

SPORT

No new recipes for downcast Jahanara

MAZHAR UDDIN

The Bangladesh women's national cricket team were one of the last sporting teams to return home before the coronavirus outbreak, landing in Dhaka on March 2 after completing their ICC Women's T20 World Cup campaign in Australia.

The cricketers were happy to get home safely but things escalated over the next few days, with sport worldwide halted in a global effort to contain the spread of the virus.

Restrictions were also imposed on movement and public transport by the government which led to all-rounder Jahanara Alam being unable to return to her hometown of Khulna and deciding to self-isolate at her Dhaka residence.

"I contemplated training for a few more days before returning home

but the sudden coronavirus threat changed everything and I decided to stay in Dhaka and not move. It's a very anxious time for me, I have never experienced anything like this in my entire life. At the same time, not being able to play cricket also makes it extremely boring," Jahanara told The Daily Star.

The pace bowling all-rounder, who is one of the most successful bowlers in the Bangladesh team, also enjoys cooking and sadly reported that her quest to learn new recipes during the time had also gone awry due to the unpleasant atmosphere.

"I love to cook whenever I am at home but recently, I've found that I don't even feel like cooking anymore. I try to pray, do some shadow practice and free-hand fitness exercises but something still feels amiss. It's a very critical time for all of us and we must ensure our safety first. I would like to request

everyone to remain home and stay with your family and take care of your health," she added.

Similar to other upcoming events worldwide that have been postponed, the upcoming women's fifty over World Cup qualifiers scheduled from July in Sri Lanka this year are also in jeopardy.

However, according to Bangladesh T20 skipper Salma Khatun, the main focus for everyone should be on the precautionary measures being advised by the WHO and government.

"This situation is something very unusual for everyone but you must acknowledge that life comes first, ahead of everything else. And we should collectively follow the instructions to remain safe. We should all do our civic duty and stay home to make sure we don't spread this virus and cause further damage," Salma said.

The 29-year-old added that it

would be important for the players to take this solitary time to work on their individual fitness at home in order to prepare for upcoming events because she believes everything will become normal soon.

"You have to remain positive, I am certain that everything will be fine again. We have to be prepared for the coming days. It is the best time to evaluate your game mentally given the amount of free time we have on our hands now. We should work on our fitness at home so that we are prepared to play, given short notice, when the time comes," she said.

It's safe to say that the entire world is going through a terrible ordeal but optimists such as Jahanara and Salma believe that proper safety measures and a collective, organised effort can help us navigate our way out of this pandemic in a short span of time.



With all sport completely halted, including training camps, Bangladesh women's national team player Jahanara Alam has been maintaining her fitness regimen from home.

PHOTO: COURTESY

BFF decides to postpone polls

SPORTS REPORTER

The Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) has decided to postpone its April 20 elections for indefinite period in face of growing demand for deferment from the stakeholders.

The executive committee made the decision yesterday through an online opinion conducted among the 21 members. All of them opined in favour of postponement except for Harun-Ur-Rashid, who did not respond to the e-mail sent to him by the BFF.

A statement from the BFF said, "Due to the World Health Organisation declaring the Covid-19 outbreak a pandemic and the government of Bangladesh imposing a nationwide lockdown from March 26 to April 4 to curb the spread of coronavirus,

any kind of public gathering is banned nowadays."

"The executive committee of the BFF has decided to postpone the BFF Elective Congress 2020, previously scheduled to be held on April 20, unless the situation becomes normal. The same will be communicated to AFC and FIFA," the statement further said.

BFF general secretary Abu Nayeem Shohag later informed that they would write to the FIFA and the AFC by tomorrow to seek approval to postpone the elections and mandate to hold the polls sometime in normal situation. The tenure of the current committee will expire on April 30.

Shohag also informed that the committee still wants to continue with the process of collecting names of councillors, extending the deadline for submission of names to April 7 from March 30.



The Bangladesh Football Federation started a programme yesterday to provide food to the less fortunate, especially those who have been struggling to earn a living due to the coronavirus pandemic. BFF officials handed out packets of food outside the BFF House in Motijheel and said that the programme would provide 300 people with food and would run until April 4.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

Transfer window till Dec 31?

AGENCIES

FIFA is reportedly considering extending the summer transfer window until December 31, while expiring contracts could run beyond June 30 as the European football calendar remains up in the air with competitions on pause due to the outbreak of coronavirus.

Now, L'Equipe claims FIFA is studying the possibility of extending the summer transfer window until the end of this calendar year. Summer windows in Europe are generally held between July and September, although some of its smaller nations open for business in June.



PHOTO: COLLECTED

France manager Michel Hidalgo stands alongside legendary footballer Michel Platini.

France legend Hidalgo dies at 87

AFP, Paris

Michel Hidalgo, the coach of the great France team that won the 1984 European Championship, died at the age of 87 "of natural causes" at home in Marseille, his family said Thursday.

He is best remembered for his eight years in charge of Les Bleus, which culminated with the stylish team of Michel Platini, Alain Giresse and Jean Tigana winning Euro 84 on home soil, beating Spain 2-0 in the final in Paris. It was their first ever major tournament success.

Prior to that, he took France to the 1978 World Cup, their first appearance at the tournament in 12 years, and then led them to the semi-finals of the 1982 World Cup, where they lost on penalties to West Germany.

"As coach, Michel took the France team to its greatest heights, opting for a beautiful style of football which allowed each one of us to fully express our individual talents," said Platini in a statement.

"Michel Hidalgo left a considerable legacy. He rebuilt French football at international level. His vision and his work still resonate today in every match our national team plays."

Born in 1933, Hidalgo also enjoyed a richly successful playing career. After starting at Le Havre, he played for the great Reims side of the 1950s, featuring, and scoring, when they lost 4-3 to Real Madrid in the first ever European Cup final in 1956. Hidalgo went on to win two league titles and two French Cups with Monaco in the early 1960s.

'I'm still hungry to play'

Anderson says coronavirus won't end his career

AFP, London



England bowler James Anderson is determined that the coronavirus will not end his illustrious career as he focuses on keeping fit by taking part in "virtual" training sessions with his teammates.

Anderson, 37, whose 584 Test wickets are the most taken by any pacesman in the history of the game, is nearing the end of his playing days.

But the Lancashire veteran says despite having no cricket to play until the end of May at the earliest, the idea of not bowling professionally again has not crossed his mind.

"I've not actually thought about never playing cricket again," he said during a conference call on Thursday. "I feel like we will play again and I will play again at some stage."

"I'm still hungry to play, I've still got ambitions to play for England."

"So I think the fact I've been able to do this for a long time and I get to play a sport as a job means when I do get to do that again, I'm really going to cherish it and enjoy every single moment of it."

The England and Wales Cricket Board is planning to install coronavirus checkpoints and isolation units at grounds in its bid to resume international cricket without spectators.

The ECB had suspended all professional cricket till May 28, delaying the start of the new season, due to the COVID-19 pandemic. However, ECB director of events Steve Elworthy said they are looking at ways to resume play inside closed doors and that it would need a sterile "bubble" to ensure the identification of anyone in the vicinity who was carrying the virus.

With Britain under a coronavirus lockdown, Anderson is keeping fit by working out on-line with teammates including fellow pacemen Stuart Broad and Mark Wood.

"A few of the lads are training together virtually," he said. "I did a workout with Stuart Broad and Mark Wood yesterday."

"We've all got Pelotons -- the bikes. You can compete against each other. Stuart came out on top this time, with me a close second and Mark Wood in third."

Anderson made the most recent of his 151 Test appearances against South Africa in Cape Town in January before a broken rib ended his tour prematurely.

That followed an Ashes campaign last year in which he bowled just four overs because of a calf problem.

Anderson primed England left Anderson out for their recent tour of Sri Lanka, curtailed by the coronavirus, in a bid to get him fit for the English summer.

"To get injured again was a big frustration," he said. "But it was lucky in a way that it was a broken rib. If it was a muscle injury it would have taken much longer to recover."

The England and Wales Cricket Board last week put cricket on hold until May 28 -- just a week before the scheduled start of the first Test against the West Indies.

Anderson believes even if that return

date is feasible, the timescale could be tight unless players can train outdoors in May.

He is also wary about the prospect of matches being played behind closed doors, saying the game has to be played in front of fans.

Although he has long been a red-ball specialist, Anderson said he would be prepared to play white-ball cricket again, even in the new Hundred competition.

Anderson has an ambassadorial role with the Manchester Originals, one of the franchises, but no contract.

"I want to be playing cricket and if that is the only cricket going on, if it's the Hundred or the T20 Blast, I'd love to be involved in that," he said.

"If there wasn't any red-ball cricket this summer, it would be a long, long time for me to be ticking over in the nets."

Despite the frustrations as a cricketer during the coronavirus lockdown, Anderson said it was important to look at the bigger picture.

"People are sacrificing a hell of a lot for us to try and keep us healthy," he said.

"I think us sacrificing some of, and maybe all of, the cricket season and staying inside for a bit, I don't think that's a huge sacrifice."



Brazil superstar Neymar, who is currently in home quarantine in his native land, found himself in hot water after posting pictures of himself alongside his friends yesterday, with fans and media bashing the 28-year-old for flouting guidelines over maintaining social distance to prevent the spread of coronavirus.

PHOTO: INSTAGRAM



This is like nirvana in that we're home with our families, we sleep in our own beds, we eat home-cooked dinners and we can still work in one degree or another from home. It gives them a really good opportunity to recharge and we're looking at scenarios to make sure we'll be ready for whatever comes up.

JUSTIN LANGER
AUSTRALIA COACH