



Pacer Sumon Khan celebrates the wicket of Mushfiqur Rahim. After Sumon's five wickets for 38 runs, Liton Das hit 68 off 69 balls as Mahmudullah XI posted a seven-wicket victory against Najmul XI chasing down 173 runs in the BCB President's Cup final at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

Not perfect, but enough value

ABDULLAH AL MEHDI



Bangladesh head coach Russell Domingo recently downplayed performance issues during the BCB President's Cup, citing the lack of cricket in the last seven months as having played a big role in players struggling to get going. However, there were familiar patterns in the performances especially of the top-order batsmen throughout the tournament while the flux of youthful energy in the bowling department may have also piqued national selectors' interest.

Rather than neglecting performance issues of the cricketers following a break, it appears to be more prudent to look at the bright specks in this BCB-arranged tournament since some of the young players who played the tournament may very well form the backbone of the national team in the near future. It essentially became an opportunity

to the competitive structure, one that makes BCB's first tournament since the coronavirus outbreak a success as match situations tested batters' resilience.

The tournament served as a notice to top-order batsmen as the likes of Tamim Iqbal, Liton Das, Naim Sheikh, Soumya Sarkar, Nazmul Hossain and Mominul Haque failed to fire even though earlier on in the tournament, the Mirpur wicket had good bounce on offer for batsmen to play shots. The trend was not an unfamiliar one as the national team too have often struggled to get the top order to fire in recent years. Rust was an important factor and one also has to consider that one good delivery can upend a batsman, but the consistency of early debacles should be cause of headache and it may also raise doubts about how hard the bowlers actually had to work to trouble underperforming batsmen. All things considered, the tournament did provide an opportunity to evaluate performances as any competitive setting does and national selector Habibul Bashar was keener to focus on the bowlers' performances rather than disappointing batting displays.

"There is time before our next international assignment in January, so there will be time for batsmen to rectify things. The way I see it, the bowlers performed exceptionally and that is why the batsmen struggled. Both pacers and spinners have been bowling very well and kept a tight leash on batsmen," he said.

"Obviously we didn't expect the batsmen to underperform but it wasn't easy on the slow surface and because of the rust associated with playing after a long time," he added. But in terms of evaluating the future stars? "We're definitely looking at the performances and with the future tournaments coming before next year, we will get to see a lot more," Bashar concluded.

Rust was a key factor but if one looks at the ongoing IPL, it appears that players' preparation has been far from ideal. The key lay in how to mentally prepare to play the game, as Chris Gayle showed after coming back from sickness and hitting a crucial fifty to give his side Kings XI Punjab a much-needed win. Getting cricket back onto the field was BCB's priority but the team selections and balance of the three teams also gives them good ground to evaluate what they saw in this tournament.



Lesser lights grab the spotlight

SPORTS REPORTER



Young pacer Sumon Khan's five-wicket haul laid the platform for Mahmudullah XI to bundle out Najmul XI for a total of 173 runs. In reply, a clinical batting display, led by a fifty from Liton Das, helped Mahmudullah XI clinch the BCB President's Cup title with a seven-wicket win at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.

While the intent and attitude from many of the established cricketers was absent, it was the lesser known ones who managed to grab all the limelight in yesterday's final.

All eyes were on the likes of Rubel Hossain and Ebadat Hossain in the pace bowling department for Mahmudullah XI when they sent

HIGHLIGHTS

PLAYER OF THE TOURNAMENT

Mushfiqur Rahim

BATSMAN OF THE TOURNAMENT

Irfan Shukkur

BOWLER OF THE TOURNAMENT

Rubel Hossain

PROMISING PLAYER OF THE TOURNAMENT

Rishad Ahmed

Najmul XI to bat first. However, young Sumon Khan, who had his way into the team due to an injury to Hasan Mahmud, stepped up and grabbed the opportunity.

Neither tall nor stocky, Sumon used his line and length with a bit of swing to great effect. The 20-year-old, who has been part of the High Performance squad, announced himself by picking three wickets in the first game before his five-for-38 in yesterday's game.

Rubel Hossain gave

Mahmudullah's side the early breakthrough by removing Saif Hasan before Sumon, who was struck for two boundaries early, had his revenge and got the biggest scalp of Mushfiqur Rahim.

Sumon's ability to shape the ball into the right-hander worked well as Mushfiqur, batting on 12, was beaten by the late swing and got trapped leg-before while trying to work the ball on the leg side.

The right-arm pacer got the outside edge of another in-form batsman Afif Hossain before he got Soumya Sarkar edging while playing at a delivery going away from his body.

The pacer from Manikganj used his intelligence and tried to bowl at the stumps against the tail-enders and dismissed Nayeem Hassan and Nasum Ahmed late in the innings as Najmul XI were bundled out for 173 with 17 balls to spare.

Much like Sumon, another cricketer who is lesser known to many cricket fans was left-hander Irfan Shukkur. Irfan's innings was the only highlight with the bat for his side in this game.

Irfan showed promise throughout the tournament as he displayed a great amount of adaptability coming into bat in different situations. Coming in at five-down, the 75-run knock was his second half-century of the tournament and eventually he ended as the second-highest run-getter of the tournament with 214 runs behind Mushfiqur's 219 runs in five games.

The selectors will surely provide more opportunities in future to players like Sumon and Irfan, who generally do not get enough opportunity compared to the established players so that a healthy competition for places in the national team ensues.

'Madrid's life insurance' makes the difference

REUTERS, BARCELONA



Talking points from Saturday's action in La Liga after Real Madrid won 3-1 away to Barcelona in the 'Clasico' and Atletico Madrid beat Real Betis 2-0.

STREETWISE RAMOS PROVES THE DIFFERENCE

Real coach Zinedine Zidane was unable to explain how his side could beat Barca so comfortably after pitiful defeats to Cadiz and Shakhtar Donetsk but there was in fact a simple explanation: Sergio Ramos.

Madrid's captain got injured against Cadiz and was not risked against Shakhtar, meaning he was at his all-powerful, bloody-minded best for the game that mattered the most and once

Ramos continued to thrive in the pressure-cooker situation of a penalty, scoring a 25th consecutive spot kick and racking up his 100th goal for the club.

KOEMAN LOSES TACTICAL BATTLE

A veteran of Clasico encounters as a player, Barca coach Ronald Koeman had a disappointing first experience of Spain's biggest fixture from the dugout and got the big decisions wrong.

He made a bold call in benching Antoine Griezmann, but giving a start to 17-year-old Pedri in his place proved misguided as the youngster looked out of his depth and fazed by the occasion.

The Dutchman also took far too long to change things around even as his side continued to be overpowered in the second half, not making any changes until



again the towering centreback proved the difference.

Ramos restored power and concentration to Madrid's defence but above all embodied the winning mentality that runs through the club, which was underlined when he made the most of a tug by Clement Lenglet to win the penalty in the second half from which he put Madrid back in front.

"The smartest kid in class, he brought home the bacon for Madrid by falling over and reacting far quicker than any other player would," said newspaper AS, adding that Ramos was 'Madrid's life insurance'.

the 81st minute.

After the match, he chose to focus on Real Madrid's penalty which he argued was soft, insisting that his side played well and would have got a different result were it not for the decision, even though they were out-played in the latter stages.

There are also two questions: Can Griezmann find a way back after latest snub? Can Atletico grind their way to the title?

With Real and Barca looking far from their peak powers, Diego Simeone's side are starting to look like a consistent, solid side after seeing off Real Betis.



ON TARGET

[L-R] Moise Kean scored his first goal for Paris St Germain as the French champions recovered from their Champions League defeat by Manchester United to move top of the Ligue 1 standings with a 4-0 home victory against lowly Dijon on Saturday. Romelu Lukaku struck again, his fifth league goal of the season and seventh in all competitions, as Inter Milan ground out a 2-0 win away to Genoa in a lacklustre Serie A match. Robert Lewandowski took his Bundesliga tally to a record 10 goals in the first five games this season with a hat-trick as Bayern Munich thumped Eintracht Frankfurt 5-0. Sadio Mane congratulates Diogo Jota, who elevated to head home Mane's perfect cross from the left flank as Liverpool came from a goal down to beat Sheffield United 2-1 in their Premier League clash at Anfield on Saturday night and extend their unbeaten run at home to 62 games in the top flight.

PHOTO : TWITTER

Sri Lanka to tour South Africa in Dec

REUTERS, COLOMBO



Sri Lanka will travel to South Africa in December to play a two-Test series, a local media report said on Sunday, marking their return to international cricket after a 10-month gap due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Since hosting West Indies for a limited-overs series in February, Sri Lanka cricketers have seen a number of fixtures, including test matches against England and a limited-overs series against India, postponed because of the pandemic.

The team will play a two-Test series beginning on Dec. 26 though venues have not been finalised yet, the Island newspaper reported, quoting Sri Lanka Cricket officials. The first match is set to be played in Durban or Port Elizabeth, with Cape Town the likely venue for the New Year test.

Sri Lanka last toured South Africa in 2019, becoming the first Asian team to win a test series there. Most of Karunaratne's team-mates will be seen in action in the Lanka Premier League Twenty20 competition beginning on Nov. 21.

FIRST ROUND: MATCH 4

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HURDCO INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL

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