

Better safe than sorry

Says Siddikur about Indian tour pull-out as his Olympics dream fades

ATIQUE ANAM

Bangladesh's premier golfer Siddikur Rahman is prepared to forego the riches on offer in the Indian tour and even the lure of a second Olympics participation in order to be safe and secure from the clutches of Covid-19.

The two-time Asian Tour winner and the only Bangladeshi to participate in the Olympics through qualification, in Rio 2016, has said that life and safety comes first for him and feels that there is no point taking risks that at such a difficult situation like this.

The 36-year-old was supposed to go to India to participate in two events of PGTI -- the chief golfing tour of the country -- which would have helped him earn precious ranking points required to be in contention for next year's Olympics. However, with the second wave of coronavirus pandemic all but here, Siddikur has opted against travelling to India.

"I had registered and bought tickets too for these events. But the coronavirus situation is getting very bad, both in our country and in India. So I've decided not to go," Siddikur told The Daily Star.

"The second wave is here already. If I get infected in India, there will be a lot of trouble. So it's better being safe than being sorry," said Siddikur, who has won seven PGTI events in his career.

The two events that Siddikur is skipping are the Jeev Milkha Singh Invitational, which takes place in Chandigarh from December

3 to 6 and the Tata Steel Tour Championship taking place from December 17 to 20 in Jamshedpur. Both events carry a prize purse of 1.5 crore rupees, and even though Siddikur will not be there, there will be Bangladeshi representation in the form of Jamal Mollah, Mohammad Sayum and Badal Hossain.

Siddikur, who last played competitive golf in the first week of March this year, is not bothered about the prize money or the chance of getting back to competitive golf.

"These are not that big prize purses to be honest. I would have much preferred playing the Asian Tour or tours in Malaysia

or Thailand. But Asian Tour is not happening at the moment and countries like Malaysia are not allowing visas to Bangladeshis. So I guess I'll wait for a few more months," Siddikur said.

"Although it is difficult not to be playing golf, I am willing to bide time. Having said that, I'm preparing myself with intensive training at the Army golf club, of course maintaining proper precaution. We don't get much time to work on our weaknesses with the busy schedule round-the-year. So I'm trying to work on those areas and staying prepared so that when tours start in full swing, I can immediately join in," Siddikur added.

Skipping the Indian tour means not only giving up on match-practice and prize money, but perhaps more crucially, foregoing the slim chance of qualifying for the rescheduled 2020 Olympics, which will be held in Tokyo in July-August next year. Siddikur accepts the situation and is looking towards future.

"I really wanted to be in the Olympics and for that I had to be playing on tours. But I can understand the situation and console myself saying that I have already participated in one Olympics. And there will hopefully be more opportunities for me to participate in future," the ace golfer said.

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Bangladeshi Golfer Siddikur Rahman



'Life is Life'

AFP, BUENOS AIRES

The first games in Argentina's Primera Division since the death of Diego Maradona kicked off Saturday amid tears and memories, with the club he last coached notching up a victory in tribute to the footballing genius.

Players from Racing and Union de Santa Fe entered the pitch at Avellaneda wearing national jerseys with Maradona's number 10 on the back. They warmed up to the sound of "Life is Life" -- a song made wildly popular by an accompanying video of the Argentine great performing feats of magic with the ball.

Standing around the centre circle, they marked the legend's passing with a minute's applause. A kite in the Argentine colours was released, in reference to the "Cosmic Kite" moniker given to the diminutive playmaker by commentator Victor Morales after his "Hand of God" goal against England in the 1986 World Cup.

"He is a great one, it goes without saying," said Racing midfielder Walter

Montoya, unable to hold back tears during the tribute. "There is no need to say anything else, all words are futile."

Maradona's last public appearance came four weeks ago for his 60th birthday celebration at the stadium of Gimnasia y Esgrima, the club he was coaching before he underwent an operation to remove a clot on his brain. He died in his sleep on Wednesday aged just 60, plunging his South American homeland and football globally into mourning.

Gimnasia paid their own tribute to the star with a 1-0 victory over Velez in Buenos Aires in a later Saturday fixture. Several Gimnasia players coached by the legend were also on the verge of tears before kickoff.

"It was crazy to play, because we are still reeling from this blow," midfielder Victor Ayala said after the match. "But we did what Diego taught us... For us, he was like a father, calling us whenever we needed something... From up there, he must be proud of this team."

Unbeaten Ctg take on Tamim's Barishal

SPORTS REPORTER

After two exciting games on the opening day of the Bangabandhu T20 Cup, there was a sense that the tournament would produce more action-packed cricket in the coming days.

Drama, agony and competitive cricket highlighted the opening day. Minister Rajshahi defeated Beximco Dhaka by two runs in the opening game before Gemcon Khulna got home with one ball to spare against Fortune Barishal.

Rajshahi's 169 for nine in that game remains the highest total of the tournament, with teams even being bundled out below 100 twice in the six games so far. That has raised questions about the lack of competitiveness and underlined the need for batsmen to step up.

There have been only five fifties in the six games and Barishal's Tamim Iqbal holds the highest individual score with a match-winning 77 as they were chasing a modest 133-run* target in search of their first win against Rajshahi.

Barishal will be facing an unbeaten Gazi Group Chattogram in the day's first game today. Mohammad Mithun's side look a force to be reckoned with, managing comprehensive nine-wicket wins in their two games against Dhaka and Khulna after bundling out the opposition in the 80s on both occasions.

Led by Mustafizur Rahman, who

picked up four wickets for five runs in his last outing against Khulna, Chattogram's bowlers seem in great rhythm.

As a consequence of their sublime bowling and the presence of two in-form openers in the form of Soumya Sarkar and Liton Das making the job even easier, the middle order is yet to be tested.



Neither have quite gotten into the groove, but Mushfiqur Rahim's Dhaka have fared worse after going winless in the first two games. He will surely look for a different approach in leading a rather young side against Mahmudullah Riyad's star-studded Khulna, who won their first game after last-over heroics from Ariful Haque but have failed to live up to expectations since.

There was some bad news for Chattogram as Bangladesh Test skipper Mominul Haque injured his right thumb while fielding in the previous game. An X-ray revealed that the left-hander had a fracture which might force him to miss a major part of the tournament.

All eyes were on Khulna's star all-rounder Shakib Al Hasan at the start of the tournament, but he failed with the bat in all three games with scores of 15, 12, and three. He has also scalped just one wicket.

It will be important for the big guns to fire in order to make the tournament livelier and, more importantly, score the big runs that T20 cricket is all about.

Smith pummels India as Australia seal ODI series

REUTERS, SYDNEY

Steve Smith was at his imperious best as he scored a second successive 62-ball century to drive Australia to a 51-run victory over India at the Sydney Cricket Ground on Sunday, sealing the one-day series 2-0 with a match to spare.

The clash, almost a carbon copy of Australia's 66-run win in Friday's match at the same ground, was soured for the home fans by an injury to David Warner which may rule him out of the Test series around the new year.

Warner had scored a bright 83 in an opening partnership of 142 with his skipper Aaron Finch (60) as Australia made light of the stifling afternoon conditions to pile on a massive 389 for four.

Despite a fine innings of 89 from Virat Kohli and a 72 from wicketkeeper KL Rahul, India limped to 338 for nine.

"I tried to whack the ball too hard in the IPL but I've started hitting it with more finesse I should say, which is working for me. Nice to score some runs again for the team and get us to a good total. I thought the boys were outstanding in the field as well," said man-of-the-match Steve Smith.

"Completely outplayed," said Kohli. "With the ball we were not that effective, we just didn't hit the areas we wanted to that effectively. The chase always felt a bit too steep."

Smith needed only 64 balls for his 104 before falling to all-rounder Hardik Pandya, who before Sunday had not bowled in



international cricket since September last year due to a lower back injury.

"It was I guess (perfect performance with the bat). Anytime you get in the high 300s is good. Very pleased to wrap it up in two wins," said Australia captain Aaron Finch.

Iron Mike's swing-heavy return

AGENCIES, LOS ANGELES

Mike Tyson has revealed plans to continue fighting at the age of 54 after impressing in his highly-anticipated return in his draw with Roy Jones Jr in Los Angeles.

Tyson stepped in the ring for the first time in 15 years to take on fellow boxing great Jones Jr in an eight-round exhibition at the Staples Center. The duo went the distance in the exhibition bout which saw numerous punches and Tyson as the aggressor and, although there were no official judges, a panel of guest judges scored the fight as a draw.

The pair's combined age of 105 had done little to dull the affair, and Tyson revealed he would do it again.

"This is better than fighting for championships," Tyson said of the fight, which raised money for various charities. "We're humanitarians now. We can do something good for the world. We've got to do this again. I would absolutely do this again."



BHF Green XI players celebrate with the trophy of President's Cup at the Maulana Bhasani Hockey Stadium yesterday. BHF Green XI, one of the two teams made up of national under-21 players taking part in the five-team competition, beat Bangladesh Army 3-2 in an exciting final, with Ashrafur Alam scoring twice and Rajib Das scoring the other for the winners. Sabbir Ali and Milon Hossain scored for Bangladesh Army, who had advanced into the final with an all-win record in round-robin stage.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

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