

Top-order toppled Selectors recall Mehrab, Javed



SPORTS REPORTER

Openers Mehrab Hossain and Javed Omar Belim have been recalled yesterday for the triangular tournament and the Test series against South Africa next month.

The three-member selection committee headed by Aliul Islam also included young medium pacer Tarek Aziz Khan in a list of 15 that has experienced a change in the top-order after Bangladesh's failed mission in the World Cup.

Axe fell on opener Al-Shariar, his opening partner Hannan Sarker and Ehsanul Haque.

A change was on the cards since the national team returned home from South Africa with five defeats in six games under their belt. Picking a different combination appeared to be an image-building effort by the selection committee a day after the BCB (Bangladesh Cricket Board) announced Khaled Mahmud as the new captain after Khaled Mashud decided to step down.

Chief selector Aliul claimed that batting did not click in the World Cup because of some irresponsible batting by the top-order batsmen. He was quick to find a scapegoat in Al-Shariar, who failed in the big stage along with the rest.

"We dropped Al-Shariar because of his irresponsible bat-

ting. When he was supposed to occupy the crease, he played carelessly in every game putting pressure on the others," Aliul said to the Daily Star Sport last night.

He said that failure of the top-order prompted them to bring back Javed and Mehrab.

"The two experienced players have done well in the Dhaka League and I believe they are capable enough to deliver goods as openers."

Mehrab's recall after 14 months gives the talented cricketer a new lease of life after a poor run of form coupled with controversial lifestyle almost brought a premature end to

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Asian Cup Bangladesh bow out

SPORTS REPORTER

South Asian champions Bangladesh crashed out of the Asian Cup after a 2-2 draw with hosts Hong Kong in their Asian Cup preliminary round Group D match at the Mongkok Stadium according to faxed message received by the Bangladesh Football Federation last night.

Needing to beat Hong Kong by a clear five-goal margin, Bangladesh started badly and were trailing 0-2 in the first half.

They however came back in the second session with midfielder Monwar Hossain and left-wing back Firoz Mahmud Hossain Tito equalising. Tito's goal was only his second in internationals following a brilliant effort against European powerhouse Yugoslavia in the Nehru Cup three years ago.

Bangladesh, who lost their opening match 1-2 to lowly rated Laos, finished at the bottom of the table with one point. Hong Kong advanced to the final round of qualifiers having topped the Group with four points.

The Bangladesh team is scheduled to return home today.



PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

YOU ALL HAVE TO FOLLOW IN MY FOOTSTEPS! Newly appointed Bangladesh cricket captain Khaled Mahmud showing his sons Ifaz (L) and Ishmam how to grip the bat at his residence in Shiddeshwari yesterday.

Super League Day One curtailed



SPORTS REPORTER

Rain brought a premature end to the first day's action of Super League matches of GrameenPhone Premier Division cricket yesterday.

Showers during the lunch break prevented any more play in the two four-day games

At the BKSP ground in Savar, a half century from opener Gazi Salaudhin helped Brothers Union score 93 for two in 29 overs against leaders Victoria.

Salahuddin scored 55 in 106 minutes with eight sweetly timed hits across the rope.

Together with former national opener Shahriar Hossain, Salaudhin put on 48 for the first wicket before left arm spinner Abdur Razzak bowled the latter on 20.

Salahuddin then shared 44 runs with one-down Masroor before he was stumped off Sabbir Khan.

City Club meanwhile, were in control against Uttara Sporting Club at the Dhanmondi Cricket Stadium before rain stopped play after immediately after lunch.

Electing to bat, Uttara were reeling on 87 for eight in 33 overs in the face of some incisive left arm spinner from Saifullah Khan.

Saifullah took five wickets for 28 runs from his eleven overs as Uttara at one stage lost five wickets for only 16 runs.

Right arm paceman Tarek Aziz Khan ably helped him with two for 19.

SCOREBOARD

Scoreboard on the first day of the two GrameenPhone Premier Division Super League matches at different venues yesterday:

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Points to ponder



ATHAR ALI KHAN

As being a former national player, I would like to put forward some proposals to the Bangladesh Cricket Board to improve the present sorry standard of the game.

1. Build a very strong infrastructure based on all age groups. To start with, revive the old format of National League (3 and 4 day games), which was played in all divisional quarters-- Dhaka, Chittagong, Sylhet, Khulna, Rajshahi and Barisal-- and on home and away basis. If possible, let a few big institutions to participate in it. Inter School, College and University tournaments should commence immediately after one day and three-day format.

I really admire the idea of our former Board president KZ Islam, who made sure that each year 5

cricketers would stay in UK for 6 months to get used to different conditions and pitches in UK by playing club cricket. Board should start sending players to UK, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, West Indies and elsewhere on regular basis. It can also invite first class teams from other countries to participate in Premier and National leagues.

2. Formation of Development squad and their participation in the Premier league is definitely a good step. The Under-19 team should also participate in First Division league.

3. The Board needs to immediately hire curators who will train our grounds-men so that they can prepare all kinds of pitches i.e. fast, hard and bouncy and spin-friendly wickets with an even and true bounce. The pitches should be maintained round the year otherwise it would not be of any help.

Standard of umpiring has to

be improved significantly. Players get lot of unfair advantages playing in the local league but once they play outside Bangladesh they fail. Training course and practical experience should be a must for them. Training classes should be supervised by qualified overseas coaches.

4. Selection committee must include only former players who have played for a certain number of years in ICC Trophy, Asia Cup, World Cup and Test Matches. Selectors have to know about every player's strength and weakness and their performance should be evaluated after every series. They need to be on the ground whenever a match is on and submit their reports to BCB.

5. Take strong actions against bowlers with suspect bowling action. Umpires should be very strict in this regard. Quite a few players are playing with highly

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Sultan defensive



SPORTS REPORTER

The April 25 election of Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) will be held under the directive of Asian Football Confederation (AFC) and there is no requirement of holding an Annual General Meeting before the election.

BFF president SA Sultan said this while speaking at a press conference at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

Replying to the allegation of a number of BFF members including assistant general secretary Badal Roy on Friday that Sultan

was acting on his own in fixing the election date, Sultan said that everything in the federation is controlled by the AFC after FIFA lifted its temporary suspension early last year.

"We are doing everything according to the AFC's instructions. In a letter on March 10, the Confederation said that we must organise the election before April 30. That's why I gave the ruling in BFF's last meeting on March 25 of holding the election on April 25," said Sultan adding that he did not violate any rules.

Sultan, in his defence, also showed relevant documents to the press.

"I am not afraid of any legal wrangles because according to

the new AFC constitution, no one is allowed to go to the court after it has been passed by the Congress. We passed the new constitution in our last Extraordinary Congress on September 4, 2002," Sultan said.

When asked why he convened an AGM in late December only to postpone it later, Sultan said that he did it to pass a resolution on the BFF election.

"According to the AFC's initial directive, we were supposed to hold the election after the month of Ramadan. But that was not possible because we needed to a m e n d t h e

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Latif BCB's surprise Imran to take over as coach



SPORTS REPORTER

The Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) yesterday sprang a real surprise when it announced Lt. Col. (retired) MA Latif Khan as manager of Bangladesh team for the forthcoming tri-nation tournament and the Test series against South Africa.

Although the Board quite predictably named Sarwar Imran as an interim coach in place of under-fire former Pakistan paceman Mohsin Kamal, Latif's appointment was unexpected with former national captain Faruque Ahmed or ex-national opener Athar Ali Khan being tipped as successors to

ASM Faruque.

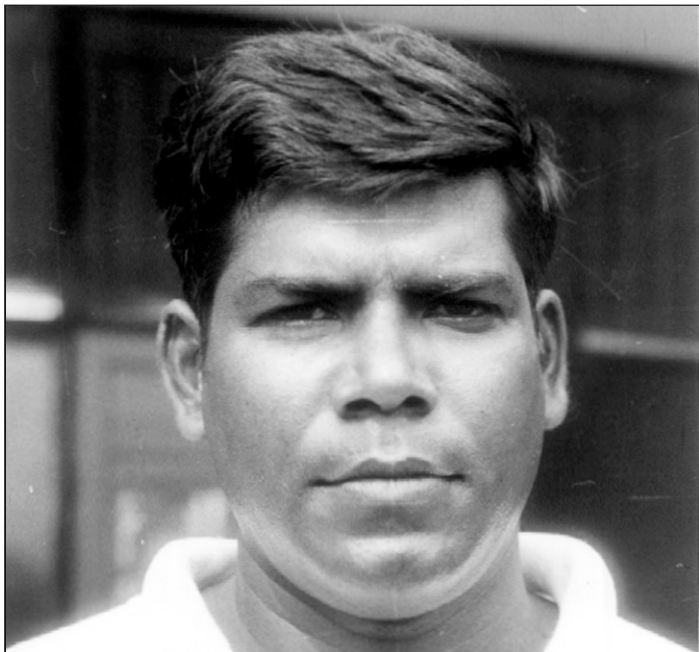
Latif's name only cropped up on Saturday when a Board official confirmed the existence of a third candidate dismissing the general feeling that it was going to be a two-way race between the two former national stars.

But Faruque, who led Bangladesh to the ICC Trophy in Kenya in 1994, was the popular choice because of his relationship with the players. Besides, signs were that the BCB was considering an ex-player for the demanding job.

Latif, a former Director General of Bangladesh Krira Shikkha Protisthan, is known as a strict disciplinarian.

He was instrumental in estab

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SARWAR IMRAN

Bangladesh being monitored



BBC ONLINE, LONDON

The English cricket will attempt to head off a repeat of the Zimbabwe World Cup fiasco by joining forces with other sports to simplify decision-making on controversial tours.

On April 7, the England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) will present a draft protocol to representatives from football, rugby and tennis.

Between them they would create a committee seeking early government approval to fulfil tours in politically-sensitive countries.

"We are trying to be prudent and anticipate the sort of problems we

had in Zimbabwe," John Read, the ECB's head of corporate affairs, told the Sunday Telegraph.

"We think it could be a useful mechanism."

England's next cricket tour is to Bangladesh, in October.

That trip already looks as though it could prove something of a political minefield, especially if the war in Iraq drags on for months.

Bangladesh is a Muslim country and foreign office advice for British travellers to the tiny south-east Asia nation centres on extreme vigilance.

They should keep a "very low profile" due to an "increased risk for British nationals from international terrorism in the region."

The advice continues: "Large

demonstrations against US and UK policy in Iraq have already occurred in Dhaka, Chittagong and Sylhet."

England refused to play their cricket World Cup match in Zimbabwe on 13 February.

That was what Tony Blair's government wanted to see happen.

There is an increased risk for British nationals from international terrorism in the region

But the England players and its board went through many weeks of soul-searching before deciding to pull out at the eleventh hour.

The decision cost the team at least two million pounds and the chance to qualify for the later stages of the World Cup.

Kenya minus Ravindu

AFP, Nairobi

Opener Ravindu Shah is among three experienced players from the World Cup missing from the Kenyan team for the Sharjah Cup tournament starting in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) this week, cricket officials said Sunday.

Shah, who hit 46 against Australia in the Super Six phase of the World Cup is unavailable for the trip, according to Asif Padamshi, the Kenya Cricket Association chief selector.

Veteran off-spinner Asif Karim and Alpesh Vadher, who both came out of retirement to play in the World Cup in South Africa, have decided to quit the sport again.

Selectors have included two U-19 members-- Alfred Luseno and Maurice Ouma.

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Champions beware Aussies warned of Windies danger



AFP, Sydney

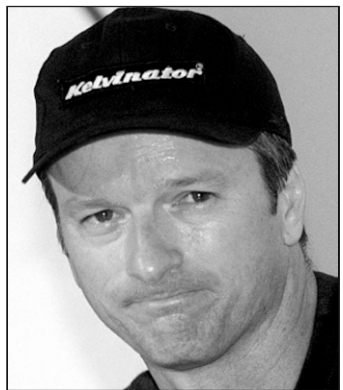
Steve Waugh has cautioned his celebrating World Cup champions to beware of a resurgent West Indies on the eve of the Australian cricket team's departure to the Caribbean.

Waugh and senior opening batsman Justin Langer are the only members of the touring side not to play a role in Australia's unbeaten run in the World Cup and the 37-year-old skipper is wary of what his team may encounter in the West Indies over the next two months.

The four-Test series and six one-day internationals will challenge the stamina and mental strength of the players, with many already on the road for eight months during one of the longest campaigns in Australian cricket history.

Australia crushed the West Indies 5-0 when they last toured here in 2000-01 in a disappointingly one-sided series, but Waugh will be gauging his team's prospects from the last trip to the Caribbean in 1999.

Australia drew the last series



STEVE WAUGH

there 2-2 in Waugh's first series as captain.

Brian Lara was outstanding in that series and averages almost 50 against Australia making him a danger man for the Australian bowlers.

"He'll certainly lift for an Australian series, he always does," Waugh said on Sunday.

"He was phenomenal last time we were there and, knowing him, he will want to play well against the best side in the world so he'll definitely fire up."

Waugh rates the West Indian batting highly and apart from Lara has pinpointed Marlon Samuels and Ramnaresh Sarwan as important wickets to capture.

"They're one of the few sides in world cricket which are on the up," Waugh said.

"Their batting looks very strong

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Zim agreed to tour Eng



REUTERS, Harare

Zimbabwe team will go ahead with their tour of England this year despite the boycott by Nasser Hussain's team of their World Cup fixture in Harare last month, a senior cricket official here said on Saturday.

England refused to play Zimbabwe in their Group A match on February 13, citing concerns over security following President Robert Mugabe's controversial land reforms.

On Saturday, Zimbabwe Cricket Union chairman Peter Chingoka said a meeting of the board had agreed to fulfil tour commitments from May to July regardless of the World Cup boycott.

"The ZCU board decision to

proceed with the tour of England was informed first and foremost by the fact that the union is apolitical. We continue to make our decisions purely and solely on the basis of the game," Chingoka told journalists.

He said England and Wales Cricket Board chairman David Morgan told the meeting that "England did not come to Zimbabwe because of safety and security concerns only and there was no political agenda".

The result cost England all four points from the fixture and went a long way to eliminating them from their opening group.

Meanwhile ZCU managing director Vince Hogg said that a planned England tour of Zimbabwe scheduled for next year would go ahead.

"We have assurances that they

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PHOTO: STAR

International Master Reefat bin Sattar (R) and Shawkat Hossain Pallab engage in cerebral warfare during the fourth round games of the Professor Abdur Razzak 29th National Championship at the NSC chess room yesterday.