

Selectors disallowed Babar from including Hafeez, Malik

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PAKISTAN'S NEW Twenty20 captain Babar Azam wanted to have senior players such as Muhammad Hafeez and Shoaib Malik in the side for the Australia tour but the PCB officials shot down the suggestion. Before the team's departure, it has emerged that head coach and chief selector Misbah-ul-Haq had discussed the selection of players with Babar and both agreed on the selection of Hafeez and Malik.

But apparently some top officials in the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) advised them not to pick them, throwing open a debate on how much authority was enjoyed by the head coach and the captain.

Asked if he was consulted for team selection, Babar said, "I had given my input for selection of the squad. I felt I required some seniors but it is decision of selectors."

Babar recently said he wants to emulate captains like England's Joe Root and India's Virat Kohli but surprisingly the full video of his press conference on October 25 does not include those comments.

The video is available on the PCB's official website. Babar said though captaincy adds to pressure but with the support of his teammates, he was confident of handling it.

"I have belief in myself and my batting. Captaincy is a new responsibility and I will try to take everyone along and form a combination. It is clear that if players support you the team does well. So I want everyone to perform. I will try to keep the environment of the dressing room healthy and positive. We must enjoy playing for Pakistan and not take pressure," he said.

Babar reminded that he had captained Pakistan in the under-19 World Cup and has played in Australia before so he was aware of the conditions and pitches.

"It is a big challenge playing in Australia and beating them. The idea is to play fearless cricket and give them a good fight. Play aggressive cricket like they do."

Four PSL franchises not in favour of Misbah's involvement

Karachi: Four franchises of the Pakistan Super League don't want the national team's head coach-cum-chief selector Misbah-ul-Haq's involvement in any capacity in the fifth edition of the T20 event next year.

In a recent meeting with the six franchises to finalise the categories of players for next month's players draft, a Pakistan Cricket Board official was clearly told by at least four franchises that allowing Misbah to be part of the PSL would amount to conflict of interest.

"These franchises made it clear they don't want Misbah to take part in the PSL in any capacity either as coach or director with any franchise as it would be a major conflict of interest," a source said. He said the franchises had noted that last year also when Inzamam-ul-Haq was chief selector they had ensured he was dropped from the committee that finalised players list for draft and later also had to call off his association with a franchise.

"One franchise owner made the point that the PCB chairman Ehsan Mani himself has said that he couldn't remove Pakistan's former head coach Mickey Arthur and bowling coach Azhar Mahmood from the support staff of a franchise as they had got permission to take part in the PSL from the previous PCB chairman," the source said.

Warner's ton flattens Sri Lanka

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OPENING BATSMAN David Warner hit his first Twenty20 international century as Australia beat Sri Lanka by 134 runs in the first of three matches. Warner's whirlwind unbeaten 100 from 56 balls on Sunday at Adelaide Oval led Australia's 233-2 — the country's fourth-highest T20 total and best on home soil.

In reply, Sri Lanka stumbled to 99-9 as Australia took a 1-0 lead in the three-game series which continues in Brisbane on Wednesday and Melbourne on Friday.

The winning margin is, by runs, the third-largest in a T20 international between test-playing nations — Pakistan's 143-run victory against the West Indies at Karachi in April 2018 is the biggest. Warner, on his 33rd birthday and in his first home international since being banned for ball tampering in South Africa, leapt wildly into the air on reaching his milestone from the last ball of Australia's innings. And after hearing jeers during his mostly personally unsuccessful Ashes campaign in England, Warner was feeling the love from the Australian fans.

"It's always fantastic to get that... you forget how much it actually drives you when you're out there," Warner said of the crowd support. "I think they don't realize how much of an impact it has for us players." The left-hander received support from captain Aaron Finch (64 from 36 balls) and Glenn Maxwell (62 from 28). Sri Lanka fast bowler Kasun Rajitha finished with 0-75, the most runs conceded in a

INTERVIEW: HABIBUL BASHAR

'Won't be surprised if more than 6,000 Bangladeshi fans turn up at Eden'

SHAMIK CHAKRABARTY
KOLKATA, OCTOBER 27

BANGLADESH HAS played a Test in India before, but a full tour which will be part of the World Test Championship provides an added dimension. Former skipper Habibul Bashar, now a national selector talks about the significance and the recent problems, including the short players' strike.

This is Bangladesh's first full tour of India and the two Tests are also part of the World Test Championship. As a former Bangladesh captain and current national selector, how do you look at it?

Obviously, every series is important. But this one is a little different. We started playing Tests in 2000. After 19 years, we are going for a full tour of India. We had played a one-off Test in Hyderabad two years ago. But it's the first full tour, which makes the assignment even more important from Bangladesh's perspective. We are very excited, especially for the fact that we will be playing a Test at Eden Gardens. It makes the occasion humongous. Playing a Test at Lord's is a matter of pride and prestige. The same applies to a Test at Eden Gardens. Also, we will open our World Test Championship campaign with this series against India.

How excited are the fans in Bangladesh? The Fifa World Cup qualifier between India and Bangladesh at the Salt Lake Stadium earlier this month saw a turnout of over 60,000. It's likely to be a full house at Eden also.

Fans are very excited. I'm sure a lot of fans from here (Bangladesh) will be going to Eden. For a lot of people in Bangladesh, especially those who are from Jessore and Khulna, it's easier to go to Kolkata than Dhaka, distance-wise (Kolkata is just 128 kilometres from Jessore). Obviously, there's sentiment attached as well, between Kolkata and Bangladesh. In Kolkata also, there are many people who have their ancestral roots in Bangladesh (erstwhile East Bengal). Like many people in Bangladesh consider Kolkata sort of their second home, I believe a lot of Kolkatans, too, reciprocate that feeling. A lot of my friends are planning to go for the Eden Test. I won't be surprised if more than 6,000 Bangladeshi fans turn up.

The Eden Test could be a pink-ball, day-night affair, although it hasn't been finalised yet. If the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) receives a request from the BCCI in this regard, will the BCB be agreeable to it?

I'm 100 per cent sure that the BCB will not object. Although we haven't played pink-ball cricket much, I'm sure that the BCB and the team will accept (it). It won't be a problem.

Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina is expected to be present for the match. Prime Minister Narendra Modi and West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee are likely to be in attendance as well. Do you agree that given the occasion, a day-night Test against Bangladesh at Eden would offer a grand spectacle?

I'm sure it will. I believe Sourav



National selector Habibul Bashar believes the strike by the players and the falling out between Test captain Shakib and BCB was handled professionally.



(Ganguly) will take the Kolkata Test to a different level. So we are very excited. I just hope that our team performs well.

Bangladesh started the World Cup strongly but lost momentum. The short limited-overs series in Sri Lanka didn't go well either. Then they lost the one-off home Test against Afghanistan also. India, on the other hand, are the World No. 1 Test side for close to three years now. They are also fresh from back-to-back clean sweeps of West Indies and South Africa. So how well are Bangladesh prepared for the upcoming series, given that the players went on

As for the issue related to Shakib, it's not a team issue. Sometimes, such individual issues crop up. I hope it will not affect our preparations. But we will miss Tamim Iqbal, as he is not available (the opener has pulled out on personal grounds). It's a big setback for us, because he has been our best batsman (in Tests) for long."

strike and Test captain Shakib Al Hasan has fallen out with the BCB over an alleged breach of contract?

See, the strike didn't last long. The matter was resolved in two days. We didn't have any match or practice sessions during that period. The BCB handled it professionally. As for the issue related to Shakib, it's not a team issue. Sometimes, such individual issues crop up. I hope it will not affect our preparations. But we will miss Tamim Iqbal, as he is not available (the opener has pulled out on personal grounds). It's a big setback for us, because he has been our best batsman (in Tests) for long.

And like you mentioned, India are in tremendous form. They are the strongest opposition in Test cricket at this moment. So, opening our World Test Championship campaign against India is a huge challenge. We know that. It's a very tough test. At the same time, it's an opportunity for us as

well. If we perform well, Bangladesh cricket will make a rapid forward movement. But once again, it won't be easy. India probably have the best bowling attack in the world at this moment. Pace, spin — they have an all-round bowling attack. They probably also have the best top-five, batting-wise. So we have to play out of our skins.

But Shakib at loggerheads with the BCB; it might affect the team atmosphere, isn't it so?

No, I don't think so. I think players are now very happy, for whatever they demanded they got it. The problem between Shakib and the BCB is over a contract clause. It's not related to cricket. So the team (atmosphere) will not be affected.

Have you finalised the Test squad?

We have picked a preliminary squad. After the ongoing round of our first-class matches, we will finalise the squad.

Bangladesh are a good batting unit and the team also has a few very decent spinners. But they probably need a tearaway fast bowler to reach the next level. Do you agree?

Yes, fast bowling is one area where we are struggling. We don't have flat-out fast bowlers. But I'm hopeful that Taskin (Ahmed) will be fit and available for the Tests. He is currently acquiring game time in first-class cricket. If he is fit for the Tests, that will be a real positive for us. We have also brought back Al-Amin (Hossain). So

For a lot of people in Bangladesh, especially those who are from Jessore and Khulna, it's easier to go to Kolkata than Dhaka, distance-wise. There's sentiment attached as well, between Kolkata and Bangladesh. Like many people in Bangladesh consider Kolkata sort of their second home, I believe a lot of Kolkatans, too, reciprocate that feeling."

let's see.

We don't have a fast bowler like (Jasprit) Bumrah or (Mohammed) Shami. Whatever we have, Bangladesh had earned success with them in the past. And we will unearth fast bowlers in the future. At one time, India, too, had this problem (not having 140kph fast bowlers). Hopefully, we will unearth some fast bowlers soon.

One problem area in the Bangladesh batting is that even the experienced players don't usually convert their 70s and 80s into daddy hundreds. So as a national selector, what will be your message to the batsmen ahead of the tour?

I totally agree. See, in Test cricket, not every batsman will score big runs in a match. He who gets into the groove must play a big innings. If we want to do well against India, we have to convert the 60s, 70s and 80s into big hundreds.

India's attitude towards excellence should be copied by teams: Chappell

New Delhi: AUSTRALIAN GREAT Ian Chappell says India's attitude towards achieving excellence should be copied by the ambitious cricket nations for the well-being of the Test format.

In the wake of their 3-0 whitewash of South Africa in a Test series recently, the former Australian captain called India the envy of world cricket. "If Test cricket is to be a viable part of the game's future, the standard of play needs to remain high. Whilst it's true India - with a large talent pool, unlimited finances and the IPL - has a huge advantage, it's their attitude towards achieving excellence that should be copied by any team with an ambition to be the best," Chappell wrote in his column for 'ESPNcricinfo'.

India blanked South Africa despite missing their premier pacer Jasprit Bumrah, consolidating their position at the top of the ICC Test Championship standings. He said the Indian pace attack is now equipped to shine in all conditions across the world.

"These pace spearheads, added to India's always capable spinners, give the attack a potency that not too many other countries can match," Chappell said.

The legendary batsman added, "Slot a fit seam-bowling allrounder in Hardik Pandya into that group and India are more than adequately placed to cope with any conditions they encounter."

PTI

Do away with toss in Tests, suggests du Plessis

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JOHANNESBURG, OCTOBER 27

SOUTH AFRICA losing three straight toss in India has frustrated Faf du Plessis, so much so that the embattled Test captain has suggested doing away with the rule in the five-day format.

India trounced South Africa 3-0 in a Test series recently and while Du Plessis admitted that his team had been outplayed and lacked mental strength, he said losing the toss in all three matches had made an already difficult task almost impossible.

"Every Test match, they bat first, they score 500, they declare when it's dark, they get three wickets when it's dark and when day three starts, you're under pressure," du Plessis said. "It was like copy and paste in every Test match."

Du Plessis believes getting rid of the toss in Test cricket would help teams compete better when they travel away from home.

"It was obvious from the way we played the last Test match. We started really well but by being put under pressure for a long period of time through the series, slowly but surely we started playing worse." Hoping for a change in fortunes, du Plessis sent Temba Bavuma for toss ahead of the third Test in Ranchi, a move that was widely criticised by the country's former players, including ex-captain Graeme Smith. Seeking clarity from

India trounced South Africa 3-0 in a Test series and while du Plessis admitted that his team had been outplayed and lacked mental strength, losing the toss three times made an already difficult task almost impossible.

Cricket South Africa on the road ahead, du Plessis highlighted the importance of the involvement of former players in the development of the team.

"The most important thing right now is clarity. Someone needs to make decisions, the director of cricket first and then filter down so that everyone else can make decisions.

"It's obvious that we need to make more use of ex-players, but it also comes with challenges. I suppose it always comes down to finance. I know for a fact that we have tried to get them involved, but the financial thing is a hurdle.

"We need experience in the team right now and that comes from ex-players," he said. The South African coaching staff and selection committee, led by Ottis Gibson, was sacked after a below-par World Cup campaign, and a new structure was put in place. However, the members were inducted into the new structure only on an interim basis.