

Mahedi rallies the troops as batsmen disappoint again

SPORTS REPORTER

The BCB President's Cup may have witnessed the first 200-plus total courtesy of Mahedi Hasan's blistering 57-ball 82, but questions can still be raised regarding a lack of intent from the batsmen yesterday.

Tamim XI posted 221 for nine against Najmul XI following Mahedi's late flourish, recovering from a batting disaster that had reduced them to 108 for seven.

Coming in at number nine, Mahedi joined Taijul Islam -- who remained unbeaten on 20 provided valuable support -- for a magnificent 115-run ninth-wicket stand.

Mahedi departed in the final over of the innings as he went for a big shot, but it was enough for Tamim XI to post a challenging total in the rain-affected game.

After folding for just 103 in their first game, all eyes were on Tamim XI, who needed a win to keep their hopes of reaching the final of the fifty-over competition alive.

There was talk of rust among cricketers featuring in the three-team tournament, which was understandable given the of seven-month gap in activities. But even that should have been overcome by



A batsman finally offered some resistance to the bowlers as Mahedi Hasan, coming at number nine, smote three sixes and nine fours during his 57-ball 82 to help Tamim XI recover from 108 for seven and post a commendable 221 against Najmul XI during BCB President's Cup match in Mirpur yesterday.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

the time the tournament reached its mid-stages.

Fans were eager to witness the two Tamims opening the innings together -- Tamim Iqbal and Tanzid Hasan Tamim. Although the younger Tamim showed promise in getting 27 in the first game, he departed for eight after his attempt to pull a banged-in delivery from

pacer Al Amin Hossain resulted in a simple catch at mid-wicket.

Anamul Haque again showed glimpses of his talent with two beautiful boundaries but the right-hander's tendency to play away from his body cost him dearly. He departed for 12, caught at slip by Soumya Sarkar after going fishing for a length delivery well outside

the off stump from Taskin Ahmed. Although Tamim looked solid at one end, wickets kept tumbling at the other. Mohammad Mithun fell four four and the batsmen did not live up to the expectations of putting high prices on their wickets, which made life easy for the Najmul XI bowlers.

Taskin, Al Amin, Mukidul Islam, Nayeem and leg-spinner Rishad Hossain picked up wickets at regular interval.

Tamim had reached the thirties and looked set but, perhaps due to the mounting pressure from losing partners, fell victim to a classic off-spinner's dismissal. The experienced left-hander, who has suffered failed to cash in on innings in the past despite getting set, was dragged in front by a beautifully flighted delivery from Nayeem and could only manage to edge to slip. He fell for 33.

Like the seniors, Shahadat Hossain walked back after an encouraging 31, while Akbar Ali, who captained Bangladesh's Under-19 World Cup-winning side, failed to make an impact in his first game.

It will be important for batsmen to come up with a better approach or the tournament, which was arranged to bring back competitiveness among cricketers, will continue to miss that spark.

Players upset as pay hike falls short of promises

SPORTS REPORTER



The Bangladesh Football Federation's professional football league committee yesterday declared a six-week transfer window for the upcoming Bangladesh Premier League, from November 1 to December 15, and decided to increase players' payments from clubs from 25 per cent to 35 per cent of their contracts.

The decision was made at the first meeting of the new committee in the presence of its chairman and BFF senior vice-president Abdus Salam Murshedy, just two days after BFF president Kazi Salauddin promised players he would increase their payments to 40 per cent for the upcoming season, which will start on December 19 through the Federation Cup.

The players, who waited outside the BFF House for nearly three hours while the meeting was held, refused the decision and sought another appointment with four-time BFF president Salahuddin.

Abahani and national team midfielder Sohel Rana said: "We came here to learn the outcomes of the meeting. They decided to pay 35 per cent but we are not happy with this decision because the BFF president promised us 40 per cent. We will again sit with the BFF president because we haven't demanded much from the clubs."

Meanwhile, Murshedy maintained that the clubs had shown generosity.

"We had decided to pay 25 per cent of their new contracts for the upcoming season but players spoke to the BFF president and it was discussed at the executive meeting. During the pandemic,

practically most clubs have depended on donations because they don't have permanent sources of income," Murshedy said after the meeting.

"So we have decided to increase the payment of the players to 35 percent from 25 percent of new contracts for the 2020-21 season. The new contracts will also include dues from last season.

"As a former footballer and organiser, I believe clubs have shown generosity amidst the pandemic. I also believe the players won't be unhappy with this



decision," he added.

Replying to a query, the long-serving senior vice-president said: "There is no question of honor or dishonor [for the BFF president]. It is a discussion among club officials and players. The decision we made is the reality and what the president told the players were the thoughts of the BFF president, who may make an additional announcement because he is the head of the BFF."



NORTJE'S LIGHTNING PACE

The Dubai International Cricket Stadium, which is dubbed the 'Ring of Fire', witnessed one of the most hostile spells in IPL on Wednesday as Delhi Capitals pacer Anrich Nortje provided thrills to millions of fans. The South African bowled the fastest delivery in the history of the IPL, demolishing the wickets behind Rajasthan Royals batsman Jos Buttler with a 156.22 kmph delivery.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

Riding the Begboti wave to the top

AZIBOR RAHMAN from Jhenidah



"It is from small streams that big rivers rise." Similar to the sentiment in Canadian writer Matshona Dhliwayo's words, Sohagi Khatun, Mukti Khatun, Mehnaz Khatun, Antara Khatun and Hossain Mondol completed an inspiring journey from a remote village swimming club in Jhenidah on the shores of Begboti River to the top levels and top sports institution.

Bikoshito Swimming Club has been helping realise local swimmers' dreams by utilising the river to provide them training.

The club's authorities bear the expenses of training students, as well as the rent of the office and its running expenditures.

The club was established in 2001 on the banks of the Begboti River running through the heart of Hatbakua village under Sadar Upazila

Since its inception, students, both male and female, have been given training and so got a chance at BKSP. At present, there are 30 students in the club who are trained from here.

Among them, Mondol, Mukti, Mehnaz and Antara have gotten admitted to the BKSP in Dhaka.

15-year old Sohagi Khatun said she won a national award being trained here.

Now she is swimming at the national level. She got a place in the list of "Sera Satarur Khoje Bangladesh" (Search for the



Best Swimmer in Bangladesh), the joint initiative of the Bangladesh Navy and Bangladesh Swimming Federation.

Daughter of Shakhawat Hossain of DhanaJoypur village, a rickshaw-puller, their family consists of five members. She said, "All this has been possible because of the benevolence and untiring efforts of the Bikoshito Club president and secretary."

Fighting poverty and various adversities, she has overcome and reached her goal.

Hossain Mondol said he got a chance at BKSP in 2016 after a frantic effort, encouraged by Sirazul Islam, secretary of the club. During the ongoing pandemic, Mondol -- an expert in diving -- is at home and continues his diving practice at the Begboti River. His father is a well-to-do

farmer in the area.

"I am chasing a dream of becoming a famous swimmer," said 14-year old boy.

Mukti Khatun burst into tears while talking to this correspondent about her family and her own hardships.

Her mother divorced her father and married another man and her father left home to work in a garments factory.

"He does not take care of me. At last the trainer Sirazul Islam gave me shelter and trained me properly," 13-year old Mukti said, adding that Sirazul sir bears all her expenses.

"Students are trained by two trainers and we pay them Tk 10,000 per month and spend more Tk 15,000 more for office rent and the students' expenses, like training

materials. We are committed to doing something good for the distressed and helpless ones," said club secretary Sirazul Islam.

"Mukti is in class seven at BKSP. She was admitted in 2017. She won four silver and one bronze medal in the Under-12 competition," Sirazul added.

"Mehnaz is a student of class eight at BKSP. She finished third in 50-metre freestyle swimming in 2019. Her father Anwar Hossain is a barber and they live in a tin-shed house. Her [BKSP] fees of Tk 700 a month is difficult for her father to pay," he said.

Sumon Shikdar, president of Bikoshito swimming club said they do not charge the



trainees any fee.

"Every year, two-three students get a chance at BKSP, which makes us very happy. A big budget is needed, which is difficult for us. We have already started to set up another swimming centre at Gopinathpur water body. If we get any monetary support, we will be able to train more students."

Arteta urges for 'shared vision'

REUTERS, London

Premier League clubs have an obligation to protect those further down the football pyramid, Arsenal manager Mikel Arteta said on Thursday, the day after top-flight clubs voted against Project Big Picture.

"I think we have to protect the lower leagues as well, this is our obligation," Arteta told reporters ahead of his side's trip to his old club Manchester City on Saturday. "We want to produce grassroots and opportunities for everybody in this industry. I think it's fair to assess the situation and find the best possible way to achieve that. This is our responsibility as well."

Arteta said he believed unity was vital in decisions regarding a re-structuring of the Premier League.

"I think that's a massive strength so as much as we can, we can maintain that unity and sustain our way of doing things," Arteta said. "I think that's very valuable and the image that we project to the outside world is really, really strong."



Robert Lewandowski (L) showed his predatory instincts with two superb goals in Poland's 3-0 home win over 10-man Bosnia while Portugal brushed off Cristiano Ronaldo's absence and outclassed Sweden, a brace from Diogo Jota (C) giving them a comfortable 3-0 win in the Nations League matches on Wednesday. Meanwhile, Kylian Mbappe celebrates his late goal in a 2-1 win against Croatia with Antoine Griezmann, who had fired France into an eighth-minute lead.

PHOTO: TWITTER

Maguire the villain as Danes storm Wembley

AGENCIES, London



England's prospects of returning to the finals of the Nations League suffered a big hit as Gareth Southgate's side lost 1-0 at home to Denmark on Wednesday.

Harry Maguire was sent off for England in the first half at Wembley for two clumsy yellow cards before Christian Eriksen converted a 35th-minute penalty on the occasion of his 100th cap.

Maguire was already under intense



scrutiny after a difficult period for both club and country in the wake of his arrest in Greece and the Manchester United captain endured a 31-minute nightmare in what was one of the toughest nights of Gareth Southgate's reign.

However, Southgate said he had no intention of taking Maguire out of the firing line when England next meet up in November, while captain Harry Kane said he expected the defender to "bounce back."

"For me, he is a top player and a massive part of what we do. He is having

a period where he is getting a lot of stick thrown his way. He is big enough to deal with that and he will be stronger for it. He has our full support and I know his club will be the same," he told Sky Sports.

"He will be getting all sorts. He has been getting all sorts for a while from some people who should know better. None of us like to be at the centre of that sort of summer, do they? He is having one of those periods where things are going against him but you have to hang on in there and things will turn."

Belgium won 2-1 in Iceland on



Wednesday with Romelu Lukaku scoring twice while, in Zagreb, Kylian Mbappe missed an open goal early on but got the winner in the 79th minute as France beat Croatia 2-1 in their latest re-run of the 2018 World Cup final. Antoine Griezmann had put France ahead with Nikola Vlasic equalising in the second half for Croatia before around 7,000 fans.

Meanwhile, the Dutch came from behind to draw 1-1 with Italy in Bergamo, with Donny van de Beek netting for Frank de Boer's side after Lorenzo Pellegrini put Italy ahead.

'Training while in quarantine is a must'

REUTERS, Sydney

The Australian Open will only go ahead in January if agreement can be reached with local authorities to allow players to practice while they undergo quarantine in Melbourne, tournament director Craig Tiley said on Thursday.

"If a player has to quarantine and be stuck in a hotel for two weeks just before their season, that won't happen," Tiley told Australian Associated Press. "You can't ask players to quarantine for two weeks and then step out and be ready to play a Grand Slam."

"We completely accept that everyone coming from overseas has got to have two weeks in quarantine," he added.

"What we are negotiating, or what we're trying to have an agreement on, is that we set up a quarantine environment where they can train and go between the hotel and the courts in those two weeks."

He also revised expected crowd numbers from the 50% he predicted in August to a likely 25%.