



Rubel Hossain celebrates the wicket of Mohammad Mithun during the second match of the BCB President's Cup between Tamim XI and Mahmudullah XI in Mirpur yesterday. Rubel returned figures of 3-16 as Tamim XI were bundled out for 103 runs.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

Rusty batsmen again make easy prey for hungry pacers

SPORTS REPORTER

The difference between an intra-squad practice game and a competitive match was witnessed yet again as the cricketers were still shedding the rust for a second consecutive day of the three-team BCB President's Cup as Mahmudullah XI took on Tamim XI.

With batsmen yet to get into their groove in their first taste of competitive cricket in seven months, the pacers continued to shine brightest in the fifty-over tournament.

In the first game between Mahmudullah XI and Najmul XI, fast bowlers were instrumental. So much so that Mahmudullah XI folded for just 196 as Najmul XI's pace trio of Taskin Ahmed, Al Amin Hossain and Mukidul Islam picked up two wickets each.

Taskin looked especially solid

alongside Ebadot, both pacers managing to get extract pace and bounce from a sporting Mirpur pitch which offered even bounce and swing. Meanwhile, after impressing during last year's T20 Bangladesh Premier League for Rangpur Rangers, young Mukidul again displayed good bowling.

Ebadot had been the brightest spot for Mahmudullah XI, the tall right-arm pacer bagging three early wickets, but it was always going to be difficult for the bowling side to defend such a small total.

Similar to the first game, overcast conditions yesterday favoured the pacers and Mahmudullah XI's Rubel Hossain and Sumon Khan made full use to flatten Tamim XI's batting line-up.

Rubel impressed with pace and swing and trapped ODI skipper Tamim Iqbal leg before with a gem of a delivery that shaped into the left hander.

The experienced pacer then toiled to get purchase from the

| SCORES IN BRIEF |
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| TAMIM XI: 103 all out in 23.1 overs (Tanzid 27, Anamul 25; Rubel 3-16, Sumon 3-31, Mehedi Miraz 2-2, Aminul Islam 2-17) |
| MAHMUDULLAH XI: 106 for 5 in 27 overs (Mominul 39, Nurul Hasan 41 not out, Mahmudullah 10; Saifuddin 2-8, Tajjul 2-27, Mustafizur 1-14) |
| Result: Mahmudullah XI won by 5 wickets. |

pitch and dismissed young Tanzid Hasan Tamim -- who looked solid for his 27 runs -- and Mohammad Mithun in the same over to leave Tamim XI struggling at 42 for three.

It was then that young Sumon came onto the scene to pose challenging questions with his pace and bounce. The 20-year-old dismissed a the well-set Anamul Haque before removing Shahadat Hossain and Mosaddek Hossain in quick succession.

Failing to negotiate the right-arm pacer, Tamim XI crashed 68 for six and were unable to mount a

comeback. They eventually folded for 103 runs inside 23.1 overs in a game that had been curtailed to 47-overs-per-side due to a rain delay.

Fascinatingly, Tamim XI made a game of it and Mahmudullah XI faced the music from more pacers, namely Mohammad Saifuddin and Mustafizur Rahman -- who rattled through the top order and left Mahmudullah XI reeling on naught for three.

Bangladesh head coach Russell Domingo stated previously that the team management was looking to build a group of seven to eight fast bowlers who would be able to serve the team in all formats at home and away.

Although the rust was more evident on batsmen, they could also be blamed for not being able to spend enough time at the crease, while those that got starts could also be faulted for throwing their wickets away when they needed to score big.

From Hamdu Miah to Nahida's father

While male cricketers have returned to training with some form of cricket scheduled for the coming days, the same cannot be said about women cricketers as the Bangladesh Cricket Board is yet to schedule a series for the Tigresses in the pandemic era. Since the halt in cricketing activities, The Daily Star has been talking to women cricketers to learn stories of their early days. In today's instalment, we talk to Nahida Akter, a left-arm spinner who represented Bangladesh in 15 ODIs and 41 T20Is since her debut in 2015.

MOSTAFA SHABUI



The proudest moment for a father, probably, is when he is known among friends and others through his children's identity.

For Hamdu Miah, a mere employee of the government's central poultry farm, there probably is no other prouder feeling than being referred to as 'Nahida's [Akter] father'.

"As my father is a fourth-class employee in the colony, the people of the colony and other senior officers did not have much respect for him. But since I started playing for the national team, everyone has a lot of respect for him. Earlier, everyone used to call him Hamdu Miah. But now everyone refers to him as 'Nahida's father'," explained a proud Nahida Akter, who not only brought financial stability to her family but also upgraded the family's social status through cricket.

Nahida, who used to bunk school to play cricket with boys of her colony, had to face a lot of criticism for cricket. Even at times, it was her family and especially her father, who used to scold her for playing cricket. But times have changed drastically for the left-arm spinner.

"People who used to criticise me upfront for playing cricket don't even dare face me now. When I go home, my father still cleans my boots, balls, bat and bag with his own hands. He said, 'we get a lot

of respect in the society for cricket, so we have to respect this bat, ball, shoes too'."

However, Nahida's family was initially not so interested in letting her play. It was the adamant nature of Nahida that forced her parents get her admitted to a cricket academy.

"Seeing that I was not giving up cricket and after heeding advice of a few good neighbours, my family decided to get me admitted to a cricket academy," said Nahida.

But Nahida could not make it to the BKSP straight away.

"I went for the BKSP trial in 2012 but I was not selected at that time. Then my brother Nazim Ahmed told my mother that I should focus on my studies and give up cricket. I broke down in tears.

"I wanted to go to the BKSP trial in 2013 but I could not convince anyone else in my family except for my mother. Later my aunt Rehana Begum took me to the



BKSP. After the trial and prior to the result, I grew impatient and thought to myself that this would be the end of cricket for me if I didn't make it. But after five days I got a call from BKSP and I got in. That was the best day of my life," reminisced Nahida.

Things changed a lot from there on for Nahida and her family.

"The brother who once told my mother to stop my cricket bought me bat, ball and shoes with the money he earned from tutoring students. I was called for the national side in 2015 and made my debut against Pakistan that year. Through that I could reimburse the money that my father had spent while marrying off my sister in 2013. Since then my family has been enjoying financial prosperity."

WTC final on schedule, says ICC

REUTERS, New Delhi

The final of the inaugural World Test Championship (WTC) remains on course to be held in June next year despite the disruption caused to the qualifying process by the Covid-19 pandemic, the ICC told Reuters on Tuesday.

The pandemic played havoc with the game's calendar, prompting cancellation of a number of Test series and complicating the process of allocating WTC points from those matches in the process.

"The planning is still in progress," a spokesman of the ICC said of the WTC final, without elaborating how the point system would be reworked.

"There is likely to be more clarity in the coming days once all stakeholders are aligned. There will be an announcement soon."

This year's Twenty20 World Cup in Australia had to be postponed because of the pandemic and the restrictions it forced.

The ICC launched the WTC last year to lend context to bilateral test series, giving the format its standalone showpiece like the World Cup in other formats.

India currently top the WTC points table, having played four series, followed by Australia who have played one fewer.

England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) chief executive Tom Harrison last week underlined the logistical challenge of hosting the WTC final.



'YOU'RE A SUPERMAN'

During his unbeaten 33-ball 73, AB de Villiers showed India the way to deal with Australia's pace attack ahead of their tour down under by playing Pat Cummins in Monday's IPL match against Kolkata Knight Riders. Australia's pace spearhead had given away 19 runs in three overs but finished with figures of 4-0-38-0 after de Villiers smacked two sixes and a four in the 17th over. Royal Challengers Bangalore captain Virat Kohli said of his star teammate afterwards: "Barring one superhuman, every batsman struggled on the pitch. Only AB can do what he did. It was a fabulous knock."

PHOTO: COLLECTED



UNITED, BUT NOW ONLY IN SPIRIT

Cristiano Ronaldo posted this photo of a team meal with all members of the Portugal squad and wrote: "Unidos dentro e fora do campo! (United on and off the field!)." The defending champions were scheduled to face Sweden tonight in the UEFA Nations League, but the hosts' plans were disrupted by the news late in the day that Ronaldo had tested positive for coronavirus. The 35-year-old will certainly not feature and the repercussions of this meal could be massive.

PHOTO: TWITTER

Can new VP stem 12 years of failure?

ANISUR RAHMAN



Irregularity in staging lower division football leagues and district football leagues has been one of the major areas of criticism of Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) President Kazi Salahuddin in his past three tenures.

Having been elected to a fourth term, he has taken up the responsibility of arranging the district football leagues and brought newly elected Vice-president Imrul Hasan into the Dhaka Metropolis Football League Committee (DMFLC), which is responsible for holding lower-division football leagues in Dhaka.

While Salahuddin has been able to stage the top-tier Bangladesh Premier League regularly, he could not do the same for the lower divisions and district leagues, the pipelines through which footballers graduate into the professional football leagues -- the Bangladesh Championship League and the BPL.

There was a time when the DMFLC used to organise all football leagues including the popular Dhaka Premier League in Dhaka, but its functionality reduced drastically when the professional football league was introduced in 2007 with top clubs like Abahani, Mohammedan SC, Brothers Union, Muktiyoddha Sangsad entering the professional era.

The BFF placed much focus on the then B League, which was later renamed the Bangladesh Premier League, overlooking the importance of holding the lower division leagues regularly. At one point the BFF was forced to allow each club to play five foreign players due to a lack of quality players as well as the high demand of some top players.

The irregularity of lower and district leagues also resulted in a scenario where players were blooded in the national team following just two or five matches in top-flight football.

In his first 12 years in charge,

Salahuddin appointed Manzoor Hossain Malu, Sheikh Mohammad Maruf Hasan and Harunur Rashid as chairmen of the DMFLC. All three were only able to arrange the first, second and third division leagues a maximum of twice in their four-year terms because of two shortages -- sponsorship and grounds.

However, new DMFLC chairman and Bashundhara Kings president Imrul Hasan is apparently taking up the challenge to regularise all lower leagues, including the pioneer league, but he wants proper coordination with the Professional Football League

and the lower leagues because there is the question of promotion and relegation. So you can't just think of lower leagues; you also have to think of the professional leagues," said Imrul.

To increase the number of footballers and giving them enough time to mature before entering the professional football league, Imrul is also thinking about limiting a footballer to one Dhaka league and another district league per season.

"If the league is held regularly, a player will not have the opportunity to play more than one league in



Committee, which is responsible for holding the BPL and BCL, to fix the timing of the lower leagues.

"The main challenge is to regularise the lower leagues but it is my responsibility to make it happen," Imrul told the Daily Star adding that he has the will to work with both lower division leagues and district leagues.

"I believe we can manage sponsors for the lower division leagues but the shortage of grounds is the biggest problem. Let's hope of doing something by adjusting everything," Imrul said.

"We will sit soon to make a calendar for lower leagues but timing is also another factor and we need the synchronisation of the top leagues

Dhaka and I am thinking of keeping a provision that one player will be allowed to take part in two leagues -- one in Dhaka and one in district -- in a single season," said Imrul.

He said he was also mulling another provision -- to have certified coaches for all clubs in the lower divisions.

Although Imrul is not involved with district leagues, he is thinking of how to incorporate the champions of district leagues into the national level, so that clubs at district level can also play with an ultimate target in mind.

With a history of predecessors failing to regularise the lower leagues due to shortages of funds, grounds and will, time will tell how well the new vice-president fares in this regard.