

SPORT

Oman defeat leaves Bangladesh reeling

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh's hopes of finishing fifth in the AHF 9th Asia Cup all but evaporated when they suffered a frustrating 2-4 defeat at the hands of Oman in their second pool match at the Azlan Shah Stadium in Ipoh, Malaysia yesterday.

This was Bangladesh's poorest performance on the field in recent times after the Red & Green had shown consistent improvement in the past two years when they had won the AHF Cup and finished third among six teams in the World Hockey League (Rd-2). Those performances helped Bangladesh's ranking up to 31st against 36th of Oman, whom Bangladesh had convincingly beaten by 4-1 goals in the WHL (Rd-2) earlier in February.

But once the teams took the field yesterday, it was clear that Oman were the dominating force. Oman looked like they have grown from strength to strength in the intervening six months, while Bangladesh, who have had a two-month camp before the start of this tournament under a newly-recruited Pakistani coach, looked haplessly poor in technique, short of motivation and lacking in teamwork.

Oman enjoyed the lion's share of possession and played an attacking game to keep Bangladesh at bay with their better stick work, passing, running and execution of plans.

There seemingly was little urgency among the Bangladesh players and the first goal they conceded resulted from a lapse from defenders, who allowed Hashim Al Shattari a free hit inside the circle to beat goalkeeper Zahid Hossain, who however initially thwarted a couple of

good efforts from Oman.

Rasel Mahmud Jimmy, the best midfielder of World Hockey League, was anonymous throughout the game except for an effort which should have brought the equaliser, but ended up off-target instead. Striker Krishna Kumar squandered an easy opportunity from handshaking distance.

Pakistani coach Naveed Alam, before leaving for Malaysia, had told the press that his charges would play an attacking game against Oman. He was optimistic about winning the match even after going 9-0 down against South Korea the previous day. But there was no sign of those promises as the forwards hardly got any support from the midfield which was almost vacant and Oman capitalised on the gap to put pressure on Bangladesh.

After the resumption, Al Shair converted a penalty corner before Bashim Khator Rajib made it 3-0 to take the match away from Bangladesh, who pulled one goal back in the 53rd minute through a field goal from newcomer Roman Sarker.

But Oman showed their mettle to add a fourth goal from a penalty corner before Mamunur Rahman Chayan converted a penalty corner to reduce the margin to 4-2 one minute before the end.

Naveed blamed the strikers for missing scoring chances and said the team needs to play more international fixtures against big teams to do well at this level. True that Bangladesh did not get too many practice matches leading up to this tournament, but the fact is that Bangladesh had less practice before they took part in the World Hockey League (Rd-2) in February, that too under a local coach.



An action from the match between BJMC and Nepal during the Women's International Invitational Kabaddi Tournament at the National Kabaddi Stadium yesterday. BJMC won the match by 15-8 points.

PHOTO: STAR

Shakib: CPL well-organised

SPORTS REPORTER

Ace all-rounder Shakib Al Hasan returned to the country after almost three months with his wife yesterday, following stints in England and the West Indies.

The player picked up 11 wickets in the Caribbean Premier League for the Barbados Tridents, including record figures of 6 for 6. He, however, had a disappointing run with the bat and scored just 22 runs in seven innings.

"The bowling was good but I didn't bat too well. But it's not something that I am too concerned about. It would have been good if I could take a break, but the Dhaka Premier League is there and that's what I am going to concentrate on now."

A stern critic of the Bangladesh Premier League, the left hander had good things to say about the CPL. "The way they organised the entire league was worth noticing. They handled everything professionally so things were easy for us. The atmosphere was great as well," he said.

National opener Tamim Iqbal, who also participated in the league, returned on Sunday night.

DHAKA PREMIER LEAGUE

Players bemoan loss of choice

Fears over payments going BPL route

SPORTS REPORTER



The Dhaka Premier League's newly formed player transfer system entitled 'Player by Choice', by which each of the twelve clubs bought players through a rotational policy decided by lottery, was criticised by players yesterday, a day after the transfers took place.

Many felt that the system was unfair since the players did not have an option to choose their desired clubs.

The new payment system where the players would receive only 40 per cent of their fees before the start of the tournament -- which is a significant decrease compared to the previous editions of the league -- was also slated. Many fear that the system might encourage clubs to follow the Bangladesh Premier League's (BPL's) style of payments.

"I have no doubts. I am somewhat sure that this will happen," said Shakib Al Hasan about the risk of the payments going down the fraught BPL route upon his return from the West Indies yesterday.

"I don't like the new bidding system. I think the system that was in place before was good and I don't know why they changed it. But there's nothing that can be done since the board decided to do it this way," said Shakib, who will play for Kalabagan Krira Chakra for the first time this year. "The system might have taken place this year because of many problems, but I don't think the players will agree to it next year."

"Because of the new system, I was expecting to

play for a new team. But I am fine with it. I'll play where I have to," he said.

National skipper Mushfiqur Rahim, who was bought by Sheikh Jamal on Sunday, reiterated Shakib's views. "A majority of the players are unhappy with the new system. The players don't have much of a choice here. But the board has told us that this system will take place only this year and we trust them to change the system from next year onwards," said Mushfiqur, adding that he felt 'lucky' to be playing for Jamal this year.

The captain, however, was happy that the league was finally about to begin. "The main thing is that we are getting to play and that's good. We are trying to organise a three-day match before the start of the league, since we won't get time to prepare for the Test series (against New Zealand in October) later on," he said.

Bangladesh A captain Jahurul Islam, upon his return to the country yesterday shared his colleague's views. "The new system spoils the Dhaka Premier League's 30-year-long tradition," he said.

The changes were criticised by the league's veterans as well. "Before choosing a club, a player looks at how committed the officials are, how they behave and the entire environment. That's not possible with this system," said former national cricketer Tushar Imran.

"Earlier, players used to get 70 to 80 per cent of their money before the tournament began. Majority of the players never receive the remaining. So if that goes down to 40 per cent this time, many fear that they might not get 60 per cent of their money," said former national captain Rajin Saleh.

2 weeks too short to write letters

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August 12 was the date when the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) were supposed to write to the clubs, the District and Divisional Sports Associations (DSAs) and other parties asking them for the names of their councillors for the BCB elections.

Two weeks on, it is sad though unsurprising that the letter is yet to be sent. In fact, the board is not even in a position to name an exact date. "What I can say is that we will send the letter very soon," said BCB's acting CEO Nizamuddin Chowdhury yesterday without offering any explanation behind the delay which has triggered a lot of speculation.

Recently, former BCB president Saber Hossain Chowdhury, who has expressed his desire to contest the high-profile elections, also raised questions about the delay by saying: "At first they were supposed to send it on the 12th and then the 22nd but we still don't have a definite date. As per the Supreme Court's decision, the elections were supposed to begin as soon as possible, so why is there a delay now? Is it because they are not sure about winning?"

The elections of the cash-rich federation are due to take place in September but there are a number of processes yet to be completed. Many believe that it is still possible to hold the elections within the next month if the National Sports Council starts the process immediately and the BCB sends the letters within the next two-three days.

A team blame schedule

SPORTS REPORTER



Bangladesh A skipper Jahurul Islam named a busy schedule as one of the reasons behind their disappointing performance on the England trip.

The second string Bangladesh side returned home yesterday after losing seven matches out of eight, an unexpected result considering the fact that the squad was full of international players.

"In England, we played in unfamiliar conditions. We never played more than one match at one venue. So whichever venue we went to, we played a match and then travelled to another the next morning. Adjustment could have been a problem, so I guess that was a factor," said Jahurul, who was quick to add: "Obviously that's not the only reason; players should always be ready to adjust, so it is our fault that we couldn't do that."

He also blamed the lack of match practice before the tour. "It's not an excuse, but had we played the premier league, maybe it could have been better for us."

Anamul Haque, who scored 213 runs with one hundred and one fifty in seven matches, also echoed his skipper by saying: "We could have won one or two of the matches. The travel schedule was a big deal; we played at seven venues, so that could have been a reason. The wickets were good -- in some of the matches they [opposition] batted extraordinary well."

It was expected that the pacers would enjoy the English conditions most but their performance too was per below. "Actually, before we departed for the tour we thought that the pacers will enjoy conditions there. But the wickets weren't that helpful, but still the bowlers bowled badly," said Robiul Islam, who captured seven wickets in seven matches.

Everybody however wanted to focus on some individual performances on the tour. Naeem Islam, who smashed an unbroken hundred in the last match against England Lions to give his team their only victory, was the top-scorer with 294 runs at the average of 58.80.

Ziaur Rahman also scored a hundred while Al-Amin was the highest wicket-taker with eight wickets from six matches.

Andy not leaving Wants light rules changed

AFP/REUTERS, London

England coach Andy Flower on Monday insisted he has no intention of walking out on his Ashes heroes just yet.

Flower's team completed their 3-0 series victory over Australia after a dramatic drawn fifth Test at The Oval on Sunday, but the Zimbabwean had little time to celebrate before being quizzed about his future.

Less than 24 hours later, Flower responded to reports at the weekend that he may quit his current role after the return Ashes series in Australia later this year.

Reports suggested Ashley Giles, England's one-day international and Twenty20 coach, was being lined up as his replacement.

Flower meanwhile has called on the International Cricket Council (ICC) to change the regulations regarding bad light.

"Where I think the ICC could improve the regulations, and we've spoken with ICC officials about this for years, I think the description that they use when judging bad light and when they consider whether it's dangerous or not -- often it is not dangerous and it's a poor description of that particular regulation," Flower told a press conference on Monday.

If I touch you, I'd be ...

AFP, Sydney



Skipper Michael Clarke told umpire Aleem Dar not to touch him as the fifth and final Ashes Test ended in an acrimonious draw, Australian media revealed Monday.

Clarke's exchange with the umpires hit the headlines after bad light ended England's dramatic late bid to run down the target set by the tourists' bold second innings declaration which injected life into the encounter at The Oval in London.

England, set 227 to win in 44 overs, needed just 21 off 24 balls with five wickets left when the umpires decided the light, even with the floodlights on, was too dark and ended the match with England taking the series 3-0.

"Michael Clarke asked umpire Aleem Dar to take his hands off him as the final Test ended amid controversy and confusion after one of the most extraordinary days in the history of Ashes cricket," the Australian's Wayne Smith said.

The daily quoted Clarke as saying: "I can't remember what I said. I remember Aleem touching me and I asked him politely to not touch me because if I touched him I'd be suspended for three matches."

Dar had reached out with his left hand to push the Australian captain away.

Clarke later revealed at the post-match presentations that the lux (light) reading was 5.7, "no comparison", as he put it, to the brighter 8.1 level that had prompted the umpires to call play off in Manchester when Australia had been in control of the Third Test.

"Once they took the reading, I knew it was going to be darker



than what it was in Manchester. I was batting at the time in Manchester and I knew it was going to be darker," Clarke said.

The Australian newspaper said the way the English crowd jeered Clarke was "nothing short of disgraceful" given that their own side had played "nothing but negative cricket at every stage of the match".

The Daily Telegraph's Malcolm Conn said that umpires had to take a "more pragmatic view" of bad light rulings in future.

"The light that the last hour of the game was played in highlights how farcical it was to come off for bad light earlier in the tour, showing that the umpires must take a more pragmatic view," Conn said.

"In one of the great ironies of the tour Clarke was booed by the crowd during the presentations despite his declaration saving a dead match. The team that deserved to be booed was England, which crawled along at two runs an over during the third day."

OVAL BITS & PIECES

ANI, Sydney

The Australian media praised captain Michael Clarke for giving the crowd at The Oval something to watch by declaring and putting life into the match.

According to the Sydney Morning Herald, it was fitting that Clarke spent the last part of the Ashes in a nervous game, because the series was also carried on in the same way.

The report said that the result of the match was fair because England did not deserve to win after being slow at various stages in the match.

'CELEBRATORY' URINATING!

In an embarrassing display about five hours after the last Ashes Test was stopped due to bad light with England close to victory, the players gathered near the pitch in turns to the cheers of their teammates.

According to news.com.au, while the centre of the ground was quite dark, lights were on in

the grandstands with dozens of people still cleaning up after a late finish, which saw the game go beyond usual time.

A number of players including Stuart Broad, Kevin Pietersen and Jimmy Anderson are said to be involved in the act, the report said.

Curator Cam Sutherland called the incident unfortunate. FAR FROM ATTRACTING

The Australian media has claimed that the recently concluded Ashes series in England has been one of the less entertaining ones, and was not in a position to attract millions, as was the case with 20-over cricket and the Indian Premier League.

According to the Sydney Morning Herald, England did not actually win the Ashes but Australia gave it away in crucial moments.

The report said that a five-Test series should be played on five different stages to maximize the drama and public interest, adding that playing every match on the same sort of surface has resulted in a boring victory.