

Tigers look for new heroes as question hangs over Riyadh

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh take on Afghanistan in the series-deciding third and final ODI in Sharjah today in the absence of a few key players and their senior-most statesman Mahmudullah Riyadh searching for runs.

Captain Najmul Hossain Shanto, who was named player of the match in the second ODI for his 76, remains doubtful for today's game following an injury sustained in the previous match, said sources inside the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB).

The batter had been taken for scans and at the time of filing this report, the team management was waiting for the reports.

Bangladesh are without Shakib Al Hasan and Liton Das in the series and faced further set back with the injury to Mushfiqur Rahim in the first ODI. Now Shanto, who is the leading scorer in this series with 123 runs, is also in doubt.

Shanto had said in the press conference after the second ODI on Saturday that they cannot focus too much on the absence of seniors. His words ring truer before the series-deciding game, especially in light



of Mahmudullah's lack of contributions in the series.

Mahmudullah was expected to take on more responsibility to make up for the notable absences but instead his poor form has added to the team's burden.

In the second ODI, Mahmudullah got out trying to clear the ropes, just two deliveries after he saw Shanto perishing attempting to do the same thing in that very over.

After losing a well-set Shanto in the 41st over, a senior player such as Mahmudullah was expected to steer the side through to the end of the innings.

Instead, the veteran went for the big shot, but could neither manage the flourish nor pack the punch to clear the ropes against Afghan left-arm spinner Nangeyalia Kharote and held out to long off.

The timing of his dismissal could not have been worse. The death overs had just begun and Bangladesh were now down to debutant Jaker Ali and a returning Nasum Ahmed. Despite platform being laid earlier on, Mahmudullah leaving Bangladesh at

184 for 6 invited trouble.

Jaker and Nasum then rescued the Tigers with vital contributions of 37 and 25 respectively which helped them secure the series levelling 68 run win. The duo hit five sixes between themselves, which also puts a spotlight on Mahmudullah's difficulty in clearing the ropes against Kharote, who was Afghanistan's seventh bowling option that day.

In the first ODI too, the onus was on Mahmudullah to guide the innings after Bangladesh were reduced to 132 for 4 in the 31st over, chasing 236. But Mahmudullah, failed to read Rashid Khan's googly and was castled.

His fielding capabilities too has come under question this series with him being late to react on a catch at long off against Mohammad Nabi in the first ODI.

Mahmudullah's last four ODI innings read 0, 1, 2 and 3 and unless the 38-year-old turns around his ODI form dramatically in the third ODI, the onus will be on the likes of Mehedi Hasan Miraz, Tanzid Tamim and Towhid Hridoy to emerge as heroes today.

Taskin, Shoriful back as Bangladesh name squad for WI Tests

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Pacers Taskin Ahmed and Shoriful Islam returned as Bangladesh announced a 15-member squad for the upcoming away Test series against the West Indies, part of the World Test Championship.

Taskin was rested while Shoriful missed the two-match home Test series against South Africa last month due to a back strain.

Mushfiqur Rahim, who suffered a finger injury during the first Afghanistan ODI last week and was ruled out for the rest of the three-match series in the UAE, was left out for the Windies tour.

Pacer Khaled Ahmed and off-spinner Nayeem Hasan, who were in the squad for the South Africa Tests, were also left out.

Spinner Hasan Murad replaced Shakib Al Hasan in the South Africa series after the latter failed to return to Bangladesh for his Test swansong. Murad retained his place for the Windies series.

The first Test against the West Indies will begin on November 22 in Antigua while the second match will begin on November 30 in Jamaica.

SQUAD: Najmul Hossain Shanto (C), Shadman Islam, Mahmudul Hasan Joy, Zakir Hasan, Mominul Haque, Mahidul Islam Ankon, Liton Das (WK), Jaker Ali, Mehedi Hasan Miraz (VC), Tajjul Islam, Shoriful Islam, Taskin Ahmed, Hasan Mahmud, Nahid Rana, Hasan Murad

Aus bet on uncapped McSweeney for India Tests

REUTERS, Sydney

Uncapped Nathan McSweeney has beaten out his rivals to secure the vacant spot in the Australia team for the first Test against India in Perth, with head selector George Bailey backing the 25-year-old to open the batting later this month.

Australia has been engrossed for weeks in a heated debate over who should take the spot left open in the batting order by the season-ending injury to all-rounder Cameron Green.

With Steve Smith's brief period as a Test opener already signalled as being over, McSweeney has been given the nod to partner Usman Khawaja at the top of the order when the first of five Tests against India gets under way on Nov. 22.

McSweeney, who usually plays at number three for his state

SQUAD: Cummins (c), Khawaja, McSweeney, Labuschagne, Smith, Head, Carey, Marsh, Inglis, Hazlewood, Starc, Lyon, Boland.

Queensland, scored 14 and 25 in his two innings as an opener in the "A" match against India in Melbourne, which concluded on Saturday.

That proved sufficient to see off the challenge of teenager Sam Konstas, as well as tried and tested options Cameron Bancroft and Marcus Harris, even if the latter scored a 74 in the first innings of the match.

Pakistan relish 'special moment'

- This was Pakistan's first series win in any format against Australia in Australia since 2002.
- Australia's 140 all out in 31.5 overs at Perth is their lowest total in ODIs at home since their 74 all-out against Sri Lanka in 2013 in Brisbane.
- Pakistan pacers scalped 26 wickets in this series against Australia -- the joint-second most by pacers for any team in a three-match ODI series.
- Pakistan's eight-wicket win in the third and final ODI yesterday, coming on the back of their nine-wicket win in the second ODI, meant that this was the first time that Australia lost consecutive ODIs by a margin of eight or more wickets.
- Pakistan cruised to victory with 141 balls and 139 balls in the second and third ODIs, respectively, making it the first instance of Pakistan winning successive matches in the format with 100-plus balls to spare. It is also the first instance of Australia losing two back-to-back ODIs with 100-plus balls left.



AFP, Perth

Saim Ayub hit 42 and Abdullah Shafique 37 as Pakistan raced to a commanding eight-wicket victory and their first ODI series win in Australia for 22 years on Sunday.

After bowling out the woeful world champions for a miserly 140 at Perth Stadium, Mohammad Rizwan's team reached their target in the 27th over.

The impressive performance, aided by high-quality bowling from Naseem Shah, Shaheen Shah Afridi, and Haris Rauf, ensured a first ODI series win in Australia since 2002.

They lost a tense opening match in Melbourne by two wickets, but bounced

back with an emphatic nine-wicket victory in Adelaide.

"It's a special moment for me and the fans," said captain Rizwan.

"I'll give all the credit to the bowlers. Australia in Australia is not easy.

"But Saim and Abdullah have given us a couple of great starts, too," he added.

"The fans love us regardless of whether we win or lose and I really appreciate that."

The hosts rested Steve Smith, Marnus Labuschagne, Pat Cummins, Josh Hazlewood, and Mitchell Starc in Perth ahead of the Test series starting this month against India, and they were certainly missed.

Shafique and Ayub began aggressively and rode their luck, with little spark from

the bowlers.

After Shafique and Ayub departed following a few dropped chances, Rizwan (30) and Babar Azam (28) kept calm to steer Pakistan home.

Rizwan won the toss and sent in Australia to bat, who were no match for Afridi (3-32), Shah (3-54) and Rauf (2-24).

It was a disappointing batting display from the six-time World Champions Australia, who were missing a host of regular starters, as Sean Abbott top-scored with 30 before getting bundled out in the 32nd over.

"It's pretty disappointing, to be honest," said skipper Josh Inglis.

"Not enough runs on the board in games two and three."

Amite hits maiden first-class double ton

SPORTS REPORTER

Amite Hasan hooked Abdul Halim for a four through fine-leg to celebrate his maiden double ton in first-class cricket as Sylhet division dominated proceedings against Khulna Division on day two of their fourth-round fixture of the National Cricket League (NCL) at the Cox's Bazar Academy Ground yesterday.

In a true testament to showing grit and patience, Amite faced 455 deliveries, hitting 18 fours and a six, and batted over 12 hours over the course of two days before he fell to Ziaur Rahman for 213.

Along with Amite, Asadulla Al Galib also hit 115 as Sylhet declared at 496 for seven. Mahedi Hasan took four wickets for 152 while Ziaur got 3 for 15 for Khulna, who reached three for no loss at stumps.

At the other game in Cox's Bazar's Sheikh Kamal International Cricket Stadium, Chattogram Division were in a strong position as Shahadat Hossain Dipu and Yasir Ali strung together a 141-run unbroken stand against Barishal Division.

Dipu scored a run-a-ball 64 while Yasir reached 81 off 106 as Chattogram reached 202 for 3. Earlier, Barishal were bowled out for 318 in the morning session with spinner Ashraful Hasan picking up four for 68 for Chattogram.

At the Shaheed Kamruzzaman Stadium in Rajshahi, Rajshahi Division were skittled out for 189 -- the exact first-innings score of Rangpur Division. Chowdhury Md Rizwan bagged three wickets for Rangpur for 30 runs while Tanbir Hayder scalped two for one run.

In reply, Rangpur reached 83 for 4 at stumps. Shuvagata Hom contributed with an all-round performance for Dhaka Division at Sylhet Academy Ground in Sylhet against Dhaka Metro.

He bagged four for 62 to help bowl Dhaka Metro out for 304 before hitting an unbeaten 60 to see Dhaka Division reach 254 for 6.



Rafi, Romana continue breaking records

SPORTS REPORTER

Samiul Islam Rafi and Romana Akter set three new national records on the second day of Max Group 33rd National Swimming Championship at the Syed Nazrul Islam National Swimming Complex in Mirpur yesterday.

Although Bangladesh Navy swimmer Rafi had expressed his concern over recovering from load in training, the 19-year-old set two more records yesterday after having set a new record in 50m backstroke on the opening day.

Rafi first broke the 200m individual medley record with a timing of 2min 09:99sec, wiping off the previous record of 2min 10:77sec set by Kajal Mia in 2023. The Olympian swimmer later set a new 200m backstroke record by clocking 2min 10:87sec, breaking his own record of 2min 11:86sec from last year.

The swimmer from Rajbari also participated in 100m freestyle, an event he competed in Paris Olympic Games, however, he failed to repeat his Olympic timing of 53.10sec. He finished the distance at a time of 53.28sec.

Rafi was happy with his overall performance and attributed it to the training he received in Thailand under a World Aquatics Federation scholarship for Paris Olympics.

"I have been gradually improving my timing despite

having sat idle after the Paris Olympics. I lagged behind without training but then went to Thailand to continue training. I also struggled there to match with other swimmers which had made me worried," Rafi told reporters.

"However, we went through hard training; even trained 16 to 17 thousand metres every day along with exercise and gym. Now I am getting the rewards and I am really happy with that," concluded Rafi, who is now on top of individual medals tally with four gold medals.

Meanwhile, Romana of Bangladesh Army, who was out of swimming for nearly one and a half years due to her assignment in UN peacekeeping mission in Sudan before her return in September last year, produced a record in 200m breaststroke after setting a record in 100m breaststroke on the first day.

Romana rewrote her own record in the 200m breaststroke by clocking 2min 51:35sec, breaking her own eight-year-old record of 2min 51:90sec.

"I am happy with my timing because I won another gold medal by creating another national record. I am looking forward to keep going with such performance," said Romana, currently in second position of individual medals tally with two gold medals and one bronze medal. Soniya Akter was on top alongside Rafi with four gold medals.



Mohamed Salah netted his 10th goal in all competitions on Saturday to help Liverpool beat Aston Villa 2-0 at home on Saturday, opening up a five-point lead at the top of the Premier League after Manchester City suffered a 2-1 defeat at Brighton just hours ago. [Inset] Pep Guardiola was left dejected as his side could not hold on to the lead given by Erling Haaland in the first half, with Joao Pedro and Matt O'Riley scoring in the 78th and 83rd minutes to help Brighton snatch three points. The defeat meant Guardiola suffered four consecutive defeats for the first time in his managerial career.

PHOTO: AFP/REUTERS

