



'Onus on BCB to tackle the new normal'

While the other cricket boards are finding ways to get cricket back to the field, the Bangladesh Cricket Board on the other hand is still in a dilemma over how to resume during the Covid-19 pandemic. Obviously, the coronavirus situation in Bangladesh is getting worse by the day, which has seemingly forced the BCB to play the waiting game. However, according to former BCB president Saber Hossain Chowdhury the board is lagging behind other countries when it comes to thinking outside the box to face the new normal. During an exclusive interview with The Daily Star's Mazhar Uddin, the former BCB boss spoke about various issues that the BCB should focus on in the coming days. Following are the excerpts of the interview:

The Daily Star [TDS]: How much do you think the Covid-19 pandemic would impact Bangladesh cricket as the Tigers were supposed to have a busy 2020?

Saber Hossain Chowdhury [SHC]: Obviously the impact is a global one and Bangladesh is no exception. If we look at India, they also suffered a huge impact and faced huge financial losses – the postponement of the Indian Premier League along with their international schedule. Obviously, what promised to be a productive year for Bangladesh in 2020 has turned into a huge disappointment and it's important for the BCB to think about the post-pandemic world.

TDS: What should be BCB's approach to tackle the situation?

SHC: I don't see any approach as the new normal requires a different approach, out-of-the-box thinking, long-term plan and a collective approach. I don't see any planning from the BCB when read the newspapers. In the era of Digital Bangladesh, the board officials can communicate over the internet and give guidelines, but I haven't noticed such. Communication is important both internally and with other cricket boards, and the ICC as well.

In the post-pandemic world there will be more bilateral series and talks and I don't know



whether the BCB is maintaining the diplomatic relations with the other bodies. You never, know the top cricket boards can come up with the big three proposal once again and even make two divisions in world cricket. It is important to increase and maintain diplomatic relations. One more thing, suppose Sourav Ganguly becomes the next ICC president, how much have we maintained communications with him? We need to think about such areas as well with a positive mindset.

TDS: Five series have been postponed so far this year? How big an impact will that have on the BCB financially? Officials said BCB has

the financial capability to continue for the next four-five years.

SHC: We do have the reserves, which is around Tk 400 or Tk 500 crore but that should be the last thing to think of and you have to generate revenue. BCB does get a good amount from the ICC and also from participation money but even the ICC events like the T20 World Cup is now in doubt.

In the coming days most series will be bilateral and it is important to remain engaged with other boards. We can think of developing the subcontinental relations more and the Asian Cricket Council (ACC) can also play a big role. If you remember, during our time, we

have given priority in hosting the Asia Cup and also hosted events like the World XI and Asia XI games to remain engaged. At the moment we are even behind Afghanistan in the ICC [T20] rankings, so when the sponsors notice that, it's not something positive for us. If we are not able to host home series it will be tough for us. The BCB needs to redesign the financial sector and focus on those areas rather looking for what the other boards are doing.

TDS: How and when should BCB resume domestic leagues?

SHC: Obviously, safety is the first and foremost priority and we have to create a fresh environment before resuming leagues. Cricket is not a body contact game, if you compare this with rugby or football. It is important to have up-to-date technology and facilities and test the players regularly. If you have noticed, many sporting leagues have already started along with a few cricket boards approaching resumption of games, obviously by taking proper measures. As Mirpur is in the red zone, the board can prepare alternative places and start proceedings as players are out of cricket for more than three months now. It is not that I am not aware of realities, but we also need to find ways to face the new normal. Obviously, BCB is under the government and they need to follow instructions, but they should also find ways to overcome the situation.



Alexander-Arnold, who has developed a reputation as a dead-ball specialist, kisses the Liverpool badge after opening the floodgates for Liverpool with a 'Beckham-esque' free-kick in the 4-0 thrashing of Crystal Palace on their return to Anfield behind closed doors on Wednesday. PHOTO: COLLECTED

'It's our time'

AGENCIES



Liverpool manager Jurgen Klopp lamented the fact no fans were in the stands to witness one of his side's best displays of the season. Klopp's men moved to the brink of a long-awaited Premier League title in the style that has made them worthy champions-elect by thrashing Crystal Palace 4-0 on their return to Anfield behind closed doors on Wednesday.

Liverpool's 30-year wait for a title had been extended by three months due to the coronavirus shutdown, but they had a chance to start celebrations yesterday if Manchester City were to fail to beat Chelsea at Stamford Bridge.

"Imagine how this stadium would have been full and all the people would have experienced that live," said Klopp. "I don't think the game could have been better."

But the German hailed his players' ability to motivate themselves without a crowd. "Today was a reaction [from the 0-0 draw with Everton], I liked it a lot. 4-0 up, 87th minute and four players are chasing one poor Crystal Palace player like it is the only ball in the world," added Klopp.

"Wonderful result, wonderful game. It was important we showed our supporters we are still here."

Mohamed Salah was preparing for a title party after scoring. "Two points to go to win the league, it's great," said Salah. "I feel great. Since I came here I said I want to win the Premier League. The city did not win it for a long time. Last year we had a chance but Man City also played really well and deserved it. It's our time to win the league."

Trent Alexander-Arnold opened the floodgates with a brilliant free-kick as Liverpool looked far slicker than they had at Everton on Sunday in their first match since the break. Salah doubled the hosts' advantage and goals from Fabinho and Sadio Mane after the break rounded off a fine team performance.

"For the first game back at Anfield, it couldn't have gone any better," said Alexander-Arnold.

When Liverpool were last crowned English champions, in April 1990, Margaret Thatcher was prime minister and the Premier League was two years away from its glitzy launch.

In 1990 it was business as usual for Kenny Dalglish's dominant Reds, who had finished in the top two every year since 1973, apart from one season.

Their triumph came a year after the trauma of the Hillsborough disaster, which claimed the lives of 96 Liverpool fans after a terrace crush.



Real Madrid star Sergio Ramos was ecstatic after scoring his side's second goal with a majestic free kick, curling the ball over the wall and into the top corner, during their 2-0 home victory over Real Mallorca on Wednesday. PHOTO: REUTERS

Ramos fires back at critics

REUTERS, Madrid

Real Madrid eased to a 2-0 home victory over Real Mallorca on Wednesday thanks to goals in each half from Vinicius Jr. and Sergio Ramos to stay in charge of the La Liga title race ahead of Barcelona.

Club captain Ramos also took the time to rubbish suggestions that Los Blancos have been getting favourable refereeing decisions recently, arguing critics are looking for ways to attack the team since they returned to the top of La Liga.

"All this noise is to be expected because now we are top of the league, people weren't saying so much about us before that," Ramos said after his side beat Real Mallorca 2-0 on Thursday to sneak back above Barcelona in the title race.

Madrid trailed Barca by two points when the season resumed earlier this month but are now level with their rivals on 68 and lead the standings due to their superior head-to-head record. The victory over Mallorca was Madrid's fourth win in a row while Barca have won three and drew 0-0 away to Sevilla last Friday.

Madrid benefitted from having an opening goal by Valencia ruled out in their 3-0 win last Thursday, prompting

Barca's Gerard Pique to remark: "Looking at how the matches have gone, it'll be very hard for Madrid to drop points."

Zinedine Zidane's side then saw three key decisions go their way in Sunday's 2-1 win at Real Sociedad, including another goal for their opponents being ruled out.

Their opening strike against Mallorca, scored by Vinicius Jr., could also have been ruled out for a foul by Dani Carvajal in the build up.

But Ramos, who doubled Madrid's advantage in the second half with a majestic free kick after Vinicius Jr. had opened the scoring, said it was nonsense that his side were being shown preferential treatment.

"I don't think any pre-determined decisions are being taken, it's as if we have to say thanks to the referees for being top of the league," he added.

"People need to stop making things up."

Brazilian youngster Vinicius opened the scoring with a cool finish in the 19th minute after missing an earlier chance and he hit the crossbar later in the first half.

Captain Ramos doubled Madrid's lead with a superb free kick, curling the ball over the wall and into the top corner to score his eighth goal of the league season and his 10th in all competitions.

	PTS	PLD
1 REAL MADRID	68	31
2 FC BARCELONA	68	31
3 ATLETICO DE MADRID	55	31
4 SEVILLA FC	53	31
5 GETAFE CF	49	31
6 VILLARREAL CF	48	31

Local booters seeking solutions for haphazard payments

ANISUR RAHMAN



Although Bangladesh Premier League clubs settled contract issues with foreign recruits in line with the FIFA-prescribed process of reaching mutual understandings, settlement of local players' contracts have not been completed three-and-a-half months since the halt of the league.

Local players have been suffering financially due to not receiving salaries and also not having the option to play football on hire to supplement their income. They are eager to reach amicable solutions and want the Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) involved in the process of settling their contracts for the 2019-20 season, which was declared void on May 17.

In the last meeting of the professional football league on May 17, clubs proposed playing their squads from this year in the upcoming season as only 24 per cent of league matches could be played and only the Federation Cup could be completed.

There were also discussions

about curtailing players' wages and question were raised about what could be done about players who had received up to 90 per cent of their contractual earnings. It has been learnt Abahani, Bashundhara Kings and Saif SC were among the big clubs that cleared up to 80 per cent of wages in line with original contracts. Other clubs have cleared between 20 and 50 per cent.

"Arambagh formed their team at the last moment and I joined Arambagh at a person's request. Most of the young players signed on condition of getting a platform and a nominal sum to buy gear. There were a few players under contract but we did not get only 20 to 30 percent of payment. Arambagh officials are in financial trouble but we believe they will clear it and we are waiting," said former national team defender Didarul Haque.

"Three senior players, including me, haven't received any money from Brothers Union. I know other players received 20 to 30 percent of the payment. And the players called me to inform of their suffering in this pandemic, but the financial state of Brothers is also not good,"

Juve's chance to move in for the kill

AFP, Milan

Cristiano Ronaldo's Juventus host struggling Lecce on Friday looking to take advantage of a midweek slip-up by Lazio and move seven points clear at the top of Serie A.

Lazio host Fiorentina on Saturday filled with regret after losing their first league game in nine months, falling 3-2 at Atalanta on Wednesday after giving up a two-goal lead. "Unfortunately the title race gets more complicated and we regret this," said Lazio coach Simone Inzaghi.



LIFE IN THE BUBBLE BEGINS

England captain Joe Root and all other training group members for the upcoming three-Test series against West Indies returned negative results from their Covid-19 tests. Fast bowler Mark Wood however said he felt like he was in a science fiction film after entering England's bio-secure training 'bubble'.

PHOTO: COLLECTED