



## 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.

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 Bangladesh's first of the two T20Is against Zimbabwe in Mirpur yesterday. Soumya notched his T20I career-best unbeaten 32-ball 62 to help Tigers register a convincing victory.

## Soumya, Liton banish demons

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh's batting approach in T20Is had come in for a lot of criticism during their previous T20I series that against Pakistan in January this year.

Questions were raised over Tamim Iqbal not being able to rotate the strike or lift tempo after being set at the crease, despite the left-hander scoring 39 off 34 balls and a 53-ball 65 in the two T20Is in Pakistan.

Despite stable starts from openers Tamim and young Mohammad Naim, Bangladesh were unable to utilise the six Powerplay overs, scoring 35 without loss in the first game and 33 for two in the second.

That was then followed by a poor show from the middle order as Bangladesh posted below-par scores of 141 for four and 136 for six in the two games, and going on to lose the series, to no one's surprise.

But things looked totally different for the Tigers in the first

- 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.

match of the two-match T20I series against Zimbabwe yesterday, with in-form Liton Das -- who was promoted to open the innings with Tamim -- providing succour for the hosts.

Both batsman started from where they left off in the ODI series as the opening pair registered yet another record, this time adding a record opening stand of 92 runs for Bangladesh, surpassing their previous highest opening stand of 74 against Sri Lanka back in 2018.

Tamim, however, departed after scoring 41 off 33 balls, which

again witnessed as Soumya Sarkar, mainly a top-order batsman who batted at numbers six and seven respectively in the two T20Is against Pakistan, was promoted to number three yesterday. And the stylish left-hander made full use of the opportunity and looked in fine touch right from the start.

Soumya took on the Zimbabwean bowlers and played some delightful shots all over the ground and more than capitalised on the brilliant start from the openers.

The left-hander, who was yet to show his full potential with the bat in the shortest format of the game, went on to smash his second T20I fifty off just thirty balls.

Courtesy of Soumya's blistering hitting, where the left-hander struck three sixes in the last over of the innings from Chris Mpofu, Bangladesh managed to add 75 runs in their last five overs to post their third total of 200 or over. Soumya finished with a six to remain unbeaten on 62 off just 32 balls, which featured five sixes and four boundaries.



Similar celebrations like that in the backdrop of the above picture 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.

### BD-ZIM SCOREBOARD

BLADESH	R/B	4s/6s		
Tamim c Williams	41/33	3/2		
b Madhevere	59/39	5/3		
Liton lbw b Raza	62/32	4/5		
Soumya not out				
Mushfiqur c Williams	17/8	0/2		
b Mpofu	14/9	1/0		
Mahmudullah not out				
Extras: (lb-1, nb-1, w-4)		7		
Total: (For 3 wickets in 20 overs)	200			
Did not bat: Mahedi Hasan, Shafiqur Islam, Afif Hossain, Mohammad Saifuddin, Aminul Islam, Mustafizur Rahman.				
Fall of wickets: 1-92, 2-106, 3-146.				
Bowler	O	M	R	W
Raza	4	0	31	1
Mumba	2	0	24	0
Tripiano	4	0	39	0
Mpofu	4	0	58	1
Madhevere	2	0	15	1
Williams	4	0	31	0
ZIMBABWE	R/B	4s/6s		
Kamunhukamwe c Liton	28/20	4/1		
b Aminul	1/5	0/0		
Taylor c Soumya b Shafiqur	8/9	1/0		
Ervine lbw b Mustafizur	4/5	0/0		
Madhevere run out				
Williams c Soumya	20/12	1/2		
b Aminul	10/14	2/0		
Raza c Mushfiqur b Afif	20/13	0/2		
Mutumbari c Liton				
b Mustafizur				
Mutumbari c				
Mustafizur b Aminul	2/4	0/0		
Tripiano b Saifuddin	20/13	0/3		
Mumba c Liton	25/16	3/1		
b Mustafizur	2/3	0/0		
Mpofu not out				
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.				
Bowler	O	M	R	W
Mustafizur	4	0	32	3
Shafiqur	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.

## 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 AFC Communication and Postponement (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 proposal of postponement to all its member associations yesterday after consulting with the world's 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 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

"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 fixtures and communicate with PMAs in due course. Meanwhile, Qatar recently banned the entry of people travelling from 14 countries including Bangladesh due to coronavirus.

Five more national sports federations -- cycling, volleyball, archery, golf and basketball -- had

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 on Monday.

With a capacity of 25,000 spectators at the home of cricket in Mirpur, the BCB is intent on keeping the crowd to one-fifth of its capacity for the T20Is at SBNS, with the restriction on ticket sales the first step against COVID-19.

There is minimum attendance at the ground today. One of the spectators said: "I have been waiting since 3pm to get tickets but the counters have closed. I managed to buy tickets at black by paying 100 TK extra."

Another said that he would have liked to bring his family but the coronavirus threat stopped him from bringing his close ones with him. "I wanted to bring my family but the virus threat averted me. I could've managed the tickets at black."

BCB has 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. All the events are to take place at SBNS.

"We will speak to the government regarding the situation. The direction from the government has come only yesterday [Sunday]. At this point things are moving as planned but as because there is a concern from the government, we will monitor the situation closely and will keep aligned to the concern from the government," Nizamuddin clarified.



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 coronavirus.

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.

## 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 staged 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.

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