

‘Youngsters played fearless cricket’

NABID YEASIN



From Shoriful Islam's pace, bounce and swing with the new ball and his effective yorkers with the old one that left batsmen rooted to the ground at the death to Parvez Hossain Emon's audacity to smash the fastest T20 hundred by a Bangladeshi to help chase down a 221-run total to Shamim Hossain's breathtaking fielding, the recently concluded Bangabandhu T20 Cup showed the youngsters' prowess throughout.

The likes of Akbar Ali, Shoriful, Rakibul Hasan, Parvez and Shamim had already conquered age-level cricket by lifting the Under-19 World Cup trophy after beating India earlier this year. But usually, concerns cloud the period when they make the transition from age-level to the international level as many in the past have faded at this stage after showing glimpses at the age-level.

After a few four-day practice matches and the three-team President's Cup in October, proper competitive cricket returned to the country through the Bangabandhu T20 Cup, which concluded on Friday. And the performances of



the World Cup-winning Under-19 batch in a proper competitive set-up for the first time since their age-level triumph could help brush away some of those usual concerns.

"I am impressed that they played well at crucial moments under pressure. This was proper competitive cricket after two four-dayers and a three-team tournament earlier. We wanted to see how they reacted under pressure. It will be similar to the circumstances they will be facing at the international stage. And they looked very good. This batch is really promising and they lend

us the hope that we will get some very good cricketers," Bangladesh selector Habibul Bashar said when asked to evaluate the Under-19 players' performances, adding: "the characteristics of a player can be best judged when under duress".

Parvez Hossain's maiden T20 century -- a 42-ball 100, the fastest T20 century by a Bangladeshi -- that helped Fortune Barishal thrash Minister Group Rajshahi by eight wickets in a must-win encounter could be the most notable example of when a player showed his true character and came through for the team.

While Parvez broke out of his shell through some power hitting in that particular game, left-arm pacer Shoriful proved to be the perfect match with ace left-arm pacer Mustafizur Rahman in the Chattogram squad. Shoriful's 16 scalps from 10 matches speak volumes of his consistency with the ball.

Promising left-arm spinner Rakibul's ability to turn the ball and return miserly figures or Shamim's diving efforts on the field to save crucial runs and those mid-air flicks from beyond the boundary before complete stunning catches have all been the best takeaways from a tournament which also involved national stalwarts.

And that's exactly what Bashar reiterated.

"The way I would describe this tournament in a sentence is that it was the youngsters who stepped up as all three of the centuries came from youngsters. Shoriful Islam showed lot of promise. Left-arm spinner Rakibul [Hasan] looked decent. And that the youngsters performed in such a tournament is what is the biggest takeaway for us from this tournament. They have played fearless cricket which is exactly what I want to see in players," said an elated former Bangladesh skipper.



BFF'S PROPOSED GYM

No alternative other than green?

ANISUR RAHMAN



The long-standing demand of footballers for a well-equipped gymnasium is likely to come true, but unfortunately at the expense of the green open lawn at the Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) premises.

Since the establishment of the FIFA-funded four-storied building on a land leased by the government in 'Motijheel Club Para' in 2005, the BFF House created its own identity with different types of trees, a greenish lawn and an astro-turf marking its premises in the midst of high-rise buildings.

But that identity and natural beauty will disappear if the BFF executive committee approves of a gymnasium in the open lawn.

There is no denying the fact that modern gym facilities are of paramount importance in maintaining fitness for any professional team. Despite being one of the major points in election manifestos, the game's local governing body could not build a gym in the last 12 years, and as a result the national teams -- both men's and women's and age-level ones -- have to maintain fitness in rented gyms during training camps.

Now that they are bent on building it, the move comes at the expense of something which is of equal importance to everyone involved, not just the players. The proposed gymnasium will erase a portion of the building from the sight of people and block the view of footballers' activities on the turf, a sight soothing to the eyes in the midst of all the doom and gloom in country's football.

Last week, BFF president Kazi Salahuddin and other officials twice inspected the proposed site, measuring the lawn.

"We want to set up a modern gymnasium here. We have prepared five to seven architectural designs for the proposed gymnasium, which will cost Tk one crore. We are measuring how much space we need to set up the gymnasium so that we can keep the lawn in right shape," Salahuddin told reporters on Tuesday. "There will be sand running track in gymnasium. It is not a hotel gym, neither a hockey or cricket gym; it will be a football gym, like the one at English club Tottenham Hotspur."

Replying to a query, Salahuddin said, "There is not enough space inside the BFF building. The beauty of the BFF house won't be damaged; instead the beauty will increase."

The first and second floors of the BFF building are used for administrative purposes while the third floor is used as a dormitory. The ground floor remains empty, the right side of which was supposed to be used as gymnasium as per the original design of the building.

Maintaining the beauty and identity of the BFF house, there is enough space on the ground floor to set up a modern and well-equipped gym as one-fourth of the floor has approximately 1500 square-foot space. Incorporation of one of the two parking areas may add an additional 900 square-foot space, making it a total space of approximately 2500 square-foot.

There is the other option of setting up the gym by constructing a fifth floor as the building has a five-story foundation. That, of course, will need inspection and examination by experts.



Sohanur Rahman (3rd from R) of Bangladesh Air Force celebrates his goal against Sonali Bank in the opening match of the Walton Victory Day Hockey Competition at the Maulana Bhasani Hockey Stadium yesterday. Debashish Kumar Roy scored three goals for in the match which Air Force won 5-2. In the second match of the day, defending champions Bangladesh Navy thrashed Bangladesh Police 7-2. The five-team competition will conclude on December 26.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

Australian Open given green light

AGENCIES



The Australian Open will start on February 8, organisers confirmed on Saturday after months of speculation over the first Grand Slam of 2021.

Players will compete for Aus\$71 million (US\$54 million) at next year's Australian Open, tournament chief Craig Tiley said Saturday, confirming the Grand Slam will begin three weeks late and players must undergo quarantine.

Singles, doubles and wheelchair competitions will all be played as usual after agreement was reached to stage the event following eight months of talks between Tennis Australia and state authorities in Melbourne.

But the men's and women's qualifiers will be held in Doha and Dubai respectively from January 10-13 while the junior championships have been postponed until later in the year.

"This will be an historic Australian Open on so many levels," tournament director Craig Tiley said in a statement. "For the first time in more than 100 years the Australian Open will start in February and we look forward to offering the players what we believe will be one of their best playing experiences in 2021."

The state of Victoria on Saturday recorded a 50th straight day without a case of community transmitted Covid-19 but many health restrictions remain in place in Melbourne and international travel into Australia is still strictly limited.

Liverpool thrash Palace

REUTERS, LONDON

Liverpool's Roberto Firmino and Mohamed Salah each netted twice in a scoring masterclass as the visitors thrashed Crystal Palace 7-0 to record their first away win in the Premier League since September and move a provisional six points clear at the top.

It marked the first time the Reds had won away in the top-flight by a margin of seven goals and was their biggest league victory since they hammered Palace 9-0 at Anfield in 1989 when they won the old top-flight First Division title.

The result put the defending champions on 31 points after 14 games ahead of second-placed Tottenham Hotspur.



Takumi Minamino took just three minutes against Crystal Palace to net his first Premier League goal for Liverpool yesterday.

PHOTO: TWITTER

India hit rock bottom

Didn't expect it to come that quick, says Paine

AGENCIES



In a spectacular display of seam bowling, Josh Hazlewood and Pat Cummins bowled India out for their lowest score in history, to set up a stunning comeback victory for Australia on day three of the first Test in Adelaide.

Josh Hazlewood (5-8) and Pat Cummins (4-21) turned a tight Test on its head in a devastating spell of pace bowling to open the third day of the day-night Test, ripping through the much-vaunted Indian batting line-up in less than two hours for 36; India's lowest innings score in 88 years of test cricket

"We were expecting a real dogfight right to the end, late day four, maybe day five in this Test. Again, it shows the talent we have with the ball and when our boys execute and there's anything in the wicket, that's what can happen," said Australia skipper Tim Paine, who was named the



"It's very hard to put (my) feelings into words. We had a lead of 60 when we arrived today and just collapsed completely. When you work hard for two days ... to get yourself in a good position and then literally in an hour, you put yourself in a position where it's impossible to win, it really hurts."

VIRAT KOHLI

India dubbed the performance and the defeat -- the hosts cruised to an eight-wicket victory on just the third day -- the "massacre in Adelaide".

The Indian Express wondered if the "summer of 36" is "Indian cricket's lowest point", adding tongue-in-cheek that the players had at least "buried the ghost" of 1974.

Forty-six years ago when India were thrashed by England at Lord's, that innings at least saw one player -- Eknath Solkar making 18 not out -- reach double figures, the paper recalled.

Former India great Sachin Tendulkar meanwhile was gracious about the defeat, congratulating the Australians. "With the way India batted & bowled in the 1st innings, they were in the driver's seat, but the Aussies came back really hard this morning," he tweeted. "That is the beauty of Test cricket. It's NEVER over till it's over. India was outclassed in the 2nd half. Congratulations to Australia!"

India captain Virat Kohli questioned his team's batting mindset in the second innings.

"They bowled similar areas in the first innings as well, but probably our mindset and intent was to get runs, even if it's ones and twos," Kohli said. "To be honest, there were some good balls, but I don't think the ball did something drastic in the morning. It was just the mindset that put us into positions where the ball took edges and it was pretty evident in

the way we went about things, just losing one (wicket) after the other."

Another Indian great Sunil Gavaskar knows what it feels like to be saddled with a dubious distinction and the batting great offered comforting words to India's team.

Gavaskar, who was part of that 1974 team, did not find any fault with Kohli and his men and simply attributed the collapse to a fiery rival attack, just like 46 years ago.

"Taking nothing away from the Australian bowling, they were absolutely superb today, there was nothing wrong with the Indian effort today. In the same way as in 1974, overcast conditions at Lord's with the ball swinging around, none of us got out playing bad shots, we were all trapped lbw or caught behind," recalled the former opener.

"When you face bowling of that quality, with that line and length, it's very difficult to score runs and that's what happened to the Indians today."



LOWEST SCORES IN TEST CRICKET

Team	Score	Opposition	Ground	Match Date
New Zealand	26	England	Auckland	25 March, 1955
South Africa	30	England	Port Elizabeth	13 February, 1896
South Africa	30	England	Birmingham	14 June, 1924
South Africa	35	England	Cape Town	1 April, 1899
South Africa	36	Australia	Melbourne	12 February, 1932
Australia	36	England	Birmingham	29 May, 1902
India	36	Australia	Adelaide	17 December, 2020
Ireland	38	England	Lord's	24 July, 2019
New Zealand	42	Australia	Wellington	29 March, 1946
Australia	42	England	Sydney	10 February, 1888
India	42	England	Lord's	20 June, 1974