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‘Pitches in India surprised us’

Having worked as the Bangladesh team's performance analyst for nearly six years, **Shrinivas Chandrasekaran** bid adieu to Bangladesh cricket after the World Cup. He is the second member of the support staff after pace bowling coach Allan Donald to cut ties with the team. In an interview with **The Daily Star's Mazhar Uddin** in Pune on Saturday, Shrinivas spoke candidly about what he felt went wrong in the World Cup campaign. Following are excerpts of the interview:

The Daily Star (DS): As a performance analyst, what do you think was the reason behind the team's disastrous World Cup?

Shrinivas Chandrasekaran (SC): We did have a plan. But sometimes things don't happen according to plan. In terms of batting, I feel we were short of a batter in the squad because at the time you need an extra batter who can bowl a bit. Obviously Shakib [Al Hasan] and Miraz [Mehedi Hasan] are there but Bangladesh cricket needs someone who can bat lower in the order and also bowl. Unfortunately, our batters lost their form during the World Cup, that is the reason why we always felt we were a batter short. Some of our key players who had done well over the last one and half years were unable to perform in the World Cup.

DS: Were the conditions in India as you had anticipated?

SC: One of the things that surprised me was the quality of the wickets here in India. You expect the Chennai or Delhi pitch to play slow and low. I even experienced that during the IPL. But it actually turned out to be a belter of a wicket. Before the start of the tournament, we went through each venue, trying to understand which players are required in what venue and work a game plan considering the strengths and weaknesses of the opponent. But as you move forward, things might happen differently. So your game plan also changes accordingly.

DS: How did the dressing room react to the defeat to the Netherlands?

SC: Everyone went quiet. No one could even look at each other and the environment was very dull. Shakib was very shocked since he had high expectations to do well in this tournament. Seeing everything turn out like that probably hit him as a leader. He didn't share his feelings too much but I know him, deep down how disappointing it is for him when the team loses. Personally, for me it was a tough pill to swallow.

DS: How did the coaching staff react when Shakib went back to Bangladesh to train with his childhood mentor mid-tournament?

SC: I had the experience of working with Shakib during the IPL so it's nothing new for me. In the 2019 IPL season, he was with the Sunrisers Hyderabad and during that time he went back and brought his coach to work on certain things. The trip to Bangladesh did benefit him. So me personally and the coaching staff didn't find it unusual.

DS: How often did players, especially youngsters, approach you for help?

SC: Firstly, a trust needs to be developed between the player and the performance analyst. I had great conversations with Shanto [Najmul Hossain] even when he was not scoring runs. Same as Liton [Das], who is very specific about what he wants. There are certain players who want to know the details while there are some who have particular things on their minds. But as there are no analysts in the domestic structure, it takes time for the youngsters to gain that trust. I would suggest every domestic team to keep an analyst who can give the youngsters data about their game plans. At this moment I don't think their games are being recorded so probably for them it's difficult to review what is wrong and what are the areas they need to work on.



Bangladesh batters Mahmudullah Riyad and Towhid Hridoy leave the Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport in Dhaka yesterday after coming back from India following an abysmal ICC World Cup campaign. PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

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‘Not a crime to make mistakes’

AFP, Kolkata

Pakistan captain Babar Azam was described as “depressed” and under pressure to save his job Sunday after the team crashed out of the Cricket World Cup, failing to make the semifinals for a second successive tournament.

A 93-run loss to England sealed Pakistan's fate, ending the 1992 champions' already slim hopes of squeezing into the last four.

Former Pakistan captain and ex-chairman of the country's cricket board Ramiz Raja said that 29-year-old Azam was “depressed” over the reaction at home.

Fans' anger would have been made more acute by seeing arch-rivals India sweeping to eight wins out of eight, becoming the first team to reach the semifinals.

Azam's team lost five of their nine games including a seven-wicket mauling by India in front of more than 100,000 fans in Ahmedabad.

That was India's eighth victory in eight World Cup games against their neighbours.

Pakistan also lost to Afghanistan for the first time.

Azam made 320 runs at the World Cup with four fifties at an average of 40 and remains the world's second highest-ranked batter.

However, it was his captaincy in India which was questioned

when he faced accusations of lacking aggression in field settings.

Pakistan media consistently accused him of favouring his friends in selection.

“I get behind Babar. Babar is very, very close to me. He's a young guy that needs to be taken on the journey,



he needs to be shown the ropes,” said Pakistan's director of cricket Mickey Arthur.

Azam has been captain of the Test and ODI teams since 2020.

“He's still learning all the time. We know he's a very, very fine batter. He learns every day with his captaincy,” added Arthur.

“We have to allow him the time to grow. And in order to do that, you make mistakes. It's not a crime to

make mistakes as long as you learn from those mistakes.”

Despite the despondency of fans at home, Azam and his team found sympathy in India.

Only a smattering of Pakistan fans – mostly expatriates – were at the venues as visa complications effectively meant a ban on those wishing to cross the border.

As a Pakistan squad playing in India for the first time in seven years, they were virtually confined to hotel rooms once playing and training commitments were completed.

Security details would accompany players and squad members if they wanted to venture outside their hotel.

Arthur compared the situation to touring “in Covid times”.

Meanwhile, Raja believes that Azam may become the first victim of bloodletting in a Pakistan cricketing environment often plagued by infighting.

“There's so much pressure on him that he may leave the job,” Raja told the BBC's Test Match Special.

“Back home there has obviously been a massive backlash, as expected. The Pakistan media have targeted certain players, and especially Babar Azam.

“It's just a World Cup so you have to take the heat somehow. The problem with this team is it has the potential to play modern-day cricket but they have been a bit shy and timid with their approach.”

‘We want to start practising’

AFP, Colombo



Sri Lanka skipper Kusal Mendis appealed Sunday for the governing International Cricket Council to lift its suspension of the country over alleged political interference in the local board.

“This is our profession and we can't be staying at home doing nothing,” Mendis told reporters in the capital Colombo.

“We want to start practising as there are a few tours to happen next year.”

The ICC said on Friday that Sri Lanka Cricket was “in serious breach” of its obligations as a member, highlighting “the requirement to manage its affairs autonomously and to ensure that there is no government interference”.

The suspension came a day after Sri Lanka's parliament asked the board to resign over allegations by sports minister Roshan Ranasinghe that it had syphoned off millions of dollars.

“As players we had no control over that,” Mendis said. “As the captain, I only hope for its (the ban's) removal so that we can resume our game.”

It was not immediately clear if the indefinite suspension would affect Sri Lanka hosting the Under-19 World Cup in January.

Rangpur's Akbar shines in draw with Dhaka Metro

SPORTS REPORTER

Rangpur Division skipper Akbar Ali piled on the runs as he followed his first innings knock of 179 with a 97-run second-innings knock in a draw against Dhaka Metro on Day Four in their National Cricket League fixture at the Sheikh Abu Naser Stadium in Khulna yesterday.

Akbar put away seven fours and two sixes for his 121 ball 97, the only significant knock of the innings that saw Rangpur skittled out for 159, having started the day on 11 for the loss of two.

Metro's Arif Ahmed scalped six wickets for 76 runs, while Shohidul Islam and Abu Hider Rony got two each.

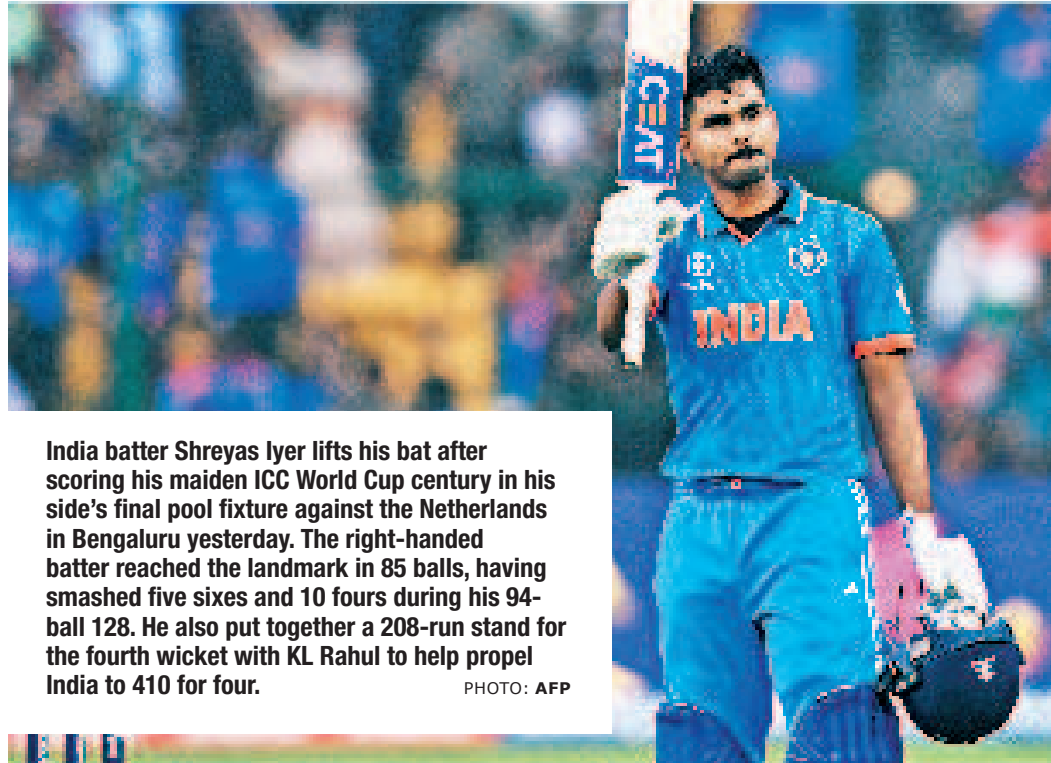
Rangpur, who started their second innings with a 140-run lead, gave Metro a 300-run target on the final day. Metro managed 113 for four in 35.5 overs as the match ended in a draw.

In Chattogram, Dhaka Division spinners Shuvagata Hom Chowdhury (4) and Nazmul Islam Apu (3) picked up seven wickets between them to secure a 52-run win over Sylhet Division.

Dhaka had set Sylhet a 210-run target on Day Three when Shuvagata did the damage late in the day, picking up three of the top four batters to leave Sylhet four down for 39 at the close of play.

On the final day, it was Apu and skipper Saif Hassan who picked up two wickets each along with Shuvagata's one that helped to bundle out Sylhet 157.

Shuvagata and Apu picked up seven wickets each in the match but the Player of the Match award went to Dhaka's wicket-keeper batter Mahidul Islam Ankon who scored a century in the first innings.



India batter Shreyas Iyer lifts his bat after scoring his maiden ICC World Cup century in his side's final pool fixture against the Netherlands in Bengaluru yesterday. The right-handed batter reached the landmark in 85 balls, having smashed five sixes and 10 fours during his 94-ball 128. He also put together a 208-run stand for the fourth wicket with KL Rahul to help propel India to 410 for four. PHOTO: AFP

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WORLD CUP TIDBITS

Rohit in a league of his own

India have been unstoppable in the ongoing World Cup, steamrolling almost every side they have come across in the tournament with their skipper Rohit Sharma leading by example as they stayed perfect with nine out of nine wins in the league stage so far.

Rohit was one of the five batters to score a fifty-plus innings when India piled up 410 for four – the second-highest total in this World Cup and the fifth-highest overall in the marquee tournament – against the Netherlands in their final pool fixture in Bengaluru yesterday.

The India skipper smashed several records during his 54-ball 61-run knock that included eight boundaries and two maximums. Following his 55th ODI fifty, Rohit has now scored 503 runs in the nine matches this World Cup. He now holds the record for most runs by an Indian skipper in a single edition of the tournament, surpassing Sourav Ganguly's 465 runs in 2003.

Rohit has also become the only player to have scored 500+ runs in two consecutive World Cup editions. India legend Sachin Tendulkar is the only other batter who has scored 500-plus runs twice in World Cups (in 1996 and 2003).

MOST SIXES

Rohit, who has hit 60 sixes so far in 2023,

has also become the player with the most sixes in a year. In doing so, he overtook South Africa's AB de Villiers, who hit 58 sixes in 2015. Pakistan's Shahid Afridi holds the record for most sixes in ODIs in a calendar year in a non-World Cup year



with 48 maximums in 2002.

Rohit broke another record as he became the player with the most sixes in a single edition of the World Cup. The right-handed opening batter lived up to his nickname ‘hitman’ as he smashed a total

of 24 sixes this edition of the World Cup, surpassing World Cup-winning England captain Eoin Morgan, who smashed 22 sixes in the 2019 edition of the quadrennial event.

THE FIRST BY ANY TEAM

The Indian cricket team also created history yesterday by becoming the first team to have all five of their top-order batters score fifty-plus innings in a single ODI World Cup innings.

Rohit's 61 was well complemented by Shubman Gill's 32-ball 51 as India got off to a flying start with a 100-run opening stand against the Dutch. Star batter Virat Kohli scored 51 off 56 deliveries, while KL Rahul and Shreyas Iyer had kept the best reserved for the end.

Both Iyer (128* off 94) and Rahul (102 off 64) smashed tons to see India pile up a mammoth total.

RAHUL INDIA'S FASTEST CENTURION

Rahul got to his seventh ODI hundred off just 62 deliveries as he eclipsed Rohit's 63-ball 100 against Afghanistan earlier in this edition of the tournament to become India's fastest centurion in World Cups.

Rahul smashed a total of 11 fours and four maximums before being dismissed in the final over.