

Ravindra out to prove Test credentials

SPORTS REPORTER

Rachin Ravindra may still be basking on having taken the World Cup by storm, but the New Zealand all-rounder has the wind in his sails to put his red-ball career back on track against hosts Bangladesh, the same opponents who derailed it.

In January last year, the Mominul Haque-led Bangladesh team pulled off a stunning eight-wicket victory in the Mount Maunganui Test over the hosts, registering the country's first-ever win over the Kiwis in New Zealand in any format.

Ravindra, playing only his third Test, had an underwhelming showing in that game, accumulating 20 runs in two innings while also going wicketless.

Consequently, Ravindra lost his place in the side in the second Test of the series, warmed the bench in New Zealand's following Test series against South Africa, and eventually got axed from the Test squad entirely.

The 24-year-old earned a callback into the red-ball team following an incredible display in the ICC World Cup in India, where he plundered 578 runs in 10 innings and hit three centuries - most by a New Zealander in a single edition of the showpiece event.

"It's pretty surreal. Things have happened quite quickly and I am very fortunate to be here right now," Ravindra said on Friday in Sylhet, referring to his breakout performance in the World Cup.

"I really loved my first experience of Test cricket a couple of years ago, and I'm really excited to see how my game has evolved," the 24-year-old added.

Ravindra, who bowls part-time left-arm spin, is one of the five spin-bowling options in New Zealand's 15-man squad for the two Tests.

Although his bowling stats in Tests - three wickets in three games - appear insignificant, Ravindra has a plan in mind on how to maximise success as a spinner in Bangladesh.

"I think if you're putting in the areas and dialling up your pace a little more, hopefully, you will have success."

Following the Mount Maunganui Test, while Ravindra was forging a path back to the Test team, Bangladesh went on to play 11 Tests - winning one match each against Ireland and Afghanistan, drawing one against Sri Lanka and losing the remaining eight - finishing rock bottom in the previous cycle of the ICC Test Championship.

Both Bangladesh and New Zealand will begin their campaign in the 2023-25 cycle of the championship with the Sylhet Test, starting on November 28, where much like Ravindra, the Tigers would also be hoping for a fresh start in the red-ball format.



Bangladesh pacers Hasan Mahmud and Khaled Ahmed geared up under the supervision of interim bowling coach Corey Collymore at the Sylhet International Cricket Stadium yesterday ahead of the Tigers' first of the two-match Test series against New Zealand, starting on November 28 at the venue. [Bottom] New Zealand batter Henry Nicholls batted at the nets as the Kiwis also trained on the day, continuing their acclimatisation with the condition.

PHOTO: SHEIKH NASIR

BCB's forward plan shadowy for fresh WTC cycle

SPORTS REPORTER

Following ICC World Cup debacle, the spotlight shifts to Test cricket for Bangladesh as they kick off the third cycle of the World Test Championship (WTC) with a two-match Test series against New Zealand, beginning November 28 in Sylhet.

Bangladesh dwelled at the bottom of the table in the two WTC cycles that preceded, and it appears the Tigers are likely to encounter significant obstacles in the coming season as well - for they have to host South Africa and Sri Lanka and travel to India, Pakistan and West Indies, with the latter tour could likely be the least difficult assignment.

Without some proven members and on the back of a last-moment change in captaincy, handed to 25-year-old Najmul Hossain Shanto, the hosts may not enjoy the home advantage against the Kiwis, according to esteemed coach Nazmul Abedeen Fahim.

"It's not that we weren't doing well in the past, but the stability that we had in the past is no longer there. We had been unable to prepare new players, and existing ones are currently unavailable. So, it'll be challenging and frightening," Fahim told The Daily Star yesterday.

"Look, the New Zealand spinners are better than us. Moreover, they're coming prepared in terms of batting and

they're strong in both the spin and pace departments, so we don't have the home advantage.

"Things are going against us, so it's unlikely that we'll suddenly start faring well in Test cricket, but what we can do now is revamp the domestic circuit's longer formats."



A momentous triumph against New Zealand in Mount Maunganui, led by Mominul Haque, in the preceding WTC cycle was billed as a watershed moment in Bangladesh's Test cricket, but things did not unfold as planned due to a lack of long-term planning.

While creating good wickets at home has emerged as the need of the hour, however, Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) has also been unable to focus on

improving competitiveness in domestic events, which has impacted the mentality of the cricketers.

The veteran coach continued, "Obviously, preparing a good wicket is a factor. But if we talk about team selection, management, umpiring, overall supervision, monitoring and, most importantly, the competitiveness factor, it's absent."

"Our first-class matches are similar to trial matches in that the players go out with the expectation that if they score runs or pick wickets, they will be selected for the national team. When players perform for the national team, they aim to win matches for the team, and this should be the case in domestic cricket as well, but it isn't."

"At times, even if you play for the team and bowl economically but remain wicketless, that player may feel he will not be noticed, so you start thinking about your personal interests rather than the team's interests. So, the lack of emotional attachment keeps the gap between domestic and international cricket wide open," he explained.

It will be critical for the relevant authorities to set in motion a long-term plan and have the guts to accept failure to begin with, or else the board's typical hand-to-mouth approach would only keep stunting the growth of the country's most followed sport.

SA approach Bangladesh series with WC in mind

ICC

Cricket South Africa (CSA) on Friday handed over the reins of their women's side for all three formats to experienced opener Laura Wolvaardt ahead of their white-ball home series against Bangladesh, prioritising a long-term plan that includes the 2024 T20 World Cup in Bangladesh.

The 24-year-old's first assignment as the full-time leader will be the home T20I and ODI series against Bangladesh from 3-23 December.

Wolvaardt achieved success in her stint as the temporary skipper, leading her side to back-to-back series wins over Pakistan and New Zealand.

Clinton du Preez, South Africa's Women's Convenor of Selectors, believed that the appointment worked well for their succession plan.

"Having Laura Wolvaardt as the official captain, together with a blend of young and experienced players bodes well for our succession planning," du Preez said. "It will also assist within the excitement we have around the squad in giving young players an opportunity and therefore we are looking forward to seeing them put up their hand and make impactful performances in this upcoming tour."

"A few of our senior players are not available for the T20-leg of the Bangladesh Tour due to injury and those returning from the Women's Big Bash League (WBBL). We are excited to provide an opportunity to our extended identified group, especially on the back of some injuries."

"This allows us to have an in-depth look at players for the ICC Women's T20 World Cup taking place next year in Bangladesh."

Hilton Moreeng, South Africa Women's head coach, was looking to continue the work.

"From our perspective, it is about continuing the good work that has been done. We know we are playing against Bangladesh who just came off a very successful tour against Pakistan," the head coach said.

'Pressure is a privilege to have'

REUTERS

Jannik Sinner said he was embracing the pressure of the Davis Cup Finals after pulling double duty to help former champions Italy defeat the Netherlands 2-1 and make the semifinals for the second straight year.

Sinner, who arrived in Malaga after losing his ATP Finals title clash to Novak Djokovic, overcame Tallon Griekspoor on Thursday to level the tie at 1-1 and later teamed up with Lorenzo Sonego to down Griekspoor and Wesley Koolhof.

The world number four was a late pick for the doubles match and had not played alongside Sonego since their defeat at Indian Wells in March but the duo barely missed a beat to book a last-four spot with Serbia up next on Saturday.

"Pressure is a privilege to have. There are not so many players who have this privilege," Sinner said. "Davis Cup pressure is different, because you know that you have a big responsibility, because you don't have many chances."

"Obviously, coming here with confidence, knowing the first day wasn't easy and I started so-so in the first set, but still I tried to kept going. It's nice that the last event of the year is a team event. It can give you good energy."



It's normal that fans step over the line and in the heat of the moment you react too. They can do whatever they want but I'm going to respond to that.

NOVAK DJOKOVIC said after British fans' reaction following Serbia's win over Britain in the Davis Cup.



Is the outrage and the extent of it justified?

NABID YEASIN

It was an anticlimactic finish to the 2023 World Cup for arguably the largest cricketing fanbase - India fans - as they saw the best team on paper tumbling at the final hurdle only for Australia to clinch their sixth title last week.

With 10 straight victories, statistically, India remained the most successful team in the last World Cup as the tournament winners themselves boast a victory less than the Men in Blue.

Seeing that dominating run end at the final stage to a team that they had already beaten in the group stage was definitely not what over 100,000 raucous fans at the Narendra Modi Stadium in Ahmedabad expected.

And even though the sea of blue was kept quiet during the course of that six-wicket win by the Aussies, India fans made their presence known - mostly in an unfortunate manner - almost from the moment the game came to a close.

The latest outburst was by an RTI activist, who filed an FIR in Uttar Pradesh's Aligarh against Australia all-rounder Mitchell Marsh for keeping his feet on the World Cup trophy during celebrations in the Aussie dressing room following the final.

Cummins shared a picture of Marsh with his feet on the coveted trophy on social media, with media and fans deservedly accusing him of disrespecting the biggest prize in cricket history.

"I am hurt. The trophy for which all the teams

in the world fight, the trophy which you want to lift over your head, keeping a foot on that trophy did not make me happy," India pacer Mohammed Shami, top wicket-taker with 24 scalps this World Cup, said on Thursday.

Shami's condemnation is understandable as it was kept just within a few words of dissatisfaction.



Undoubtedly, Marsh's act was condemnable, but the question remains if it was something that warranted the start of a criminal procedure.

According to local media reports, the alleged complaint against the 32-year-old all-rounder is that he deliberately humiliated 140 crore Indians by his gesture. The police officials also reportedly accepted the case and filed an FIR based on the

same.

A copy of the FIR was also sent to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, urging him to prohibit Marsh, who features regularly in the Indian Premier League, from playing in India moving forward.

If Marsh's act in a frenzied post-triumphant environment was indeed a 'deliberate' one to 'humiliate', the hurls of boos from the crowd at the umpire Richard Kettleborough while collecting his medal after the final, the chants of 'Kohli, Kohli' when Cummins lifted the trophy, and most importantly, the vile social media attacks on Aussie cricketers' wives may need some categorisation as well.

Glenn Maxwell's wife Vini Raman, who is of Indian descent, responded to the hate messages as she wrote on Instagram: "Aaaaand cue all the hateful vile DMs. Stay classy... Can't believe this needs to be said BUT you can be Indian and also support the country of your birth where you have been raised and more importantly the team your husband plus father of your child plays in #nobrainier. Take a chill pill and direct that outrage towards more important world issues."

The FIR incident took place three days after Maxwell's wife urged for the 'outrage' to be directed somewhere important, so it is clear that the Indian fans failed to comprehend the logic behind it. But maybe, it is time that they start doing so - if at all the 'outrage' is justified.

FIG president pledges support to Bangladesh

SPORTS REPORTER

The International Gymnastics Federation (FIG) president Morinari Watanabe pledged their support to the Bangladesh Gymnastics Federation (BGF) to help achieve its goal of winning an Olympic medal in the 2028 Games after attending its development committee meeting in Dhaka yesterday.

"Definitely, we'll extend our support towards them [BGF] in achieving the goal. I believe they can earn a medal in the 2028 Olympic games," the FIG president Watanabe told the reporters after the meeting.

The FIG president and its executive members were in Dhaka to attend a two-day-long executive committee meeting on November 22-23 in a city hotel.

This was the first time FIG held its executive committee meeting in a non-member country.

The FIG president and several of its executive members attended BGF's meeting yesterday, where the BGF revealed their plans of holding school gymnastics championships across the country.

Watanabe was complimentary of BGF's plans, said that FIG is ready to extend its helping hand while also reminding all that their assistance won't amount to anything if the athletes don't make use of the facilities. "Nothing will fall from the sky. You have to work hard to achieve your goal... We'll give them the facilities that their gymnasts need to thrive in this sector," said the Japanese president.

Bashir, buoyed by Watanabe's pledge, said that they will continue working towards achieving their goal.

"They are pleased with our plan and vision. Some of the member countries have also pledged their support, which we need to improve our level. We want to continue striding toward our goal of obtaining a medal in the 2028 Olympic Games," said Bashir.

