



The all-round abilities of Ravichandran Ashwin and Ravindra Jadeja turned out to be the turning point in India's massive win over Bangladesh in the first Test in Chennai last week. With the second and final Test set to be played at Green Park in Kanpur, where the surface is speculated to be more suitable for spinners, the duo could present a much steeper challenge to Liton Das and the Tigers' batting lineup.

PHOTO: AFP/BCB

Kanpur of the old, looking to cope with the new

SPORTS REPORTER *from Kanpur*

Kanpur was once the centre of trade during the industrial revolution. The Ganges flows through these parts and the railways helped it become the centre of trade. Members of the Indian contingent of journalists say it was called the 'Manchester of the East', simply because of the abundance of textile industries.

But that was all in the past for Kanpur, still busy but not quite as exciting as the other big cities in India. There is a lot of green there too. The Kanpur Green Park stadium, too, in a way has dropped off a few levels from its peers in the big cities, Chennai's Chepauk for instance, which boasts the best facilities in India at the moment and hosts the Chennai Super Kings in the Indian Premier League.

It is an old stadium but has not had the development others have had. The flood lights appear to be dim and are slung low and in case of overcast conditions, there is the chance there would not enough artificial light to allow play to go on.

The press box is an open stand and despite being a Test venue, the covering journalists often fear the heat and humidity. The lush green grass covering says the ground was well maintained. But many there feel the venue is still not adequate for Test cricket.

But rich in history, the venue attaches itself to the legends from India. There is a restaurant in Kanpur which makes sweets called the 'Sunil Gavaskar Gulkand'. In fact, the lift at the venue was inaugurated by Gavaskar himself.

A capacity of 39,255 can watch matches. However, some of the stands appear to be falling into jeopardy. The UPCA (Uttar Pradesh Cricket Association) made the ground fit for international cricket. Domestic matches are held here regularly.

Yet, somehow the green playing area is just about covering up for all the deficiencies that may be seen on first look. As Mushfiqur Rahim came out yesterday to bat in the nets, Shakib Al Hasan was looking on towards the area, taking in the view from the dressing room, that itself looks stunning. Venues in India get something like one Test in three years. The irregularity is a challenge to transformation for certain stadiums.

Built in 1945 and several renovations later, the Kanpur Test venue is finding new challenges to cope with.

Shakib available, but concerns lie with batters

ABDULLAH AL MEHDI *from Kanpur*

Bangladesh ace all-rounder Shakib Al Hasan appears to be available to play the second and final Test in Kanpur, beginning tomorrow, despite widespread speculation regarding the condition of his fingers and whether he might play solely as a batter due to ongoing discomfort.

He was supposed to be under observation, but coach Chandika Hathurusingha said yesterday that Shakib is eligible for selection, and he has no reports suggesting otherwise.

Shakib batted in the nets for a limited time yesterday. He mostly struggled but Shakib knows his tasks and typically only works on what he needs before games. He will have another day before the match to sort himself out. Hathurusingha was not aware of Shakib's issue, even though he did not turn up with the ball at the nets.

"I have not heard anything on Shakib, regarding any complaints," he said, informing that Shakib was available for selection.

"About Shakib Al Hasan there is no doubt at the moment. I haven't heard from my physio or anyone, so he is eligible for selection," Hathurusingha said.

Overall, the head coach was happy with Shakib's batting in the

first Test.

"I am upset about not his (Shakib's) performance, but our overall performance and how we could have done better. I am sure that he also thinks that he can perform better and we all know what he is capable of," said the coach.

"I think he batted really well in the second innings. He couldn't go on, not because of lack of pride but for the sheer quality of the opposition," the Lankan coach added.



That quality of the opposition has been a little daunting since Tigers themselves were in pretty good vein of form after a historic Test series sweep in Pakistan.

The approach of the batters have been under the magnifying glass. There was a team meeting in Chennai after the first Test to dissect mistakes the batters made.

"The concern is what we talk

about whether we do that (convert their starts) in the middle and we normally talk about if you get a start make it big; and that's the biggest concern. Some of the guys are playing 30 to 40 balls, and in cricket the hardest thing is to get in."

It was also a case of the team management, especially the head coach, on what the batters learned from the conditions in the last match at Chennai.

The openers have gotten starts but not made it big. They had applied themselves and not only got in but settled fluently to put pressure on India. Yet, the India attack can produce deliveries that can win games of cricket. Jasprit Bumrah, Mohammed Siraj or Ravichandran Ashwin do that on a regular basis. There is a lot of hard thinking to do.

Asked if he went into specifics, especially of top order debacle, he said: "We spoke about it [specifics]. They spoke about what they learned from the condition and oppositions. We are a good side and you will see a better approach and understanding of what the opposition are trying to do."

There is the possibility of low bounce. Is Taijul Islam being readied? The Tigers have a day to consider all the aspects as Kanpur heats up under the boiling sun in what could be a gruelling contest for the Tigers.

Aghore Mandal no more

SPORTS REPORTER

Aghore Mandal, a renowned figure in Bangladesh's sports journalism, passed away at the Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University (BSMMU) Hospital in Dhaka yesterday. He was 58.

The noted journalist had been suffering from kidney and coronary ailment for a long time and underwent treatment at the BSMMU for the past two months. He was released from the hospital early this month but was again admitted to the same hospital after he was diagnosed with dengue fever on September 5. He was on life-support for more than a week since then as his condition deteriorated.

The late journalist had blazed a trail in Bangladesh's Bengali sports journalism, blending his rich vocabulary with technical knowledge of football, cricket, and other sports three decades ago. He had started his career with Ajker Kagoj before moving to Bhorer Kagoj, inspiring many to follow his footsteps into sports journalism.

Later, Aghore switched to electronic media, working for Channel I, ATN News, and Dipta TV, respectively. He lastly served as the news editor of ATN News. He had also served as an acting president of Bangladesh Sports Journalists' Association.

Aghore left behind his wife, two daughters and a host of well-wishers to mourn his death. His last rites were held at the Postgola Crematorium last night.

BPL directives expected in today's BCB meeting

SPORTS REPORTER

The directors of the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) are all set to sit today for a board of directors' meeting at the BCB Headquarters in Mirpur from where directives for the upcoming 11th edition of Bangladesh Premier League (BPL) are expected to come to light.

After the fall of the Awami League government and changes at the BCB last month, holding the BPL -- the country's only franchise-based T20 tournament -- in scheduled time [expected starting date: December 27] has become a major challenge for the newly-elected board president Faruque Ahmed.

It was learned that four of the previous seven franchises who featured in the last edition -- Fortune Barishal, Khulna Tigers, Sylhet Strikers, and Rangpur Riders -- along with three new franchises have already cleared their participation fee for the upcoming edition. The names of the new franchises are expected to be announced today.

Chattogram and Rajshahi franchises are likely to see some old faces, who had previous links with the BPL during its initial years, return while the Dhaka franchise is set to get a new owner.

Although the BCB failed to arrange the players' draft in the first week of September as per schedule, it was learned that they are now planning to hold it between October 10 and 12, and the announcement of the players' draft date is expected to be made today as well.

Meanwhile, it was also learned that the BCB has reduced the bank guarantee figure to Tk 6 crore from the previous amount of 8.5 crore.

SHORT CORNER

Alcaraz hopes Davis Cup will not be Nadal's 'last dance'

Carlos Alcaraz welcomed the addition of Rafa Nadal to Spain's Davis Cup team for the quarter-finals in November and hoped the event in Malaga will not mark the end of the 22-times Grand Slam champion's career. Nadal has said he expects to end his injury-plagued career this year after a hip injury that required surgery limited his appearances in 2023, and there has been speculation the Davis Cup could be his last event. "It's always great having Rafa around. I miss him. I'm not going to lie, I missed him in the Laver Cup. Obviously, as much time as I can spend with him, it's a privilege for me," said Alcaraz.

Mbappe suffers muscle injury, ruled out of Madrid derby

Real Madrid striker Kylian Mbappe has sustained a thigh injury ahead of this weekend's La Liga derby with Atletico, his club said on Wednesday. The French superstar was taken off during the 3-2 win over Alaves on Tuesday



and appeared to be suffering some discomfort. Spanish media suggest Mbappe will miss around three weeks injured. Mbappe has been in fine form this season, scoring seven goals for Real in nine matches across all competitions. Real are second in the La Liga standings on 17 points, one behind Barcelona who have a game in hand and host second-bottom Getafe later on Wednesday.

World Cup winner Varane retires

France World Cup winner Raphael Varane on Wednesday announced his

retirement from football at the age of 31, adding that he will remain at his current club Como in a non-playing capacity. Former Real Madrid and Manchester United centre-back Varane had joined the Italian club for this season but was then excluded from their Serie A squad having suffered a knee injury in August. "From Lens to Madrid to Manchester, and playing for our national team, I have defended every badge with everything I have, and loved every minute of the journey," Varane said. He finished his France



career two years ago on 93 caps. "I have won more than I could have even dreamed of," he said.

'No concern' for Tigers cordoned by tight security blanket in Kanpur

There have been security concerns for the second Test between India and Bangladesh, scheduled to start on Friday in Kanpur, as multiple right-wing organisations have called to oppose the match in protest of the alleged recent attacks on Hindu communities in Bangladesh. There was a tight security blanket provided for the Bangladesh and the India teams by the UP Police ahead of the second Test. Even the media personnel were checked for their accreditation cards by members of the UP Police at the entrance of Kanpur Test venue. "We have a lot of input but I can't tell anything conclusively. There are a lot of different intelligence from different quarters but we have a standard security and it is almost impossible to go through the system, so there is no concern," Additional DCP Rajesh Srivastav told The Daily Star

**Read The Daily Star website for the full stories.



Kane Williamson became New Zealand's all-time leading run-scorer in international cricket, surpassing Ross Taylor's 18,199 runs, in a closely-fought defeat in their first Test against hosts Sri Lanka in Galle earlier this week. Williamson is expected to play a pivotal role again in the second and final Test starting today at the same venue as the visitors look to level the series and maintain their unbeaten streak against Sri Lanka, which dates back to 2009.

PHOTO: AFP