

Ball in captain's court

Cricket

SPORTS REPORTER

Five years ago Naimur Rahman walked on to the hallowed turf of the Bangabandhu National Stadium with his opposite number, the India's captain Sourav Ganguly for the toss. That marked the beginning of Bangladesh's Test dawn and since then, three others have had the privilege of leading the Tigers.

Without going into the details, it can be said that the team's character and image has gone through a definitive change for the better from its formative years and the faces then and now bear little resemblance excepting a few. But what hasn't changed is the philosophy of limiting the captain's area of authority. Also, from the very beginning, Bangladesh skippers have been kept on their toes courtesy of the tradition that stipulates captains are chosen on a series by series basis.

Thankfully, men who matter are

finally thinking differently and present skipper Habibul Bashar, by far Bangladesh's best Test batsman and most successful captain will in all probability, get a chance to exert more influence in selection related matters in the coming days. The Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) will approve the Tigers' final tour party to Sri Lanka in the second week of August and barring a near miracle, Bashar will be retained as captain. That's the irony because on performance and success rate, Bashar should be the automatic choice to lead into the immediate future at least and should be spared the mere formality of waiting for an official announcement ahead of every series.

The Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) president Ali Asghar also apparently sees nothing wrong with more involvement of the captain in team selection and also agrees on the assurance factor. But he wants the initiative to come from the man in question.

"He (Bashar) should let his

desires known to the board and should tell us what he needs to perform his job smoothly. We are not rigid about anything. That's why these things are open for discussion," said Asghar on Sunday.

According to the present policy of the board, the captain hardly has any scope to be a part of the selection procedure officially but many feel the time has come to change that mentality.

Chief selector Faruque Ahmed recently said that at the moment, it was almost impossible to make the captain an integral part of the selection procedure because of the artificial uncertainty created regarding who is going to lead before every series. He suggested naming the captain for a lengthy period.

"We are maintaining that policy because we lack consistent performers in the team. But if everybody thinks that now is the time to change, we are ready to discuss it in our board meeting.

"We have a plan to continue with

Rain ruins BD A tour game

BBC ONLINE

Hampshire's limited-overs match against touring Bangladesh A was the first to be abandoned as rain swept the south of England on Sunday.

Faced with poor weather and a wet outfield, officials at the Rose Bowl called the match off at 1050 (British Standard Time).

It was to have been the first instance of a game involving a county using the new international rules for substitutes and fielding regulations.

The teams had agreed to nominate "supersubs" and use 20 "powerplay" overs with close fielders.

Bangladesh A's next match is three-day game against Glamorgan on Tuesday.

'Govt won't interfere in fed polls'

SPORTS REPORTER

State Minister for Youth and Sports Fazlur Rahman said yesterday that the government will not interfere in the coming sports federation elections.

"We will follow the Olympic Charter to elect the president of the Bangladesh Olympic Association," he said while talking to reporters at the BSJA (Bangladesh Sports Journalists Association).

The minister informed that work of the tenth floor of the 40-crore Tk NSC Tower would be completed within seven months and the renovation of the Mirpur Stadium will be finished very soon.

"We have already decided to begin the works to build the athletics track at the Bangabandhu National Stadium and a synthetic turf at the Hockey Stadium.

Unhappy by achievements of the BKSP, the sports minister said that he would not interfere with the governing body which runs the organisation.

BSJA president Manzurul Haque, general secretary Syed Mamun, DRU president Shafiqul Karim Sabu and other members of the BSJA were present.



TRUST ME, THE RAIN WON'T LAST! Fast bowler Jason Gillespie (L) explains something to his Australian mate Simon Katich on the Lord's balcony on Sunday.

NSC employee in BCB: Why?

SPORTS REPORTER

The Sommilito Krira Paribar (SKP) has sought the running of sports in the country by real organisers and keep to it free from politics.

With elections in the sports federations around the corner, the organisation has also demanded to select sports organisers as councilors.

"When we pick a player for the national team, we don't think about his loyalty to political parties. That is the reason when our national teams win, even the opposition leaders talk in the same tone. Players have no politics and only performance determines their success. We have to keep this practice and stop the organisers use politics in sports," SKP convenor Mubasshar Hussain told at a press conference at the Jatiya Press Club yesterday.

"Whenever a government changes, the federations also change their face. It has to be stopped. Otherwise, the anomalies that are now spoiling the country's sports, will continue to destroy what we have," he added.

Among others, Harunur Rashid, Dewan Shafiqul Arefin Tutul, Gazi Ashraf Lipu, Mahmudul Haq Manu, Ahmed Sajjadul Alam Bobby and SKP member-secretary Fazlur Rahman Babul were also present.

The speakers highlighted problems in the two major sports organs, Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) and the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BFF).

"The BFF was banned by FIFA when the government replaced an elected committee by its preferred ones. They have wasted funds but we have not seen any development work," he stated.

The members of SKP also raised questions about the new constitution (2003) for the cricket board approved by the National Sports Council (NSC).

"The amendments were done bypassing the councilors. It is not proper. Why the NSC should have five representatives in the board? Why the name was changed from BCB to BCCB?" they questioned.

They also complained about the conspiracy to make not-cricketing persons councilors ahead of the election with a view to control the board.

"Our duty is not to investigate. We are just trying to build awareness among sports lovers by notifying the anomalies we are seeing," said Harunur Rashid, veteran organiser and former general secretary of the BFF.

Vaas to miss tri-series opener

REUTERS, Kandy

Sri Lanka's leading fast bowler Chaminda Vaas is likely to miss the start of the triangular series against West Indies and India, the team's physiotherapist said on Sunday.

Vaas struggled when batting in the second Test against West Indies on Sunday and had to call for a runner before being bowled for 19. "Chaminda picked up a grade one hamstring strain the other day and at the moment he is looking at being out for seven to 10 days," physiotherapist C J Clarke said after the third day's play.

"At this stage he looks unlikely for the first game against India in the tri-series," he added.

Vaas, who completed figures of six for 22 in West Indies' first innings, will not bowl again in the match.

"We rested him when bowling in the first innings because we did want it to develop into a grade two strain which could mean he is out for three-four weeks," Clarke added.

"Batting was not ideal and we now have to make sure the injury is not exacerbated by any sprinting."

Sri Lanka's first game of the tri-series is against India at Dambulla on July 30.

Meanwhile, Sri Lanka's cricket selectors on Sunday named two uncapped players for the tri-series.

Left-handed opening batsman Upul Tharanga, 20, and hard-hitting all-rounder Dilhara Lokuhettige, 25, were picked in a 15-man squad to be captained by Marvan Atapattu.

Fast bowler Dilhara Fernando, ignored for the ongoing Test series against the West Indies, was also included in the squad.

SQUAD

Marvan Atapattu (captain), Mahela Jayawardena, Sanath Jayasuriya, Kumar Sangakkara, Upul Tharanga, Tillekeratne Dilshan, Russel Arnold, Chaminda Vaas, Upul Chandana, Muttiah Muralitharan, Nuwan Zoysa, Dilhara Lokuhettige, Dilhara Fernando, Farveez Maharoof, Lasith Malinga. **Coach:** Tom Moody; **Manager:** Michael Tissera.

Reds return to form

SPORTS REPORTER

A matured performance helped Mukti-joddha Sang-sad shrug off a spirited and stubborn Youngmen's Club Fakirpool with two late goals in the Premier Football League yesterday.

Muktijoddha's 3-1 win at the Bangabandhu National Stadium also helped the Reds take sweet revenge for their shock 2-1 defeat to Youngmen's in the last match of the first-leg a week ago.

Feroze Mahmud Titu gave Muktijoddha a 39-minute lead but Youngmen's, who were the brighter of the two sides, equalised through a spectacular backheel by Masud Parvez on the hour.

Despite dominating the proceedings with a string of passes against their mighty opponents, the tired Youngmen's backline gave up

under constant pressure when Paul Nwakwuchu and Kanchan sealed the victory for Mukti-joddha.

Muktijoddha -- third in the table -- pushed their collection to 19 points after ten rounds while third-from-bottom Youngmen's remained on seven points.

Muktijoddha started without captain and country's number one custodian Aminul and his deputy was under fire in the very second minute.

Young left winger Rajan tested Titumeer with a long range effort and the goalkeeper, who lost the ball from his grip, pushed out Robin's shot on the rebound for a corner.

Nigerian striker Jeremiah, suspended for the game by the club management on disciplinary ground, was another noted absentee in the Reds line-up and his replacement Amin Rana hardly flourished up front beside Paul. There was good news for them as

national striker Moni, who missed the entire first leg following a knee surgery, made an appearance for the last 15 minutes.

After the strikers failed to make any impact, Titu put them ahead against run of play when the right fullback was picked by Rwandan defender Harry. Chasing the long ball, Titu raced past Youngmen's centre-back Ariful and went round the keeper before placing the ball into an empty net.

Youngmen's, the only team without any foreign player, could have levelled the score on the stroke of the breather but Robin failed to connect a superb right-side cross by Baten in the goalmouth under pressure from Riad.

The pressure told when Youngmen's won a freekick on the right of the rival box. Chanchal put the ball into the box and Baten's volley was brilliantly saved by Titumeer

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Youngmen's centre-back Ariful (R) tries in vain as fullback Titu scores the first goal for Mukti-joddha during their Premier Bank Premier Football League match at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

DAY'S
EVENT

Premier Football League
Abahani vs Arambagh (5:00 pm)
Venue: Bangabandhu National Stadium.

SCHOOL CHESS Masum, Sharif share lead

UNB, Dhaka

Masum Hossain and Sharif Hossain jointly led the points table in Class VI to X group with maximum five points each after the fifth round of the 7th Standard Chartered school chess tournament yesterday.

Nazmus Shakib and Riazul Islam Babu followed the leaders with 4.5 points each.

Abdullah Al-Saif took solo lead in class KG to V group with maximum 5 points after the 5th round.

Saathi Majumder secured 4.5 points to lead the girls' table.

Sangakkara piles on pressure

Cricket

AFP, Colombo

Kumar Sangakkara hit 135 not out in between frustrating rain delays as hosts Sri Lanka tightened their grip on the second cricket Test against the West Indies on Sunday.

The left-hander's eighth Test century enabled Sri Lanka to close the rain-hit third day on 340-7 in their second knock, an overall lead of 342 with three wickets in hand.

The hosts have two days -- provided the weather holds -- to force a result and sweep the short two-match series after taking the first Test in Colombo by six wickets.

The second-string West Indians, missing 10 top players including master batsman Brian Lara due to a sponsorship row at home, will find the pace of Chaminda Vaas and the

spin of Muttiah Muralitharan hard to tackle in the fourth innings on the wearing wicket.

The Sri Lankans have not yet declared and put the West Indies in to bat, mainly to enable Vaas to recover from a mild hamstring injury he suffered while bowling on Saturday.

"This is one of the most hard-working centuries I have scored," said Sangakkara.

"I had failed in the series till now and the team needed runs to set a target beyond 300. Once I got a start I was determined to make the most of it."

"We should go and win it from here but a lot will depend on how the weather behaves."

Only 56.5 overs of the stipulated 90 were bowled during the entire day as heavy rain drenched the popular hill resort and forced the harried ground staff at the Asgiriya Stadium to work overtime to dry the outfield.

Umpires Simon Taufel of Australia

and Tony Hill of New Zealand rescheduled the lunch and tea breaks to accommodate as much play as possible in the brief dry spells.

Bad weather due to the prevailing monsoons also hit the second day's play on Saturday when only 61.1 overs were bowled.

Tillekeratne Dilshan put on 109 for the fifth wicket with Sangakkara after West Indian fast bowler Jermaine Lawson struck twice in three balls when the morning session began an hour and 45 minutes behind schedule.

Lawson clean-bowled Mahela Jayawardena for 43 to end a third-wicket stand of 98 with Sangakkara. Two balls later, Lawson had Thilan Samaraweera caught down the leg-side by wicketkeeper Denesh Ramdin for zero as the hosts slipped from their overnight 146-2 to 155-4.

Dilshan made 49 before he was

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SUPER SANGAKKARA: Sri Lanka's Kumar Sangakkara (L) celebrates with his partner after reaching his century against West Indies in Kandy on Sunday.

PHOTO: AFP