

## FOOTBALLERS' TRANSFER All eyes on October 22 meeting

SPORTS REPORTER

With just 10 days remaining to the deadline for the inter-club players' transfer window and none of the ten clubs turning up, the October 22 meeting of the Players' Status Committee of Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) may break the deadlock.

The window, which opened on August 24, has been extended till October 30 from its initial deadline of October 20, but none of the clubs have so far responded.

One of the reasons for the no-show by the clubs has been the ongoing crisis over six players -- Zahid Hossain, Mamun Mia, Nahidul Islam, Shakil Ahmed, Mithun Chowdhury and Shariful Islam -- who have been alleged by more than one club of taking money even before the transfer window opened. Four clubs, namely Mohammedan SC, Abahani, Sheikh Jamal DC and Sheikh Russel KC -- are in the thick of things in this player-owning issue.

Mohammedan have sent a letter to BFF on September 10 accusing five of those players of taking money from them but committing to other clubs later.

Zahid, Mamun and Nahidul played for Sheikh Russel last season, but reportedly took money from Mohammedan before ultimately deciding to stay with Sheikh Russel.

Shakil, who was a Sheikh Jamal player last season, allegedly took money from Mohammedan but committed to Sheikh Russel while Shariful Islam of Mohammedan committed to Abahani despite allegedly taking money from his former club.

Meanwhile, a show-cause notice has been served by Sheikh Russel to their former captain Mamunul Islam, who allegedly committed to play for Sheikh Jamal even before the end of last season.



Bangladesh cricketers are in a jolly good mood during their training session at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur on Saturday.



PHOTO: STAR

## Tigers' spin v Kiwis' pace

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh's team composition was the main talking point in the lead-up to the first Test. The Tigers could have either gone in with one pacer and three spinners or two pacers and three spinners by dropping one of the eight batsmen they have traditionally preferred to play at home.

Eventually, Bangladesh went for the more sensible option of playing two pacers and dropping Mahamadullah Riyad.

Going in with just one pacer is by no means a conventional strategy in Tests. But the reason why the option was on the table for Bangladesh was simply because of their spinners' dominance against the Kiwis at home.

In the five Tests that Bangladesh have played against New Zealand at home, the hosts have picked a total of 56 wickets, 49 of which were taken by the spinners.

Till date Bangladesh have employed eleven pacers against the Kiwis at home with Mashrafe Bin Mortaza's three wickets in two matches topping the wickets col-



*In five Tests against New Zealand at home, Bangladesh have picked 56 wickets, 49 of which were taken by spinners. Of the 164 wickets taken against Bangladesh in Mirpur, 92 were by pacers.*

umn. Mashrafe is the only bowler to have taken two wickets in a Test match against the Kiwis at home.

The spinners, on the other hand, have done considerably better. Shakib Al Hasan,

Mohammad Rafique and more recently, Shohag Gazi have all taken five-fors against the Kiwis. Shakib's seven for 36 in 2008 remains the best bowling figure by a Bangladeshi in Tests.

In the last two years, New Zealand's tours of Sri Lanka and India have seen similar results.

In the two Tests against India, New Zealand lost 31 of 39 wickets to spinners and 26 of 38 against Sri Lanka.

While the visitors did manage to see off Bangladesh's three-man spin attack on a newly laid wicket in Chittagong, the task might be more challenging in Mirpur where the ball is expected to turn mid-way through the Test. It is something that the visitors, who are chasing a win, are aware of.

"The wicket may turn more than it did in Chittagong. We are preparing for every scenario. It is not necessarily easy to get results. Five days is a long time in a Test match. If we improve on our first Test performance, we can get a result," opener Peter Fulton told reporters at Mirpur yesterday.

While the visitors are busy

concentrating on spin, Bangladesh will be looking to fend off their opponent's pace attack. Despite the traditional 'slow and low' wickets prepared in Mirpur, pace bowling has consistently proved to be a thorn for the hosts; something that New Zealand's bowling coach Shane Bond had mentioned before the first Test.

Of the 164 wickets taken against Bangladesh in Mirpur, 92 of them have gone to pacers.

It is a feature commonly seen in matches at home. The West Indian pacers have picked up 84 out of 111 wickets, India have 77 out of 130, Zimbabwe have 45 out of 67 and the list goes on. The Kiwi pacers however have picked up only 27 of the 81 wickets in Bangladesh. The main reason behind that is the exemplary performance of Daniel Vettori, who has taken 34 wickets alone.

With the series decider starting tomorrow, the chinks in armour of the respective camps should be sorted out. The next five days will decide whether the Tigers' spin or the Kiwis' pace hold sway.

## Siddikur slips

SPORTS REPORTER



Bangladesh's Siddikur Rahman slipped to joint second position, four shots off the leader, after playing a one-under-par (70) in the third round of the Venetian Macau Open on Saturday.

The 29-year old golfer from Madaripur who was leading by a stroke after the second round, traded four birdies for a bogey and a double-bogey to fall four strokes off leader Scott Hend of Australia who raced on to the lead with an eight-under-par (63). Siddikur was joined in second place by his idol, South Africa's Ernie Els, at eight-under-par (205).

Siddikur was however looking at a positive outcome in the last round as he believes that the lead is not too big to overturn.

"I don't think it's too big a lead on this golf course [Macau Golf and Country Club]. If there is a birdie and bogey, it will change. This is a placing course, so you have to stick to the plan. If I can hold the putts, then I may have a chance," Siddikur told Asiantour.com after the day's play.

"I need the putter to get hot. Today [Saturday], it wasn't good. Yesterday, it was excellent. I'm hoping it will be perfect tomorrow. Today, I just couldn't putt although I had several birdies. It's just a matter of few putts," said Siddikur.

However, apart from the chance of winning a second Asian Tour title, Siddikur was also relishing a dream final day pairing with his idol, Els. "I'm so excited," said Siddikur, who turned on 32 but stuttered coming home with a double bogey, bogey and birdie on the card.

India's Rahil Gangjee (66), Filipino Elmer Salvador (70), Daisuke Kataoka of Japan (69) and Baek Seuk-hyun of Korea (70) shared joint fourth place, a further stroke back going into the final 18 holes on Sunday.

## Will Mirpur be sporting?

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It is all but confirmed that there will be no respite from the heat when the spirited Tigers lock horns with the Kiwis in the second and final Test, starting from tomorrow, at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur. But the main interest leading up to the Mirpur Test has surrounded the nature of the wicket. Would it be the same placid surface of the drawn first Test in Chittagong?

Considering the visitors' documented weakness against the slower bowlers in sub-continent conditions, the home team think-tank would love to see the spinners -- their main weapons -- get some advantage in order to tame the visitors in the hot and humid conditions. The nature of the wicket in Mirpur will probably not be the same as Chittagong but it was hard to guess whether the spinners will get that advantage, especially as there is always uncertainty over the nature of the black soil. Bangladesh, confident after an impressive show in the port city, expressed the desire for a 'sporting wicket' as they want a result from the Mirpur Test.

"We want a result and for that we hope that it will be a sporting wicket unlike the first Test where there was nothing for the bowlers. You know the pace bowlers have a good record in Mirpur and I believe this team is ready to face any challenge because they have got the start in the series. What I



can say is the Mirpur pitch will offer some bounce," said selector and former national skipper Habibul Bashar, who spoke with Sri Lankan curator Gamini Di Silva out in the middle during the Tigers' practice session yesterday.

The players were not eager to think too much on the pitch and instead wanted to continue their good performance. First-match hero Shohag Gazi, who achieved a unique Test record by hitting a hundred and picking six wickets in an innings along with a hat-trick, echoed the sentiment.

"Till now the coach or captain does not know much about the wicket. We haven't done much work. But no matter what the wicket is, we need to play. Actually this is a new wicket, because there haven't been any games played here for a long time. I don't know what will happen," said Gazi.

There have always been doubts over whether the Bangladesh team get the type of wickets they want at home. Actually the nature of the Mirpur pitch will remain a mystery until the end of the second Test. Winning a Test match however will depend on Mushfiqur Rahim's men's tenacity. Bangladesh have shown a great deal of maturity to draw the first match, regardless of how flat the wicket was till the last day, and they have to show a lot more if they want to win a Test against a top-ranked side.

## 'Want another 5-wicket haul'

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Having notched a hat-trick and scored a century in the first Test against New Zealand, off-spinner Shohag Gazi, who took eight wickets in the Test in Chittagong, aims to get another five-wicket haul in the upcoming second and final Test in Mirpur.

Speaking to reporters at the Sher-e-Bangla National Cricket Stadium yesterday, Shohag said, "I want to hold on to this streak. I don't know if I will break a record again or not, but I sure am hoping to get a five-for," he said.

"Whenever I get a wicket, I tend to get wickets in groups. I don't know how that happens but that's a good thing for me," he added.

Following his century in the first Test there was talk about how Shohag had the ability to grow as an all-rounder in the team. However, at the moment, the player does not have a special focus on his batting.

"I have worked on my batting like before. Just because I hit a hundred does not mean that I am going to have an extra batting session. Yes, I will try to fix whatever mistakes I have in my batting technique, but I still spend most of my time bowling," said Shohag.

The off-spinner, who has taken 34 wickets in seven Tests, also stated that he wanted to continue his good run and end up as the highest wicket-taker of the series.

"I want to perform well. Right now my driving force is to become the highest wicket-taker of this series," he said.

"There's nothing different I can do to achieve that. I will try to bowl in a similar way to the last match. The little mistakes that I made in the previous games, I will try to fix them," he added.



SHOHAG GAZI

## Faulkner blitzes India

DECCAN CHRONICLE



Chasing a stiff target of 304, the Australians rode on James Faulkner's brutal unbeaten 29-ball 64, which was studded with two fours and six sixes, to dramatically change the complexion of game and take his side home with three balls to spare.

Adam Voges made a valuable contribution of 76 not out from 88 balls, which was studded with seven fours.

A hugely costly over by out-of-form pacer Ishant Sharma who gave 30 runs in the 48th turned the tide in Australia's favour after the Indians seemed cruising comfortably.

It was a commendable show by the Australians and the Indians paid the price of the lack of quality death bowlers in a high scoring match on a good batting track at the PCA Stadium.

Earlier, Dhoni produced a magnificent late onslaught as he rescued India from a precarious 76 for four at one stage to single-handedly take the score to 303 for 9 after the home side were asked to bat. His unbeaten knock came from 121 balls with the help of 12 fours and five sixes. Virat Kohli was the other notable contributor with a 73-ball 68.

But it was not the day for the Indians as Faulkner hit four sixes and a four in the 48th over bowled by Ishant to turn the match on its head. R Ashwin bowled a very good penultimate over just giving away five runs as Australia needed nine runs from the final over.

Faulkner ended the match in style with a six in the third ball of the final over as Australia reached 304 for six to win the match to the disappointment of the capacity crowd.

The two sides now moved to Ranchi for

the fourth ODI on October 23.

Australia made a solid start in their run chase with the openers Phil Hughes and Aaron Finch sharing 68 runs in 12.2 overs but seemed to have lost the plot after that.

Pacers Bhuvneshwar Kumar, R Vinay Kumar and Ishant bowled a tight line and length that squeezed the runs and built pressure on the Australians who were reduced to 88 for three in the 20th over.

Captain George Bailey (43) and Voges then stitched a 83-run stand for the fourth wicket before Australia were dealt a blow in the 37th over as they lost two wickets in the same over. Bailey and Glenn Maxwell (3) departed in the space of five balls to leave the visiting side at 174 for five.

Four balls later, Shikhar Dhawan came up with a gem of a fielding effort as his direct throw led to the run out of Maxwell who was involved in a mixed-up with Voges.

Haddin (24) was out ion the 42nd over and Australia seemed to be heading towards a defeat with the asking rate having shot up 10 an over before Faulkner and Voges saw took them home.

Earlier, Dhoni led from the front by smashing an unbeaten 139 as India recovered from a poor start to post a massive 303 for nine.

Dhoni rescued India after early jitters as he played a responsible and sensible innings that came off just 121 balls, including 12 fours and five sixes.

SCORES IN BRIEF

INDIA: 303 for 9 in 50 overs (Dhoni 139 not out, Kohli 68; Johnson 4-46)

AUSTRALIA: 304 for 6 in 49.3 overs (Voges 76 not out, Faulkner 64 not out, Bailey 43)

Result: Australia won by 4 wickets

Man of the Match: James Faulkner (Australia)

## Deadline now November 30

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The Sylhet Divisional Stadium is unlikely to host the lone T20I between New Zealand and Bangladesh, scheduled to take place on November 6. The Bangladesh Cricket Board, however, received an extension till November 30 from the ICC to get the venues -- Sylhet and Cox's Bazar -- ready for the 2014 World Twenty20.

BCB CEO Nizamuddin Chowdhury said: "Our main priority is to get the stadiums ready in time for the World Cup next year. If we want to host the T20 match of the ongoing series in Sylhet then it might slow down the progress of work by at least five to six days."

"There is little chance for us to hold the match in Sylhet. We are however yet to take a final decision," he added.

Meanwhile the ICC Development International (IDI) decided to extend the date to ready the World Cup stadia after reviewing a report on the condition of the venues in London yesterday.