



Trouble on the horizon for chess players

ANISUR RAHMAN

“Working from home” has suddenly become a buzzword for the professionals the world over following the outbreak of coronavirus, but for professional athletes that hardly holds meaning as all they can do is some light practice to stay fit.

However, chess players are having a different experience because they can practice indoors and in isolation just as easily, but there are financial drawbacks.

Grand Master Ziaur Rahman, who is considered the country's lone professional chess player, talked about the advantage of practicing indoors as a chess player and the challenges ahead of him while he was speaking to The Daily Star.

“Having no tournaments due to coronavirus is a problem for us because players like me, who earn their bread and butter through chess, came this far through hard work. Now I have no options left but to spend the money I deposited for the future of my family,” the 45-year-old Zia said.

“I will be able to bear my expenditure from the deposited money for one year because I need less money to run my three-member family in our own apartment. I am lucky that my son is a good one who is also



Grand Master Ziaur Rahman has been keeping sharp by playing games with his son, a formidable opponent in his own right, as they practise social distancing. PHOTO: COLLECTED

playing chess and earning money from different tournaments. If the situation doesn't improve, then I will definitely face problems,” he continued.

“I know some chess players who hardly take part in international tournaments. Instead, they earn their bread and butter playing different tournaments at home. And they are definitely going to face a tough time in the future. The arbiter of the chess tournaments is also going to face the same problem,” he said.

Zia however has been enjoying time with his son Tahsin Tajwar Zia

and wife.

“I have been practising with my son, giving time to the family by helping my wife a lending hand in doing household chores. Sometimes, I am even cook. Sometime I'm helping my Indian students through online sessions and taking part in courtesy tournaments online,” Zia informed.

Zia was very conscious about the need to stay home since the emergence of coronavirus in Bangladesh. He said he would take time and would be cautious before taking part in any international tournaments.

“I forgot from when I have been in quarantine at home [laughs]. Maybe from March 10. I did not even allow my son to take part in any tournaments, including the national youth championship where I think he could have won the title,” he said.

Zia also wants chess players to utilise the time at home saying that chess players can practice at home and online. A player can even analyse his game and pen down which system they want to use. Zia also requested everyone to stay at home and stay positive in the fight against coronavirus.

Reminiscence: My first match

In these times of social distancing, we must be safe while remembering that we do not get too used to the world being at a standstill. We were meant to go watch matches together, agree with a few of our neighbours and disagree with the rest. So, we are taking turns at The Daily Star Sport talking about our first live experience at a sports venue. Mazhar Uddin from Dhaka, 1998



I had never before experienced such freezing weather and it was perhaps the chilliest of winters in Dhaka back in January 1998. Me, then a 12-year-old boy, had become so hooked to cricket after Bangladesh won the ICC Trophy the previous year that I made up my mind to become a cricketer.

So, I began practising under former national leg-spinner Wahidul Gani at the Bangabandhu National Stadium. One day he called and asked me to collect a tracksuit from him, told me to wear it and wait outside the stadium

cricketing heroes roaming beside me just like normal people, knocking the ball and I can remember that I even threw one ball to Aamer Sohail.

Going back to the game, it was also one of the most memorable matches in history. I saw the elegant and flawless Saeed Anwar striking a magnificent hundred along with Ijaz Ahmed as Pakistan posted a huge 314 for 5 in 48 overs. During the break, I got a box of polao and a soft drink from the authorities, which I enjoyed a lot, eating right in front of thousands of spectators, separated from them by a barbed wire fence.

But I was still waiting for the



India opener Sourav Ganguly plays a square cut on way to scoring a match-winning century against Pakistan in a thrilling final of the Silver Jubilee Independence Cup on January 18, 1998. PHOTO: COLLECTED

premises before the third final of the Silver Jubilee Independence Cup between India and Pakistan in Dhaka. I was still unaware that I was chosen as the ball boy along with a few other youngsters, including Mohammad Ashraf and Shahriar Nafees, who would be watching the game from the boundary ropes and help fielders return the ball from the fence.

I can still remember wearing the red Coca Cola tracksuit and entering the ground to witness my first ever international cricket match, that too between fierce archrivals India and Pakistan.

For the first few minutes I was stunned – I couldn't move or, truth be told, even feel -- when I saw the likes of Saeed Anwar, Mohammad Azharuddin, Sachin Tendulkar, Sourav Ganguly, Inzamam-ul-Haq and others emerge from the dressing room and head to the ground for the warm up session.

After a while I managed to gather myself somewhat and realised that this was my chance to take the autographs of all the players and I didn't miss out on that.

I was in heaven with all my

potential coup de grace, which I had previously always witnessed on TV. Sachin and Sourav walked by me towards the pitch to open the innings for India and it gives me goosebumps even writing this.

In reply I witnessed yet another masterclass from Ganguly who struck a hundred equally entertaining as Anwar, while Sachin however was dismissed in the forties.

Robin Singh also chipped in and it turned out to be a very interesting affair when the weak floodlights had forced officials into a dilemma at the end of the match. It was decided that the match would be finished and then, it was Hrishikesh Kanitkar who struck the winning boundary off the penultimate delivery to help win India a thriller by three wickets.

Back then, totals over 300 in ODIs were quite rare and I couldn't thank my luck more for what I had witnessed as it was then a world record for the highest successful chase in ODIs.

22 years have gone by and I can hardly recall many of the past incidents of my life, but I will never forget my first ever cricket match, experience from the field, till I die.

Morgan bats for closed-door cricket

AGENCIES

With international sport either cancelled or postponed because of the coronavirus pandemic, host captain Eoin Morgan says it could be the way forward to advance the game.

Australia are among those countries visiting the UK this year, with three Twenty20s and three one-day internationals scheduled in July.

But while English grounds are used to bumper attendances for international fixtures, Morgan pointed out that is not the case everywhere.

“I've played county cricket for a long time and Test match cricket in Dubai and Abu Dhabi, and that's the exact same, I'd say,” World Cup-winning captain Morgan said.

“From a very serious point of view, if medical experts advised us it was OK to play behind closed doors and it was on TV, I think that would be a huge step forward for the game.”

Two Englands once more?

KEKUSH TAPADER



Is it possible that a representative national team would play two Tests at the same time against two different oppositions, that too on opposite sides of the world, on the same day? As ridiculous as it sounds, this incredible feat was achieved by England in January 1930 when they sent two teams 8,700 miles apart from each other, one in Christchurch to play against New Zealand and the other in Bridgetown to be pitted against West Indies.

The coronavirus pandemic has halted sporting events around the globe indefinitely. All domestic cricket in England has been postponed until May 28 at the earliest. However, England's World Cup-winning captain Eoin Morgan has already entertained the idea of them playing two series, albeit different formats, with separate squads at the same time as the long layoff could lead to a compressed international schedule after resumption.

While the idea of playing different formats at the same time in the modern era may have stemmed from the need to fit a potentially crammed international schedule, back in 1930, when Test was the only format, the sole agenda behind sending two teams to two different continents was to help promote cricket.

Back then, both West Indies and

New Zealand were just recently added to the Imperial Cricket Conference (ICC) -- the forerunner to the modern International Cricket Council (ICC) -- alongside the likes of Australia, England and South Africa after a meeting in May 1926. While West Indies had played three Tests before playing the Freddie Calthorpe-led England side from January 11, New Zealand were playing their first ever Test when they met the Harold



FREDDIE CALTHORPE HAROLD GILLIGAN

Gilligan-led England starting from January 10 in Christchurch.

Even though the two England sides were playing Tests at different parts of the world on the same day, they were not in action simultaneously. The second day of the Christchurch Test, on January 11, was washed out. And hence, the English side playing in the Caribbeans from January 11 were not in action simultaneously as the one in Christchurch. The next day, January 12, was a Sunday and was a rest day for both Tests. And by the time the match in Barbados started on January 13, the three-day match in Christchurch was

already over with England winning comfortably by eight wickets.

The two England sides were again scheduled to play Tests on the same day on the aforementioned tours and this time both matches -- the third Test in Georgetown and fourth Test at Eden Park in Auckland -- both started on February 21. And this time both Englands were caught in action simultaneously.

Owing to time differences, the second day's play in New Zealand on February 22 coincided with the last session of the first day's play in Georgetown, where it was still February 21. With February 23 a Sunday -- rest day -- the final day in Auckland, on February 24, would have coincided with the rest day in Georgetown.

As a result, even though the bizarre instances of one team playing two Tests on the same day have occurred twice in the past, due to time differences and weather, it was less than even two hours that the two English sides actually played simultaneously at the same time.

History could well be repeated with perhaps more simultaneous playing hours by the same side but with two different teams in the future, if the England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) do wind up heeding the idea of playing a separate Test squad against West Indies or Pakistan while playing a different ODI and another T20I squad against Australia in July 2020.

Lewis, of 'DLS method' fame, dies at 78

AFP, London



Tony Lewis, one of the men behind the Duckworth-Lewis-Stern method used in weather-affected limited overs cricket matches, has died aged 78, the England and Wales Cricket Board announced Wednesday.

“Tony, alongside fellow mathematician Frank Duckworth, devised the Duckworth-Lewis method which was introduced in 1997 and adopted officially by the ICC (International Cricket Council) in 1999.

“Renamed the Duckworth-Lewis-Stern Method in 2014, the mathematical formula continues to be used in rain reduced limited overs cricket games across the globe,” the statement said.

A career academic, and not the Welshman of the same name who captained England, Lewis received an MBE (Member of the Order of the British Empire) for his services to cricket and mathematics in 2010.

Duckworth, the more outspoken of the founding duo -- fellow



The formula came about in response to the extraordinary climax of a rain-interrupted 1992 World Cup semi-final in Sydney. The method then in use was based on removing the lowest-scoring overs from each team's innings. But it produced a farcical finish to a showpiece semi-final when South Africa, who had faced the challenging but achievable target of 22 runs off 13 balls to beat England, were left with the impossible task of scoring 21 runs off one ball after a rain delay.

statistician Steven Stern helped revise the formula several years later -- said: “I recall hearing (commentator) Christopher Martin-Jenkins on radio saying 'surely someone, somewhere could come up with something

better' and I soon realised that it was a mathematical problem that required a mathematical solution.”

The big difference between Duckworth-Lewis and previous methods was that it gave credit to sides defending a target for taking wickets as well as chasing sides for



scoring runs.

Significantly, this meant the target could be adjusted proportionately in the event of more than one stoppage.

An enduring criticism of the system is that it is difficult to

understand without having access to a chart that shows where teams need to be over by over, for however many wickets they have lost.

Several sides have still confused the target needed to tie with the total they require to win, with co-hosts South Africa being knocked

out of the 2003 World Cup when they made this mistake against Sri Lanka in Durban. The formula has also been criticised for not being suited to Twenty20 matches

No alternative method, however, has yet found favour with the ICC.

Pape Diouf dies of coronavirus

AFP, Marseille

Former Marseille president Pape Diouf has died aged 68 after contracting the new coronavirus, a family source told AFP on Tuesday.

Diouf, who was born in Chad but had French and Senegalese citizenship, led the club between 2005-2009 and helped build the side who lifted the Ligue 1 title in 2010.

He was hospitalised in Senegal after contracting the virus there and became the country's first COVID-19 fatality.

Diouf had been due to leave for Nice earlier on Tuesday to be treated in France, but a sharp deterioration in his health -- which saw him placed on a respirator -- prevented him from boarding the plane.



Cristiano Ronaldo may be in self-isolation, but the Portuguese has always taken his fitness seriously and posted this picture yesterday to reassure fans that he had not lost his edge. PHOTO: INSTAGRAM