

SPORT



Players of Feni Soccer Club celebrate their maiden passage into a domestic tournament final after their 2-0 semifinal victory over Brothers Union in the Independence Cup at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

Feni's first final

SPORTS REPORTER



Feni Soccer Club booked their maiden final berth in top-flight football with a 2-0 win over falling giants Brothers Union in the first semifinal of the Modhumoti Bank Independence Cup football tournament at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

After a barren first half, Gambian Mathew Mendy put Feni ahead in the 81st minute before substitute Abdullah Al Mamun sealed the victory five minutes from time to fire Feni to a tournament final for the first time since their debut in the top tier in 2009.

Feni Soccer came into the game with the tag of favourite against three-time Federation Cup champions Brothers, but they failed to keep the momentum of their previous match going due to relentless pressure from the men in orange.

Brothers, the Gopibagh-based outfit, cornered Feni Soccer for the first 25 minutes and produced two genuine scoring chances only to be squandered by forward Jewel Rana and Nigerian Simon. Subsequently Brothers lost their way as Feni started to reorganise to build up the game. The bottom side of the professional football league, Feni, nearly took a lead in the 36th minute, but Gambian forward Landing Darboe saw his goal-bound side-

volley cleared by defender Yousuf Ali Khan from the goal-line.

After the break, Brothers tried to impose some pressure on Feni Soccer with Chuka Charles forcing goalkeeper Nehal to make a diving save in the 56th minute.

Five minutes later, Feni came close to taking a lead but Mendy floated wide in front of open net before the Gambian midfielder made amends to put his side ahead when he headed a Kabba Jobe lob in the 81st minute before Mamun, availing a miscued shot from teammate Chuka, beat Brothers goalkeeper Mohammad Sujon in his second attempt to kill off Brothers' hopes of playing a tournament final since 2005.

"Playing a tournament final at the top level is something special for us and credit goes to my boys," said the club's Gambian coach Omar K Sise at the post-match briefing.

"Only four foreign players cannot change a game, rather it was the local players, who really played well. We were in trouble in the first half, but we did well in the second half to break the deadlock," said Mendy.

"May be the foreign players made the difference, but we played really bad and conceded the defeat," said Brothers coach Syed Nayeemuddin, who believed that the match would have been different had those two early chances been availed by his players.

Brett & Lana tie the knot

PTI, Melbourne

Former Australia pacer Brett Lee has married his girlfriend Lana Anderson in a private ceremony at his new home in Seaforth last weekend.

This is Lee's second marriage after he divorced Elizabeth Kemp in 2008, with whom he has a son named Preston.

Lee, 37, has been publicly dating Lana, 29, since August 2013 when the couple was seen kissing and holding hands during a fundraiser.

According to media reports, the couple had moved in to their new home in North Sydney in 2013.

Bollywood behind Yuvi

PTI, New Delhi

As Yuvraj Singh faces public ire for his poor showing in the lost World T20 final against Sri Lanka, many of his fans and Bollywood have rallied behind the beleaguered batsman.

Yuvraj's 21-ball 11 sucked the momentum out of India's innings on Sunday and some unruly fans pelted stones at the all-rounder's residence in Chandigarh.

Bollywood though took to social media to extend their support to the left-hander, who was instrumental in getting two World Cups to India -- the 2007 T20 title and the 50-over trophy in 2011.

Megastar Amitabh Bachchan wrote on his blog, "Ok ... so we lost to Sri Lanka in the World Cup final T20 tonight ... yes disappointed, but proud of our team and our boys for reaching the final, against the best teams in the world ... it was just not our day and the better team won...congratulations to Sri Lanka, who played really well ..."

Actor Varun Dhawan, whose 'Main Tera Hero' is currently in cinemas, tweeted, "Yuvi won us the World Cup, he gave us happiness when he was still having cancer. How can people forget that #Shame..."

Director Madhur Bhandarkar also voiced his support for the out-of-form player, tweeting: "Who are these idiots who are pelting stones just because we lost a game? Have we forgotten it was @YUVSTRONG12 who won us both World Cups?"

Team spirit: Not just a cliché

NAIMUL KARIM



It is often said that cricket is a sport played in the head, with over 80 per cent of the game being a mental battle. For before every delivery factors like the pitch, the pace, the field, the swing, the spin, the timing, the tension, builds up in a player's mind. And if he is not in the right mode, he is likely to go home early.

One of the most important factors for keeping a cool head is to be part of a team that maintains a positive ambience. A calm team environment can work wonders and that's the reason why cricket, despite so many individual features, at the end of the day is a team game.

A brilliant individual performance no doubt can take a team ahead to a certain extent, however -- as was seen in the final of the ICC World T20 -- a champion team needs a united effort.

That Sri Lanka's first World Twenty20 win was a result of their side's all-round spirit can be observed by a glance at their scorecards. Apart from the semi-final, where Rangana Herath weaved his magic, the rest of them were won thanks to a group of players rather than an individual.

Players from the champion team are generally expected to remain in the top half of both the runs and wickets column, but in the recently concluded tournament Mahela Jayawardene was the only Sri Lankan among the top 15 run-scorers of the tournament. The wicket-takers column follows a similar trend with Nuwan Kulasekera the only Sri Lankan in the top-ten. It just goes to show how Sri Lanka's team effort took them through, even though they lacked standout performers.

What makes Sri Lanka's achievement a lot more special is that they had been going through a financial dispute with their board which even led to the possibility of a second-string side coming over to Bangladesh.

The cricket market is not as glamorous and sponsor-driven there as in Bangladesh. People don't mob around a Lasith Malinga or a Kumar Sangakkara in public and corporate companies will not necessarily target cricketers as their number one ambassadors. As a result, financial incentives outside the board may not always be that lucrative.

These factors could have been a burden for these players, but they just let their game do the talking.

Bangladesh's scenario has been completely different in almost every aspect, but it's been the lack of team spirit that has been the most visible and dumbfounding.

The team's ambience it seems has undergone a huge shift since their thumping series win over New Zealand last year. While there are no clear reasons behind the startling change, apart from the series of defeats, there were a couple of incidents that could have disfigured the winning spirit.

After the thrashing defeat to Sri Lanka in the first Test, coach Shane Jurgensen reckoned that all the talks going on about Bangladesh's Test status being in danger had affected the players mentally and thereby the balance of the team.

Tamim Iqbal, who was quickly made vice-captain before the tour, was not made captain for the T20 series after Mushfiqur Rahim was deemed unfit. It led to Tamim taking the odd decision of resigning from vice-captaincy. Mushfiqur publicly criticised chief selector Faruque Ahmed for the 15 he had selected for the Asia Cup. An out-of-form Mahmudullah Riyad, was played throughout the Sri Lanka series, instead of an in-form Naeem Islam. Riyad was also played throughout the T20 World Cup.

It does not take a sporting pundit to realise that the above incidents might have played a part in eroding team spirit, which in turn affected each and every player's confidence.

Of all the incidents, it was Mushfiqur's reaction to the defeat to Sri Lanka after the third ODI when he stated that 'Bangladesh could even go down to Afghanistan', that was perhaps the biggest 'spirit-downer' of them all. There's not much a crew can do when the captain himself goes down.

After Bangladesh's debacle in the World Twenty20, the BCB immediately asked every level of the management to submit reports, and even hinted at possible changes. Whether they ring the changes or not, they have to find a way to bring back the team spirit lest they want to go through a similar embarrassment in Australia and New

Test in India this year?

MAIL TODAY, New Delhi



Bangladesh would finally be playing a Test match on the Indian soil this year, disclosed Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) president Nazmul Hassan on Monday.

Hours before catching a flight to Dubai to attend an ICC Executive Board meeting on Wednesday, Hassan revealed that Bangladesh would play a Test this winter, most probably at the Eden Gardens in Kolkata.

Hassan said an agreement with the BCCI to this effect could be signed during the ICC meeting. "We're trying to play a Test match in India this year. To start with, one Test match [is to be played] in India this year. The dates will be given

once we go for the ICC meeting in Dubai," Hassan told Mail Today in an interview.

"I have heard that the BCCI has nominated N Srinivasan for this meeting."

India and Bangladesh have played seven Tests since 2000 -- all in Bangladesh.

Hassan hinted that in the coming years the frequency of matches between the neighbours would increase.

"What we are discussing is that we'll go there [India] this year. And we'll play a full series in 2015 and 2016, with India coming here one year and we going there the next. We talked about 2015, but they will have to see their schedule and come back to us. We've decided that, and most probably we'll sign a contract after this ICC Board meeting," he said.

Hassan said the BCB's preference

would be to play in Kolkata.

"Kolkata would be fine because we can then send a lot of Bangladesh spectators to watch the game. That's what our discussions have been about," he revealed.

Hassan, also a member of parliament, said that the Indian team would tour Bangladesh for a one-day international series in June.

"This year, India is coming to Bangladesh for three ODIs," he said. "That is scheduled for June, but the final dates have to be finalised. We will finalise the dates in Dubai." Since India's first match on the tour to England starts on June 26, the ODI series in Bangladesh could be played before that.

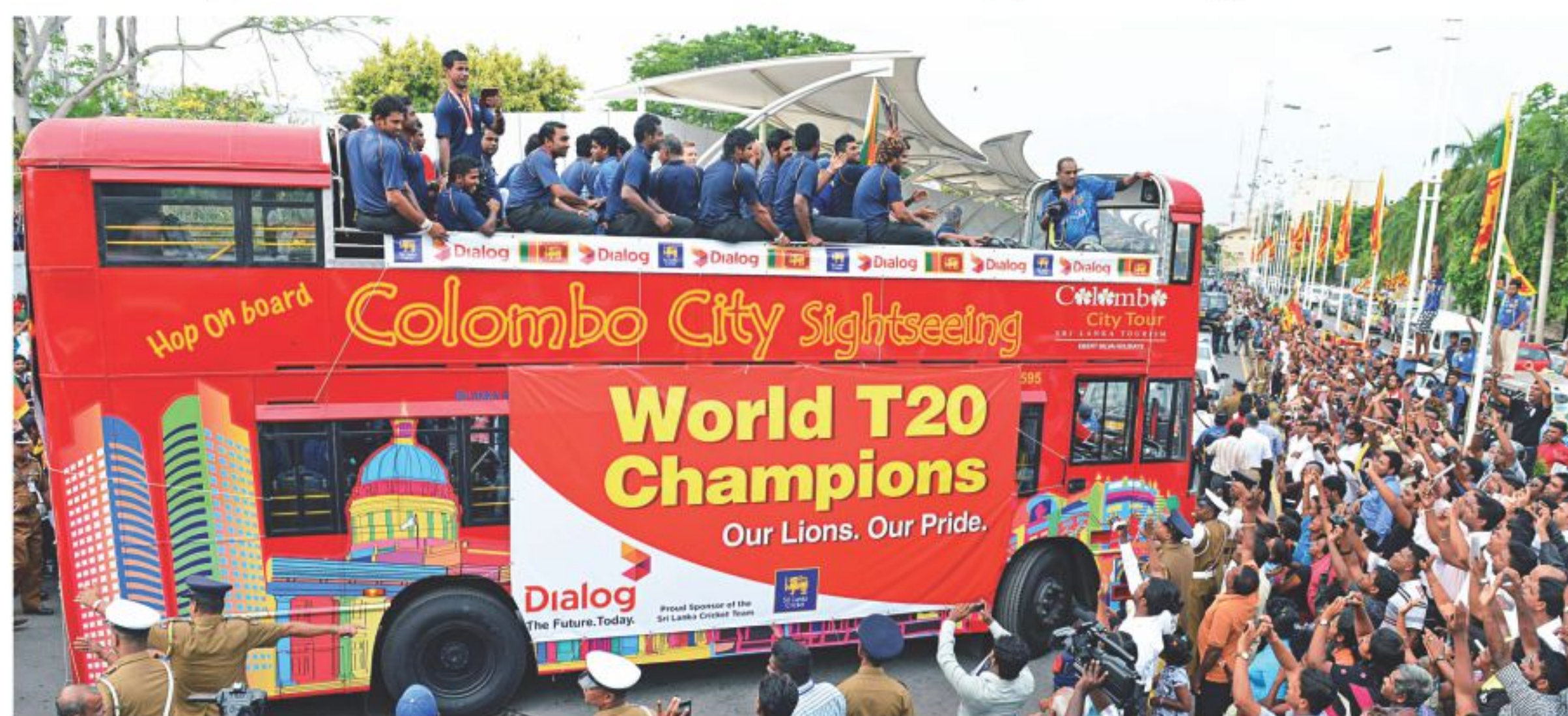
On the financial and structural changes effected in the ICC, Hassan said that those didn't worry the BCB. "To me, it was not a big issue," he said. "IDI [ICC Development

International] is becoming IBC [ICC Business Company] and F&CA [Financial & Commercial Affairs Committee] is becoming Ex-Co. Their functions would be the same; the changes are only in the names. The only major change I see is that now the ICC will have a chairman which we didn't have so far."

"We were not that much concerned because from what had been presented [draft position paper] we found out that we would also be getting more [money] than what we were getting," he pointed out.

"It was based on how much contribution a country makes. Naturally, the BCCI is a major contributor, so they'll be getting more. Since we are getting [something] -- and that they are not taking anything away from us -- it didn't bother us." Hassan said that except

Dispute mars SL party



ICC World T20 champions Sri Lanka take a merry ride on an open-top bus as jubilant fans line the Colombo streets to greet their cricketing heroes yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

AFP, Colombo



Sri Lanka's team flew home in triumph Tuesday to a huge street party after winning the World Twenty20, but celebrations were marred by controversy over the retirements of Mahela Jayawardene and Kumar Sangakkara.

Tens of thousands of fans lined the street from the main international airport to downtown Colombo, a distance of 35 kilometres, causing traffic chaos across the capital as the heroes passed by in a motorcade.

Sangakkara and Jayawardene, both former skippers, told reporters at the airport there were serious disagreements about their retirement from T20 cricket.

Jayawardene said his remarks to a local newspaper, that the tournament may be his final T20 appearance, had been taken as notice of his intention to retire, and based on that he had been criticised by a cricket board official.

"I am disappointed and hurt that an official went public criticising us without first asking us whether we actually made those remarks," he told reporters shortly after landing.

"I agree with what he says," Sangakkara added.

Both said they had been uncertain whether they would play in the World T20 tournament until a few hours before they were due to leave for Bangladesh.

Sources close to the players said they did not finalise their employment contracts with the cricket board until the eve of their departure, following disputes between players and the board over pay and conditions.

There was no immediate comment from the cricket board, but an official had earlier criticised both senior players for allegedly going public about their retirement plans without prior notice to the board.

On the eve of the finals with India, the board announced a million dollar bonus for the team if it could

finally shed its reputation for "choking" in major tournaments.

Sri Lanka hosted but lost the last World T20 tournament in 2012, and were defeated in the final of the 2007 and 2011 50-over World Cups.

Sangakkara was in celebratory mood despite grumbles with the board.

"It's going to be a massive day," he tweeted, along with photos of fans who mobbed the airport and the streets to greet him and the rest of the team.

"Rain gods be kind."

The met office had forecast thunder showers in Colombo, but the weather was holding up as the team was driven at a snail's pace to meet President Mahinda Rajapakse.

Fans waved national flags and cheered as the team bus escorted by hundreds of motorcycles and cars passed by. It was the biggest street party since government forces crushed Tamil Tiger rebels in May 2009.

The victory on Sunday night in Dhaka came 18 years after Sri Lanka's triumph in the 50-over World Cup, which had been followed by a series of defeats in

Srinivasan to attend ICC meeting

CRICINFO, Dubai

Despite having been sidelined from BCCI affairs following a Supreme Court directive, N Srinivasan will attend the ICC executive board meeting, to be held in Dubai on April 9 and 10, in his capacity as a BCCI "representative."

While BCCI interim president Shival Yadav said he has "no comment on this" and secretary Sanjay Patel didn't respond to queries, a senior BCCI official confirmed to ESPNcricinfo that Srinivasan "will attend the ICC Board meeting".

While splitting the BCCI presidency between Sunil Gavaskar (IPL affairs) and Yadav for other issues, the two-judge bench of the Supreme Court had declined to pass an order in relation to Srinivasan's role in ICC affairs, saying it was an "internal" matter of the BCCI.

In normal practice, the BCCI president is inducted onto the ICC board as a Director while the secretary attends the ICC Chief Executives Committee meetings. At every Annual General Meeting (AGM), it is the BCCI president who nominates the Board's representative at ICC meetings. At the last BCCI held in Chennai on September 29, 2013, it is understood the issue of an ICC representative had been discussed and it was verbally decided that "Srinivasan will continue to be in the (ICC) executive