a campaign.

Ahead of Bangladesh's penultimate match in the World Cup against Sri Lanka in Delhi, Hathurusingha missed no opportunity to remind all that he came on board as the Bangladesh coach seven months before the World Cup.

"I'm only seven months into the job -- There's not much I can do within seven months. What I did was just take the team from where the team was and make sure that they were prepared for this. Actually, my work has to start after this," said the 55-year-old.

The Sri Lankan was re-hired as the Bangladesh coach in February this year, meaning he had eight months before the World Cup, not seven.

Interestingly, Hathurusingha had only nine months in hand before the World Cup when he joined Bangladesh in his first tenure back in June of 2014.

The Sri Lankan had joined a team that was down in the dumps and coached them to their best ever finish in World Cups.

This time, Hathurusingha had a team which was fairly settled and sitting at number three in the ICC ODI Super League.

All the Sri Lankan had to do was to build on the work done by his predecessor Russel Domingo and work on the weaknesses that persisted in the team.

Hathurusingha also said that some things had happened before the campaign, which were out of his control, presumably hinting at the Tamim Iqbal fiasco.

Throughout the hullabaloo surrounding Tamim's retirement, prompt un-retirement and stepping down from captaincy, Hathurusingha played the role of a passive bystander.

Whenever asked by the media if he had made any attempts to speak with the batter, Hathurusingha dismissed that notion, saying Tamim has to approach him first.

The issues between Tamim and Shakib Al Hasan had been brewing for years and it became public knowledge in February, a few weeks after Hathurusingha joined as the coach.

As a coach, Hathurusingha was in a position to act as the mediator between them and mend the cracks forming in the team.

But in his second stint, the situation in the dressing room only worsened.

Hathurusingha's poor man management skills were not secret. In between the two terms in Bangladesh, he coached Sri Lanka from 2017 to 2020.

He was sacked by SLC after an investigation report, which revealed that Hathurusingha had created disharmony within the team and ruined team spirit.

After Bangladesh's uninspiring performances so far, it seems that Hathurusingha has successfully robbed another team of its spirit, whether he admits it or not.



Liton Das is perhaps struggling to answer Towhid Hridoy's question about why Bangladesh's batting has not been firing in the ongoing ICC World Cup. The duo was seen having a conversation in Bangladesh's training session in Delhi yesterday on the eve of their match against Sri Lanka.

PHOTO: ICC



## Champions Trophy only stake as Tigers face SL

MAZHAR UDDIN from New Delhi

With their semifinal dreams already dashed, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka will face off at the Arun Jaitley Stadium in Delhi today, with hopes of keeping their qualification dreams for the 2025 Champions Trophy alive.

Bangladesh are languishing at ninth position in the points table with just one win in seven games.

Sri Lanka haven't fared much better either, having won just two of their seven games and lie in seventh position.

The match is of no real importance in the context of the tournament but could prove crucial in the race for the Champions Trophy.

The top seven teams and hosts Pakistan, at the end of the group stage, will qualify for the 2025 competition, and with Pakistan all but certain to finish in the top eight, finishing above the bottom two should be enough to ensure a qualifying spot.

Although it will be difficult for the demoralised Tigers to bounce back after losing their last six games on the trot, head coach Chandika Hathurusingha hoped that his team

would turn up motivated against Sri Lanka in Delhi.

"The Champions Trophy [qualification] is up for grabs. We need to finish as high as possible. So, this game has a big impact on who finish higher," Hathurusingha told the media yesterday ahead of the game.

At the press conference, the

problem with the squad and felt the weight of expectations may have led to the batting failure.

"When we selected this team, before the World Cup, they had been performing. Their skill hasn't gone anywhere, whatever is going through our heads is the only thing that is disturbing us. We haven't played to our potential, we haven't shown what we are capable of," he said.

There was an injury scare in the Tigers' camp yesterday when Mashfiqur Rahim suffered a blow in his right thumb while facing throw-downs in the nets.

The team physician came rushing in and applied ice on his hand after which Mashfiqur returned to the nets again. However, after facing a couple of deliveries, Mashfiqur felt discomfort and cut his practice short.

Later in the night, the medical team informed that the wicketkeeper-batter's injury was not serious and he is expected to play today.

The toxic haze in Delhi hampered both team's preparations and will remain a challenge for both teams today.



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