

Tigers’ slip sets up tense series decider

SPORTS REPORTER

Captain Liton Das will be under growing pressure to deliver as Bangladesh look to bounce back from a shock defeat to the UAE and avoid further embarrassment in the T20I series decider at Sharjah today.

Despite posting an imposing 205 for five in the second and penultimate T20I on Monday, the Tigers fell apart in the field, suffering their first-ever loss to the hosts in any format.

In the aftermath, the question regarding Bangladeshi players’ game sense was raised quite evidently, as they got several opportunities to close the game. However, due to poor execution, the home team eventually crossed the line in the second-last delivery of the match.

Bangladesh had capable bowlers to defend such a total – albeit relatively inexperienced from the series opener, which featured the likes of Mustafizur Rahman and Hasan Mahmud. However, a new-look bowling unit could hardly put a brake on UAE’s run flow, allowing them to stay in the

contest despite the hosts having lost regular wickets following a 107-run opening stand between Muhammad Waseem and Muhammad Zohaib.

Even the fielding department was below par, as Towhid Hridoy and Liton Das dropped a few regulation catches during crucial junctures of the game, while an overthrow in the penultimate over by Shoriful Islam that had a huge impact on the result of the contest before the indecisiveness of Tanzim Sakib and Hridoy led to missed run-out chances in the final over.

“Look, it’s a game of two teams. I think they batted really well and hence they came on top. We batted well too, but again we dropped a few catches and kept them in the game,” Bangladesh head coach Phil Simmons told reporters after the match.

From the surface level, Bangladeshi batters have done quite well by posting 191-7 and 205-5 in the opening two games so far, but their performance left room for improvement.

In the opening match, Parvez

Hossain Emon made a blistering hundred, while the rest could only bat at an average strike rate of 100. The next game saw Tanzid Hasan Tamim, Hridoy and Liton make meaningful contributions but the run flow in the middle overs came back to bite them.

Before taking on the UAE in the series decider, captain Liton will be under pressure for a separate reason, as he will be hoping to gain some confidence with some runs under his belt before travelling to Pakistan for a three-match T20I series.

In the second match, Liton was among the run-getters for the Tigers, but he was seen struggling hard during his 32-ball 40-run innings, and it also stretched his fifty-less innings in this format to eight matches.

A strong response is expected from the Tigers as they head into the decider, and much will depend on how they respond under pressure – both collectively and individually.



Saad’s six-month ban reduced to 22 days!

SPORTS REPORTER

Bashundhara Kings defender Saad Uddin's six-month suspension has been reduced to four matches after the Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) disciplinary committee reviewed his petition on Monday.

Saad will now serve a 22-day ban, ending on May 24. On May 16, he was handed a six-month ban under Clause 45 of the disciplinary code for assaulting the match commissioner during the May 2 Bangladesh Premier League (BPL) match between Kings and Abahani.

Kings have already played three of their remaining BPL matches without him, with their final two fixtures scheduled for May 24 and 29.

One reason for the reduction could be Bangladesh's upcoming Asian Cup Qualifying match against Singapore on June 10. Last year, national coach Javier Cabrera excluded Tapu Barman, Anisur Rahman Zico, and Sheikh Morsalin from the squad for FIFA World Cup play-offs and Asian Cup Qualifiers against the Maldives on disciplinary grounds. Another source claimed BFF disciplinary committee chairman Mejbah Uddin Ahmed mistakenly announced a six-match ban, instead of a six-month suspension.

The suspension was ultimately reduced to four matches under Clause 45, Article 1.A, which allows for a minimum four-match ban for unsporting behavior toward match officials. However, Saad's actions clearly fall under Clause 45, Article 1.B, which stipulates a minimum six-month suspension for assaulting a match official.



Bangladesh set for trimmed Pak tour

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh will go ahead with their scheduled tour of Pakistan later this month, but the T20I series has been shortened to three matches from the originally planned five, the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) confirmed yesterday.

The tour had faced uncertainty following heightened cross-border tensions between India and Pakistan before agreeing to ceasefire earlier this month.

“Yes, the series has been reduced to three T20Is and will be played in Lahore only,” PCB media official Shafqat Shabbir told The Daily Star on Tuesday.

The dates of the revised schedule, however, is yet to be announced. The series is expected to begin shortly after the conclusion of the Pakistan Super League (PSL) final, scheduled for May 25.

“PCB chairman Mohsin Naqvi held direct talks with the Bangladesh Cricket Board and convinced them of full security arrangements,” a PCB press release read.

Pakistan's domestic T20 competition, the PSL, had itself suffered a ten-day disruption due to the conflict, while the Indian Premier League (IPL) also faced a temporary suspension.

Despite initial hesitation from some Bangladesh players over touring, the PCB stated successfully addressing “all concerns raised by the Bangladesh Cricket Board.”

The matches are set to add further significance as both nations look to finalise preparations ahead of the upcoming ICC T20 World Cup later this year.

‘Modern cricket has huge demand for all-rounders’

In 2017, a 19-year-old **Mehedi Hasan Miraz** was picked by Trinbago Knight Riders for the Caribbean Premier League – his first pick in a foreign franchise league. However, he didn’t get a chance to play any game that year. Years passed by and Miraz is now an experienced member of Bangladesh side and it took him eight more years to get a call from another foreign league as Lahore Qalandars picked him for the remainder of the ongoing Pakistan Super League (PSL). Before leaving for Pakistan yesterday, the cricketer spoke to *The Daily Star’s Samsul Arefin Khan* about his excitement regarding the PSL, reasons behind him not cementing a place in the T20I side and other things. The excerpts are as follows:

The Daily Star (DS): How much excited are you about your PSL stint?

Mehedi Hasan Miraz (MHM): It's a great feeling. I was previously selected in a foreign franchise league in 2017 but didn't get chance to play. This is my second time in a foreign league. Of course, there is a huge excitement as PSL is a big tournament.

DS: How did the connection happen between you and Lahore Qalandars?

MHM: My manager, Polish Sokal, made things possible. He made the communication with the Lahore franchise and due to his effort, I'm able to go to the PSL.

DS: You must be happy to have your long-time national teammate Shakib Al Hasan in the same team.

MHM: It's really great. We have been playing for the national team for a long time. As he is vastly experienced, I think I can get to learn a lot of things from him.

DS: You were the player of the tournament in the last Bangladesh Premier League (BPL). Still, you didn't get a place in the national team. You



must have been disappointed.

MHM: I have been in and out of the national T20I side. It's the call of the selectors and the team management on what they plan about me. But I'm always ready to play T20Is. To be honest, becoming the player of the tournament in the BPL is giving me added confidence. If I can play one or two more franchise leagues, it will add to my confidence.

DS: After playing T20Is for more than eight years, you have only played 29 matches. How would you explain this?

MHM: Honestly speaking, I wasn't serious about the format before. I was more serious about Tests and ODIs. It's also difficult to play in all three formats and perform equally. But now, I want to perform in T20s as well in other formats.

DS: The national team has a jam-packed T20I schedule in the coming days. How important will the PSL be for you to make a comeback to the team?

MHM: I think performing in such big will gives good confidence. As the next T20 World Cup will be held in India and Sri Lanka, I think it will be a big

opportunity for me. If I can perform well in PSL with both bat and ball like in the BPL, the selectors may think of giving me the opportunity.

DS: Do you think your recent evolution as an all-rounder has attracted the foreign franchises more than previous times?

MHM: I think yes. If you want to play in franchise leagues, you need to be good in both batting and bowling. Secondly, in T20s, there are lot of different moments and it's important to adapt to those quickly. The way the modern cricket is played, there is a huge demand for all-rounders.

DS: Do you think due to the high-expectations from the people for the bar you have set, you came under scanner very often for your T20 performances?

MHM: I have created high-expectations by performing regularly. If I couldn't perform, there wouldn't be similar expectations. I have delivered several match-winning performances both with the bat and ball. I have played a lot of match-winning innings for the national team. I think it has raised the bar of expectations of people and my expectations as well. If I can't perform, of course I feel bad. But when I can't win matches for my team, especially for the national team, it feels even worse.

NAT’L SWIM MEET Digital timing set to debut at last

SPORTS REPORTER

The long-awaited debut of electronic timing in swimming competitions is finally set to become a reality as the Bangladesh Swimming Federation (BSF) has completed preparations to host the 37th National Age-group Swimming and Diving Championships under electronic timing at the National Swimming Complex in Mirpur from today.

The US-made Daktronics electronic timer, installed by the National Sports Council in late 2019 at a cost of Tk 4 crore as part of an Tk 8.5 crore renovation project, has remained unused in national events for five years due to faulty timekeeping.

At the time, BSF officials said the device failed to produce timings for all lanes simultaneously, forcing them to rely on traditional stopwatches, which frustrated swimmers.

“The electronic timer is now functional and providing accurate timings. We’ve already used it during the ongoing talent hunt programme at the National Swimming Complex,” BSF general secretary Mahabubur Rahman Shahin told The Daily Star after a press conference at the BOA auditorium yesterday.

“It has been repaired with parts from different companies. We’re not sure how long it will last, but we’re happy to finally host the age-group championships using it,” he added.

Around 550 swimmers are expected to compete in 100 events across five groups, with four additional diving events. The top three in each event will receive Tk 2,000, Tk 1,000, and Tk 500 respectively, along with medals.

“We’ll also identify promising swimmers from this meet for long-term training, alongside those emerging from the ‘Search for the Better Swimmers’ programme,” the BSF general secretary further informed, adding that the federation is also planning to organise the country's first-ever school swimming championships to increase participation nationwide.

Last shot at redemption for United, Spurs

AGENCIES

Manchester United and Tottenham are floundering near the foot of the Premier League table, but both clubs have a golden opportunity to redeem their seasons in Wednesday night's Europa League final in Bilbao.

United sit 16th and Spurs 17th in the Premier League after campaigns marked by inconsistency, criticism, and historical lows. Yet, a single win could not only deliver long-awaited silverware but also secure a vital place in next season's Champions League – a lifeline both clubs desperately need.

For United, the stakes are immense. Under-pressure manager Ruben Amorim knows that lifting the Europa League

trophy is the club's only route back to European football. With co-owner Jim Ratcliffe estimating Champions League qualification could bring up to 100 million pounds in broadcast, matchday, and commercial income, the final carries both financial and reputational weight.

Tottenham's Ange Postecoglou, meanwhile, is seeking to cap off a turbulent season with the club's first trophy since 2008, and refrain from this being his final season at the club.

Both managers are under pressure, both squads are reeling, and both sets of fans are desperate for a reason to believe again.

For United and Spurs, it's one final chance to turn despair into redemption.

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- ➡ Manchester United are winless in their last six meetings with Tottenham in all competitions (two draws, four defeats). The Red Devils have never gone seven without a win against Spurs before.
- ➡ Ruben Amorim could become only the third manager to win a major trophy in his first season in charge of United, after Jose Mourinho in 2016-17 (EFL Cup and Europa League) and Erik ten Hag in 2022-23 (EFL Cup).