

Top players to get richer in 2014

SPORTS REPORTER



New Year.

A total of 15 players had earlier been given central contracts which expired on December 31 last year and the board is yet to finalise the new list of players for the new contracts but Akram Khan, chairman of the BCB's cricket operations committee, yesterday confirmed that there will be a marked increase in salary.

The players were awarded a 10 per cent increase in the last contracts but were not satisfied with the increment. As a result the board had decided in February last year to review the contracts and finally increased the match fees - Tk 2 lakh from Tk 1.5 lakh per Test match; Tk 1 lakh from Tk 60,000 per ODI and Tk 50,000 from Tk 35,000 per T20I.

"The salary will increase no doubt, and we will offer a package which will satisfy both parties. Yes, we are especially thinking about a significantly better salary package for our top players. The selectors will give their suggestion regarding the new list very

soon and then we will place it in the board meeting after reviewing everything within this month," said Akram.

Chief selector Faruque Ahmed said that his selection panel have already discussed the issue.

"We have had a guideline from the board. The board will offer one-year contracts but with flexibility to terminate or add any player at anytime. We will suggest the list within the next two-three days," said Faruque.

The former skipper however was unwilling to divulge further details regarding the new contracts but it was learnt that the number may be less than the 15 players previously contracted as many contracted players were not regulars in the team in the past.

Jahurul Islam and Elias Sunny were in Grade C, but were not regular members in the national side while new pacer Abul Hasan was not available for most of the time due to injury. On the other hand, pacer Al Amin Hossain and batsman Marshal Ayub were not under contract but played for the national team, but their inclusion in the national team may still not be enough for them to warrant a contract as they are yet not regulars.

Considering this scenario, the board is willing to bring only those players under

English pride at stake

Final Ashes Test in Sydney from Friday

AFP, Sydney

Battered England are desperate to avoid the ignominy of a 5-0 series whitewash against Australia as they scramble to salvage some pride in the final Ashes Test in Sydney starting on Friday.

Alastair Cook's team -- coming off a dispiriting eight-wicket loss in the fourth Test in Melbourne -- faced becoming only the third English side to lose an Ashes series 5-0 to their oldest rivals.

It has been a tour from hell for England with the loss of senior players Jonathan Trott (stress) and Graeme Swann (retirement), star players out of form and Kevin Pietersen admitting his team-mates are "mentally fragile" from playing in back-to-back Ashes series.

England have so far used 15 players and there are expected to be changes for Sydney, with Gary Ballance, Scott Borthwick and Steven Finn mentioned as possibilities. In contrast, Australia have been unchanged in all four Tests.

Former England captain Michael Vaughan believes the tourists will be unable to stop the Mitchell Johnson-led Aussie juggernaut in Sydney with the same team that succumbed in Melbourne in four days.

"It is not easy for them. England will not do this with the same XI. There is too much baggage, there are too many scars," he wrote in an English newspaper.

As England's tour has unravelled so has the pressure cranked up on Cook as skipper.

Div I cricket

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Manikganj

Biltu Club defeated Victoria Club by 26 runs in the Khan Real Estate First Division Cricket League at the Shahid Miraz-Tapan stadium in Manikganj yesterday.

Batting first, Biltu Club scored 216 runs in the allotted 40 overs. Russel top-scored with 59 runs. Victoria Club's Jilani picked up four wickets, while Hira and Rocky took two wickets each.

In reply, Victoria Club were restricted to 190 for seven. Pappu was their highest scorer and remained unbeaten on 73. Russel took two wickets for the winning team.

'New players in spotlight' NCL start uncertain

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Bangladesh Cricket Board's (BCB's) chief selector Faruque Ahmed has said that the performances in the recently concluded Victory Day T20 Cup have helped bring a number of players, outside the national team, into focus.

Performances such as Tamim Iqbal's dashing 130 and Al Amin Hossain's record five wickets in an over lit up the tournament, which ended on December 31.

What it also witnessed were non-national players such as Sabbir Rahman, Imrul Kayes, Jahurul Islam and Dewan Sabbir stake emphatic claims for a spot in the national side through their performances.

Speaking to The Daily Star Faruque Ahmed said, "The tournament ended on a good note and players were very competitive. I personally think that the selection criteria should not be based on just one tournament -- there are various calculations for that -- but this tournament has brought many new players into the spotlight for the selectors."

"The new players, if they are T20 material, they might be thought about during the selection process and it could be a problem for those who are already in the side," he added.

With the end of the T20 competition, Faruque and co will now be busy preparing for the tour by Sri Lanka, who are set to arrive at the end of this month.

According to the cricket calendar the National Cricket League, the four-day domestic competition, is supposed to begin next week. However, the ongoing political instability has put the scheduled start in doubt.

"We are still planning what to do in this regard. The matches do include a home and away format and players will have to travel a lot. So we still have to figure it out," said BCB director Akram Khan.

If the NCL does not take place, then the BCB plans to host two longer version practice matches right before the Sri Lanka series.

"From a selection point of view we need the practice matches to take place as it will help both us



Abahani striker Osei Morison (C) is congratulated by his teammates after the Ghanaian scored the winning goal against Brothers Union in their Bangladesh Premier League match at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

Abahani edge past Brothers

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Four-time champions Abahani survived late scare in their opening match of the Bangladesh Premier League to eke out a hard-fought 1-0 win over Brothers Union at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

The Sky Blues took the lead through Ghanaian striker Osei Morison in the 48th minute of the match, before coming under a barrage of attacks from Brothers Union and were only saved by some desperate defending. The win was Abahani's ninth against the Gopibagh outfit in 13 meetings in the professional league.

Brothers Union, coached by Syed Nayeemuddin, looked the better side of the two and dominated possession over Ali Akbar's Abahani and they produced at least four scoring chances, which were however thwarted by some brave defending from Wali Faisal and Atiqur Rahman Meshu.

Abahani played with five midfielders as Morison played the lone striker's role, but the highest scorer of last season hardly got any assistance from his teammates, rather had to capitalise on a defensive fumble to score the decider.

With both sides fighting to control the midfield early in the match, the first chance came in the 14th minute to Brothers' Nigerian striker Kester Akon, who drove it straight to goalkeeper Shahidul Alam Sohel. Akon's compatriot Victory Anthony saw his effort from inside the box float over the crosspiece in the 38th minute.

Abahani mustered their first shot on target in the 45th minutes but Morison's back-heal was too weak to trouble Brothers Union goalkeeper Sabuj Das Raghu.

However, Raghu could not thwart the next effort three minutes into the second half when Morison, taking advantage of a weak clearance from Brothers defender Saddam, unleashed a fierce side-volley to break the deadlock.

Brothers stepped up the attack and created two genuine scoring chances but were denied on both occasions. The first of those was in the 79th minute when Rubel Mia dribbled past two defenders and beat the goalkeeper with a low angular shot towards only to be denied by last-ditch save by Wali. The next attempt from substitute Abdul Malek was cleared off the line by Meshu.

"I am happy with the performance as it was my first match, but we need more communication among the players," said Abahani coach Ali Akbar, who however praised Brothers Union for their pressing football.

"We failed to hold possession in the opponent's area despite playing five midfielders and I have to work on it and I believe the team will play better as the league progresses," said Akbar.

Terming the defeat as bad luck, Nayeemuddin said, "We went there to fight and won the fight, but were unlucky not to have come out with at least a point. Instead of being quick, the boys looked to be in a hurry and that was the reason

BFF coaches to stay put

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The elaborate assessment of the 19 coaches by experts came to nothing as the development committee of the Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF), headed by Badal Roy, decided to renew the contracts of all for another year under the AFAP programme funded by the Asian Football Confederation.

In light of BFF president Kazi Salahuddin's commendation to renew the contracts of only

quality coaches, the development committee formed a three-member evaluation committee comprising three AFC-licensed coaches -- Saiful Bari Titu, Maruful Haque and BFF technical director BA Jubair Nipu -- to assess the performance of those 19 coaches, three of whom are AFC A-licensed, 13 AFC B-licensed and three AFC C-licensed.

The performance of those coaches, however, was not satisfactory and the development committee formed another committee to look into other matters apart from the evaluation report.

"Under the guidance of the

Development Committee, a huge development work will be undertaken in the running year. That is why all the coaches have been given renewal of contracts for another year after discussion between development committee chairman Badal Roy and BFF president Kazi Salahuddin," stated a BFF press release.

BFF conducted three talent hunts ahead of the SAFF U-16, AFC U-14 and AFC U-19 Championship Qualifiers under the development committee last year, but there are no such programmes in the works for this year amid the financial crisis that also left BFF employees and foreign coaches

Zia takes lead

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Grand Master Ziaur Rahman assumed joint lead in the Masters event of the 89th Hasting International Chess Congress at the close of the fourth round held in Horntye Park of East Sussex in England Tuesday.

Zia beat German FM Neil Stewart to earn 3.5 points from four matches as he shared the lead with GM Mikheil Mchedlishvili of Georgia and GM Daniel Gormally of England.

Zia was scheduled to play his fifth round game against Georgian GM Mikheil Mchedlishvili last night.

26 called for TT trial

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The Bangladesh Table Tennis Federation (BTTF) will run a three-day trial to pick the national team for the upcoming international events till June, said a press release yesterday.

The federation has selected 26 players initially for the trial and the selected ones have been asked to report to the federation on January 6. The final team will comprise of three players and will have two standby players.

The selected players are - Hasib, Hamlet, Mehdi, Antu, Manosh, Palash, Mahbub, Himel, Javed, Regan, Jubair, Shahed, Parag, Samir, Rocky, Mursalin, Tuhin, Munna, Rimon, Asif, Badal, Hrydoy, Tirtho, Ripon, Tuhin (Armanitola) and Gautam



Pakistan's Younis Khan (R) celebrates his century as teammate Misbahul Haq, who also scored a century later, keeps him company in Abu Dhabi on Wednesday.

PHOTO: AFP

Twin tons lift Pakistan

AFP, Abu Dhabi



Experienced batsmen Younis Khan and Misbahul Haq hit sparkling hundreds as Pakistan took command of the first Test against Sri Lanka in Abu Dhabi on Wednesday.

Younis hit 136 for his 23rd hundred while Misbah was 105 not out for his fifth as their side reached 327-4 at the close on the second day in reply to Sri Lanka's first innings total of 204.

Asad Shafiq was the other not out batsman with 12 as Pakistan dominated the day after Sri Lanka took two early wickets in the first session.

Pakistan now lead by a healthy 123 runs, primarily because of Younis and Misbah sharing 218 runs for the fourth wicket.

Younis hit spinner Rangana Herath for his 13th boundary to complete his hundred, taking just 47 balls for his second 50 runs. He also hit a six.

Younis equalled Javed Miandad's record of 23 centuries, the third highest for Pakistan in the list topped

by Inzamamul Haq (25) and Mohammad Yousuf (24).

Younis was finally bowled by paceman Shaminda Eranga after his 198-ball knock which included 19 fours and a six.

Misbah had luck on his side as he was dropped by Mahela Jayawardene when on 69, as he tried to paddle sweep Herath and the fielder, moving to leg-slip, failed to hold an easy chance.

Misbah had also survived a close leg-before appeal on 48 off a luckless Herath as Sri Lanka's referral was wasted as TV umpire Ravi Sundaram adjudged the ball had hit the bat.

The Pakistani skipper reached his hundred with a single off spinner Sachitra Senanayake, taking 297 minutes for the century which included 12 boundaries.

He has so far hit 13 boundaries in his chancy innings and once again proved to be the mainstay for Pakistan.

Sri Lanka had taken the second new ball with Pakistan 251-3 but they only bagged one wicket in the last two sessions.

SCOREBOARD

SRI LANKA: First innings 204 (Mathews 91; Junaid 5-58, Bhatti 3-65)

PAKISTAN: First innings (overnight 46-1)

Manzoor run out 21

Shehzad c Karunaratne b Eranga 38

Hafeez c Silva b Lakmal 11

Younis b Eranga 136

Misbah not out 105

Shafiq not out 12

Extras: (lb-1, nb-2, w-1) 4

Total: (For 4 wickets in 109 overs) 327

To bat: Akmal, Bhatti, Rahat, Ajmal, Junaid

Fall of wickets: 1-46, 2-59, 3-83, 4-301

Bowler **O** **M** **R** **W**

Lakmal 27 7 84 1

Mathews 9 0 36 0

Eranga 24 5 63 2

Herath 31 9 77 0