



Thrust into captain's role MIRAZ RADIATES COMPOSURE

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh's innings suddenly had a familiar look at 72 for four yesterday, despite the openers putting up a fifty stand against Afghanistan in the third and final ODI in the UAE.

However, Mehedi Hasan Miraz played an anchor's knock during a vital 145-run partnership off 188 balls with Mahmudullah Riyad for the fifth wicket to pull Bangladesh out of trouble in a series-deciding game at the Sharjah Cricket Stadium.

Beside holding the innings together, Miraz's role was key to keeping the spinners at bay, which is why he is usually the one promoted up the order against Afghanistan.

His 119-ball 66 may look slow and cumbersome, but given Bangladesh's recent batting debacles — one of which happened in this very series, where they lost their last eight wickets for 23 runs from a good position — Miraz's innings was necessary.

When Rashid Khan was making his presence felt, Miraz overcame that period of pressure, and his holding up one end allowed Mahmudullah to play his shots. Mahmudullah's run-a-ball 98, laced with seven fours and three sixes, and Miraz's knock defined Bangladesh's innings as the Tigers posted 244 for eight.

Miraz got his fifty in 106 deliveries and



fell looking to accelerate in the death overs. But the way he coped with the run-out mix-up that led to Zakir Hasan's dismissal showed he had the ability to meet the demands placed on him.

In all likelihood, Miraz, named vice-captain, is set to captain the side in West Indies Tests, taking over duties from

Najmul Hossain Shanto, who has been ruled out of the upcoming Tests due to a groin strain. Shanto, who was also unable to play yesterday due to that injury, talked about Miraz's innings at the interval.

"Miraz and Riyad bhai showed a lot of character and I am especially happy with the batting during the middle overs

period," he said.

While Shanto was disappointed that Mahmudullah missed out on a hundred, Miraz being able to play second fiddle did not go unnoticed.

"Brilliant batting [from Riyad]. And especially the way Miraz showed his calmness in the middle overs when we lost two-three wickets suddenly. I think that was the plan," Shanto said.

"When Riyad bhai went out to bat, he showed his experience taking it one ball at a time. Little disappointed he missed a hundred, but I think the team is in a good position," he added.

When Shanto was injured in the second ODI, it was also Miraz who took charge of the team during a must-win encounter. Shanto had said he was impressed.

"I think Miraz did a good job (as the stand-in captain). It was a difficult one for him, especially taking up the role in a pressure match like this one," the skipper had said after the second ODI.

Yesterday was Miraz's 100th ODI and also his first as captain on an official basis. In the absence of Shanto alongside a few key seniors in the West Indies series, Miraz's leadership qualities will be tested.

So far, his calmness has answered the team's calls with the bat. In the second ODI, he relieved Shanto on the field, and the Tigers will need his calmness in a tough West Indies tour.

Tigers leave for Windies without injured Shanto

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh's all-format skipper Najmul Hossain Shanto will miss the upcoming two-match Test series in the West Indies — a series that is part of the World Test Championship — due to a groin injury, a Bangladesh Cricket Board press release confirmed yesterday.

Shanto, who missed the series-deciding third ODI against Afghanistan, suffered the injury while fielding in the second ODI against Afghanistan last week. An MRI report later suggested that the 26-year-old would need a few weeks to recover, ruling him out of the West Indies Tests which will run from November 22 to December 5.

"We have received the team physio's report and the scan report, which has confirmed a Grade II strain on his left groin. He has been ruled out of the third ODI against Afghanistan and will also be unavailable for the Test series in the West Indies," BCB's Senior Physician Dr. Debashis Chowdhury was quoted in a media release.

Meanwhile, several members of the Test squad, including Taijul Islam, left for the West Indies yesterday. During their transit in Dubai, they will be joined by the other members of the Test squad who were in the UAE for the ODI series against Afghanistan in Sharjah yesterday and left for the Caribbean.

The first Test will be played in Antigua from November 22 and the second match will take place in Jamaica from November 30.



PHOTO: STAR

Chattogram earn season's first win

SPORTS REPORTER

Chattogram Division secured their first win in the ongoing National Cricket League (NCL), defeating Barishal Division by eight wickets at Cox's Bazar's Sheikh Kamal International Cricket Stadium yesterday.

In a thrilling fourth-round match where 19 wickets fell on the third day, Chattogram's left-arm spinner Ashrafal Hasan starred with a six-for in the second innings, totalling a career-best 10-90. As a result, Barishal were bundled out for just 77 runs and in reply, Chattogram reached their 83-run target in just 11.3 overs.

Earlier, resuming on 20-3, Shahadat Hossain Dipu struck 116 for his third first-class century, while Yasir Ali (99) narrowly missed his ton, as Chattogram posted 313.

On day three in other matches, Sylhet Division gained a 223-run lead over Khulna Division at Cox's Bazar Academy Ground, with Anamul Haque Bijoy top scoring with 88.

Meanwhile, Rajshahi were reeling on 62-6 at stumps, chasing 263 against Rangpur Division at Rajshahi's Shaheed Kamruzzaman Stadium.

At Sylhet Academy Ground, Dhaka Metro ended the day on 186-6, holding a 175-run lead over Dhaka Division.



PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

Asif breaks 50m freestyle record

SPORTS REPORTER

Asif Reza became the fastest swimmer in the Max Group 33rd National Swimming Championship after winning gold in 50m freestyle event on the third day of the competition at the Syed Nazrul Islam Swimming Complex in Mirpur yesterday.

The Bangladesh Navy swimmer clocked 24.43 seconds beat Bangladesh Army's Nurul Islam, who took 24.94 second to finish. Sifat Ullah of Bangladesh Army and Amirul Islam Joy of Bangladesh Navy shared the bronze by clocking 24.95 seconds.

Asif was also part of a national record in 4X200m freestyle relay as Bangladesh Navy team comprising Asif, Samiul Islam Rafi, Kajal Mia and Mahamudunnabi Nahid broke their own record from last year.

Navy took 8:00.51 minutes to beat Bangladesh Army team, who clocked 8:07.76 minutes. The previous record was 8:06.01 minutes.

"It is a feel-good factor that I have contributed in team's success after having success in individual events where I broke a few records," said Rafi, who created three new records in four individual events.

A total of eight records were set over three days of the four-day championships, which will come to an end today.

At the end of the third day, Bangladesh Navy dominated the medals table with 24 gold, 19 silver and nine bronze, followed by Bangladesh Army who grabbed eight gold, 13 silver and 18 bronze. BKSP were in the third position with five bronze medals.

Gambhir solely focused on winning Australia series

REUTERS, Mumbai

India's singular focus over the next two months is on winning the five-match series in Australia and the players will not be distracted by the race to reach the World Test Championship (WTC) final, head coach Gautam Gambhir said on Monday.

India were in pole position to make next year's WTC final until a 3-0 white-wash by New Zealand earlier this month allowed Australia to leapfrog them.

Captain Rohit Sharma must now guide his side to a 4-0 win in Australia to guarantee a spot in the final, though their path could become easier depending on the results of other series.

"We are not looking at what's going to happen in the World Test Championship, whether we are going to qualify (for the final)," Gambhir said in a pre-departure press conference.

"Every series is important, as simple as that, when you are playing for your country..."

"For us, it's two good teams playing each other and we are absolutely keen to go out there and perform and try and win the series."

India prevailed in their last two Australia

tour but their batting looks less than formidable this time as they look to retain the Border-Gavaskar Trophy.

The skipper is likely to miss the opening test in Perth beginning on Nov. 22 to attend the birth of his second child while stalwart Virat Kohli has been out of form.

The absence of the injured Mohammed Shami will also increase the workload on pace spearhead Jasprit Bumrah, who will captain India should Rohit miss the match.

Rohit's absence would also mean Yashasvi Jaiswal would need a new opening partner and Gambhir was happy with his back-up options even though both Abhimanyu Easwaran and KL Rahul struggled in two unofficial tests against Australia A.

Former India opener Gambhir hinted that Rahul's 53-test experience and his ability to bat practically anywhere in the order could tilt the decision in his favour ahead of the uncapped Easwaran.

"There are times when you go with the experienced players," Gambhir said of Rahul.

"That is the quality of the man, that he can bat at the top of the order, he can bat at number three and he can actually bat at number six as well," he added.

Maldives eye victory in both friendlies

SPORTS REPORTER

Maldives team arrived here yesterday to play two FIFA friendly matches against Bangladesh, with the hope of winning both matches following their return to international football after a year.

Since being eliminated by Bangladesh from the first round of World Cup Qualifiers with a 3-2 aggregate defeat in October last year, Maldives have not played an international fixture.

Besides, the provisional suspension of Football Association of Maldives president Basam Adeel Jaleel by FIFA in June last year saw the Maldives' Dhivehi Premier League not being held since the end of the last edition in December last year.

"You know that we have some problems back home, so we fell into a long gap of playing international matches," Maldives coach Ali Suzain told reporters following the team's arrival in the capital yesterday.

"So, we did not get much time to prepare, even though the players of Maziya SRC recently played in the AFC Challenge League," the 55-year-old coach added.

Despite a lack of preparation, the experienced coach expects to win both matches against Bangladesh, who are ranked 185th as opposed to 163rd-ranked Maldives.

"We will take to the ground to win both matches because we really need victory, especially since we are returning to



international matches," said Suzain, who held the team's first training session in Dhaka yesterday afternoon.

Both teams are scheduled to hold their final practice sessions today at the Bashundhara Kings Arena, which will host the two matches on November 13 and 16.

Meanwhile, Bangladesh Football Federation informed that tickets for the first match will be available at Bashundhara branches of Social Islami Bank and Southeast Bank from today, with gallery tickets priced at Tk 300 and Tk 500 while VIP tickets are priced at Tk 800.

Barca stumble at Real Sociedad

AFP, San Sebastian

La Liga leaders Barcelona fell to a 1-0 defeat at Real Sociedad on Sunday as they had a Robert Lewandowski goal controversially disallowed, with coach Hansi Flick labelling the decision a "big mistake".

Sheraldo Becker's 33rd-minute goal consigned Barcelona to their second league defeat of the season and brought an end to a seven-match winning streak in all competitions, leaving the Catalans six points clear of second-placed Real Madrid, having played an extra match.

Lewandowski's early disallowed strike led to furious debate over whether the Polish forward had been offside or not.

"It was the wrong decision, clearly, it's clear, but we have to accept it," Flick told the club's streaming platform Barca One.

"The referee, it was not his fault, we are humans, we make mistakes and today was a big mistake."

The Catalans failed to score in a match for the first time this season across all competitions as Real Sociedad, eighth, held firm, while Barcelona did not manage a single shot on target.

Despite scoring 40 goals in their first 12 league matches Barcelona were unable to find the net or even create any significant danger in the final stages.

