



## Soumya's omission a result of 'chaos'

SPORTS REPORTER



The Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) had on Sunday disclosed the names of 16 players for the new central contract after its meeting, but it raised many eyebrows that Soumya Sarkar was not on the list. Everyone was curious to know about the reason behind the exclusion of the left-hander, especially as he has been a regular member of the national team for quite some time.

If Soumya's exclusion shocked many, then what chief selector Minhajul Abedin revealed yesterday about missing his name in the BCB's contract list was nothing short of a big surprise. "This was simply a typing mistake. We are going to send his name by correcting the list. BCB's media department will issue you a press release soon," Minhajul told the Daily Star yesterday.

BCB had mistakenly excluded the cricketer's name from the list and interestingly it had only come to the selectors' attention when reporters inquired about it in the afternoon yesterday, although different media outlets had raised questions about Soumya's absence in yesterday's newspapers. In the last year, Soumya had played in 25 of the 30 matches

the Tigers have played in all three formats.

Minhajul also said that Soumya would be given a white-ball contract. "Soumya is returning to being contracted and we will keep him in our white-ball contract list. Since we were forming separate contracts for white-ball and red-ball cricket, there was much chaos and, in a bid, to exclude players from the list, we left Soumya's name out," Minhajul explained the reason to a local media.

"It's a mistake by the selectors. We are expected to include him soon in our contracts' list for white-ball [cricket]," said Akram Khan, chairman of the BCB's cricket operations committee.

For the first time, BCB has enacted different contracts for red-ball cricket. Tamim Iqbal, Liton Das, Nazmul Hossain Shanto, Mushfiqur Rahim, Mohammad Mithun, Taijul Islam and Mehedi Hasan Miraz have been included in both white-ball and red-ball categories.

Mominul Haque, Nayeem Hasan, Abu Jayed and Ebadot Hossain have been included solely for red-ball cricket while T20I skipper Mahmudullah Riyad along with Mohammad Saifuddin, Mustafizur Rahman, Afif Hossain and Mohammad Naim form the list of players who have gotten white-ball contracts.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

Unlike the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB), who made a glaring 'typing error' that saw Soumya Sarkar's name missing from the initial central contract's list, Soumya did not make any mistakes when it came to putting away bad deliveries in the first of two T20Is against Zimbabwe in Mirpur yesterday. Soumya notched his T20I career-best score of an unbeaten 32-ball 62 to help the Tigers register a convincing victory.

## 'Have to adjust to team's needs'

SPORTS REPORTER



Soumya Sarkar's batting role has been fluctuating in recent times as the left-hander, who is mainly a top-order batsman, had to bat at number six and seven respectively in the two T20Is against Pakistan in January this year, when things did not quite go well for him.

But yesterday, the team management's mantra to provide adequate platforms and having the right player for the right role worked well for Soumya as the left-hander, coming in at number three against Zimbabwe, in the first T20I smashed his second fifty in the format.

The left-hander, for whom it was the first 50 after 21 innings in the shortest format of the game, looked in terrific touch right from the start and smashed a blistering 32-ball 62-run unbeaten knock, which included five sixes and four boundaries.

Courtesy of the furious 92-run opening stand between Tamim Iqbal and Liton Das, who also

### HIGHLIGHTS

- Bangladesh scored 200 for 3 which is the third instance for the Tigers to post over 200 mark in the T20Is.
- 92 runs opening stand from Tamim Iqbal and Liton Das is the highest opening stand from Bangladesh in the T20Is.
- 62 not out from Soumya Sarkar was his second T20I fifty and his first after 21 innings.

scored a fifty yesterday, Soumya later cashed in on the start as Bangladesh posted 200 for three, just their third score of 200 or higher in T20Is. It was enough for the hosts to clinch the first T20I against Zimbabwe comprehensively, by 48 runs.

Although Soumya did not admit that he preferred to bat at the top of the order, citing the team management's decision, he did indicate his comfort of batting at his actual position.

"I have always batted up the order, but I have to bat at number six or seven due to the demands of

the team. I have tried to give my best and prove myself wherever I bat. Although things have not gone well for me down the order and I was batting at number three after a long time, I was trying to cement my place, which was in the back of my head. I have always batted up the order, but I had to adjust as per the team's demands so there is nothing about my preference, instead I try to contribute for the team," player-of-the-match Soumya told reporters after the game yesterday.

According to the 27-year-old, who previously tended to keep his

strike rate high throughout, now the left-hander looks to attack a specific bowler and to play according to the situation.

Soumya had gotten married just late last month, and when asked that had changed his fortunes, he replied with a smile, "I have just got married and played only one game, but I can assume that the change is coming."

There were a lot of questions over Zimbabwe's bowlers, compared to the strength of the Pakistani bowling attack as the Tigers struggled to face the quality bowling in their previous T20I series, which the visitors went on to lose 2-0 in the three-match series.

Soumya admitted the fact and said that it's a matter of planning, when playing against a quality bowling attack like Pakistan.

"At times it depends on the planning as well. Yes, the bowlers do vary and the pace... as well as the variations [are difficult]. Obviously, Pakistani bowlers are much more skillful and we also try to plan according to that," Soumya said.



Similar celebrations like that in the picture above was a regular scenario in yesterday's game as Zimbabwe failed to put up a fight against a high-flying Bangladesh at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur. Bangladesh took a 1-0 lead in the two-match T20I series after beating Zimbabwe by 48 runs yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

### BD-ZIM SCOREBOARD

BLANDESH	R/B	4s/6s
Tamim c Williams		
b Madhever	41/33	3/2
Liton lbw b Raza	59/39	5/3
Soumya not out	62/32	4/5

BLANDESH	R/B	4s/6s
Mushfiqur c Williams		
b Mpofu	17/8	0/2
Mahmudullah not out	14/9	1/0
Extras: (lb-2, nb-1, w-4)		7
Total: (For 3 wkts in 20 overs)		200
Did not bat: Mahedi Hasan, Shaiful Islam, Afif Hossain, Mohammad Saifuddin, Aminul Islam, Mustafizur Rahman.		
Fall of wickets: 1-92, 2-106, 3-146.		

BLANDESH	R/B	4s/6s
Raza	4	0/31/1
Mumba	2	0/24/0
Tiripano	4	0/39/0
Mpofu	4	0/58/1
Madhever	2	0/15/1
Williams	4	0/31/0

ZIMBABWE	R/B	4s/6s
Kamunhukamwe c Liton		
b Aminul	28/20	4/1
Taylor c Soumya b Shaiful	1/5	0/0
Ervine lbw b Mustafizur	8/9	1/0
Madhever run out	4/5	0/0
Williams c Soumya		
b Aminul	20/12	1/2
Raza c Mushfiqur b Afif	10/14	2/0
Mutumbami c Liton		
b Mustafizur	20/13	0/2
Mutumbami c		
Mustafizur b Aminul	2/4	0/0
Tiripano b Saifuddin	20/13	0/3
Mumba c Liton		
b Mustafizur	25/16	3/1
Mpofu not out	2/3	0/0
Extras: (lb-1, w-11)		12
Total: (All out in 19 overs)		152
Fall of wickets: 1-11, 2-30, 3-37, 4-69, 5-69, 6-83, 7-100, 8-107, 9-130, 10-152.		

ZIMBABWE	R/B	4s/6s
Mustafizur	4	0/32/3
Shaiful	3	0/19/1
Saifuddin	3	0/19/1
Mahedi	4	0/29/0
Aminul	3	0/34/3
Affif	2	0/18/1

**Result:** Bangladesh won by 48 runs.  
**Player-of-the-match:** Soumya Sarkar.

### CORONAVIRUS FALLOUT

## AFC postpones joint qualifiers

SPORTS REPORTER

The Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) yesterday postponed the Bangladesh national football team's remaining four fixtures of the Joint Qualifiers of the 2020 World Cup and 2023 Asian Cup, scheduled for March and June, after the Asian Football Confederation (AFC) communicated a proposal to postpone the Preliminary Qualifiers Round 2 fixtures following the outbreak of coronavirus.

There had been a possibility of postponing World Cup and Asian Cup Qualifiers after the AFC postponed fixtures of the AFC Champions League in West Zone on Sunday and the game's governing body in Asia sent the postponement proposal to all its member associations yesterday after consulting with the world game's governing body FIFA.

Bangladesh were scheduled to host Afghanistan on March 26 in Sylhet before travelling to Qatar to play their away match on March 31. The boys in red and green were also scheduled to host India and Oman on June 4 and 9 respectively to complete the Round-2 fixtures of Group E in Asia.

In a statement sent to the BFF on Monday, AFC stated, "We have taken note of issues and various travel restrictions affecting the smooth delivery of upcoming preliminary joint qualifiers second-round matches scheduled to be played in March and June 2020."

"Following discussions with several participating member associations (PMAs) of the ongoing emergency meeting recently organised for the calendar for national and club competitions, AFC has consulted with FIFA and

collectively agreed to postpone the upcoming matches of the preliminary joint qualifier round-2."

BFF has also accepted the AFC proposal after discussing the matter with its relevant committees such as medical, national teams' management and let the AFC know about their decision immediately.

"After getting the proposal from AFC, we talked to all BFF



The Bangladesh fans are being discouraged to attend the Zimbabwe T20I series matches following the one-ticket-per-person rule enacted by the BCB to guard against the coronavirus outbreak. PHOTO: STAR

authorities concerned and accepted the AFC proposal of postponement as Bangladesh also found people affected by coronavirus," said BFF general secretary Abu Nayeem Shohag at a hurriedly arranged press conference at the BFF House yesterday.

However, participating member associations may still play matches in March or June upon mutual agreement, provided that the safety and health concerns of all

individuals involved meet the required standards, subject to prior approval by FIFA and AFC.

But the BFF don't want to take any risk to arrange the matches under the required standards set by FIFA and AFC.

"Who will take the responsibility if anything is raised centring the match?" questioned Shohag, adding that the FIFA and AFC will discuss further detailed of the postponed

Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's birth centenary have been postponed due to the coronavirus outbreak, Awami League sources told The Daily Star last night. The decision was made at a meeting of the AL Central Executive Committee at the Gono Bhaban in presence of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina.

The Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) had plans in motion to arrange a concert involving Bollywood musician AR Rahman on March 18, followed by two T20Is between Asia XI and World XI on March 20 and 21 respectively to commemorate the occasion.

In light of the AL decision, those events are now uncertain too.

"BCB President Nazmul Hassan will talk to the authorities concerned tomorrow [Tuesday], and we will have a clearer picture about it in the next two days," BCB Media Committee Chairman Jalal Yunus told The Daily Star last night.

BCB enacts one-ticket-per-person rule

With controlling the spread of coronavirus in mind, the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) yesterday moved to reduce the crowd size in the ongoing two-match T20I series between Bangladesh and Zimbabwe, decided to restrict the sale of tickets to one per person.

"We have decided to sell only one ticket to each person during the two T20Is against Zimbabwe. The government has given directives to discourage public gathering and following that we have taken this initiative," said BCB CEO Nizamuddin Chowdhury to the media yesterday.

Bangladesh on Sunday announced the first confirmed cases of coronavirus as three people tested positive.

## Ireland to stage BD T20Is in England

CRICINFO



Ireland will stage their four-match T20I series against Bangladesh in England, with The Oval, Chelmsford, Bristol and Edgbaston staging one fixture each.

Extensive renovations to their ground in Clontarf, combined with an unusually busy international schedule, left Ireland with only 12 ICC-standard pitches available across Malahide, Stormont and Bready.

Warren Deutrom, Cricket Ireland's chief executive, had hinted at the possibility of staging the series at neutral venues in December, and Richard Holdsworth, the performance director, visited several counties to discuss options earlier in the year.

This will be the first time that Ireland have hosted a series at a neutral venue, and the first neutral internationals between full-member nations on English soil since Pakistan played an ODI, two Tests and two T20Is against Australia in 2010.

Bangladesh fans have fond memories of two of the grounds being used. Their team secured a first-ever victory over England at Bristol in 2010, and were involved in two close games at The Oval in last summer's World Cup - a win against South Africa and a narrow defeat to New Zealand.

Bangladesh also featured in one of the three ODIs to have been wicketed at the County Ground in Chelmsford, a six-wicket defeat against New Zealand during the 1999 World Cup. All three of Chelmsford's ODIs came during World Cups, starting with a one-off fixture between India and Australia in 1983, and most recently Zimbabwe's win over South Africa in 1999.

More than half a million Bangladeshis live in the UK, the majority of whom live in London. There is also a large Bangladeshi population in the Midlands.

### FIXTURES

Date	Match	Venue
May 14	First ODI	Stormont
May 16	Second ODI	Stormont
May 19	Third ODI	Stormont
May 22	First T20I	The Oval
May 24	Second T20I	Chelmsford
May 27	Third T20I	Bristol
May 29	Fourth T20I	Edgbaston