

Stokes to miss 2024 IPL season

REUTERS

England Test captain Ben Stokes has made himself unavailable for next year's Indian Premier League (IPL) in order to manage his workload and fitness, CSK said on Thursday.

Stokes, who signed for CSK for 162.5 million Indian rupees (\$1.95 million) in December, 2022, came out of ODI retirement to participate in the recent ODI World Cup in India.

"The Chennai Super Kings management is supportive of Ben in his decision to manage his workload with England playing a 5-Test series in India before the IPL and then the T20 World Cup in June 2024," the club said. The all-rounder is expected to have surgery for a knee issue which saw him play just twice for the Super Kings in 2023.



Both Bangladesh and New Zealand had their first practice session at the Sylhet International Stadium on Thursday ahead of their two-Test series, beginning with first match on November 28 at the same venue. Head coach Chandika Hathurusingha was seen having a conversation with Najmul Hossain Shanto, captain for the New Zealand Test series, while Kiwi top-order batter Daryl Mitchell (bottom) enjoyed a fruitful batting session at the nets as the two sides hope to begin the new Test championship cycle on a positive note.

PHOTO: SHEIKH NASIR

Greenish pitch in Bangladesh surprises Kiwis

SPORTS REPORTER

Having toured Bangladesh twice in the last three years, the New Zealand team management had a fair idea about what to expect when they came here to play a two-Test series against the hosts.

In fact, most teams tour Bangladesh with a similar presumption -- that of being welcomed on slow and low surfaces.

On Thursday, however, in their first training session in Sylhet, the Kiwis were taken by surprise by the one thing they expected they wouldn't be seeing during their entire stay in Bangladesh -- the green tinge on the pitch.

"Pitches were a little greener than we thought they were going to be. But it spun, nonetheless," said Kiwi all-rounder Glenn Phillips after their training session.

Phillips, who last came to Bangladesh in 2016 with the Under-19 team, was clearly befuddled by the extra grass on the practice pitches as he brought it up for a second time in his three-minute-long interaction with the media.

"They were a little bit greener than we thought we were potentially going to come up against. But at the end of the day, we still have four days here before the first game [in order to] get everything all lined up and ready for the first game," he added.

Phillips remain the only off-spinner in their side and he was also confident of troubling a left-hander heavy Bangladesh batting line-up.

"With the line of Bangladesh including a few lefties, I think I will be able to apply pressure and take the ball away from bat while others bring it in," Phillips added.

The Sylhet International Cricket Stadium -- the venue for the first Test -- is considered as one of the more sporting pitches in Bangladesh.

The Black Caps are no strangers to playing in the country, having played 28 matches here against the Tigers across three formats, but this is going to be their first outing in Sylhet.

New Zealand have spent most of their time in the capital while touring Bangladesh, as they have faced the hosts 19 times at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur.



Like most cricket teams outside of Asia, New Zealand mostly struggled at the Tigers' 'home of cricket' in Mirpur -- a venue that is notorious for producing low and slow pitches.

The Tigers, with the help of their brigade of finger spinners, capitalised on this weakness and notched up notable bi-lateral series triumphs over the Kiwis -- the 4-0 'Bangla Wash' in 2010, and the 3-2 Twenty20 series in 2021, their only series win over the Kiwis in the shortest format.

The New Zealand team last toured Bangladesh for three ODIs in September, which was both team's last bilateral engagement before the World Cup in India.

All three matches of that series were played in Mirpur, but the Tigers ended up on the wrong side of a 2-0 series defeat with one game producing no result.

Playing at their favourite hunting ground failed to give the Tigers the boost they had been hoping for and perhaps provided a glimpse of what had been awaiting the Tigers in the World Cup -- an eighth-place finish, including a convincing defeat to the Netherlands, the only associate nation in the tournament.

Perhaps to atone for their past mistake, the board decided to hold the first Test of the forthcoming series in Sylhet which is set to be both team's first match in the current cycle of the ICC Test Championship.

But given Bangladesh's tendency to doctor pitches to aid their spinners, there is no guarantee that the wicket in the Sylhet Test will remain green like the practice wickets.

That would be another surprise for the Kiwis, just not as pleasant as the first one.

BCB prioritises rehab prior to NZ tour

SPORTS REPORTER

Hasan Mahmud had a close shave with injury when batter Najmul Hossain Shanto hit one back at the bowler as Bangladesh began training today in Sylhet. Hasan, who could make his Test debut in the upcoming New Zealand series, was down holding his arm but recovered later to bowl at the nets again.

Nevertheless, before the away tour of New Zealand which will feature three ODIs and three T20Is, the Tigers have a few absentees and injury concerns.

Taskin Ahmed will be undergoing a long rehab process that would all but put him out of contention for the upcoming New Zealand tour and even the Bangladesh Premier League. Given the impact of surgery on pacers in the past, BCB medical team has prescribed rest for the initial stages of recovery.

"We have asked him to completely put off bowling for four weeks. After four weeks we will assess him and take the next decision. Our aim is that he comes back with full fitness. We will take whatever time is necessary," BCB chief physician Dr. Debashish Chowdhury told the media yesterday.

Taskin had been set two weeks of complete rest since the last World Cup game against Australia in Pune. His two weeks of complete rest will end on November 25, but the road to recovery will be long despite the fact that he is still able to bowl through the injury.

"There is no alternative to long-term rehab since it's a recurring injury," Debashish added.

Meanwhile, ODI captain Shakib Al Hasan remains doubtful for the upcoming New Zealand tour. Shakib, who was ruled out of the World Cup with a fractured finger, will undergo an X-ray after three weeks since the injury happened on November 6.

"During the review time if we feel that it will be possible [to play] for him [Shakib], then of course we will allow him. But it's too early to comment on what his condition will be after two weeks. But we want a long period of time where he can be pain free and in a rehabilitation process. Shakib's pain has reduced from the high intensity pain he was feeling earlier," he said.

There is a question mark over who will take the reigns of the ODI and T20I sides if Shakib remains unavailable, with cricket operations chairman Jalal Yunus informing that no discussion has yet taken place. Yunus further informed that talks with Tamim Iqbal have not begun yet but the opener is aware of the upcoming meeting with the board.

There is also doubt regarding Mahmudullah Riyad's participation for the upcoming tour. Riyad has begun physiotherapy for his shoulder but has been instructed to undergo long-term rehab. Meanwhile, pacer Ebadot Hossain will review his injury recuperation and has an appointment in England on November 30.



Bangladesh women's cricket team had their last practice session at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur on Wednesday ahead of their upcoming tour of South Africa for three T20Is and as many ODIs. The Tigresses are set to leave the country today. PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

Disney sets India cricket viewership record

REUTERS, Bengaluru

Walt Disney said on Thursday its TV channels in India and digital streaming platform both set new viewership records in the recently concluded men's cricket World Cup.

A record 518 million viewers from India watched during the 48-day event on TV, while Disney's streaming app recorded a peak concurrent viewership of 59 million during the finals.

Disney's disclosure comes as it competes aggressively with billionaire Mukesh Ambani's JioCinema in the streaming sector.

On Thursday, Disney said 300 million users tuned into watch World Cup finals alone on TV, citing data from broadcast industry body BARC. "This becomes the most watched event in Indian television history," said Sanjog Gupta, head of sports at Disney Star.

Disney is currently exploring options of finding a joint venture partner or even a sale of its India business.

The company has offered free streaming of World Cup cricket on smartphones via Hotstar, part of a strategy to boost advertising revenue and offset the impact of a subscriber exodus.

Cricket-mad India hosted the 13th edition of the showpiece event Oct. 5-Nov. 19, where it lost to Australia's national team in the final match.

BFF could hire experienced Butler as development coach

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) is considering to appoint former West Ham United midfielder Peter James Butler as the development coach of the BFF Elite Academy, informed BFF president Kazi Salahuddin.

"The discussion about various aspects has been going on with him [Butler] for the last few days. If we agree, he will come in next month as the development coach," Salahuddin told The Daily Star yesterday.

Butler, currently associated with an African club as per BFF, has played over 450 matches in English domestic football league. The 56-year-old coach also has the experience of coaching in different clubs and national teams, including Botswana and Liberia.

"There are lots of academies across the country, but no professional football academy. We have an Elite Academy that is doing well, but they are now without a coach. So, we're hiring a coach who has playing experience in English Premier League and coaching different teams," the BFF boss added.

"If he joins us, he will work with the next batch of players to strengthen the pipeline of the national team as we don't inherit players rather than those who are coming up because of league regulation for the last 12 years," Salahuddin said, adding that he wants to form a "family" between coaches in different sectors who would assist each other.

"We will create a group of coaches who will sit all together with the technical director, women's coach, men's coach," Salahuddin further said, hinting that former technical director Paul Smalley may be reappointed in the post as well as operate as the head coach of the women's national football team.

Tigresses to leave for SA

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh women's cricket team will catch a flight in the early hours of Saturday to South Africa for their upcoming assignment, featuring three T20Is and as many ODIs against the hosts.

The series will begin with the T20Is, the first of which will be on December 3 at the Sahara Park Willowmore Cricket Stadium in Benoni followed by the second and third T20Is on December 6 and 8 respectively at the Diamond Oval in Kimberly.

The Tigresses will train for five days and acclimatise with the conditions.

Bangladesh have a sorry record against South Africa, with only two wins from 18 ODIs. Both wins came at home.

The Tigresses sit seventh on the ICC Women's Championship standings with three wins from 12 matches, while South Africa are fifth, having played nine games and winning seven of them.