



Young Bangladesh off-spinner Nayeem Hasan (L) has had a bright start to his Test career but he will do well to learn from Mushfiqur Rahim's example and strive to improve everyday. Daniel Vettori (R) said yesterday that spinners can take the next step only if they try to keep getting better.



PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

A show of disrespect

AL-AMIN

Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) President Nazmul Hassan's antics during press briefings have been well-advertised, but the BCB boss probably violated the very essence of the game -- respect -- while taking a swipe at Mushfiqur Rahim's decision to skip the Pakistan tour.

Responding to a question at the BCB headquarters on Tuesday regarding Mushfiqur's prospect of travelling to Pakistan for the last leg of the three-phase tour, Hassan first said that he was yet to hear anything from the horse's

"[His] family member went there and played. So would nothing happen if something happened to [Mahmudullah] Riyad [his brother-in-law]? Will the family members cry only if something happens to him [Mushfiqur]? I can't believe such things," Hassan proclaimed.

His bizarre logic for Mushfiqur to travel to Pakistan next April, which can be debated, is not an issue at all. The burning question is whether the board president has the authority to mock the family sentiments of Mushfiqur or any other cricketer.

Does the BCB boss have the right to belittle a cricketer, let alone a player like Mushfiqur, who has time and again showed his utmost dedication to serving the nation during his illustrious career spanning over 15 years?

Mushfiqur decided against touring Pakistan due to security concerns raised by family members and he has every right to respond to the request of his dear ones, which is quite common in the international sporting arena.

There might be criticism among the fans but this kind of reaction from the establishment and that too against a player who publicly acknowledged that he never felt good when out of the ground, is not only uncalled for but also a serious violation of mutual respect.

The board president has reasons to be disappointed. Bangladesh badly lost the two T20Is and the first Test against Pakistan by an innings. It is also understandable that, had Mushfiqur been around, Bangladesh could have put up a better fight with the bat.

Just to show how important he is in the Tigers' batting line-up, Mushfiqur hammered a magnificent double-hundred in the one-off Test against Zimbabwe on Monday.

The day after he scored 203 not out at Mirpur, the BCB president said normal service returned to the Bangladesh camp as a reference to that easy win against Zimbabwe.

He also presented Mushfiqur with the player-of-the-match award with a smile on his face. But whether that was a compliment is anybody's guess now.



NAZMUL HASSAN

mouth.

It was a reasonable response.

He then said something more at home in a political dictionary.

"Will have to think for the country. Don't always have to think about your own [welfare]. This is what I personally believe. Family is very important, but the country is even more important," he said.

After a pause, he said something quite rational again.

"Well, there was fear. We all had fears over travelling to Pakistan. Wasn't the fear-factor prevalent in those who have travelled?" he asked.

But then he uttered something that no decent professional athlete -- let alone Mushfiqur, a champion batsman and the most committed cricketer of the country -- deserves.

Challenge is to keep improving

MAZHAR UDDIN



The innings and 106-run win over Zimbabwe may not have fully made up for Bangladesh's six-match losing streak in Tests leading up to that match, but there are still some obvious positives to take from this victory.

Regardless of Zimbabwe's strength when compared to top Test sides like India and Pakistan, Bangladesh can see the win as a step towards the mantra of developing their Test culture under head coach Russell Domingo, who stated the need to do that before the match.

A good cricketing culture requires healthy competition for places in the team and a system that enables cricketers to take their games to the next level.

The Bangladesh team management are always hard pressed to identify and produce worthy replacements for injured or underperforming players, which has in turn forced selectors to revisit players who were dropped not long ago.

Due to the lack of healthy competition with players coming in and improving upon their predecessors in meaningful ways, out-of-favour players only have to wait for a poor performance by his competitor instead of developing his game further. The result is that when he is slots back in

the team, there is not a noticeable impact on his own performance or that of the team.

Since breaking into the international circuit with a five-wicket haul on debut against the West Indies in 2018, young off-spinner Nayeem Hasan continued to display his quality and has managed to create a place in the team by replacing the previous specialist off-spinner Mehedi Hasan Miraz, who had a similarly auspicious start to his international career.

A string of underwhelming performances from Mehedi led to him being dropped from a home Test for the first time since his debut in 2016.

It will be a tough ask now for Mehedi to make a comeback and so it seems that there is actually healthy competition as the 22-year-old would have to do something extraordinary and forget about whatever he has achieved so far.

Nayeem's variety -- he uses his height and accuracy and tries to mix it up with his pace and bounce -- benefited him even on a sporting Mirpur pitch as he picked up his second five-wicket haul in his fifth Test and ended up bagging nine wickets against Zimbabwe.

Now, The 19-year-old can either learn from his predecessor and continue adding tricks and levels to his art or, like Mehedi, remain a bowler

who can only threaten quality batting orders when conditions are loaded in his favour.

Bangladesh has the likes of spin legend Daniel Vettori who could offer his vast experience, both in terms of mentality and skill, but he will have to buck a trend as history is rife with Bangladesh players unable to draw the best from the available resources.

According to spin consultant Vettori, a majority of the players have the knowledge and it's a matter of realising that they need to improve every day.

"It's just giving them some experience, just giving them some understanding of how they can be a little bit better. There are not many spinners who can do what Nayeem's done. He has done it at such a young age. You know Taijul is not pretty old, Miraz is young as well, so I think these guys are really talented spinners and they can always get better," Vettori told reporters yesterday.

Nayeem and others who have performed against Zimbabwe should not rest on their laurels. Where Bangladesh go from here depends on whether players like him truly believe that they have to improve every day. It is up to Nayeem to keep improving and it is up to Mehedi to make sure the youngster does not get too comfortable.

Mushfiqur, Nayeem move up in Test rankings

ICC



Bangladesh's Mushfiqur Rahim has risen five places to return to the top 20 after his double-century in Mirpur against Zimbabwe in the one-off Test while captain Mominul Haque has moved up five places to 39th after a score of 132 in the MRF Tyres ICC Test Player Rankings.

Young spinner Nayeem Hasan is the big news for the team with his nine wickets lifting him 29 places to 38th position among bowlers. Abu Jayed has moved up 11 places to 46th.

Australia's Steve Smith is back on top of the list of batsmen in the rankings after India captain Virat Kohli could manage only 21 runs in

his two innings in the first Test against New Zealand in Wellington, which his side lost by 10 wickets to concede a 1-0 lead in the two-match series.

This is the eighth time that Smith is on top of the rankings after first occupying the top position in June 2015. The last batsman apart from Smith and Kohli to be No. 1 is New Zealand's Kane Williamson, for an eight-day period in December 2015.

In the latest update, that also includes the Test between Bangladesh and Zimbabwe, which the home side won by an innings and 106 runs, Williamson has gained 31 points after his innings of 89 due to the low team scores in the match and the highly-rated India attack, facts considered in the calculation of rating points. India

opener Mayank Agarwal is back at a career-best 10th position with his highest aggregate points tally.

New Zealand's Ross Taylor and Colin Grandhomme have moved up the batsmen's list while fast bowlers Tim Southee and Trent Boult have made big gains after finishing with nine and five wickets, respectively. Southee has advanced eight spots to take sixth position, which is his highest since a career-best fifth place in June 2014. Boult has moved up four slots to take joint-13th position.

In the Test Championship, New Zealand are on 120 points after gaining 60 points for the Wellington victory. They had won 60 points in a 1-1 draw against Sri Lanka while this is the first match that top-placed India have lost.



Bangladesh will play their second group match of the ICC Women's T20 World Cup against hosts Australia at the Manuka Oval in Canberra today. The match will start from 2:00pm BST. Salma Khatun's side started their campaign with an 18-run defeat to their Indian counterparts at the WACA in Perth, but they fought hard in the opening match, with their bowling and fielding especially encouraging. Today will be the Tigresses' first encounter with Australia and they must improve their performances with the bat if they want to push their mighty opponents.

PHOTO: COLLECTED



Mendis, Fernando put on 239

Twin centuries from Kusal Mendis and Avishka Fernando (R) lifted Sri Lanka from a precarious nine for two to a commanding 345 for eight as they defeated the West Indies by 161 runs in the second ODI yesterday. The duo shared a mammoth 239-run third-wicket stand before Mendis departed for a run-a-ball 119 featuring twelve boundaries. Fernando, who hit ten boundaries, departed two overs later for a 123-ball 127 but Sri Lanka had turned the game on its head by then.

PHOTO: AFP

SHORT CORNER

SA exclude Faf for Australia ODIs

Former captain Faf du Plessis will not play for South Africa in a three-match one-day internationals series against Australia but remains part of the country's future plans, Cricket South Africa said yesterday. Du Plessis, who stepped down from the captaincy in all forms of the game earlier this month, is being rested along with recent regular players in Rassie van der Dussen and Dwaine Pretorius, according to a CSA statement.

The first match in the series will be in Paarl on Saturday. On the other hand, pace bowler Jhye Richardson was added to the Australia one-day international squad for the series. Selectors also named an unchanged line-up for the one-day series against New Zealand at home next month.

Richardson dislocated his shoulder ahead of last year's World Cup in England but was recalled for T20 series against South Africa which ends Thursday and will remain with the team for the one-dayers. --AGENCIES

Al Amin wants to play all formats

Bangladesh pacer Al Amin Hossain said yesterday that he had always wanted to play in all formats of the game, using his participation in the Bangladesh Cricket League final to back up the claim.

The 30-year-old bowled a total of 22 overs for South Zone in the two innings, picking up just one wicket. Although he did not sparkle, South won the game.

"If I wanted to play only with the white ball, then I would not have played the Bangladesh Cricket League final," Al Amin told reporters at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium. "Those who were not in the Test side practiced with the coach and I was also supposed to join but I had to play the BCL final. The team management has plans to utilise players accordingly but I have always wanted to play all formats whenever and wherever I get the opportunity." -- SPORTS REPORTER



Madhevere included in Zimbabwe's ODI and T20I squads

Zimbabwe named uncapped Wesley Madhevere in the team for their three-match ODI and two-match T20I series against Bangladesh, with Chamu Chibhabha taking over as captain after returning to the national side for the first time since 2018.

Madhevere impressed at the U-19 World Cup and had a brilliant performance that saw him hit a half century and scalp four wickets against England in a place-deciding match.

The three-match ODI series will begin on March 1, with all the games in Sylhet, and Dhaka host the following T20Is.

--SPORTS REPORTER

