



Last hurrah for captain Mash

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Cricket Board president Nazmul Hassan put to rest the recent speculation surrounding the future of Bangladesh ODI captain Mashrafe Bin Mortaza by saying he would lead the team against Zimbabwe, but hinted that the series would probably be the 36-year-old's last as ODI captain as the board were contemplating the appointment of a long-term captain with the 2023 World Cup in mind.

Although Hassan did not write-off Mashrafe's chances to play for the national team after the Zimbabwe series, he added that the Narail Express would have to come through general procedures like any other member to qualify for a spot in the national team spot.

"Mashrafe will definitely lead the side in the Zimbabwe series and he will play if he is fit. However, we are not that strict over his fitness this time around but we also need to take a decision quickly on appointing a captain for the upcoming World Cup because we want to select a captain two years before the event," Hassan told reporters at the Sher-e-Bangla National

Zimbabwe series, specifically mentioning that the board will not be monitoring his fitness too strictly.

But that also raises questions about Mashrafe, who has been in poor form since 2019 World Cup -- where the pacer bagged just one wicket in eight games. He returned to competitive cricket after a long gap in the

Definitely, it is board's sole authority when it comes to appointing a captain. During my tenure, we proposed a name for board's approval and normally they accepted it. I don't know how things happen now but it is standard practice all over the world that a player is only considered for the [captaincy] post if he is eligible for the squad.

FARUQUE AHMED
FORMER BCB CHIEF SELECTOR



Having branded Test captain Mominul Haque "soft" and "shy" yesterday ahead of the one-off Test against Zimbabwe starting February 22, Bangladesh Cricket Board President Nazmul Hassan (R) said that seniors such as Tamim Iqbal -- who he spoke to in training yesterday -- would need to help him pump up the team.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

There is no question over the selection of a player if the board declares him as captain. The selection panel does not have a decision to make about that.

MINHAJUL ABEDIN
CHIEF SELECTOR

Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.

"We don't have much time on our hands and I think we will be able to take a decision within the next one-and-a-half months. We are waiting until this [Zimbabwe] series is over and will take a decision after that. Whether he will retire or not is a personal decision and he can even play in future. We are worried about the captain at the moment. If we name someone else as captain then he can get into the team as a player through performances and there are no problems with that."

Hassan's stance on Mashrafe however hints that the board has given the Tigers' most successful captain special consideration by including him for the

Bangladesh Premier League in November last year but his performances remained below par and that led to confusion about whether selectors would take his performances into consideration when naming teams.

When chief selector Minhajul Abedin was asked whether they had selected Mashrafe for the Zimbabwe series based on his performances, he said: "There is no question over the selection of a player if the board declares him as captain. The selection panel does not have a decision to make about that."

Although standard procedure in the selection policy suggests a player must first be eligible to be part of the team based on their performance, in Mashrafe's case it seems the board has kept his portfolio as captain ahead of recent performances.

Hassan paid tribute to Mashrafe's contribution to Bangladesh cricket but the BCB boss also said that the time had come for the pacer to think about retirement.

"There is no question about Mashrafe's contribution to Bangladesh cricket and his leadership is very important to us, but the time has come for him to take a decision on how long he wants to continue. There are a lot of things related to this," Hassan added.

'Don't take Zimbabwe lightly'

SPORTS REPORTER



Bangladesh Cricket Board president Nazmul Hassan yesterday issued a warning to the national team ahead of the upcoming home series against Zimbabwe.

The BCB boss expressed his disappointment over the poor performances from the national team recently and urged the Tigers to not take Zimbabwe lightly and to go into the series with a new mindset.

"I have been seeing in the media over the past few days that things will be great after beating Zimbabwe. I don't see that happening. I have no hope. I told them, 'if you take them lightly, it will be a big disaster'. Zimbabwe are where Zimbabwe were. We are not where we were. They have performed better than us recently," Hassan told the media yesterday.

"If someone asks me what Bangladesh's worst performance was at home, I would say losing to Afghanistan. It was unacceptable. If we lose to Afghanistan, we can lose to Zimbabwe. We need to have a new mindset. Our seniors must take major responsibility and it has to be a team game."

Hassan also slammed the T20I side for losing 2-0 to Pakistan recently and also branded Test captain Mominul Haque "soft" and "shy" and marked him as someone who would need help from senior cricketers like Tamim Iqbal and Mushfiqur Rahim. He also said that the Tigers must beat at least four or five teams in home conditions.

"I told them to not take Zimbabwe lightly. We must work in a planned way. Mominul is new, plus he is quite shy... soft. I said Tamim and Mushfiqur must be involved fully in charging up the team," he added.

Interestingly, Hassan had instructed the team management to provide him with all the team information, including the playing XI and even the batting order before the game.

"I want to know the game plan the day before the game and the playing XI," he said. "Why? It started from the World Cup and then the Afghanistan series, there is a total change; nothing has happened the way I expected. Those who had never played in the top order were given those roles. It was experimentation. In Pakistan too, what was told to me didn't happen," Hassan added.

"I have told them that they have to give me the batting sequence and that they cannot drop a player in one game and then pick him again. I understand that they want to try a few boys. Our coach, who is relatively new, wants to see the fast bowlers. But whatever happens, they have to let me know in advance."

'You must understand your role'

SPORTS REPORTER



Bangladesh's pace bowling department has been one of the chief concerns in all formats of the game and despite a lot of chopping and changing, especially in Tests, the Tigers are yet to find stability and get things right.

Although Bangladesh's recent showing in the longest format have been abysmal -- the Tigers lost all six of their last Tests, five of them by an innings -- Abu Jayed has been able to come up with decent performances during the bleak period.

Since 2019, Jayed featured in five of the six Tests Tigers played, only being dropped for the home Test against Afghanistan in September, when Bangladesh opted for four spinners and no specialist fast bowler. In those games, the 26-year old was the Tigers' leading wicket-taker, with 12 to his name at an economy of 3.77.



Although he has played just eight Tests, Abu Jayed (L) has quickly become Bangladesh's most dependable pacer in the format. PHOTO: BCB

And with selectors emphasising 'continuity', Jayed will likely be a key figure in the Tigers' line-up for the lone Zimbabwe Test, scheduled to begin from February 22.

The 26-year-old, who relies on his line and length, is also the only

player in the current squad with ability to swing both ways, but he said that Test matches demand different things from a player.

"It depends on game situation. There will be times when I will need to take a wicket and not worry about

runs. If the captain thinks we do not need wickets but to maintain an economy rate, then I need to ensure that I am bowling in the right areas," Jayed said after the Tigers' practice at the outer nets in Mirpur yesterday.

The way Jayed emphasised on playing a certain role in a game shows why the right-arter has been successful in recent times.

"You need to understand your role in the team. If the wicket is not friendly and spinners are not getting wickets and there is a set batsman, then our job is to bowl at economically for four-five overs. That might help spinners take the wicket. It creates chances. That's the role you have to play when the wicket is flat," said Jayed.

However, Jayed who has just played eight Tests, understood that he had a long way to go before becoming a leading cricketer for Bangladesh. And maybe that is the mentality a player needs to possess in a team that has been emphasising 'continuity'.

Tanzid, Al-Amin rescue BCB XI

SPORTS REPORTER



Tanzid Hasan, who featured for the Bangladesh during their recent ICC Under-19 World Cup triumph, again showed tremendous character and the youngster's unbeaten century, alongside an unbeaten ton from skipper Al-Amin, helped the BCB XI salvage a draw in the two-day warm-up match against the Zimbabweans at the BKSP-3 in Savar yesterday.

The BCB XI were in a spot of bother after having lost five for just 69 in 24.2 overs after the visitors had declared for the overnight score of 291 for seven. But Tanzid countered the pace and bounce of the Zimbabweans effectively and the 19-year-old got to his century off just 87 deliveries.

While Tanzid was fearless during his 99-ball 125 that was laced with 14 boundaries and five maximums, BCB XI skipper Al-Amin played a steady 145-ball

100. The duo strung together an unbeaten 219-run sixth-wicket stand that not only resuscitated the BCB XI from dire straits but also saw them through the day.

The warm-up match was played as a lead up to the lone Zimbabwe Test for the Tigers, starting from February 22. According to BCB XI skipper Al-Amin, the Bangladesh national team will not be tested by this Zimbabwe side.

"I think the national team will be able to handle Zimbabwe very easily considering the way we are playing now. They can get a very commanding victory in the Test," Al-Amin said after the only warm-up fixture ahead of the Test.

The way BCB XI finished the day was in stark contrast to how they had started. Before Tanzid's blistering innings, four of his U-19 teammates were unable to put up a good showing. Parvez Hossain was somewhat of an exception, getting a 66-ball 34, but Mahmudul Hasan, Shahadat Hossain and U-19 skipper Akbar Ali fell quickly for cheap scores of 1, 2 and 1 respectively.



With the BCB XI teetering at 69 for five, skipper Al-Amin Jr and Tanzid Hasan (R) scored impressive centuries and piled on a mammoth, unbeaten 219-run sixth-wicket partnership to salvage a draw for the hosts against the Zimbabweans yesterday.

Coronavirus now hits volleyball

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Volleyball Federation (BVF) has deferred the Bangabandhu Asian Senior Men's Central Zone Volleyball Championship after some participating nations expressed reservations connected to the coronavirus outbreak, as well as some financial constraints.

Although there are no infected patients in Bangladesh, teams in the region are reluctant to travel after the outbreak in China's Wuhan, with the International Solidarity World Ranking Archery Championships in Bangladesh also being postponed on Monday.

The meet was scheduled to take place from March 22 to 28 at Suhrawardi Indoor Stadium in Mirpur with the participation of eight nations -- Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Maldives, Nepal, Bhutan, Afghanistan and hosts Bangladesh -- but the championship is now likely to be held in September.

"We did not get a good response as Sri Lanka and one of the central Asian nations wrote to us to express concerns about the coronavirus outbreak while some others told us informally. That's why we, on February 15, decided to defer the championship by six months and hold it in September," BVF general secretary Ashikur Rahman Miku told The Daily Star yesterday.

Miku also said that uncertainty over financial assistance from the youth and sports ministry also played a part in the deferment.

"The ministry had told us they would provide financial assistance to organise the tournament but we are still in the dark about whether we will get that help," said Miku. "We could have organised the championship by managing sponsorships like before but we could not do it because the BVF president [Atiqul Islam] was busy in the DNCC election campaign." National team captain Horosit Biswas

believes the deferment will help them achieve better results as they needed at least four months' preparation to regain the title they clinched in the 2016 edition held in Dhaka.

"We lacked preparation because players scattered after the National Championship. We were also supposed to go to Iran to avail better training facilities for two months but we could not because of the political crisis between Iran and America," Biswas told The Daily Star yesterday.

Biswas informed that they will go after the completion of the Bangabandhu Bangladesh Games to be held from April 1 and have uninterrupted training until the championship.

"We will compete in the ABC Challenge Cup in Kyrgyzstan in June featuring teams like Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Sri Lanka, Malaysia, Hong Kong and Thailand. It is a better tournament than the Central Zone championship, so it will help us perform better at home in September."