



Sri Lanka skipper Angelo Mathews (C) leads his side as they head for the hotel after arriving at the Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport in Dhaka yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

Sri Lanka arrive to subdued reception

SPORTS REPORTER



Sri Lanka's 15-member squad, which arrived in Dhaka yesterday, witnessed a slightly quieter reception as compared to previous international series in Bangladesh. Day 1 of any tour in the past traditionally saw a feisty interaction between the media and the visiting team at the airport, which then paved the way for an exciting start to the contest.

The tradition was not followed yesterday afternoon as the Sri Lanka contingent boarded their bus just minutes after landing.

There were several other changes made by the logistics department. Unlike touring teams of the past, Sri

Lanka will be staying at the Radisson Blu Water Garden Hotel. While it may have led to a rise in the room charges, it was a cautious plan by the board to keep the team as close to Mirpur's Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium as possible due to the security fears that dominated the build-up to the tour.

The inaugural press meet was instead replaced with a video file sent from the Bangladesh Cricket Board which quoted Sri Lanka's fielding coach, Ruwan Kalpage.

In the minute-long press briefer, Kalpage expressed his confidence.

"We definitely want to win the series. We played good cricket in the last tour against Pakistan (in the U.A.E) and we are looking forward to do our best in Bangladesh," said Kalpage.

Sri Lanka drew the last Test series

against Pakistan in the UAE, which saw the latter emphatically gun-down 302 runs in the last day of the third and final Test.

The scenario in Bangladesh however, will be different. The visitors do not have much time to adjust to the conditions here as the first Test begins on Sunday at Mirpur and it is something that Kalpage is aware of.

"Bangladesh have got the home advantage. The wickets and conditions will obviously suit the home team. But we are looking forward to the challenge and we will do well," said Kalpage.

Their first opportunity to get a feel for the conditions, will be today morning when they attend their first practice session at Mirpur. Their practice session will be followed by the Bangladesh team taking the field in the afternoon.

Imrul 'stronger mentally'

SPORTS REPORTER



Like many openers in Bangladesh, Imrul Kayes too lost his way in international cricket after making a place in the arena. A few years ago Imrul had scored the maximum runs in ODI cricket in a calendar year for Bangladesh. And with Tamim Iqbal at the other end, the management had thought that they had finally solved the opening conundrum.

Years later, the problem still persists and here's Imrul yet again with an opportunity to redeem himself. The left-hander, who last played a Test back in October 2011, believes that he is 'mentally stronger' on his return.

"I worked really hard in the last two years, so yes I was really happy to get the national call. But this time, I really need to maintain my position," said Imrul after a training session in the morning yesterday.

"I made a few adjustments with my batting technique and I feel a lot more

comfortable. But honestly it's the mental gain that I think has helped me make the team,"

"Everyone goes through a hard phase in life and for me that phase took place when I was outside the team. But I worked hard and tried to make the most of whatever opportunity I got. That's what helped me become stronger mentally," said Imrul.

He felt that missing out on Bangladesh's emphatic series win against New Zealand last year compelled him to try harder.

Imrul's hard work did pay off as it was his performance in this year's Dhaka Premier League (655 runs at 43.66) that played an important role in his selection.

"I think the DPL helped me out quite a bit. I played that with a target to come back into the side," said Imrul. And while his first-class record in the last two years is not as impressive -- he averages 37 in the last 12 matches -- he hopes his new-found mental strength can help him make an impact.

As he himself put it, "I always told myself that if I do manage to come back, I will make

Sonali Bank held by Wanderers

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Sonali Bank and Dhaka Wanderers Club played out a 1-1 draw in the Green Delta Insurance Premier Division Hockey League at the Maulana Bhasani Hockey Stadium yesterday.

After a barren first half, Nishat converted a penalty corner to put Sonali Bank ahead in the 57th minute but 12 minutes later Shohag Gazi equalised for Wanderers Club, who bagged their first point after having lost their previous two matches. Sonali Bank are in fourth position with two wins from three outings.

Baridhara, Ctg Abahani win

SPORTS REPORT



Promoted Uttar Baridhara Club stunned Brothers Union

while Chittagong Abahani tasted their first win, in the two matches of the Bangladesh Premier League played at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

A brace from Emdadul Haque Monu helped Baridhara hand a surprise 3-2 defeat to falling giants Brothers Union while Chittagong Abahani defeated Feni Soccer Club 2-1, thanks to first-half goals from Javed Khan and Masuk Miah. Wassiou Olalawon pulled one goal back for Feni Soccer one minute from time.

Even though the maiden victories for Uttar Baridhara and Chittagong Abahani increased their points tally, they stayed in their previous positions of eighth and ninth with five and four points from five outings respectively.

Brothers Union, with three defeats, stay just above Uttar Baridhara with six points while Feni Soccer remain at the bottom with one point from five matches.

Uttar Baridhara produced a much improved performance against Brothers Union, after their getting drubbed 7- at the hands of Team BJMC in their previous match while Brothers had come into the match on the back of two successive wins over Sheikh Russel KC and Chittagong Abahani. Baridhara launched their first attack in the very sixth minute when a drive from Sujan Biswas was gripped by Brothers goalkeeper Sabuj Das Raghu.

Raghu however could not stop a header from Monu's header from a difficult angle on the half-hour mark after Brothers Union saw a curling free-kick from Faisal Mahmud come off the word work.

Brothers should have levelled the margin two minutes before the break but Nigerian forward Victory Antoni squandered a penalty kick to disappoint the All Oranges before Monu, a right-back who belongs to the generation of current national players like Mithun Chowdhury, Zahid Hossain, doubled the lead in the stoppage time, availing a fumble from goalkeeper Raghu.

Baridhara took the match away

from Brothers by scoring a third seven minutes into the second half when Shahidul Islam Shawpan found the back of the net with a free-kick from the edge of the box.

Despite going 3-0 down, Brothers put on tremendous pressure for the rest of the time and got rewards in the 57th minute when Victory Antoni volleyed a rebounder home before Faisal Mahmud pulled scored the second with a right-footer from inside the box ten minutes from time. But, the Gopibagh outfit could not snatch a point from Uttar Baridhara, who deployed all their men at the backline.

"We are not a team that should concede 7 goals. The boys were determined to prove their worth. Besides, the inclusion of Monu and Sujan strengthened our squad," said Uttar Baridhara coach Mohammad Alamgir.

"The match could have been different had Victory converted the spot kick. Besides, we created a lot of scoring chances that were not availed by our strikers. All three goals we conceded were from mistakes either from the goalkeeper or the defenders," said Brothers coach Nayeemuddin.

'BCB decision a death warrant'

Former Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) president Saber Hossain Chowdhury, in a letter to current BCB boss Nazmul Hassan Papon, entreated the governing body to reverse its decision of backing the draft proposal put forward by the Indian, English and Australian cricket boards. We have printed the letter in its entirety.

Dear Mr. President:

As a former president of Bangladesh Cricket Board and presently a member of Bangladesh Cricket Board's general council and last but not least as a fellow Parliamentarian, I am aghast and deeply disappointed at the apparent decision of BCB board of directors to endorse a plan/proposal of three Full Members of ICC.

This decision is tantamount to signing the death warrant for Bangladesh cricket.

We have worked hard and persevered for decades to achieve Test Status and Full Membership of the ICC and we historically did so on 26th June 2000. This was a crowning moment for not just Bangladesh cricket but for the entire nation and people of Bangladesh. Bangladesh Cricket Board was honoured and recognised with the country's highest national award -- Independence Day Award -- for this outstanding achievement.

All of the functions and activities of the BCB are geared towards participating and competing at the highest level of world cricket and is essentially the raison d'etre for the Board's existence.

I read your comments about ego and reality but do not feel these can ever take precedence and priority over national interest and principles. There is more to life and responsibility than meekly surrendering and being subservient to powers that be.

We had the courage and self-belief to seek and achieve Test Status but now sadly lack the conviction and leadership to defend it. Mere short-term financial benefit cannot surely

be at the expense of the very survival of cricket but this evidently is precisely what the board of directors have voted for.

We now stand to lose all that we have so proudly achieved and this is simply not acceptable. I am sorry and sad to say that that the decision of the BCB board of directors is not in the interest of Bangladesh cricket and is also in conflict with our national interest. As the custodian of Bangladesh cricket, BCB cannot



preside over its demise and be its de facto executioner.

Whilst I applaud the courage and the wisdom of a few directors to vote against the proposal, I question too the rationale to put the matter to vote. Surely by so doing and having the endorsement of the Board to support the plan, you have in effect tied your hands and now have no moral or institutional standing to oppose it during the upcoming ICC Board Meeting.

In the shadows of doubt

SPORTS REPORTER



The dominant feeling among cricket lovers was one of sadness that the dream of one day becoming a force in Test cricket was slipping away. The Big Three's controversial draft

proposal has been at the centre of discussion in the country's cricket circle for the last few days but a shockwave ran through the cricket community after the disclosure that the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) directors voted 20-3 in favour of supporting the draft proposal. The question that was on everyone's lips was: Why has the BCB taken this suicidal stance?

Frustration, anger and sadness dominated discussions in every nook and cranny. Why had even three former captains-turned-board directors voted in favour of this controversial proposal? Many directors however unofficially tried to explain their position but their explanations only echoed the sentiment that emerged from their board president Nazmul Hassan Papon's official

press conference on Thursday.

It was doubtless most frustrating for the players; the main stakeholders. But they were not in a position to comment on the issue. With the challenge in hand against Sri Lanka, the Tigers will be well advised to keep away from thinking about their Test future but that is easier said than done when there is a fear that if the proposal gets the nod in the next ICC meeting on 28-29 January it will bring about a massive upheaval in Bangladesh cricket.

Coach Shane Jurgensen however gave an impression of how this burning issue was playing a part ahead of the challenge of the coming series.

"I know we are not supposed to comment on this. Some of the guys have been talking about it. From a coaching perspective, we had a group chat in the morning today and decided to keep our focus on cricket. We have been working hard for the last 12 months to win a Test. We have drawn a few and now our aim is to win and we will go for that. All we can do right now is stop worrying about that and play

BCB's response to media reports

The Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) has noticed reports circulating in the national and international media regarding the Board's position on the draft proposal put forward by a working group of the Finance & Commercial Affairs committee of the International Cricket Council (ICC).

It has been widely suggested in sections of the media that the BCB Board of Directors in a meeting held on 23 January 2014, had adopted a resolution in favour of the proposal which seeks considerable structural changes to the ICC and which if approved, may impact the playing opportunities, finances and positions of full member countries including Bangladesh. The BCB wishes to state that such sentiment is purely speculative and is not consistent with the actual facts.

The directors of the Board have been apprised of the contents of the proposal. After a careful review of the draft the Board has found positive elements in certain sections of it which could be beneficial to the future of Bangladesh cricket. On the other hand, the Board has also expressed strict reservations about some portions of the proposal, especially those with legal and constitutional implications and those which may be interpreted as contrary to the rights of a full member.

In respect to the sensitivity and confidentiality of the matter, the BCB has not made any public disclosure of the outcomes from the discussion related to the draft proposal.



Uttar Baridhara winger Emdadul Haque Monu celebrates his second goal against Brothers Union during their 3-2 win in the Bangladesh Premier League match at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR