

'A different world'

Tigers adjusting to life inside bio-secure bubbles

MAZHAR UDDIN

The coronavirus pandemic has widened the world's vocabulary by driving words such as lockdown, quarantine and isolation into daily use. The latest buzzword is bio-secure bubble.

The England and Wales Cricket Board first introduced the term as they prepared to host the West Indies in what would be the first cricket series following the outbreak of the coronavirus earlier this year.

The ECB successfully managed the complex process of creating a bio-secure bubble, which is basically a bio-secure environment that is designed to prevent the spread of the coronavirus. The 'bubbles' are sealed off from the outside world, with players, staff and officials on the inside.

Normally bio-secure bubbles aim to minimise the risk of transmission of the virus from one person to another while training, staying together or having meals during ongoing tournaments and training camps and it is prescribed by the International Cricket Council.

With the Bangladesh aiming to return to cricket through the upcoming Sri Lanka tour, the



PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) has already started a residential camp for its 27-member preliminary squad by creating a bio-secure bubble with frequent coronavirus testing.

It can still be hard for the general public to understand what goes on inside the bubble, so The Daily Star tried to get insights on the experience from Bangladeshi cricketers who have

been inside a bubble at a city hotel since September 20, when the BCB initiated the residential camp.

"It's like a different world. The first and the most important thing about the bubble is that we are not allowed to go outside the hotel premises. We are not allowed to even have any food from outside, not even chocolates or chips. We have a dedicated lift for players," a national cricketer requesting

anonymity said.

"We have our meals in the hotel and when we are at the restaurant, there is no one from outside. Even the hotel staff who serve us maintain social distancing. After having breakfast, I go to gym or swimming in a restricted environment. When we go to the ground, we have to take alternative exit routes to avoid crowds."

According to many cricketers, it was a challenge initially but one that they later adjusted with.

Although the upcoming tour of Sri Lanka is still under dark clouds as the Sri Lanka Cricket officials are yet to provide revised health protocols for the tour, it is understood that the Tigers -- who previously planned to travel to the island nation on September 27 -- are now expected to delay.

It was learned that SLC officials had tried to relax the mandatory 14-day quarantine for the visitors, but government health authorities led by the Covid-19 task force of Sri Lanka were unwilling.

If that is the case, then the tour of Sri Lanka could well get postponed. But the Bangladeshi cricketers who got a taste of living in a bio-secure environment will surely help the Tigers to cope with similar situations in the coming days as we have already stepped into a new normal.



Nobody around to hear players' dismay

ANISUR RAHMAN



Lack of professionalism in both the Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) and the clubs, combined with the dysfunction in the Football Players' Welfare Association (FPWA) has seemingly paved the way to the unpleasant decision of big pay cuts of footballers in the upcoming season, expected to start in December.

After a series of meetings with the clubs and the players, the BFF professional football league committee has decided to reduce footballers' payments by a whopping 75 percent of their new contracts, which will be similar to last season, citing the clubs' financial constraint due to the coronavirus pandemic. The demand from the players' side was to be paid 50 percent of the new contracts after clearing 100 percent of last season's contract money. The clubs agreed to pay last season's dues in full.

There had initially been talk among players that they were ready to sacrifice 30 to 35 percent payment for last season, which came to an end at the halfway stage due to the pandemic. Footballers of overseas leagues made a similar concession to minimise clubs' losses following cancellation of the season.

As per FIFA rules, if a season is declared over, the players' contracts would also expire and they would be free to choose new destinations. And FIFA, in its special guidelines following the Covid-19 outbreak, has emphasised on mutual negotiation between clubs and players to reach a decision regarding contracts.

The Bangladeshi clubs also settled their agreements with foreign players, with BFF mediating if needed, but unfortunately the clubs and the federation has apparently taken a different approach with local players. They are now not free to sign for any new clubs unless there is mutual understanding among the clubs, while they can take only 25 percent of their contracts' payments. This translates to huge savings for the clubs when forming squads, but the players themselves will ultimately be deprived.

The majority of footballers have to play with token payments for next season because in the last season, only three to four clubs offered lucrative amounts to top players, but the rest played with low salaries.

Last season, eight clubs out of 13 in the Bangladesh Premier League spent between Tk 50,000 and Tk 20 lakh for each players and there were a lot of players who received between Tk 1 lakh and Tk 5 lakh each. Under the new stipulations those players would earn between Tk 25,000 and Tk 1.25 lakh in the new season.

"It has happened due to lack of professionalism in the BFF and the clubs because they can't put a bar on the players in line with the FIFA guidelines. The players also know that they won't get their expected money from the clubs due to the new situation. Let the players be free to deal with their own contracts with clubs like the foreign players did," said a former footballer, who preferred not to be named.

Bangladesh captain Jamal Bhuiyan is also upset by the decision and hopes it will be revised in the near future.

"To be honest, I think that the number (25 percent) is too low. I hope it is not the final decision. I hope we can hear most of the players' opinions about it," Jamal told The Daily Star. "Of course, the clubs want to pay less money to local players so that they [the clubs] can save some money. But overall, I don't think it is good because football in Bangladesh needs to be talked about and promoted in a positive way so cutting so much of salaries is not a positive thing."

He also questioned whether foreign players got reduced payments or full payment as per their contracts.

"We are not satisfied with this decision of the league committee because all of us players hoped for a good solution from the League Committee Chairman Abdus Salam Murshedy bhai and the clubs' managements. We are not waiting for the new committee of the BFF and hope they will deliver a good decision after talking to the clubs," said former captain and current midfielder Mamunul Islam.

Former footballer Iqbal Hossain, president of Football Players' Welfare Association and incumbent BFF member, however denied their inactivity when looking after the footballers' interests.

"The association has always been with the players. As we all have been in the BFF election process, we can't discuss the matter with the clubs and the federation. We hope to sit with the federation after the elections and give them an ultimatum to keep the players' interests intact," said Iqbal.

Joytu Online Chess Two locals in contention for top spot

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladeshi GM Enamul Hossain Razib and FM Khandokar Aminul Islam were tied along with four other players on top of the table in the Joytu Sheikh Hasina International Online Chess tournament after the close of the third round matches yesterday.

The tournament, which marks the birth anniversary of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, features 74 players, including 17 Grand Masters, and a prize pool of \$6,000.

Indian GMs Surya Shekhar Ganguly and Diptayan Ghosh, Indonesian GM Susanto Megaranto and IM Novendra Priasmoro were tied with Razib and Aminul with three points from as many matches.

Razib beat Iranian GM Amin Tabatabaei, WIM Rani Hamid and CM Mahtabuddin Ahmed while Aminul beat Mohammed Shuaan of Maldives, Noshin Anjum and Mohammad Javed. 19 players were tied for second place with two points.

Departure of a 'true entertainer'

REUTERS



Former Australia cricketer Dean Jones, regarded as one of the finest batsmen of his generation, died from cardiac arrest on Thursday aged 59, Indian broadcaster Star India said, prompting tributes from the prime minister and fellow players.

Jones won the World Cup with Australia in 1987 and played 52 Tests and 164 one-day internationals in an international career that spanned 10 years from 1984.

Jones was in Mumbai as part of Star India's commentary panel for the Indian Premier League.

Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison paid tribute to "an absolute cricketing legend" as he sent his condolences to Jones's family.

"A true entertainer at the crease, whose flair with the bat and electric running between the wickets changed the game forever. A genuine good guy & a huge loss," Morrison tweeted.

Former India batsman Sachin Tendulkar said he was heartbroken. "A wonderful soul taken away too soon," Tendulkar said. "Had the opportunity to play against him during my first tour of Australia. May his soul rest in peace and my condolences to his loved ones."

One of Jones's most memorable innings came in the tied Test against

India in Chennai in 1986, when he battled extreme heat and physical exhaustion to notch a memorable double century.

Jones ended his career with 3,631 runs in Tests at an average of 46.55 with 11 hundreds and 14 half-centuries, and over 6,000 runs in ODIs with seven centuries and 46 fifties.

Earl Eddings, chair of Cricket Australia, said Jones would be sorely missed by fans around the world.

"Dean Jones was a hero to a generation of cricketers and will forever be remembered as a legend



of this great game," Eddings said in a statement.

The cricketing fraternity took to social media to pay tribute.

"I can't believe this news. So very sad to hear about this. Rip Deano," Australian batsman David Warner tweeted while Steve Smith said Jones was a "wonderful player for Australia" who would be missed.

FACTS

Full Name: Dean Martyn Jones.

Born: March 24, 1961,

Coburg, Victoria, Australia.

Died: September 24,

Mumbai, India.

Test: 52 matches, 3631 runs,

46.5 average, 11 100s, 14 50s.

ODI: 164 matches, 6068 runs,

44.6 average, 7 100s, 46 50s.

Former Australian batsman Darren Lehmann said: "Dean Jones ... taught me so much on and off the ground. I and all of the cricketing world will miss him. Our thoughts are with Jane and the family at this time."

Ramiz Raja, who worked with Jones as a co-commentator, said the news had left him in complete shock.

"One of a kind you were Deano and how lonely and helpless you must have felt on your own in that hotel room - a death we commentators fear the most, and likely to meet, helpless and gone in that hotel room... RIP my friend," Raja tweeted.

Jones retired from all forms of cricket in 1998, going on to work as a coach and commentator. He was inducted into the Australian Cricket Hall of Fame in 2019.

'Games can be held sans vaccines'

AGENCIES



The recent resumption of sports events show they can be organised safely without vaccines, International Olympic Committee President Thomas Bach said on Thursday.

The Tokyo Olympics were postponed from 2020 to 2021 due to the coronavirus. The pandemic has continued to spread, casting a shadow over the viability of hosting the Games next year.

Olympic boss said that the Tokyo Games could take place next year even

without a coronavirus vaccine, pointing to the success of the Tour de France.

"We can see that sport is coming back slowly but surely, and that a number of big events have been successfully organised recently, including matches in different Japanese leagues," he said via video link. "Also, very complex events like the Tour de France and others, which showed to us and showed to the world that we can organise safe sports events even without a vaccine."

But a vaccine and progress in rapid testing "would of course greatly facilitate" holding the event, said Bach.



Hamilton one shy of Schumacher

AFP, New Delhi

Lewis Hamilton seeks to equal Michael Schumacher's record 91 Formula One wins at the Russian Grand Prix in Sochi on Sunday despite fears over allowing 30,000 fans to attend.

The six-time world champion is one win away from what once was believed to be an untouchable total, but he will be a clear favourite to succeed on a track where he has triumphed four times in six years.

He has also reeled off six wins in nine races this season to open up a 55-point lead in the title race.



IT'S NOW 20

Rohit Sharma, nicknamed 'hitman', probably does not have to remind anyone about his batting prowess. But it seemed as if the Mumbai Indians skipper, who propelled his side to a 49-run victory against Kolkata Knight Riders, went the extra mile in pointing it out to Kolkata captain Dinesh Karthik after their IPL face-off on Wednesday. A blistering 54-ball 80 saw Rohit become the highest run-scorer against KKR (904), surpassing David Warner (829). The six sixes hit by the 'hitman' helped him enter the elite 'club of mighty hitters' as he became only the fourth batsman after Chris Gayle, AB de Villiers and MS Dhoni to hit 200 IPL sixes. Also, with that win, Mumbai Indians became the first team in IPL history to register 20 wins against one franchise.

PHOTO: TWITTER



Chelsea midfielder Kai Havertz got off the mark with a hattrick in a 6-0 thrashing of Barnsley in the League Cup on Wednesday and Frank Lampard said Havertz was just getting started. Meanwhile, Eddie Nketiah took his tally to two goals in as many matches as Arsenal booked their place in the fourth round of the Carabao Cup with a 2-0 win at Leicester.

PHOTO: TWITTER