

Mixed reaction over 3-captain approach

SAMSUL AREFIN KHAN

Bangladesh cricket entered a new era with the appointment of Mehidy Hasan Miraz as the new ODI skipper, resulting in three leaders in three different formats which generated mixed reactions from former players.

Bangladesh last endorsed three different captains back in 2022 when Shakib Al Hasan, Tamim Iqbal and Mahmudullah were at the helm for Tests, ODIs and T20Is respectively.

The approach didn't bear fruit at that time and Bangladesh soon had to appoint Shakib as skipper for Tests and T20Is while Tamim retained ODI captaincy only until Shakib got it back in a dramatic fashion ahead of the ODI World Cup in India in 2023.

In February last year, Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) handed Najmul Hossain Shanto captaincy in all three formats despite Shakib's

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interest to continue the role in ODI format. By that time, Shakib had already expressed his desire to quit Tests and T20Is.

However, after a few setbacks in the T20Is, Shanto expressed his reluctance in continuing with the duty in the shortest format in order to concentrate more on his batting, and the BCB opted to pick Litton Das as skipper until 2026 T20 World Cup in India and Sri Lanka.

Having different captains in different formats isn't completely new in world cricket as India recently opted for this approach. However, other major teams like Australia, South Africa, England and New Zealand have two skippers, with most of these teams preferring one skipper for red-ball format and another for white-ball format, something that Bangladesh could also go with, feels former skipper Rajin Saleh.

"I think it would be better if there were two captains in three formats," Rajin told The Daily Star yesterday. "Looking into the kind of situation in Bangladesh cricket, there might be an ego problem among the captains."

"Three captains can have three different opinions and will try to form three different types of teams. But if someone leads in both limited overs teams, he can have his own assessment of players," Rajin added.

Meanwhile, Roquibul Hassan, another former skipper, feels that this is the way to go in modern cricket as there are so many international matches nowadays and having different captains can take pressure off of one individual, both physically and mentally.

"We have to play a lot of bilateral series and tournaments in different formats these days. Apart from that, the players also go to franchise leagues," said Roquibul. "People not only get tired physically, they also get tired mentally. Since we are still an underdog, the pressure such on technical, mental and physical aspects of the game is immense."

"If the responsibility remains on one man's shoulder, it becomes difficult for him to cope with the situations," opined Roquibul.

Liverpool agree British-record deal for Wirtz

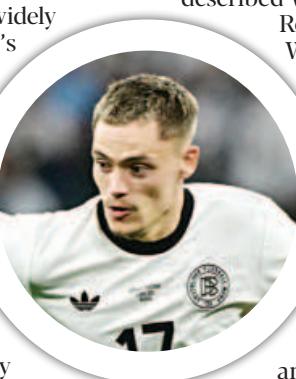
AGENCIES

Liverpool have agreed a British record deal worth up to £116.5 million to sign German attacking midfielder Florian Wirtz from Bayer Leverkusen, marking a bold statement of intent ahead of Arne Slot's second season in charge.

The 22-year-old, widely regarded as one of Europe's most exciting young talents, will join the Premier League champions after returning from holiday to complete his medical. The Reds will pay an initial £100 million, with £16.5 million in performance-related add-ons potentially making it the most expensive deal in British football history -- surpassing Chelsea's fee for Moises Caicedo (£115 million to Brighton in 2023).

Wirtz's arrival follows that of former Leverkusen teammate Jeremie Frimpong, who signed earlier this summer for £29.5 million. Liverpool are also close to sealing a deal for Bournemouth left-back Milos Kerkez as Slot seeks to reinforce every area of the pitch.

After staying relatively quiet in the transfer market during his debut



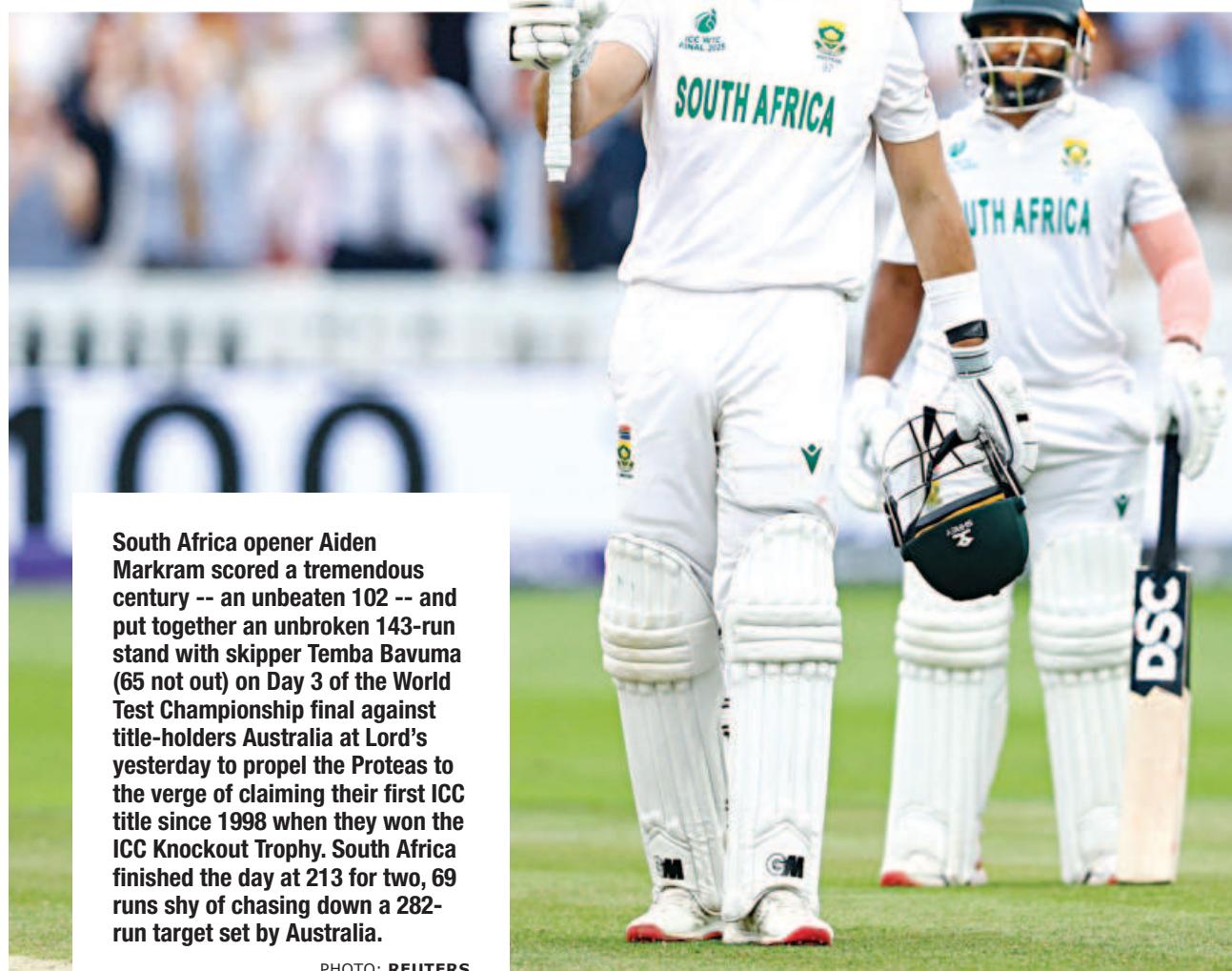
campaign, Slot guided Liverpool to their 20th English top-flight title, equalling Manchester United's record. Now, the Dutch manager is focused on building a squad capable of defending the crown and also push for continental glory.

Liverpool left-back Andy Robertson had described Wirtz as an "exciting talent".

Robertson played against Wirtz when Liverpool faced Leverkusen in the Champions League this past season, but says he realised the playmaker was headed for stardom when Germany beat Scotland 5-1 at Euro 2024.

"He was excellent against us," Robertson told Sky Sports News at the AR26 annual Captain's Cup Golf Day fundraiser before the signing was confirmed. "That was enough for me to see he's going to be a top player. He will be an exciting talent."

Wirtz scored 10 goals and provided 13 assists in 31 Bundesliga appearances last season and was crowned Bundesliga Player of the Year in 2023/24. His versatility gives Slot additional options in an already competitive forward line featuring Mohamed Salah, Luis Diaz, Cody Gakpo, Diogo Jota, and Darwin Nunez.



South Africa opener Aiden Markram scored a tremendous century -- an unbeaten 102 -- and put together an unbroken 143-run stand with skipper Temba Bavuma (65 not out) on Day 3 of the World Test Championship final against title-holders Australia at Lord's yesterday to propel the Proteas to the verge of claiming their first ICC title since 1998 when they won the ICC Knockout Trophy. South Africa finished the day at 213 for two, 69 runs shy of chasing down a 282-run target set by Australia.

PHOTO: REUTERS



Miraz's peculiar first day as ODI captain

SPORTS REPORTER

Less than 24 hours after Najmul Hossain Shanto had spoken about the importance of long-term captaincy during a press conference at the BCB headquarters, Mehidy Hasan Miraz on Friday sat in the same room for his first media interaction since replacing Shanto as skipper in ODIs.

The decision to appoint Miraz as captain was taken on Thursday evening after an emergency Zoom meeting between BCB board directors and the all-rounder will begin his year-long tenure with the three-match ODI series in Sri Lanka this month.

Shanto had reportedly been left in the dark about the development and was unaware that his ODI tenure would be coming to an end when he spoke to the media on Thursday as the Test skipper before the side's departure for Sri Lanka.

The left-hander was reportedly in talks with head coach Phil Simmons on Thursday about the ODI series when he learnt he is not the captain anymore.

The unusual manner of Shanto losing his captaincy has roused more interest than who he has lost it to and it was reflected in Miraz's first press conference, as the new captain had to field more questions related to Shanto than what he intended to do as skipper in ODIs.

"He [Shanto] was the ODI captain for a term, which had ended [after the Champions Trophy]. They probably had conversations about the Test team. I am not sure if they spoke about the ODI

team," Miraz said at the press conference yesterday about captaining a squad in Sri Lanka which was picked when Shanto was in charge.

"Fahim [Nazmul Abedeen] sir called me and said that they are going to give me the responsibility. He said that they don't have much time since we have to set up the ODI team quickly as the matches are not far away," he added.

The board's heavy-handed handling of the matter risks ruining the dressing room environment. But Miraz negated that possibility.

"I don't think it will have an effect in the dressing room. We are all playing for the country. These things won't bother Shanto and me. I helped him a lot during his captaincy. He will do the same. He will help me. We want to take Bangladesh forward," he said.

The captaincy change has laid bare that proper processes are not being followed in the board and is also a

reflection of the instability that has crept in everywhere in cricket.

But Miraz said he and the other players are now prepared for any eventuality and also corroborated what Shanto had said about long-term captaincy a day before.

"I don't know how [the captaincy] was decided. It is usually done in a board meeting. Nobody can decide on their own. I think all of us are usually prepared mentally for any situation we may have to face."

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Meanwhile, Debashis Chowdhury, the BCB's chief physician, said: "I think the instability is always there in cricket. It's just that it's been more pronounced in the last few years. The players are more aware of their rights and the board is more aware of its responsibilities. It's a good thing that the players are more involved in the decision-making process."

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