



Support staff looking for BCB's support

MAZHAR UDDIN

The Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) has come forward to provide one-time monetary support to non-contracted first-class cricketers who were taking part in the Bangabandhu Dhaka Premier League 2019-20 season, and the move was highly appreciated.

The BCB has already handed over cheques to respective clubs to support the cricketers in the wake of the coronavirus pandemic. This was done as the BCB apprehends that the DPL, which was postponed after the first round, may not resume anytime soon.

However, there are coaches, trainers and physios who work their socks off to ensure the game keeps rolling and these people earn their bread through the Dhaka league.

Although the cricketers have got the financial support from the BCB, the coaches and the support staff remain overlooked in these testing times, with their livelihoods heavily dependent on such remuneration.

Among the twelve DPL clubs, each have at least four to five support staff which includes head coach, assistant coach, physio and trainer.

There are a few coaches who are among paid employees of the BCB



PHOTO: COLLECTED

Mamunur Rashid Sumon, assistant coach of Legends of Rugganj, with cricketer-turned coaches Aftab Ahmed and Nazmul Hossain.

such as Khaled Mahmud and Foisal Hossain Dickens, both working for Abahani. There are others like Talha Jubair, Rajin Saleh, Sohel Islam, Alamgir Kabir who are among the paid employees of the BCB. But coaches of half of those twelve clubs are not enlisted as

BCB's employees and they mostly rely on earnings from the DPL, which is currently suspended indefinitely.

Mamunur Rashid Sumon, an assistant coach of Legends of Rugganj team, is one those coaches who is not a BCB employee and one whose livelihood depends on earnings from the DPL.

Since it is still not certain when the league will resume again, Sumon is passing anxious time at home and looking forward for support from the BCB.

"Like the non-contracted cricketers got one-time monetary support from the BCB, we, the support staff, also expect something like that. As I have taken coaching as a profession, I have no other income source except for cricket and DPL is one of the biggest sources of income for me. Although I am also a coach of a cricket academy, but that too has stopped due to the coronavirus. BCB is our guardian and I expect the board will consider our situation too. Things are getting really difficult everyday," Sumon told The Daily Star yesterday.

As the future seems uncertain for many due to the growing spread of the virus, the affluent cricket board should extend its support, not just towards the cricketers but also towards people who work behind the scene.

Matin raring to return

ANISUR RAHMAN



National team's forward Matin Mia is eagerly counting days to return to the pitch after recovering from a hamstring injury which he sustained during the Bangabandhu Gold Cup's semifinal against Burundi on January 23.

Matin, who scored a brace against Sri Lanka in a group-stage match, left the field just four minutes after kick-off with a muscle cramp as the home team suffered a 3-0 defeat.

The 22-year-old then missed out on the first six matches of the Bangladesh Premier League (started on February 13) for his club Bashundhara Kings, who have struggled to sixth position on the 13-team table before league was suspended due to coronavirus.

The lad from Sylhet has now recovered and he feels fit enough to help his side back to the top of the table, but the suspension of the league is delaying his return.

"After the injury, it took me 20 days to get back to training but the injury returned again. Then it took me another 20 days to be fully fit. At the moment, I feel I'm in good condition and fit enough to play competitive matches," Matin told The Daily Star over phone from Sylhet.

Explaining his fitness, Matin said, "Before the postponement of the training camp on March 17, I sprinted smoothly and raced separately under the supervision of the club trainer and I did not face any problem or feel any pain. Even after returning home in Sylhet, I have been training on the school ground adjacent to our home as per the trainer's instructions."

Last year Matin, along with Brazilian striker Marcos Vinicius, formed a lethal

attack for Bashundhara Kings, scoring 25 goals together to help the side win the league title in their debut season. But now Matin feels bad to see his side struggle, especially after failing to play because of injury.

"It doesn't feel good when the team loses or draws. I feel I could have contributed had I been on the ground. Last season, we were always on top but this time we are going through ups and downs. I think we lack a good striker like Vinicius. If I get an opportunity to play in the starting eleven, I think the coach will play me in flank with (Daniel) Colindres in striking zone and I believe I can assist Colindres to score," said Matin, who had readjusted his target of scoring more goals than the 11 he scored last season. His initial target, before injury, was to score 20 goals.

The promising forward, who also scored in the final of the Independence Cup last season to help Bashundhara Kings lift the trophy, has a regret of not being able to play AFC Cup due to the injury.

"I did not play AFC Cup before, so I had a dream of making debut against TC Sports but I had to watch the match from the gallery. However, it was really pleasing to see my team win 5-1," said Matin.

Matin believes the postponement of all domestic and international competitions will give him an opportunity to represent both the club and the national team when normalcy returns.

"I could have missed all international matches had those been held in time but the postponement of the World Cup qualifiers is giving me an opportunity to represent the country again. I really dream to play against India and I believe my dream will come true," said Matin, who has been playing top-flight football for the last three seasons.

Dalglish infected

AFP, London

Liverpool legend Kenny Dalglish has tested positive for coronavirus but is not showing symptoms of the disease, his family said Friday.

The 69-year-old former Scottish international striker was admitted to hospital on Wednesday for treatment for an infection which required intravenous antibiotics.

"He was subsequently tested for COVID-19 despite having previously displayed no symptoms of the illness," said a family statement. "Unexpectedly, the test result was positive but he remains asymptomatic."

The coronavirus has claimed the lives of nearly 9,000 people in Britain.

Barca deny wrongdoing

AFP, Madrid



Barcelona have denied what the club describes as "serious and unfounded accusations" of corruption after a former vice-president claimed someone "had put their hands in the till".

Emili Rousaud was one of six board members to resign on Thursday night as Barca continue to be embroiled in political crisis under their current president Josep Maria Bartomeu.

All six resigning board members called for the 2021 presidential elections to be brought forward in a joint letter published on Friday by the newspaper La Vanguardia.

In an interview with Spanish radio station Cadena Ser, Rousaud discussed the social media controversy that rocked the club in February, when Barcelona were accused of hiring a company called I3 Ventures to

discredit opponents of Bartomeu online, including players like Lionel Messi and Gerard Pique.

"If the auditors tell us the cost of these services is 100,000 euros and we have paid one million, it means someone has put their hand in the till. I have no evidence and I cannot say who," Rousaud told the programme RAC1 on Friday.

Barcelona responded with an official statement that read: "In the light of the serious and unfounded accusations made this morning by Emili Rousaud, ex-vice president of the club, in different interviews with the media, FC Barcelona categorically denies any activity that can be described as corruption and therefore reserves the right to any legal action that may correspond."

Bartomeu terminated the club's contract with I3 Ventures in February. He said the company had been hired only to monitor posts on social media and announced an internal audit to

investigate any irregularity.

"The analysis of the monitoring services of social networks is being subjected to an independent audit by PriceWaterhouseCoopers (PWC), which is still ongoing and, therefore, without any conclusions," Barcelona's statement added.

Rousaud had been appointed as a club vice-president in January and was seen as a leading candidate to succeed Bartomeu, who cannot stand again when the presidential elections come round next year.

Bartomeu has overseen a string of political spats in recent months being played out in public, with Messi also involved.

Messi reacted angrily in January to Eric Abidal, the club's technical secretary, suggesting the players were to blame for the sacking of Ernesto Valverde and last month, the Argentinian criticised the club's handling of negotiations with the squad over pay cuts.



A fan sits in the empty stands during a Belarus Premier League match between FC Neman and Belshina in Grodno on Friday. Belarus remains one of the four countries where football is still rolling despite the coronavirus pandemic.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Tough transitioning back as a player: Holder

ICC



West Indies Test captain Jason Holder confessed that his transition from ODI captain to "just a player" has not been smooth.

Holder was replaced by Kieron Pollard as the white-ball captain last September, and he admitted adjusting to the new demands was tricky.

"To be quite honest, it has been tough transitioning back just as a player," he told the Cricket Collective podcast. "In hindsight, it has been tough trying to understand how to get back in as just a player."



Holder admitted that he has not been a consistent performer over the past year. He took eight wickets in eight innings in the 2019 World Cup. But since then has picked up just seven wickets in 10 ODI innings. "Performances obviously haven't

been there as I would've probably liked, but I'm not too disheartened," he said. "I don't get too worried because I know my ability. I know what I can produce. I just know that an innings is around the corner, a bowling effort is around the corner."

The 28-year-old said that playing a lot had taken a toll on him and a break from leadership would allow him to recharge his batteries.

"I felt I needed the break after the India series [in December] particularly, just to refresh," he said. "I had played every single series in the entire year [in 2019], I played county cricket as well, and my batteries needed a little bit of a recharge."

'Love, enjoy and tell good stories'

AGENCIES



Michael Atherton is one of the most respected and decorated England cricketers who played 115 Tests and 54 ODIs from 1989 to 2001.

He now enjoys a successful career as a broadcaster with Sky Sports and as a journalist with The Times as their chief cricket correspondent.

Atherton visited Pakistan early last month, before the Covid-19 outbreak forced the postponement of the Pakistan Super League, to work on a documentary on the revival of cricket in Pakistan, which is likely to be aired as part of the Pakistan team's build-up for the summer tour of England.

"Love the game. Enjoy the game. Tell good stories. I still think it is about good storytelling. I know statistics and technique and all those kind of things are important and are very much at the heart of the modern landscape. But I think telling good stories is still at the heart of what journalists, broadcasters, documentary-makers and commentators, whatever tell good stories about a great game," Atherton said during a podcast with the PCB when asked about his advice to the current and future generations of cricket correspondents.

He believes that it has indeed become a lot harder for players with the advent of social media than it was during his time as a player.

"I think it is harder for players now than I played. There was no social media when I played. Of course, you still had criticism from commentators and journalists and maybe the tabloid media was a bit stronger in England then than it is now. The social media interest didn't exist then and I think

it is tougher for young players now as it is very hard to get away from social media. The players are encouraged to be on social media for all kinds of reasons: for personal sponsorships and general availability.

"But that level of vitriol and criticism is quite tough to deal with particularly if you are young. I was thinking of some of the young England cricketers. I saw some of the Under 19s this winter in South Africa, who got dumped out of the tournament at an early stage and took a fair bit of criticism



on social media. At 19, that is quite hard to deal with, but it is a fact of life.

Atherton also believes that the players no longer have something called a personal space due to the social media engagements.

"That is how life has gone a bit. People are much more open than perhaps they were in my generation. Today, in fact, there is an eight-part Amazon Prime documentary series on the Australia cricket team where the cameras have been in the dressing room. They have been in every team meeting and I think the filmmakers had 2,600 hours of footage there and that's just outside of the cricket."

Ronaldo warned over training

AGENCIES, Lij Bone

Cristiano Ronaldo has been warned over his conduct after he was pictured training at a football stadium in Madeira during the lockdown.

The 35-year-old was pictured training at the Madeira national stadium and was far from the only person in attendance. Madeira's regional secretary of health, Pedro Ramos, has urged a global superstar to set a good example for others when it comes to social distancing.

"Ronaldo has no special permission to train. Ronaldo has the right to train as long as he respects the rules like all citizens, there is no privilege," Ramos said. "All citizens can leave the house and do so, as long as they do not cause gatherings and maintain a safe distance during the exercise. Therefore, Ronaldo did what we have seen. There was no special authorisation because we are all the same, we are all facing the same pandemic."

"The best player in the world must use his image to set an example, but Cristiano seems to me to have done just a few minutes of exercise and, therefore, there is no harm in the world. I would not like it to be said that it is trivialisation, because we are all responsible."