

PERSONALITY OF THE YEAR 2009

Salahuddin kept the ball rolling round the year

ANISUR RAHMAN

He was an unparalleled performer of his generation as a player; the success embraced him even when he made a brief entry into a coaching career. Afterwards he stayed away from the game he loved most for quite a long time, but again he came back to his beloved game and this time he is showing his amazing capacity as an organiser. This man is none other than Kazi Salahuddin, the president of Bangladesh Football Federation.

Country's top-scorer Salahuddin took over the helm at a time when the game of football was living on life-support and the former Bangladesh international made an announcement to keep football on the field around the year. To keep his promise he did the most urgent thing -- to amass money through roping in mobile company Citycell with a record sponsorship deal in the country's football history that virtually indicated that the popularity of football is still alive among sponsors and general people, but that there was just a lack of a visionary man like Salahuddin.

To revive the country's about-to-die football and bring back its past glory, he took some initiatives that actually indicated what were waiting for country's domestic football, but probably no one dared to imagine that a one-crore taka cash prize Citycell Super Cup would be introduced.

Nevertheless, the introduction of a Super Cup has brought huge enthusiasm among players, organisers and spectators and thus almost every match of the inaugural Super Cup pulled off a healthy crowd and finally a 35,000-capacity Bangabandhu National Stadium watched the classical final between two perennial foes Abahani and Mohammedan that recalled memories of golden time of country's football in 80s and 90s. The introduction of Super Cup also makes the professional football league competitive this time as only a certain number of teams will

be allowed for the second Super Cup.

Under his dynamic leadership, the inter-club players' transfer also took place on time with the players receiving record money this time and it was only possible after the successful end of Super Cup that actually boosted the clubs financially.

Salahuddin was not only spending time on how to revive country's football, he also returned 37 years back to recognise his warriors, who together fought in different way under the banner of the Swadheen Bangla Football Dal (SBFD) during Bangladesh's War of Liberation in 1971.

Though the SBFD got accolades from different organisations, but not from the Football Federation, which finally arranged to give those football war heroes due respect and reception at a time when Salahuddin, who refused to live a posh life in England during the Liberation War rather choosing to be a part of the war through playing football in India, is its president.

As the president of the game's governing body, everyone expected Salahuddin to be on stage, but he chose to sit with his comrades and took certificate and crest like others from the chief guest. The Federation also laid a plaque dedicated to the SBFD at the BFF House.

Salahuddin knows it very well that Bangladesh's football will not go far if the subcontinent's football does not progress and he first felt a change was needed in the regional body of the South Asian Football Federation (SAFF), which virtually remained inactive under the leadership of Ganesh Thapa for years. And, Salahuddin with unanimous support from all eight member nations assumed the hot seat of the SAFF replacing Thapa and announced to introduce five more competitions instead of holding the lone tourney of the SAFF Championship and it definitely will open a new horizon for football in the subcontinent.

After the inaugural AFC Challenge Cup, organised by the Asian Football

Confederation, in Bangladesh in 2006, Bangladesh also witnessed two international tournaments -- the AFC Challenge Cup qualifiers where Bangladesh advanced into the finals and the SAFF Championship where Bangladesh were eliminated from the semifinals -- in the same year and it was possible for the vibrant leadership of Salahuddin.

The sacking of national team's Brazilian coach Edson Silva Dido, over a row with his youthful selection for the SAFF Championship was a black chapter for Salahuddin though the BFF boss thought it was a decision of the BFF executive committee.

"The BFF is a democratic organisation and you must give importance to democracy, which sometimes brings the right decision and sometimes the wrong and you will have nothing to do when majority of the executive committee wants something," said Kazi Salahuddin when asked whether the decision of terminating Edson Silva Dido was wrong.

Though the football federation rolls out the professional football league regularly, they are still struggling to roll other competitions such as Senior, Second, Third and Pioneer Leagues citing lack of grounds though there was no sign from the game's governing body to find out a ground for those tournament.

However, at the end of the year, the BFF, who left their hope of getting Sylhet BKSP for football academy, finally got promise from Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina to allot the BKSP to produce future booters.

"I really feel good when a big newspaper like The Daily Star recognises my work and it will inspire me more in future. It is a great honour to me," said Salahuddin when informed that The Daily Star Sport has adjudged him the sports personality of the year.

"I will try my best to keep your faith in 2010 through my activities," promised the BFF boss.



Happy New Year 2010

From The Daily Star Sport, we wish all our valued readers, who keep us tick over, a very, very happy and prosperous New Year.

Dear readers as always we have looked back at the year that has just gone by and brought out a year-end special to remind you once again of what happened over the course of time.

But different from last year, this time we have chosen two sports personalities instead of one, who with their own contributions made Bangladesh a brighter spot on the world map.

Cricketer Shakib Al Hasan, with his unmatched leadership qualities, brought rare joy for the country. On the other hand Kazi Salahuddin, as the president of Bangladesh Football Federation, kept his words by keeping the ball rolling on the ground round the year, which was a rarity for nearly two decades. So there was little to separate the two and Star Sport decided to pick both of them as the personalities of the year.

Dear readers, please turn this leaf over to look back at the Year 2009.

Mashrafe out, Shakib captain

Cricket

SPORTS REPORTER

Keeping Shakib Al Hasan as captain in absence of Mashrafe Bin Mortaza the national selectors on Thursday announced a 15-member squad for the tri-nation tournament involving India and Sri Lanka.

ICL-returned all-rounder Alok Kapali and pace bowler Shahadat Hossain were the other two players who failed to make it into the final team besides the yet-to-be match fit pace spearhead Mashrafe from the 18-member shortened squad.

The absence of Mashrafe, who has been out of competitive cricket since July last year, paved way for uncapped paceman Shafiqul Islam to get a place in the final team while two other ICL-returned Shahriar Nafees and Aftab Ahmed remained in the

team for the tournament which will kick off with the match between hosts Bangladesh and Sri Lanka on January 4 at Mirpur.

"What we thought was that it would be risky for Mashrafe to play the tournament as he is not fit enough for a competitive match. He would have needed to put maximum effort on this type of surface and pressure would have been immense as well considering the strength of the opponents, so we can't take the risk with our premier player," said chief selector Rafiqul Alam explaining the reason behind the exclusion of Mashrafe.

The former national cricketer believe that the inclusion of Nafees and Aftab, who returned to the main team after fifteen months, made the team a bit better though the team without them played brilliant cricket in the last year where they won two Tests out of three and 14 ODIs out of

19 games.

"We have some problem with our top order batting and we believe the inclusion of these two players will strengthen the side. We have considered their current form as well as their past experience and what we believe is that Aftab is an asset for our team in the middle order and you know his gentle medium pace also is sometimes effective for the team," Rafiqul said.

"Now there is nothing called ICL,"

SQUAD

Shakib Al Hasan (captain), Mushfiqur Rahim (vice-captain), Mohammad Ashraful, Abdur Razzak, Tamim Iqbal, Syed Rassel, Rokibul Hassan, Mahmudullah Riyad, Nazmul Hossain, Nayeem Islam, Imrul Kayes, Rubel Hossain, Shahriar Nafees, Aftab Ahmed and Shafiqul Islam.

he added when it was reminded in the crowded press conference that these same players had a lot of complaints against them while they joined the unapproved Indian Cricket League (ICL).

In recent past Rafiqul Alam-led selection panel tried with number of pace bowlers and Shafiqul, the 20-year old pacer from Bogra who was highest wicket-taker in the just concluded Premier League with 30 scalps to his credit, was the latest inclusion and chief selector was very much excited with the young paceman.

"Shafiqul is coming through a process as he has performed consistently with the academy. A team and in the domestic competition and what we believe is that he is matured enough to take the challenge in the bigger stage. He is quite nippy and possesses a lot of stock balls and he can move the ball both ways," he said showering praises on the young paceman.

There are three more pace bowlers--Syed Rassel, Nazmul Hossain and Rubel Hossain-- in the side and Rafiqul said that their strategy would be totally different in this tournament than in Zimbabwe.

"It was our strategy to field an extra spinner against Zimbabwe that's why we played them with only one pace bowler despite we had four pacers in the squad but we have to follow a different strategy against teams like India and Sri Lanka," he said.

It would be a sweet dilemma for the team management this time when they pick the playing eleven as there are three contenders for the opening spot with Tamim Iqbal, Imrul Kayes and Nafees and as well in the middle order with the inclusion of Aftab, who usually bats at the number three position where Mohammad Ashraful is now batting.

Women's cricket

SPORTS REPORTER

Dhaka's Sohely Akter bowled a tremendous spell taking 6 wickets for just 9 runs to help her side to an eight-wicket victory over Barisal in their clash of the National Women's Cricket league yesterday. Sohely's exploits helped Dhaka to skittle Barisal for 59 runs in 28 overs. Dhaka chased the target down in 17 overs losing only two wickets to script their second successive win. In the other match of the day, Shathira Jakir put in an all-round performance to help Rajshahi to a 103-run win over Sylhet. Shathira scored 30 runs as Rajshahi posted 144 all out in 47.2 overs. She then took two wickets as Sylhet were bowled out for 41 runs in 15.1 overs.

DAY'S EVENT

Bangladesh League
Brothers Union v Ctg Mohammedan
Venue: Kamalapur Stadium
Time: 2:45pm
Shuktara v Beanibazar
Venue: Osmani Stadium, Narayanganj
Time: 2:30pm

Russel edge Farashganj

SPORTS REPORTER

Moroccan forward Samir Omari bagged a brace as Sheikh Russel Krira Chakra beat a spirited Farashganj Sporting Club by 2-1 in their Bangladesh League encounter at the Birshrestha Mostafa Kamal Stadium in Kamalapur yesterday. This result puts Sheikh Russel in third position with 16 points, while Farashganj have 6 points from six outings.

Sheikh Russel got off to a perfect start in the fourth minute when Mohammad Ronny put his foot on a beautiful cross from Mobarak Hossain which the Farashganj keeper fisted away, but only as far as Samir Omari who volleyed in to take his side to a 1-0 lead. Farashganj pressed hard but could not break the Sheikh Russel defence in the first half. As the game was reaching its climax, Farashganj were rewarded for their unyielding efforts. Manik got them back in the game on the 80th minute coolly converting a Ritu corner. However, more drama was to unfold as in the first minute of injury time Samir Omari got his second goal when he seemed to be in an offside position. Farshganj players protested but the referee stood firm and allowed the goal which meant Sheikh Russel scraped the three valuable points.

Farashganj coach Abu Yousuf was clearly angry at the referee for allowing the goal: "We have been a victim of discrimination". His counterpart Mahmudul Haque though felt that the decision taken by the referee was a correct one.



Young medium pacer Shafiqul Islam (C) stretches during a practice session at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium yesterday. Shafiqul won a place in the final Bangladesh squad for the coming tri-series.

PHOTO: STAR

Djordjevic is BFF's choice

SPORTS REPORTER

The National Team Management Committee (NTMC) has nominated the Bangladesh Football Federation to appoint Serbian Zoran Djordjevic as the head coach of the U-23 national team for the upcoming South Asian Games' football event and the AFC Challenge Cup final round in February in Sri Lanka.

Zoran, who underwent an interview with BFF high-ups earlier last month and watched the performance of the national team during the SAFF Championship, is expected to come to Dhaka on January 4 along with two assistant coaches, said Sayeed Hasan Kanon after the meeting at the BFF House yesterday.

The 57-year old Serbian has experience of coaching Yemen national football team and Sudan national football team apart from the various clubs of Middle East. Zoran Djordjevic guided Churchill Brothers SC to the I-League title in 2008-2009, the first foreign coach to achieve the feat. It was Churchill's first league title too.

"We will initially pick a 30-member team to hand it to Zoran, who will later finalise his squad for the SA Games," said Kanon adding that the camp of the national team would start from January 15.

Ponir will be appointed as a goalkeeper coach while Hasanuzzaman Bablu has been recommended as manager of the team.

The NTMC also formed a review committee headed by Imtiaz Sultan Johnny to evaluate failures of the national team in SAFF Championship and the Under-19 side in AFC U-19 Qualifiers.

The committee also consisting of former national booters Sheikh Mohammad Aslam, Sayeed Hasan Kanon, Golam Rabanni Helal and Khurshid Alam Bablu has been asked to submit their report by January 10.

The national team coached by interim coach Shahidur Rahman Shantoo was eliminated from the semifinal of the SAFF Championship while the national guided by Shafiqul Islam Manik U-19 team won only one match they played in Malaysia.

"In past, we never reviewed the reports of the coaches after the disappointing performance of the national team as well as aged-grouped teams, but this time we decided to evaluate the coaches' reports and recommend what steps should take to get the success in various tournament," said Kanon.