

BCB EC puts everything behind to start anew

Cricket
SPORTS REPORTER

The Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) came out of a marathon executive committee meeting on Saturday burying the hatchet that put everything to a standstill for the last few months and with a promise to start afresh.

The much-talked about board meeting at a city hotel also saw a dramatic return by Reazuddin Al Mamun, who resigned two months ago from the post of BCB joint-secretary and media committee chairman following the sensational disclosure of board president Ali Asghar's 'secret' deal with Aston Moore.

With a grim face, Mamun made an 'unlawful' entry into the EC meeting half an hour after it started. But when he came out during the lunch break he was all smiles with his president Ali Asghar beside him.

Asghar accepted Mamun's resignation ten days after he tendered it, but Saturday's twist saw him regaining his post 'after being pressed by all the EC members' in a meeting where 'sorry' was the most uttered word.

"There was no seat reserved for me in the room but I was not surprised. I came here to say goodbye to everybody and explain my position on why I tendered my resignation. And all of my colleagues didn't want me to quit. But I have decided to stay only when the president showed the letter that there was no further relation with Aston Moore," said Mamun during the break of a nine-hour meeting.

BCB general secretary Mahbulul Anam finally came out to meet the reporters and he was diplomatically apologetic over a

range of issues that were not addressed until yesterday.

A bearded Mahbulul, who like his president came under severe criticism for failing to convene a meeting within the stipulated time and creating confusion over Mamun's invitation, admitted that they failed to run the show properly in the last few months that even led to the breach of constitution.

"As per constitution we are

bound to hold at least one meeting in every three months but unfortunately we failed to meet the deadline for the third meeting. We concede that it was our administrative failure. But thankfully the EC members have accepted our excuse and we promise that it would not happen in future," said Mahbulul.

Mahbulul also announced that joint-secretary Reazuddin Al Mamun has withdrawn his resignation.

But he refused to get into details of an explosive episode after Mamun walked inside the Surma Conference Room of Sonargaon Hotel.

"We had an open discussion but I think it would not be wise to say about what happened inside. Mamun changed his mind because everybody requested him. Besides, he was also convinced that the board had no commercial relationship with Aston Moore at the moment," said Mahbulul.

He also informed that a five-member committee involving president, general secretary, chairman of marketing committee, chairman of media committee and chairman of finance committee will now look into the future TV deal.

The BCB general secretary also said that the meeting dissolved all the present standing committees in an effort to start afresh with more dynamic ones.

"Since we wanted to start from the scratch we have dissolved the sub-committees and formed a seven-member body involving Aziz Al Kaiser Titoo, general secretary, two joint secretaries, Khondokar Jamiluddin, Shaheen Aftabur Reza and Asaduzzaman Kahinoo. The committees will submit the names within 48 hours for approval of the board," he informed.

Regarding the appointment of a new CEO (chief executive officer) Mahbulul said that it was in the discussion of meeting.

"We have already short-listed the candidates from five to two and we are expecting to make a final decision within two days."

"The meeting also approved the upcoming home matches against Kenya. The Africans will arrive here on March 10 to play three to four ODIs if Zimbabwe do not come for the triangular series," he added.



FRIENDS AGAIN! Bangladesh Cricket Board president Ali Asghar (L) and Reazuddin Al Mamun, the BCB joint secretary who resigned a couple of months back over differences with his president and changed his mind yesterday, are all smiles after they patched it up during the board's executive committee meeting at a city hotel on Saturday.

Rahim exudes confidence

Cricket
SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh youth team captain Mushfiqur Rahim said they are ready for the final challenge when the ICC Under-19 World Cup starts in Sri Lanka in February.

The young Tigers, who has built an invincible image over the last seven months starting with an impressive Australia tour and culminating in a title-triumph in a triangular tournament at home, leave the city tomorrow to take part in the 16-team competition.

Although Bangladesh have never played in the Cup stage in their last four appearances, Rahim believed that his team with an

exciting batting line-up is capable to break the jinx.

"Many already said that this team might become champions. I also say why not if we can continue our recent dream run. We proved that this team has the potential of winning against any team," a confident Rahim, who is the only Test player in the squad, told at a press conference yesterday.

Bangladesh Under-19s finished Plate champions in the last meet at home defeating Australia.

"The way we have been playing and developing ourselves for last seven months that might raise the expectation high and I believe we have the potential to justify it and make a history" the wicketkeeper cum batsman said.

"The team spirit is a main

strength for us. We have a very good understanding which I think was the key of our recent success and as well as difference with any other teams in the country," he added.

Coach Allister de Winter was also confident with his charges and said that his team was much fit and focus to achieve anything in the meet.

"We are capable and confident to play in the Super-league stage but of course no overconfidence. The boys are very much fit and focused to take the challenge," said the Australian.

"Having participated in the various tournaments of Afro Asian U-19 in India, tri-nation at home, and matches against Sri Lankan Cricket Academy in Sri Lanka and

Mauresmo's moment comes

Australian Open
AP, Melbourne

Amelie Mauresmo bought a special bottle of wine a few years ago in anticipation of her first Grand Slam title.

She finally can pop it open after winning the Australian Open on Saturday when Justine Henin-Hardenne retired because of stomach pain.

In an anticlimactic finish that stunned the packed Rod Laver Arena crowd, Henin-Hardenne

quit in the second set because of the stomach pain caused by anti-inflammatory medicine that she took for her sore right shoulder. Mauresmo led 6-1, 2-0 when Henin-Hardenne walked to the net and told the umpire she couldn't continue.

"Everything really came together here," Mauresmo said. "I was focusing on really what I had to do and taking control of the points the way I did for the whole match and really not paying really much of an attention to how she felt."

The 26-year-old French star also benefited when semifinal oppo-

nent Kim Clijsters tore a ligament in her ankle in the third set Thursday, and Michaela Krajicek wilted in their third-round match with heat exhaustion.

Mauresmo also suffered through her own ailments -- and occasional jitters -- while seeking her first major victory.

"Things turn around at some point," said Mauresmo, who played her first Grand Slam event in 1995 at age 15 and lost to Martina Hingis in the 1999 Australian final. "In France we say, 'The sadness of some makes the happiness of others.'"



Bangladesh under-19 cricket captain Mushfiqur Rahim (2nd from L) takes questions from reporters during a press conference at a city hotel on Saturday.

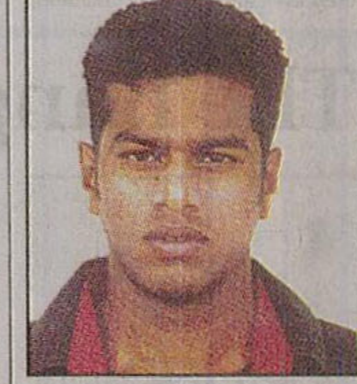
SERIES AGAINST SL BCB announces list of probables

SPORTS REPORTER

Enigmatic Alok Kapali was recalled to the national fold when Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) announced a 20-member preliminary squad for the home series against Sri Lanka next month.

The executive committee of the BCB approved the squad in Saturday's meeting where they also decided to extend Habibul Bashar's tenure as a captain and Khaled Mashud as his deputy for next three tours.

Kapali, a talented middle-order batsman from Sylhet who has



ALOK KAPALI

shown some signs of consistency in recent domestic competitions, last played for Bangladesh against Zimbabwe at home in January last year.

The Faruque Ahmed-led selection panel made hardly any change to the squad that played in Sri Lanka in August-September last year. Pacemen Talha Jubair and Anwar Hossain Munir were the only ones to miss out on the list of probables.

Sri Lanka are expected to arrive here on February 17 to play two Tests and three one-day internationals.

The selected players have been asked to report to coach Dav Whatmore on February 5 at 8am at the Mirpur indoor facilities.

PRELIMINARY TEAM

Habibul Bashar (captain), Khaled Mashud (vice-captain), Javed Omar, Shahriar Nafees, Nafis Iqbal, Mohammad Ashraful, Aftab Ahmed, Tushar Imran, Rajin Saleh, Alok Kapali, Mohammad Rafique, Manzarul Islam, Abdur Razzak, Khaled Mahmud, Mashrafe-Bin-Mortuza, Tapash Baisya, Enamul Haque Jr, Nazmul Hossain, Shahadat Hossain and Syed Rasel.

AFC CHALLENGE CUP All matches likely to be held in Bangladesh

BDNEWS, Dhaka

Following political instability in Nepal, there is a possibility that two group matches of the AFC Challenge Cup be shifted to Bangladesh.

"There is a possibility to shift all the matches from Nepal to Bangladesh for political unrest in the Himalayan country. AFC official Mohammad Sharfuddin bin Abu Bakar will arrive here on February 3 to inspect the venues," said Bangladesh Football Federation general secretary Anwarul Haque Helal yesterday.

The Group A and D matches are scheduled to take place in Nepal in February while Bangladesh was chosen for hosting Group B and Group C matches to be held in March.

Div I cricket

BDNEWS, Dhaka

Partex Sporting Club defeated Young Pegasus by six wickets in the First Division Cricket League at the Dhaka University ground yesterday. Despite their first defeat in 15 matches Young Pegasus lead the table with 28 points from 15 matches followed by Partex with 26 from 14 matches.

Pegasus made 221 for the loss of nine wickets with Sagar scoring 86. In reply, Partex reached the target with six wickets in hand and five overs to spare. Deep topscored with 83.

Dhaka in JFA Cup final

BDNEWS, Dhaka

Dhaka moved into the final of the JFA Cup Under-16 Football Tournament with a 3-0 victory over Satkhira in the first semifinal at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

Jewel Rana struck twice while Rubel added one. Tangail face Rangamati in the second semifinal today at the same venue.

All focus on the pitch Final Indo-Pak Test begins in Karachi today

Cricket
AFP, Karachi

India and Pakistan face off in the third and final cricket Test here from Sunday confident of breaking the series deadlock on a wicket that promises a result.

The rival captains said the hard, greenish pitch at the National Stadium could end the trend of high-scoring draws witnessed in the previous two Tests in Lahore and Faisalabad.

"The most sporting wicket of the series has been given," said Pakistan's Inzamamul Haq. "It is now up to us to play good cricket and force a result."

India's Rahul Dravid described the strip as a "very, very good wicket."

"There is no confusion in my mind about how it will play," he said.

"It may do a bit initially but then it will be excellent for batting. The ones in the previous two Tests were also good for batting but gave no help to bowlers at all."

"Here the bowlers will get that extra bounce and movement to take wickets."

India named a shortlist of 13 for the Test, leaving out openers Wasim Jaffar and Gautam Gambhir and reserve wicketkeeper Parthiv Patel from the 16-man touring squad.

It opens the door for former captain Sourav Ganguly, who did not get to bat in the first Test and was dropped for the second to accommodate five bowlers.

Dravid said he would prefer a combination that would "get us 20 wickets to win the game."

"In the end it is all about winning and we have to play positive cricket for five days to achieve that," he said.

Dravid declined to confirm speculation that Ganguly would

return to the side in place of Harbhajan Singh, who failed to take a wicket in the first two Tests.

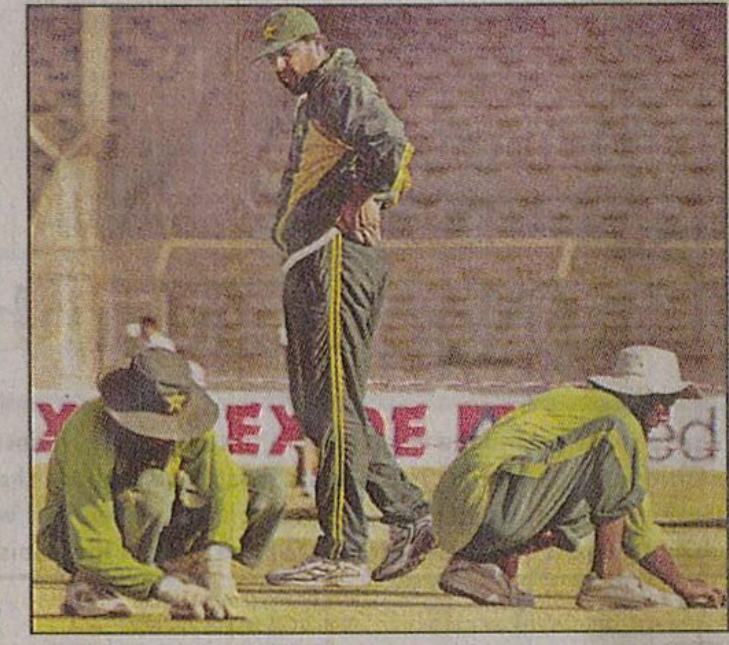
Pakistan will also finalise their team just before the toss on Sunday after assessing Inzamam's recovery from a back injury that forced him

out of the last three days of the Faisalabad Test.

"I will try my best to play," he said. "There is still time till tomorrow to decide."

If Inzamam does not take the

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Pakistan captain Inzamamul Haq inspects the pitch as groundstaff prepare it at the National Stadium in Karachi on Saturday.

CRICKET UPDATE

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MEN'S FINAL PREVIEW Favourite up against the not-so-favourite

Australian Open
AP, Melbourne

Top-ranked Roger Federer will be on one side of the net, a 20-year-old from Cyprus will be on the other in Sunday's Australian Open final.

While Federer was expected to be in position to win his seventh Grand Slam title, 54th-ranked Marcos Baghdatis is a most unexpected opponent.

Federer ran into a few problems during his run through the draw, but Baghdatis became everyone's problem in his half as he upset No. 2 Andy Roddick in the fourth round

and No. 4 David Nalbandian in Thursday's semifinals in a five-setter.

Federer powered his way into the final with a four-set win Friday over Nicolas Kiefer, and is an overwhelming favourite to take out fan favourite Baghdatis.

For now, Baghdatis is enjoying the ride.

"Everything was going in, I was just in my own world I think," Baghdatis said after his 3-6, 5-7, 6-3, 6-4, 6-4 win over Nalbandian. "It was crazy, the atmosphere was amazing."

That's been a familiar refrain over the past 10 days for Baghdatis, especially after his upset of Roddick. Legions of Greek fans

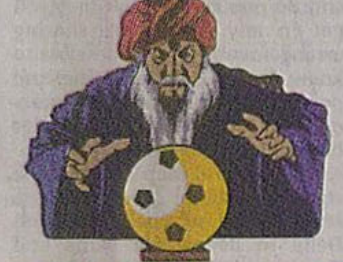
have supported him here, his homeland is rooting him on and his cell phone that used to only ring sporadically has been turned off -- even blocking out a congratulatory call from the Cypriot president.

His parents, thought to be arriving for the final, have now decided to stay in Cyprus even though they were offered an all-expenses-paid trip down under. Baghdatis' mother, Androulla, said "I don't want to put an extra burden on Marcos. He knows we are there beside him (in spirit) anyway."

Baghdatis' brother, 27-year-old Petros, was expected to attend and represent the family.

Federer has won all three

SEE PAGE 13 COL 2



Did U Know?

Virginia Wade was the first woman to win the US Open title. She defeated Billie Jean King in the final 6-4, 6-4.



TALK TURKEY



Pele

(Brazilian soccer legend) "He is the best player in the world. He has just been a little unlucky in the past."

On Roma and Italy star Francesco Totti.



What to WATCH

- TEN Sports**
India vs Pakistan
Third Test, Day One
Live at 11:00 am
- ESPN**
Australia vs Sri Lanka
Eighth ODI
Live at 11:30 am
- FA Cup**
Wolverhampton vs Man United
Live at 8:55 pm
- Portsmouth vs Liverpool**
Live at 12:00 am (Monday)
- STAR Sports**
Football Extra
Live at 9:00 am
- Australian Open**
Mixed Doubles Final
Live at 11:00 am
- Men's Singles Final**
Live at 2:00 pm

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