

Top-order in focus as Tigers eye to seal series early

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh will be keen on picking up where they left off in the first ODI against Sri Lanka and bag a victory in today's second ODI against Sri Lanka to emphatically seal the series with a match in hand at the Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium in Chattogram.

For the Tigers, the form of the top-order, especially the opening batters', would be a concern after a collapse in the third T20I against the visitors in Sylhet saw them lose the T20I series.

Liton Das' last fifty in the ODI format came in the ODI World Cup game against India in Pune and 10 games have passed since then. Soumya Sarkar hit a surreal 169 in New Zealand but consistency is still something he will have to work on.

The Tigers will be hoping to replicate the batters' approach from the first ODI, where they overcame early wickets as the rest of the batting unit pulled up their socks. Skipper Nazmul Hossain Shanto's unbeaten 122 was the highlight but Mahmudullah Riyad's 37 and Mushfiqur Rahim's 73 during a 165-run stand with Shanto were vital to the cause.

Against the swinging ball, batting coach David Hemp brought particular attention to Mahmudullah's application.

"I think the approach that Riyad had – obviously, the ball was swinging, [and] Sri Lanka were targeting the stumps; so, that was a danger ball – but he made a conscious effort to get at the ball. So, if you watched, he changed the length. He came at the bowler. And I think that his approach shifted that emphasis, took a little bit of pressure off Shanto," Hemp said in a video message posted by the BCB yesterday.

Finishing a task was emphasised upon before the start of the series, Hemp informed.

"So, something that we've talked about a lot of the last couple of weeks coming into this series, both the T20 and the ODI series, was about getting the job done. So, if you get yourself in, then finish the job. So, it's simple. But taking that responsibility to get the team over the line. And both those, especially the second partnership, the 165, was obviously a match winning partnership and something that we were sort of making sure that we hold ourselves accountable to," he added.

For the top-order, it would be about countering any threats early. Trusting the game plan was key for Hemp.

"Obviously individual contributions were really good, but for us it was more around the mindset, about staying calm and playing with control, which I thought we did," he said about coming out of the slump after Tigers went down to 23 for three in chase of 256.



Bangladesh batter Towhid Hridoy appears focused as he operates a bowling machine during training at Chattogram's Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium yesterday, on the eve of their second ODI against Sri Lanka. The Tigers had won the series opener in style but Hridoy would be desperate to rediscover his bearings, especially after having been clean-bowled early in his last two appearances in the ongoing white-ball series.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED



Traffic jam impedes Tamim

SPORTS REPORTER

Star opener Tamim Iqbal fell victim to Dhaka traffic as the batter had to bat at number three for Prime Bank Cricket Club (PBCC) in a Dhaka Premier League game only because of failing to arrive on the field in time on Thursday.

Being forced to bat one place down the order, Tamim managed a 15 ball 16 against Brothers Union in BKSP yesterday.

It was later learned from PBCC team manager Sikder Abul Kashem Kongkon that Tamim arrived late to the ground due to an accident that had halted traffic on the way to BKSP and that prompted him to bat at three.

"There was an accident in Gabtoli which caused many players from both sides to be late for the game," Kongkon told The Daily Star.

However, in Thursday's contest, PBCC openers Parvez Hossain Emon and Shahadat Hossain Dipu smashed tons to set up a 165 drubbing over Brothers.

After being put into bat, Emon smashed eight sixes and nine fours for his 129-ball 151 and Dipu's 111-ball 119-run knock featured 10 fours and four sixes as the duo put on a 246-run opening stand. In Fatullah, Abahani picked up their second win of the tournament when they thumped Gazi Tyres Cricket Academy by 146 runs (DL method).

'I felt Hathurusingha wanted to do a bit of dictatorship'

In Bangladesh cricket, team director appears to be a role only required in away series or major tournaments. Thus, Khaled Mahmud is now a former team director. He saw how the team fared in last year's ODI World Cup. The former national team captain in an exclusive interview with The Daily Star's Abdullah Al Mehdi, talked about recent controversy regarding things said in the World Cup probe report, his own role and about head coach Chandika Hathurusingha. Here are the excerpts:

The Daily Star (DS): Your assessment on performing the role of team director at the World Cup?

Khaled Mahmud (KM): I don't really know what my role is. Staying with the team in a parental role is something that used to happen in Bangladesh team earlier. I feel Bangladesh does not need a figure like that. Players are very disciplined and know about themselves. Maybe the board still feels that a father figure is required but not me. I am not for that role. An investigation report revealed that two directors intervened. I don't know what it means. Maybe many players have complained that when they [these two directors] are in the dressing room they don't feel comfortable. I also want to know which players said it since I don't think I have bossed around in any place.

DS: You are a senior figure in Bangladesh cricket....

KM: As a former cricketer, I am a lot senior to the players. I was so friendly with them. If me being there caused problems in the dressing room, I feel that that particular player has a problem. Maybe something in my behaviour felt bad to them, but as far as I know, I didn't do something that will hurt a player. Even in the last two World Cups, my role was very limited. I had nothing to do except for watching the games.

DS: Reports in media suggested a member of investigation committee said that two directors were mentioned



in the investigation report. It could be you and Jalal Yunus [cricket operations chairman]. What do you feel?

KM: If you consider everything then it is supposed to be me and Jalal bhai. I was the team director for the whole tour and Jalal bhai was in many matches. No other directors were with the team so frequently. I don't have any comments. [Nazmul Hassan] Papon bhai cleared the air considerably saying it's a fake report and there was no mention of our names.

DS: What value did the World Cup probe report create for Bangladesh?

KM: Could be [of value], there is nothing to suggest otherwise. I don't know since I didn't read the whole report but there could be findings which would help Bangladesh cricket in future.

DS: We had a strong team for the ODI World Cup. What went wrong?

KM: I am not pleased even though we

won two matches. The brand of cricket we were playing was not what I felt [we should have done at World Cup]. We could not recover from the Netherlands defeat. I feel that after a World Cup has ended, instead of doing too much analysis, we should focus on future with Sri Lanka series going on and there is a World Cup ahead in T20 format. If we focus on old things, it will only create a bad smell.

DS: There have been talks about head coach Chandika Hathurusingha at the World Cup. What did you see?

KM: I feel Hathu is one of the best coaches I have seen. From planning or sincerity, his focus and determination to work – I feel he was always a coach and 24/7, he is a coach. But yes, previously [previous term] when I saw him, I felt he was a bit hot-headed. After this World Cup, I felt he wanted to do a little bit of dictatorship, leading things.

I feel that when you are a head coach, you will have to shelter everyone. When you become a big umbrella, you have to fit in everyone under your shelter. If you don't do it, it's a problem. I feel that he needs to maintain his man management better. I could be mistaken, but that's what I feel. As a coach, he is a very good coach for us.

That's my feeling and personally what he says to others, I can't say. What I have seen before, and in this term less than before, but in this term, there was a bit of dictatorship.



Atletico Madrid players were ecstatic after they managed to bounce back from two goals down on aggregate against Inter Milan to reach the Champions League quarterfinals with a thrilling 3-2 penalty shoot-out triumph on Wednesday. Coming into the second leg trailing 1-0, Atletico looked dead and buried when Federico Dimarco pushed home Inter's opener at the Estadio Metropolitano. However, a first-half equaliser from Antoine Griezmann and an 87th-minute strike from Memphis Depay saw the tie go to extra time. In the other game on Wednesday, Borussia Dortmund also ensured a Champions League last-eight place for the first time in three years when they secured a 2-0 win over PSV Eindhoven in the second leg to progress 3-1 on aggregate.

PHOTO: REUTERS

SHORT CORNER



Former SAFF winner dies following childbirth

Mosammat Razia Khatun, a former winner of SAFF Under-18 Women's Championship, died from complications following childbirth in Satkhira in the early hours of Thursday. Razia had represented Bangladesh in the age-group football from 2014 and continued up to 2019, when she made her maiden appearance for the senior team.

Bangladesh to play three T20Is against USA

Bangladesh will take on the USA in a three-match T20I series, starting on May 21, to ramp up preparations for the T20 World Cup hosted by USA and the West Indies in June. USA Cricket (USAC) confirmed on Thursday.

Usha hold Mohammedan to 3-3 draw

Mohammedan Sporting Club surrendered a 2-0 lead to play out a 3-3 draw against Usha Krira Chakra in a Premier Hockey League encounter at Maulana Bhasani Hockey Stadium in Dhaka on Thursday.

Barishal rubbish Wasim Akram's claims of Miller being paid \$150,000 in BPL

Fortune Barishal management falsified Pakistan great Wasim Akram's claim that South Africa batter David Miller was paid \$150,000 to play for the franchise in the recently concluded 10th edition of the Bangladesh Premier League (BPL). Also, Barishal team manager Sabbir Khan informed The Daily Star that Miller never even postponed his wedding.

Read full stories on The Daily Star website

Taj desires to beat Saad for national team place

SPORTS REPORTER

Left-back Taj Uddin's dream to play with his elder brother in the national team has all but come true after getting a call up to the preliminary squad ahead of the World Cup Qualifiers against Palestine. The 21-year-old defender is now dreaming to secure a place in the final squad, even at the expense of his elder brother Saad Uddin, who plays as a right-back.

"As I have grown up watching my brother play for the national team, I also started dreaming to play alongside him. Our family members are happy to see both of us in the squad and I am trying to secure a place in the final squad by adapting the things the coach is teaching us," Taj said in a video message sent by Bangladesh Football Federation on Thursday.

"I want to play for the national team beating my brother, who can also play as a left-back. So both of us have chance to be in the squad," said the Sheikh Jamal defender.

"I have been trying to cope up with the team environment as there are a lot of differences in the camp from what I had learned from my brother," said Taj.

Bangladesh team have been in Al Taif, Saudi Arabia for preparation ahead of the Palestine matches in Kuwait on March 21 and in Dhaka on March 26.



With the round of 16 games now completed, these are the teams that have qualified for the Champions League quarterfinals:

- PSG
- Bayern Munich
- Real Madrid
- Manchester City
- Barcelona
- Arsenal
- Atletico Madrid
- Borussia Dortmund

The draw for the 2023-2024 Champions League quarterfinals will take place today at 05:00pm (Bangladesh Standard Time) at the House of European Football in Nyon, Switzerland.

From this stage onwards, any team will be able to face the seven remaining teams in the draw. In the group stage and Round of 16 draws, clubs from the same country were not pitted against each other.

The paths of the semifinals and the final will also be drawn today, meaning the eight qualified teams will know the route needed to reach the final at Wembley on Saturday, June 1.