

SPORT

The coaching conundrum

SAKEB SUBHAN

The event by itself -- Shane Jurgensen's tenure as Bangladesh coach coming to an end with around a year left on his contract -- is not surprising. What is a bit of a surprise, however, is that despite Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) president Nazmul Hassan Papon hinting at 'wholesale changes' in the aftermath of Bangladesh's debacle in the World Twenty20, it was Jurgensen who made the decision to bite the bullet and send the BCB his letter of resignation yesterday.

That makes it three high profile exits from the hot seat in three years after Stuart Law's departure in May 2012 and the fiasco that was Richard Pybus's tenure, which ended in October of the same year.

Thereafter Jurgensen -- offered a contract till the end of the 2015 World Cup in June 2013 -- presided over a period of relative stability. While the circumstances of his decision are yet to come fully to light -- perhaps he wanted to walk before being pushed -- his tenure reveals a lot about the travails of coaching this team and the pitfalls that dot the team's path towards genuine growth.

BACKWATER BLUES

Perhaps it is a function of Bangladesh's

modest potential for performance or the country's status as a third-world nation, or a combination of both, but the position of Bangladesh's head cricket coach has not exactly attracted top coaches in recent times. When they did come, the likes of Law left before time citing family commitments, while someone like Pybus could not reach an agreement on vacation arrangements and did not sign a contract during his five-month stint.

A little embarrassingly, no one replied to BCB's call for a head coach and Jurgensen, the then bowling coach, was given the job. He was massively different from his two predecessors in that he seemed to enjoy staying in Bangladesh. More importantly he presided over a period of relative success till the end of 2013.

WAS SHANE THE RIGHT MAN? A fondness for the country should not be the major criterion in judging a coach. 2014's horrid performances raise the question of whether Jurgensen was in fact the right man to lead the Tigers to Australia and New Zealand for the 2015 World Cup.

Till the end of last year, across formats he was in charge in 27 matches and Bangladesh won 10, lost 13 and drew three Test matches -- a massive step up from the usual. 2014 heralded

a sharp dip as in 18 more games the team won only two. Even so, his record is better than the overall percentage (a win/loss ratio of 0.42 as opposed to 0.31 overall). Put together with his rare willingness to be a part of the Bangladeshi culture, his departure seems a crippling loss, especially if Bangladesh do not get an adequate replacement soon.

But the team's poor showing this year brought to the surface some long-standing qualms about his coaching style, namely his alleged soft touch with players. Bangladesh's performance this year has been marked by a distinct lack of discipline and a failure to follow team plans. It is now held among the cognoscenti that Jurgensen lacked the necessary commanding voice to bring ill-disciplined elements into line. If that is indeed the case, the bigger question is: was Jurgensen, a proven coach, given enough backing by the board to wield the whip when necessary?

The onus, at the end -- considering that three head coaches have left in three years -- has to fall on the board. If it is a challenge to land a high profile coach, the bigger challenge will be for the BCB to provide an environment in which a future coach can build a team and a sustainable cricketing culture, something that may attract men with vision to stay on.



PHOTO: STAR FILE

Bangladesh captain Mushfiqur Rahim (L) and head coach Shane Jurgensen formed a quite fruitful partnership during their good days, during which discipline and team spirit yielded good results. It may have been the fall of these values that led to the team's downfall this year, and which eventually led to the coach's resignation yesterday.

NAT'L VOLLEYBALL
PDB, BJMC
lift titles

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Power Development Board (PDB) and Bangladesh Jute Mills Corporation (BJMC) emerged new champions in men's and women's section of the Walton National Volleyball Championships which concluded at the Volleyball Stadium yesterday.

PDB beat Titas Gas by 16-15, 25-19, 21-25, 25-21 points in the final of the 27th edition of men's championship while BJMC defeated Ansar and VDP by 25-20, 20-25, 25-13 and 25-20 goals in the final of the 22nd edition of women's championship.

Shihab of Titas and Shibli of BJMC were adjudged as the best male and female player. Ajoy and Moyuri of PDB and BJMC respectively were named the best setters while Jahangir of Army and Ranu of BJMC were nominated as the best liberos.

BGMEA president Atikul Islam distributed prizes as the chief guest in the concluding ceremony.

PFLC clears
two venues

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The Professional Football League Committee (PFLC) cleared Muktijoddha Sangsad and Chittagong Abahani to hold their home matches in Goplaganj and Chittagong respectively after the two clubs met all requirements following complaints from Sheikh Jamal DC, Mohamedan SC, Brothers Union and Uttar Baridhara Club.

The decision was taken at a PFLC meeting yesterday after the PFLC members inspected both venues twice. All the premier league clubs agreed to play in those two venues at the meeting.

However, the PFLC will take the final decision on the Feni venue after their May 3 re-inspection.

Abahani edge past
Muktijoddha

SPORTS REPORTER

A first-half strike from Portuguese forward Leonildo Suares helped title contenders Abahani close the gap with leaders Sheikh Jamal after a sweating 1-0 win over Muktijoddha Sangsad in the Nitol Tata Bangladesh Premier League encounter at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

Three points against Muktijoddha Sangsad means Abahani have rallied to 25 points, three behind league leaders Sheikh Jamal DC while the freedom fighters' side remained at fourth position with previous 18 points from 12 matches.

Abahani, who came into the game on the back of a hard-fought 2-1 win over Feni Soccer Club, struggled against Muktijoddha Sangsad but they had the last laugh, thanks to some defensive strategy adopted since taking the lead on 28 minutes.

However, Muktijoddha should have taken the lead in the 17th minute but Nkowcha Kingsley and Sunday Chizuba, who shared three goals in their previous match against Team BJMC, squandered three sitters.

The All Reds had to pay dearly for their missed chances as Suares put the Sky Blues ahead with a neat grounder from inside the box after midfielder Shahedul Alam provided him with a defence-splitting through pass.

Three minutes before the break, Muktijoddha came close to equalising when Nkowcha, availing a forward-pass from Imtiaz Sultan Jitu, darted into the box with Abahani goalkeeper Shahidul Alam Shohel to beat but the Nigerian struck straight at the goalkeeper.

Abahani adopted defensive strategy after the break and went on counter-attacks. The Ghanaian forward Osei Morison incredibly sent the ball wide in the 71st minute despite beating onrushing goalkeeper Rashel Mahmud Liton and a defender inside the box.

Muktijoddha Sangsad kept pressing and found a good chance to come back in the stoppage time when substitute Ibrul Siraj ran down the left to enter the box before cutting it back to Sunday, who again squandered the chance.

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"The game was easy for us but some players made it difficult though we finally secured full three points," said Abahani's Iranian coach Ali Akbar, who however came heavily down referee Jalaluddin for not booking the opponent players for their physical display.

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