

WIRTZ BECOMES BUNDESLIGA'S YOUNGEST SCORER

At just 17 years and 34 days old, Florian Wirtz on Saturday became the youngest goalscorer in Bundesliga history in Bayer Leverkusen's 4-2 defeat to Bayern Munich. Wirtz went into the record books when he curled the ball home in the dying moments of the match to bag a consolation goal. The teenager supplanted Nuri Sahin, the former Borussia Dortmund midfielder, who was 17 years and 82 days old when he scored against Nuremberg in 2005. Wirtz was just two years old at the time. Wirtz made his debut for Leverkusen against Werder Bremen last month, becoming the youngest debutant in the club's history and the third youngest ever in the Bundesliga. "Today he learnt the most important lesson he will have learned since he started playing football: the tempo at this level is a lot higher than he is used to," said coach Peter Bosz.

-- AFP



Tamim waiting for the light

MOSTAFA SHABUI



Shaheed Chandu Stadium is situated about 30 kilometres from his village (Karpur) in Sonatola upazila. Bangladesh Under-19 opener Tanzid Hasan Tamim took all the trouble merely to visit the stadium to breathe in the smell of the grass and get the feeling of standing inside a cricket ground.

The youngster cannot imagine life without cricket, but like many others the world over, he has to be content with watching matches on the TV screen or on YouTube, especially the last ICC Under-19 World Cup matches to uplift the spirit. Otherwise, he is busy following the fitness guidelines of the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) as all cricketing activity has been suspended since March 19 due to the coronavirus outbreak.

Tamim's obsession with cricket can be best understood from tales of his early days.

"An older boy in my area spent almost the entire day playing cricket and I watched him from the window. I was a meritorious student and was then preparing for admission to the Zilla School. My parents discouraged me from going outside at that time but I could not control myself and went out to meet that cricket-obsessed



PHOTO: MOSTAFA SHABUI

older boy without informing my parents. My parents wanted me to become a doctor or engineer, but I had other dreams.

"When I was a student of class VIII, I could not think about anything other than playing cricket and the consequence was that I started to do very poorly

in my studies. And my father got upset. My father rented a house in the town only because of my education. He took stern action against me and kicked me out of the house and after two days my mother managed to calm the waters enough to bring me back. My mother then started to help

me and she gave me some money so that I could gain admission to a cricket academy in Rajshahi. The rest of the money I earned playing popular khyap [on hire] matches.

"Things changed when I was called up for the Under-17 side and then both my father and mother were supportive of me

fulfilling my dream." Tamim concluded his cricket origin story, almost in one breath as if he had told it many times before.

So, it is understandable that it is difficult for Tamim -- a left-handed batsman who idolises his namesake Tamim Iqbal and dreams of one day opening the batting for Bangladesh with the senior pro -- to pass the days without any cricketing activity.

"It seems like I have arrived at a stage of darkness after a bright and colourful Under-19 World Cup campaign. We were in jubilant mood after winning the trophy and were looking to play good cricket in the coming series but all of a sudden everything has changed and we are locked in our homes. It's really frustrating. We can't do anything in this situation and everybody is helpless. We were very eager to do well in the [Dhaka] Premier League but everything is now uncertain," he said.

Tamim believes that their success in the World Cup gave Bangladesh cricket new confidence and one of his happiest memories of the triumph was singing Amra Korbo Joy (we shall overcome) in the dressing room after winning the trophy.

And the young man also believes 'we shall overcome' the current Covid-19 crisis.

Feds demand bigger budget

ANISUR RAHMAN

Fearing less support from sponsors in the post-Covid-19 era, most national sports federations are looking for more financial allocation from the government in the 2020-21 fiscal year, but the Ministry for Youth and Sports is apparently moving forward with plans to place a conventional sports budget in the parliamentary session.

The Bangladesh Cricket Board and Bangladesh Football Federation are the most affluent sports bodies in the country and get healthy sanctions from their world bodies, but most other federations depend on sponsors and government allocation to run their round-the-year activities.

Due to the pandemic, the officials of these federations are apprehending a shortage of sponsors in coming days. They fear they may have to drop tournaments from the calendar if their allocation is not increased in the upcoming budget, which is to be discussed in parliament from June 10.

In the 2019-20 fiscal year, the government allocated more than Tk 17.5 crore to 58 federations, associations and organisations to conduct training, hosting competitions and for office management. But there is hardly any chance of an increment in the coming budget as the National Sports Council (NSC) completed its draft budget last month.

"At the moment, sponsors themselves are struggling. The Bangladesh Table Tennis Federation [BTTF] always struggles to get sponsors to organise six tournaments every year and it will be more difficult in the post-Covid-19 period. So we believe the government should come forward and rescue us by allocating additional funds in the budget," BTTF vice president Hasan Munir told The Daily Star.

HIGHLIGHTS

In the 2019-20 fiscal, the government allocated more than Tk 17.5 Crore to 58 federations

Federations want more allocation as they fear sponsorship money may dry up

Sports minister sees little chance of increasing allocation to sports

Federations propose diverting funds by cutting down on the NSC's renovation and development projects

Man City face critical appeal

AFP, London

Manchester City's appeal against a two-year ban from European competition will be heard by the Court of Arbitration for Sport from Monday in a case of wide-reaching repercussions.

City are accused of overstating sponsorship revenue to hide that they had not complied with UEFA's financial fair play rules between 2012 and 2016 and were also handed a 30 million euro fine.

UEFA's case was prompted when German magazine Der Spiegel published a series of leaked emails in 2018 that purported to show how City manufactured extra sponsorship revenue from a series of companies with connections to the club's Abu Dhabi-based owner Sheikh Mansour.

City are involved in this season's Champions League and will be allowed to compete should it return in August no matter the outcome of the appeal.

But a two-season ban from the competition would represent a huge blow to the club's prestige, finances and hope of hanging onto manager Pep Guardiola and key players like Kevin de Bruyne and Raheem Sterling.

"Two years would be long. One year is something I might be able to cope with," De Bruyne said last month.

Will saliva ban threaten cricket's kings of swing?

AFP, London

An ICC board meeting on Wednesday could see the global governing body uphold a recommendation to prohibit the use of saliva in order to stop the transmission of the coronavirus.

Bowlers traditionally get the ball to move or swing in the air by applying shine to one side via sweat -- which can still be used -- or saliva.

However, as a temporary measure to combat COVID-19, the ICC's cricket committee has suggested banning the use of saliva.

One of the most extraordinary performances in cricket history saw Australia swing bowler Bob Massie take 16 for 137 on his Test debut against England at Lord's in 1972.

Yet Massie won just five more caps and took only 15 more wickets, with the bowler himself saying he had struggled on a subsequent tour of the West Indies where he adjusted his action and was never the same cricketer again.

Massie's remarkable maiden Test and the lavish swing he generated at Lord's led to suggestions he'd applied lip salve to the ball in order to maintain the shine -- an accusation he has always denied.

"Some days things go just right," Massie said, explaining his remarkable introduction to Tests.

Reverse swing used to be thought that as a cricket ball got older it would swing less.

But a technique pioneered by Pakistan paceman Sarfraz Nawaz,



Bob Massie (L) made an extraordinary Test debut, taking 8-84 followed by 8-53 at Lord's in 1972. Sarfraz Nawaz famously took 9-86 against Australia in Melbourne in 1979, the second-best figures by a Pakistani Test match bowler.

PHOTO: COLLECTED



partly in response to the slow and batsmen-friendly pitches of his homeland, led to the development of reverse swing.

"Just using sweat won't be of much help because that will only make the ball wet and that shine will be missing," said Sarfraz.

Sarfraz confused a succession of batsmen by bowling in-swingers with an old ball.

He helped compatriot Imran Khan add reverse swing to his armoury and in the 1990s there were probably no better exponents than the Pakistan fast-bowling duo of Wasim Akram and Waqar Younis.

In 1992, the pair took 43 wickets as Pakistan won a five-match Test series in England 2-1.

Mint condition-- over time, teams all round the world came

to realise that in order to generate reverse swing it was vital the ball was 'looked after' properly, with one side polished and the other kept bone dry.

Swing bowlers such as Andrew Flintoff, Matthew Hoggard and Simon Jones were pivotal to England regaining the Ashes from Australia in 2005.

But it was England opening batsman Marcus Trescothick who later revealed he had put Murray Mints sweets to good use in the field because sucking them stimulated most saliva, which could then be applied to the ball.

It seems unlikely cricket chiefs will row back from the saliva ban but former South Africa paceman Shaun Pollock, even though he is a member of the ICC cricket

committee, gave current swing bowlers a glimmer of hope by suggesting health checks in place for next month's three-Test series between England and the West Indies might make it redundant.

"I think the environment that'll end up being created is almost going to be like a bubble," Pollock told the Following On Cricket Podcast. "People will get tested, they'll go into a two-week camp where they're just going to sit and monitor how the conditions of their bodies change."

"And if there are no symptoms, it doesn't really matter about shining the ball then, because you're in the bubble and no one you come into contact with will have coronavirus."

"So, you can just get on with normal proceedings."

Afghanistan resume training

PTI

Top Afghan players, including Rashid Khan and Mohammad Nabi, resumed training yesterday at the Kabul Cricket Stadium, the ACB informed.

The players are part of a month-long training camp which will focus on strengthening batting, bowling and overall performance of the team.

"This camp will be held under the relevant health guidelines and in close coordination with the ICC, WHO and the ministry of public health of Afghanistan to avoid the spread of COVID-19," an ACB media release said.

On Saturday, an awareness meeting was held for players and other officials to educate them on health guidelines.

PHOTO: REUTERS



Football fans in Czech Republic adopted an innovative strategy, watching the top-tier league match between Bohemians Prague and Sparta Prague from behind a wall with the help of ladders. The league is taking place behind closed doors in an effort to halt the spread of the coronavirus.

'No justice, no peace'

Players show support for Black Lives Matter protests

AFP, Berlin



Bundesliga players wore black armbands and took the knee in displays of support for the Black Lives Matter protests on Saturday, as Bayern Munich kept title rivals Borussia Dortmund at bay with a ninth successive win.

Bayern striker Robert Lewandowski scored his 30th league goal of the season as Bayern came from behind to claim a 4-2 victory over Bayer Leverkusen, a win which kept them seven points ahead of second-placed Dortmund, who beat Hertha Berlin 1-0.

As thousands of protesters assembled in city centres across Germany, both of the country's top two clubs also used Saturday's games to make statements against police brutality and racism.

Dortmund players warmed up in T-shirts bearing messages of solidarity such as "no justice, no peace", before taking the knee in the centre circle with their Hertha colleagues for a moment's silence before kick-off.



Bayern players, meanwhile, wore black "Black Lives Matter" armbands during their rampant win over Leverkusen.

"As players, we always have the same message -- we are tolerant, we are open, we are open to the world," Bayern captain Manuel Neuer told Sky.

Cameroon international Kunde joined the protests, taking a knee in place of a celebration.

"I think it's good. It isn't a political statement, it's just a position, and these are values that we have. For me, there is no other possible position to take," said Mainz sporting director Rouven Schroeder.