

'Don't judge them on 10 days of cricket'



I can't compliment the players enough for the work they have done in the last six or seven weeks. Look at the shape of Taskin (Ahmed) and how Rubel (Hossain) is going, and Khaled (Ahmed) who came back from a big injury; the guys have really worked hard on their fitness levels. The biggest thing Taskin has done is change his work ethic. He is working so much harder. He is now in very good physical condition.

RUSSELL DOMINGO
BANGLADESH HEAD COACH

SPORTS REPORTER

Although the final of the BCB President's Cup, originally scheduled for today, was rescheduled to Sunday taking into consideration the weather forecast over the next 72 hours, there remains a positive vibe from players and management regarding the 50-over tournament.

The three-team tournament, organised by the BCB in an attempt to get the local players back into cricket, has been more than just a way of playing for most players after a long seven-month break. Even Mahmudullah Riyad, skipper of Mahmudullah XI, pointed out that players trying to outperform each other in the intra-squad tournament was a positive takeaway.

"Although it is a practice tournament, I think that all the players played with utmost seriousness and competitiveness. There was this competitiveness in every player; we tried to outperform each other and in that sense this was a really good tournament for us," Mahmudullah said yesterday.

The level has not been equal to that of an international competition -- justifiable given the BCB President's Cup is just an intra-squad tournament. But the



competitiveness among players and seriousness demonstrated by them throughout has not gone unnoticed by Bangladesh head coach Russell Domingo.

"The tournament has been played with fantastic intensity. I am very happy with how hard the guys have been trying on the field; the way the bowlers have bowled. It sure would have been nice to have got some more runs but I think everyone must understand that the players have not played any competitive cricket for nearly seven months," Domingo said during a virtual press conference yesterday.

Domingo also jumped in to

have not been playing cricket for seven months on such tough-ish wickets," said Domingo.

Domingo was also more than happy to take into account positives such as the impressive performances of the fast bowlers.

"That's a positive question. Well done," chuckled Domingo after being asked to have his say about the fast bowlers' dominance in the tournament. "We have been trying to find some good, young fast bowlers for the last seven or eight months. Now we are developing good fast bowlers and I think they will be competitive on the international stage."

Najmul Hossain Shanto, skipper of Najmul XI, hoped for another positive performance from his side in the final. "There have been a lot of positives in the tournament. There were some good innings from Mushfiqur [Rahim] bhai, from Afif Hossain and also from the likes of Towhid Hridoy and Irfan Shukkur. In the bowling department, the likes of Taskin [Ahmed] bhai, Al-Amin [Hossain] bhai and Nayeem [Hasan] have put in some good performances which ultimately created healthy competition among us. I hope that we can also play the final with a positive mental set-up."

ICC mulls splitting points of postponed WTC matches

AGENCIES

Aiming to complete the World Test Championship cycle and host the final in June as per schedule, the ICC is contemplating splitting points for all WTC bilateral series that had to be postponed due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

The matter is likely to come up for discussion at its Cricket Committee meeting next month, ESPNcricinfo reported. Bangladesh's has seen a total of four series postponed apart from one Test and an ODI against Pakistan.

"This is one option which has been discussed but everything will be decided in the next month's ICC meeting," said Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) CEO Nizamuddin Chowdhury.

According to the website, while one of the options is splitting points, the other feasible option could be considering the points for only those matches that will actually be played by the end of March, 2021.

Based on those matches till March, the final positions on the points table could be computed based on the percentage of points the teams have won from the matches that they have contested.

As of now, each series carries 120 points and points are distributed among the number of matches. The points split system that they are mulling will be distributing one third of the total points for the postponed series.

"Splitting the points would be within the regulations as they stand, whereby all Tests in the cycle that can't be played (through no fault of either side) are deemed draws. In that scenario, both sides receive a third of the points available for a Test. Basing it on percentages of points played for would require a tweak to existing regulations," the website wrote.

Focus to be on foreigners in coming transfer window

SPORTS REPORTER

With the transfer window for the 2020-21 season set to open on November 1 for six weeks, top Bangladesh Premier League clubs are looking to bring major changes in their roster of foreign players as they have to rely on similar sets of local players in the new season set to start from December 19.

In line with the new decisions of the professional football league committee of the Bangladesh Football Federation taken on October 15, local players have to play for the same clubs they represented last season, which was cancelled midway due to the coronavirus pandemic. The clubs were however given an opportunity to release local players, if they wanted to, on the condition that the players would return if they did not find new clubs. There are no such provisions for foreign players.

Most top clubs are not thinking of releasing their old guns; instead their focus will be on signing quality foreign players to strengthen squads because foreign players usually make the difference, be it in winning the title or avoiding relegation.

Except Saif SC, most top clubs also want to bank on their old coaches for the upcoming season.

Defending champions Bashundhara Kings have brought in three new foreign players -- Brazilian winger Robson Azevedo Da Silva Robinho, midfielder Jonathan da Silveria Fernandes and Iranian Khaled Shafiei -- and are looking for a replacement for Argentine striker Harman Barcos, who scored four times in his only appearance for the club in an AFC Cup match.

Although there were rumours that the national player-studded Kings may release some players, BA Jubair Nipu, head of Kings' strategy and planning, denied it.

"The management has decided not to release any players but if any players want to leave Bashundhara Kings, they can approach the management, which will take the final decision," said Nipu.

Echoing Nipu's sentiment, Satyajit Das Rupu, manager of six-time champions Abahani, said "We don't have any plan to release any players or rope in anyone but if any player feels he can't play for Abahani,

then he can approach us and we will think about it."

Rupu also said they are going to replace Kyrgyz player Edgar Bernhardt and are thinking of bringing another change in four-player quota.

"We want to release three to four junior players who did not improve as expected last season," Saif SC Managing Director Nasir Chowdhury said. "We are also thinking of signing four new foreign players."

Sheikh Russel KC are also thinking of releasing a couple of local players and bringing in all four new foreign players.

"After releasing a couple of players, we want to replace them if we can. We are communicating with foreign players as we have decided not to retain the services of



our old foreign players," said Sheikh Russel KC Sports Director Saleh Jaman Selim.

Sheikh Jamal DC Manager Anwarul Karim Helalsaid they would not release or sign local players but wanted to make changes to the foreigners' roster and retain only Solomon King.

Chattogram Abahani Manager Arman Aziz said that they were planning to release some local players and retain their foreign recruits.

Saif SC are looking to replace Serbian coach Drago Mamic while Bashundhara, Abahani, Sheikh Jamal, Sheikh Russel and Chattogram Abahani are all set to rely on last season's coaches.



Shakhtar Donetsk players celebrate after pulling off a shock 3-2 win away to 13-time winners Real Madrid in their Champions League Group B opener on Wednesday, despite the Ukrainian side missing 10 players due to injuries and Covid-19 while Real manager Zinedine Zidane looks dejected. (Bottom) Bayern Munich's Kingsley Coman celebrates his first goal against Atletico Madrid.

PHOTO: AFP/TWITTER

A night to remember for Shakhtar

AGENCIES

Bayern Munich's Champions League final hero Kingsley Coman was in inspired form again as the defending champions crushed Atletico Madrid. It was another ruthless display of attacking and a statement of intent by Bayern in a 4-0 victory on Wednesday.

There was a sense of deja-vu about Joshua Kimmich's killer pass and Coman's clinical finish. Just as they combined in Lisbon to clinch Europe's top prize in August, they did the same to open Bayern's title defense. That set the tone for another relentless performance by this phenomenal team.

Liverpool and Manchester City also won on the night, but it was Shakhtar Donetsk that produced one of the most memorable upsets in Champions League history,



beating 13-time winner Real Madrid 3-2 at the Santiago Bernabeu.

Real Madrid faced a team who had been decimated by injuries and had 10 players absent due to contracting Covid-19 and were still, quite simply, embarrassed.

"We were lacking a bit of everything today but worst of all we were lacking confidence. It's difficult to think of what to say

when you concede three goals in the first half. I'm left with a very bad feeling because of everything that happened tonight," said Real manager Zinedine Zidane.

"It's a bad game, a bad night but I'm the coach and I'm the one who has to find solutions. I didn't find them tonight and it's a very difficult moment for the players."

Dealing with a situation he had described as a "nightmare", Shakhtar's Portuguese coach Luis Castro watched on in admiration as his players out-witted and out-ran their illustrious opponents.

"I think they underestimated us but we showed our football and style," said Viktor Kornienko.

The Ukrainian champions, Luis Castro, added: "We were a united team from the first until the last minute. When the score was 3-2 we had to defend more and I thought 'Oh, let this game end as soon as possible'. It's a great result for us."

Real began their domestic campaign in impressive form, winning three and drawing one and looked to have picked up where they left off last season.

However, at the weekend the team looked lackluster against Cadiz, playing in their first top-flight Spanish campaign for 15 years, and were convincingly outplayed. Many wondered whether it was just a small blip or an insight into some early issues Zidane would be facing this season.

Wednesday's match would certainly have done nothing to allay those concerns. Missing Sergio Ramos through injury, and having rested Karim Benzema and Toni Kroos, Real Madrid's game plan was undetectable.

There were signs of a high press early on, but no indication of what to do with the ball when they won it. It was the same in the loss to Cadiz on Saturday.



While Lionel Messi trained with Barcelona yesterday, Cristiano Ronaldo enjoyed a meal in self-isolation. The Portuguese reportedly tested positive for the virus again yesterday. He is scheduled to undergo a swab today as well. If he is cleared, he may feature in Juventus' Serie A match against Verona on Sunday.

PHOTO: TWITTER



CR7 may still feature in Barca clash

AGENCIES, Turin

Juventus forward Cristiano Ronaldo could still face Barcelona in the Champions League next week despite reportedly returning another positive test for coronavirus yesterday. Ronaldo initially tested positive on October 13.

Juventus sent medical documents to UEFA a week before the game as per regulations yesterday, informing them of his condition, but the club are hopeful Ronaldo will test negative 24 hours before the match against Barcelona and that would be enough for him to participate.



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