

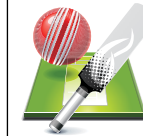


Although all cricketing activities have been halted in the country due to the coronavirus pandemic, Bangladesh batsman Mohammad Mithun was seen stretching at the BCB Academy yesterday because despite the state of uncertainty, perhaps the foremost concern for a player remains his fitness.

Tough times await BCB

Tigers' Ireland tour postponed

SPORTS REPORTER



The Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) and Cricket Ireland (CI) agreed to postpone their bilateral upcoming series due to the coronavirus pandemic, CI announced in a press release yesterday.

Bangladesh were scheduled to play three ODIs in Ireland and four T20Is in England during the series from May 14 to May 29.

"Once the scale of the COVID-19 pandemic was understood, and the advice of both governments and partner boards was sought, it became increasingly unlikely that this series could proceed as scheduled. We have a responsibility to protect the well-being of players, coaches, fans and the wider community, and will not hesitate to take a safety-first approach to our operations over coming months," Warren Deutrom, Chief Executive of Cricket Ireland was quoted as saying in the press release.

"We will continue monitoring the situation, and will liaise as necessary with relevant sports bodies, public health agencies and our stakeholders here and abroad, and provide further updates on the home season in due course."

Ireland were scheduled to arrange their four-match T20I series against Bangladesh, starting from May 22 to May 29, at neutral

venues in England. This would have been the first time Ireland arranged a series at a neutral venue. However, England has postponed all cricket till May 28.

Bangladesh were originally scheduled to play one Test, only the second Test match in Ireland, on the tour but that fixture was converted to a T20I in December last year citing "financial constraints".

Earlier yesterday, BCB CEO Nizamuddin Chowdhury had informed that they were expecting Cricket Ireland to communicate their decision soon.

"Cricket Ireland will take any decision regarding this as they are the hosts. Already we are in touch with them. As England has taken a step regarding this, maybe Ireland will make their stance clear to us very soon," concluded Nizamuddin.

Sporting events worldwide are in disarray and Bangladesh has also seen international events in football, archery, golf, volleyball, cricket, basketball and cycling postponed while the cricket team tour to Pakistan has also been postponed.

Bangladesh were scheduled to host Australia for two Tests in June following the Ireland series and although it is too early to make statements regarding that series, the BCB still need to make a contingency plan if the situation does not improve. Like many other sporting bodies, the BCB will also have a tough time scheduling and planning future events.

Champaka to take reins of HP unit

SPORTS REPORTER

Former Sri Lanka pacer Champaka Ramanayake is set to take over as head coach of the Bangladesh Cricket Board's High Performance Unit. The post had been vacant since December last year after the board parted ways with Simon Helmot.

Champaka returned to Bangladesh two years ago, joining the HP unit as its head bowling coach.

"Champaka has been working with us for a long time and has good relations with players so he is a front-runner. We will make a decision after speaking to BCB president Nazmul Hassan," HP chairman Naimur Rahman said yesterday.

Champaka first came to Bangladesh in 2008 before joining the Sri Lanka national team as its bowling coach.

"I wanted to be head coach of the HP team. I have good knowledge of the boys. I have worked with them in academy and HP team for the past two years. I would be thankful if board kept their faith in me," Champaka said.

BCB asks staff to work remotely

SPORTS REPORTER



The Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) decided to let its staff stay at home and work remotely from today due to the coronavirus outbreak, informed the BCB CEO Nizamuddin Chowdhury yesterday.

"It will be implemented from tomorrow [Sunday] and we have already spoken to our department managers and given directives from the board to everyone. We will try to limit our operational programmes as much as possible unless there are any emergencies," Nizamuddin told reporters.

"As the BCB is associated with the ICC, ACC and other member countries, we will try to attend to them remotely. There will be specific instructions if there is any

emergency work for anyone in the office and we are trying to work accordingly. We have also requested everyone not to leave their stations to stay available."

The BCB also arranged an awareness seminar for its staff yesterday, where doctors informed them about the threat of the coronavirus and precautionary measures.

"Mainly, the board thinks that we should all participate in raising awareness. As a primary step, we will have a practice session involving our staff and doctors," Nizamuddin added.

Following an emergency meeting on March 19, the BCB had postponed all cricketing activities in the country indefinitely, including the ongoing Bangabandhu Dhaka Premier League.

Bangladesh has so far registered 20 people who have been infected by the virus.



The Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) arranged a seminar in Mirpur yesterday, where Dr. Chandan Kumar Roy spoke to its staff about how to deal with the coronavirus pandemic.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

The Test: A window into Australia's path to self-discovery

MOHAMMAD ISAM

How a high-profile sports team redeemed its reputation and renewed their supporters' faith is the story of Amazon Prime's "The Test", an inside look into the Australia cricket team's journey from Cape Town 2018 to the 2019 Ashes.

The admission of Cameron Bancroft and senior players David Warner and Steve Smith that they were involved in the plan to roughen up one side of the ball with a foreign object made worldwide headlines and led to suspensions that had a lasting impact. Coach Darren Lehmann left his job tearfully, and so did some Cricket Australia officials. While the public breakdowns of Smith, Warner and Bancroft was gut wrenching, there was a helpful dollop of schadenfreude for those who long



suffered at the hands of Australia's on-field behaviour or, as Steve Waugh liked to call sledging, their "mental disintegration".

The Amazon Prime documentary begins with the appointment of Justin Langer, one of Australia's heroes from their golden era, as the head coach. It was seen as a clean break from Cape Town and it quickly becomes clear that Langer is not just the coach, but



Australia's Nathan Lyon (2nd R) celebrates with teammates after taking the wicket of England's captain Joe Root during first Ashes Test at Edgbaston in Birmingham in August, 2019.

PHOTO: AFP FILE

also a guru who is eager to take this team through a cultural revolution.

How Australia bounced back from several on-field setbacks for 12 months -- getting thrashed 5-0 by England in the summer of 2018, including the world record score of 481 in Nottingham, Test series losses to Pakistan and India, and not going past the World Cup semifinals -- before claiming the 2019 Ashes, forms the backdrop of the documentary.

Langer has a major say, although Tim Paine, the unlikely Test captain who took over in South Africa immediately after Smith lost the role in Sandpapergate, is seen as a calming influence on the team. He lacks the depth as a batsman but makes up with his leadership and wicketkeeping. Smith and Warner joins in the nick of time, helping them through the World Cup and then retaining the Ashes.

It helps that the five Tests provided unbelievable drama, starting from the introduction of Jofra Archer in the second Test, to him hitting Smith, who keeps his sublime form before and after the concussion, as well as little plot twists and turns throughout the six weeks. Australia retaining the Ashes perhaps helped the documentary go on air, because let's face it, entertainment is of no value without a happy ending.

The fly-on-the-wall nature of the 10-episode series really steals the show. From Nathan Lyon leading the winning song "Under the Southern Cross", coach Langer picking up the bottles after he kicks a trash-can following Lyon's missed run out in the dying moments in Headingley, to seeing the detailed planning that goes into their pace attack, batsmen and fielders.

The clincher was when Langer

Imagine what it was like when Shakib Al Hasan and Mahmudullah went to bat against New Zealand in the Champions Trophy, or when Mustafizur Rahman was first discovered in the nets by Mashrafe Bin Mortaza; or the moments after Bangladesh lost that Bangalore game against India in 2016. Or, every time BCB President Nazmul Hassan intervened and interfered.

made the whole team sit through the Ben Stokes-Jack Leach 10th wicket partnership in Headingley, with commentary, to make sure another such instance does not take place. It was a masterstroke, and so was his admonishment of Paine for not bringing up the fielders during one over. Paine said he felt bad to be given a sermon in front of his teammates, but the lesson was learned almost instantly.

Some of the bromances that developed was also given some airtime, including Adam Zampa's 'love cafe' with Marcus Stoinis, as well as Marnus Labuschagne's obsession with Smith. Among the most endearing part of the 10 episodes was Mitchell Marsh wanting to be the best team man during the Ashes, and how his habit of walking to get coffee every morning eventually drew

the whole team with him. Team sports is sometimes only about the camaraderie, forget the results.

There was little mention of how Smith and Warner coped with their year in banishment, or what the former thought of Paine and Aaron Finch as captain. There was also little commentary from Australia's opponents, but since the message is well and truly controlled by Cricket Australia, it was expecting too much from an already wonderful concept.

Now, how would you like to see one of your own cricket team? A similar concept in Bangladesh seems unlikely given how the BCB operates its media wing, or how it generally views public consumption of its properties. But, it doesn't hurt to briefly imagine a documentary about the wild ride of this cricket team and cricket board.

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Australia have led the way in many aspects in world cricket since the mid-1990s, and this could give other boards a concept to work on. But the documentary made one sit up and realise that at the end of the day, it is just a game of cricket they are playing, but it is at the highest level of scrutiny, expectation and exposure.

Mohammad Isam is ESPNcricinfo's Bangladesh correspondent and a former sports reporter at The Daily Star.

CA to propose reserve days for T20 WC semis?

PTI, SYDNEY

Cricket Australia (CA) may propose the introduction of reserve days for the semifinals of the Men's T20 World Cup in the ICC Cricket Committee meeting later this year. Earlier this month, the ICC had faced a lot of flak for not keeping a reserve day for the knockout stages of the Women's T20 World Cup in Australia.

As a result, England were forced to make an exit after their semifinal clash was washed out resulting in India, the higher ranked side in the group stage, progressing to the final. As the ICC's current playing conditions stand, the men's T20 World Cup, slated to begin here from October 18, will have no reserve days available before the final at the Melbourne Cricket Ground on November 15.

But, an ICC spokesperson said, according to a report in cricket.au.com., that playing conditions for the Men's T20 World Cup will be discussed in the organisation's Cricket Committee, which is scheduled to meet in the middle of this year, before they are formally signed by the Chief Executives Committee (CEC).

Should any of ICC's member boards wish to suggest changes to playing conditions, they will have opportunity to do so at the CEC gathering, although it's rare for standard playing conditions to be revised at that stage, the ICC spokesperson said, according to the report.