

No room for Al-Shahriar Nods for Rajin, Alamgir

Cricket

SPORTS REPORTER

A more or less predictable 15-man Bangladesh Test team for its tour of Pakistan was announced yesterday afternoon with just two changes from the squad that played in the Test series against Australia last month.

Middle order batsman Al-Shahriar and right arm paceman Tareq Aziz Khan got the chop with Rajin Saleh Alam and Alamgir Kabir coming in as their replacements respectively.

Speculation was already high about Al-Shahriar's possible omission and it was learnt from reliable sources that the selectors had lengthy discussions yesterday and on the previous day before agreeing on dropping the classy yet inconsistent right-hander.

In his 15-match career, Al-Shahriar had scored 683 runs in 30 innings at an average of 22.77. In Australia, his one bright moment came when he made a stroke-filled 36 in the second innings of the first Test at Darwin but that wasn't enough for him to get selected for the second Test at Cairns.

Although other specialist batsmen like Javed Omar and

Mohammed Ashraf performed miserably in Australia, rather inexplicably, Al-Shahriar seemed to be the favourite choice for a scapegoat.

Tareq Aziz on the other hand, just appeared in one warm-up game in Australia.

Rajin has been knocking on the national team's door following his

SQUAD

Khaled Mahmud (captain), Habibul Bashar (vice-captain), Javed Omar, Hannan Sarker, Sanwar Hossain, Rajin Saleh, Mohammad Ashraf, Alok Kapali, Khaled Mashud, Mohammad Rafique, Manjurul Islam, Tapash Baishya, Anwar Hossain Munir, Alamgir Kabir and Mashrafe-bin-Mortuza.

Stand by: Tushar Imran, Hasibul Hossain and Musfiqur Rahman.

impressive showing in last season's national league, Premier League and on the Bangladesh under-23 team's tour of Sri Lanka in June.

His previous association with the Tigers was during the inaugural Test against India in November 2000 when he was the 12th man.

The muscular quick Alamgir has been rewarded for his fine form with Bangladesh under-23 team in Sri Lanka.

"We never thought of making too many changes. However, we still debated and in the end felt convinced that this was the best possible selection," said chief selector Faruque Ahmed.

He said that Rajin deserved a berth in the national team for his good form over last two seasons.

"Rajin scored lot of runs in domestic cricket and also performed commendably in Sri Lanka. Besides, he is one of the best fielders in the country. That has helped him earn his place in the list. Alamgir also bowled well in Sri Lanka," said the former Bangladesh captain.

When asked why there was no specialist off-spinner in the side, Faruque said that they had originally thought of taking Naimur Rahman but his fitness let him down.

"We called Naimur. But he failed to prove his fitness. Besides, the Pakistanis play spin very well and we lack quality spinners. That's why we did not think too much about the slow bowling aspect," said Faruque.

Faruque also revealed that free-stroking opener Shahriar Hossain came very close to earning a recall after three years in the wilderness but a finger injury spoiled that prospect.

"The injury to his right index finger needs another 15 days to heal. That's why he couldn't be considered."



BETTER GET THE NAMES RIGHT! (Clockwise) Chief selector Faruque Ahmed suddenly remembers something important to note down yesterday at the Bangabandhu National Stadium. The two newcomers: Rajin Saleh (Top) and Alamgir Kabir.



PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

Chief selector's charges

Cricket

SPORTS REPORTER

Rajin Saleh and Alamgir Kabir had always expected that they would be a part of the Pakistan-bound Bangladesh squad.

The two young cricketers who excelled during the Under-23 team's tour of Sri Lanka last month attributed their call-up to chief selector Faruque Ahmed, who was the tour manager. Interestingly both the cricketers played under Faruque in City Club last season.

It was a dream come true for the 19-year-old Rajin whose only appearance for the national team was in the inaugural Test against India and that too was as a 12th man.

"I believe all my hard work has paid off. For the last two years I have been performing well both in National League and the Premier Division. The Sri Lanka tour was a challenge and I have proved my ability to get the nod," said an extremely elated Rajin after the training at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

Rajin's appearance in Bangladesh's first-ever Test in November 2000 might have been brief, the cricketer from Sylhet showed he

could be a very handy close-in fielder by taking two sharp catches at forward short leg.

The right-hander who often bats in the middle-order scored 217 runs at an average of 42 in Sri Lanka.

Right-arm paceman Alamgir Kabir was the pick of the bowlers in Sri Lanka. His accuracy, pace and the ability to bowl a good bouncer impressed the selectors.

"I was optimistic about getting the selectors nod after doing well in Sri Lanka. Faruque Bhai helped me lot during the tour to improve my bowling," said an excited Alamgir.

The 22-year-old from cricketer from Rajshahi played only one Test against Sri Lanka last year. He failed to get a single wicket and was subsequently dropped from the national team.

"When I was dropped after the playing only one Test I vowed that I would make a come back," said the stocky paceman.

But his career got back on track in Sri Lanka, where he claimed 24 wickets in seven matches including a record eight-wicket burst in a two-day match against Sri Lanka's Max Academy.

Both the players now set their next target of earning their places in the playing eleven during the three Tests and five one-day international in Pakistan.



PHOTO: AFP

CAUSING A COMMOTION: Sachin Tendulkar steps out of the bus after arriving at the National Cricket Academy in Bangalore to join the Indian team's pre-season fitness camp.

Sachin, ministries showcaused

Mum superstar joins camp

Cricket

AFP, New Delhi

India's new cricket season began Thursday amidst a growing row over the government's decision to waive import duty worth thousands of dollars for a Ferrari gifted to superstar Sachin Tendulkar.

As the country's 36 top cricketers assembled at the National Cricket Academy in Bangalore on Thursday for a 13-day pre-season fitness camp, Tendulkar was at the centre of a storm over the government largesse.

Tendulkar drove home a 163,000-dollar Ferrari 360 Modena gifted to him by a sponsor, Italian automobile group Fiat, without paying the 245,000 dollars duty that would have been levied in the normal course for importing the car.

The car, presented to Tendulkar by racing king Michael Schumacher at Silverstone, England after the Indian surpassed Australian legend Don

Bradman's tally of 29 Test centuries last year, arrived in Bombay last Friday after the federal government waived the import duty on a request from the millionaire cricketer.

The decision to write off 120 per cent duty normally levied on all foreign-made cars generated heated debate and dented Tendulkar's demi-god status in cricket-crazy India.

Meanwhile the Delhi High Court, acting on adverse media reports, asked Tendulkar and the government to explain by August 19 why the duty was waived.

The court issued notices to the ministries of sports and finance asking them why such a grant was made when the government was not in a position to spend much on other sports.

"The matter is of public importance and warrants examination in the public interest," judge Vikramjit Sen said on Wednesday.

The matter will be taken up as a Public Interest Litigation (PIL) at a

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Perform and get paid

Cricket

SPORTS REPORTER

The announcement of a new pay-roll for the national cricketers would not be announced before the end of Bangladesh's tour of Pakistan.

The Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) had earlier decided to form a fresh list of players to be brought on its pay-roll after the Australia tour.

But it was learnt that on the advice of coach Dav Whatmore, who expressed reservations about certain points of the proposed new system, Cricket Committee chairman Mahubul Anam now plans to revise it.

"The new team management has suggested that the pay scale of a cricketer should not be solely based on seniority. Rather it should strike a balance with performance and the effort he puts in on the ground," said Mahubul while talking to a group of reporters at Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

"We will discuss the proposals in our next Board meeting to be held on Monday," he said.

He however hinted that the number of players on the pay-roll would be increased three times than what it is now.

Presently there are six players -- former Bangladesh captain Khaled

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NFL heads for Mirpur

SPORTS REPORTER

After a long drama, Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) has finally conceded its fight with Bangladesh Cricket Board to hold the Super Six phase of the Nitol-Tata National Football League (NFL) at the Bangabandhu National Stadium (BNS).

The last part of the three-tier NFL will now be held at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur.

Local football officials following a meeting with State Minister for Youth and Sports Fazlur Rahman at his office yesterday morning took the decision which they should have taken much earlier.

"The Minister has asked us to spare the BNS this year for the sake of cricket. We have accepted his suggestion," said NFL committee

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Butcher puts England on top

Cricket

AFP, Nottingham

Mark Butcher's eighth Test hundred left England in charge against South Africa at Trent Bridge here Thursday.

At tea on the opening day England were 212 for two with left-hander Butcher 103 not out and former captain Nasser Hussain 72 not out.

Surrey batsman Butcher had faced 173 balls including 21 fours and Essex's Hussain 129 balls with 12 boundaries.

Together the pair put on an unbroken 183 in 47 overs after England, 1-0 down in the five Test series, had slumped to 29 for two.

England resumed after lunch on 85 for two, Butcher 37 not out and

Hussain 20 not out.

Hussain, who had cover-driven securely before lunch, used the stroke to take a four off fast bowler Makhaya Ntini and later leg-glanced the paceman for another boundary.

Ntini then saw left-hander Butcher, on 41, edge him past the outstretched hand of second slip Jacques Kallis, playing his first match of the series following the death of his father.

Butcher, who on nought saw an lbw appeal from Shaun Pollock rejected by Daryl Harper - umpiring alongside fellow Australian Darrell Hair - after the ball appeared to pitch outside leg stump, was unmovable.

He cut Ntini up and over point for four before a single off Pollock gave him his fifty.

To make matters worse for Ntini, who in the Proteas' innings and 92 run second Test victory became the first South African to take 10 wickets

in a Lord's Test, he received two official warnings for running on the pitch.

Another warning would see him unable to bowl again in the innings.

Hussain then brought up a hundred partnership with Butcher in 161 balls courtesy of a cover-driven four off Pollock.

Boundaries were flowing regularly from both ends as conditions for batting eased. Paceman Kallis, in particular, was struggling with his line to Butcher.

Hussain subsequently leg-glanced fast-medium bowler Andrew Hall for four to bring up his fifty.

South Africa captain Graeme Smith eventually opted for spin after 45 overs when, with England 160 for two (Butcher 77, Hussain 51) he brought on unorthodox left-armed Paul Adams.

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