

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 Mushfiquur 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 Shibbi 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 libero.

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 Muktiyoddha 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, Mohammedan SC, Brothers Union and Uttar Baridhara Club.

The decision was taken at a PLFC meeting yesterday after the PFCL 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



League encounter at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

Three points against Muktiyodha Sangsad means Abahani have raised their tally 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 Muktiyoddha Sangsad but they had the last laugh, thanks to some defensive strategy adopted since taking the lead on 28 minutes.

However, Muktiyoddha should have taken the lead in the 17th minute but Nkowcha Kingsely 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 Soares 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, Muktiyoddha 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 Rashed Mahmud Liton and a defender inside the box.

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

"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.

"I had spoken about negative play from Mohammedan and now Abahani walked the same way which I never expected from them. We should have won the game with a big margin but our strikers failed to cash in on six scoring chances," said Muktiyoddha Sangsad coach Shafiqul Islam Manik, who also criticised poor refereeing.



Abahani's Portuguese winger Leonildo Soares (L) shoots at the target during their Bangladesh Premier League match against Muktiyoddha Sangsad at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

F'ganj hold
Arambagh

SPORTS REPORTER

Arambagh KS played out a 1-1 draw with Farashganj SC in their Premier Bank Bangladesh Championship League match at the Birshreshtha Mostafa Kamal Stadium in Kamalapur yesterday.

Ripon put Farashganj ahead in the third minute while Krishna restored the parity for Arambagh in the 75th minute from a spot-kick.

Rising Stars at
MU v Norwich

SPORTS REPORTER

Twelve budding footballers, dubbed the Airtel Rising Stars, had the opportunity to watch the Barclays English premier League match between defending champions Manchester United and Norwich City at the Old Trafford on Saturday, thanks to Airtel Bangladesh. The young footballers had a photo session with the sponsors in front of the iconic venue after the match. They will also receive special training during their stay in the United Kingdom.

School hockey
final today

SPORTS REPORTER

With ninety-nine schools having already existed from the First Security Islami Bank School Hockey Championship in last twelve weeks, there are two schools left -- Rajshahi Al Hikma School and Jessore Municipal Preparatory School -- one of which will have the last laugh when they meet in the final at the Maulana Bhasani Hockey Stadium today.

The Rajshahi schools have a great record in national school hockey championship where two Rajshahi schools shared the national school championship title four times (1995, 98, 2000 and 2010, the last edition of the championship) out of six editions. So Al Hikma School, who stormed into the final with a 6-0 win over Zinjira PM School in the semifinals, will be considered the favourites against Municipal School, who advanced with a 2-0 win over Joypurhat Khanjanpur School.

Before taking part in the national championship, Al Hikma School also emerged champions in Rajshahi Inter-School Hockey championship and they are confident about taking the title home.

"I think the final will be a competitive one but we will give our hundred percent to win the game," said Al Hikma's game teacher Ajeruddin at a press conference, arranged by the Bangladesh Hockey Federation yesterday.

"No doubt, the opponents are a strong side. But we have a dream of inspiring the young boys of Jessore to come to play hockey by winning the title of the championship," said Preparatory School coach Josimuddin, who is also a Premier Division player.

BHF general secretary Khaza Rahmatullah informed that the champions will be given Tk 1 lakh prize money while the runners-up will get Tk 50,000. Top scorer of the tournament will also be awarded Tk 1 lakh while the second top scorer will get Tk 50,000 and third top scorer Tk 25,000.

LATEST FTP

90 matches
overs 6 yrs

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The latest Future Tours Programme shows Bangladesh will play a total of 90 matches from May 2014 to May 2020. As per the latest series of bilateral deals, the Tigers are supposed to play 31 Tests, 43 to 47 ODIs and 14 T20Is, BCB officials informed after an emergency board meeting at Mirpur yesterday.

"Seventy per cent of these matches have been finalised," informed BCB director Jalal Yunus.

The main agenda of the meeting was regarding BCB's international media rights. The board has formed a five-member committee, led by BCB director Kazi Inam Ahmed. Directors Mahbub Anam, Afzalur Rahman Sinha, Ahmed Iqbal Hasan and IH Mallick are the other members.

"The TV rights issue is very important for us. After the earnings from sponsorships, this is second main source of income. So we are taking this very seriously," said Kazi Inam.

Only fifth for Kei

AFP, Madrid



Japan's Kei Nishikori sealed his fifth career ATP title and first on clay on Sunday with a 6-2, 6-2 win over Colombian Santiago Giraldo to claim the Barcelona Open.

Nishikori, who was playing for the first time on clay this week under new coach and former French Open champion Michael Chang, becomes the first non-Spaniard to win the event since 2002.

"I always love to come to Barcelona and it is a pleasure and honour to be here," said the world number 17.

"Thank you to my team, Dante [Bottini] and Michael, and I hope I come back next year and defend this title.

"It is not easy to win this title with all the Spanish players that play here. It is one of the most difficult ATP 500 tournaments and I am very happy to win."

Giraldo was playing in just his second career final on the tour and his inexperience showed as Nishikori dictated from the off and broke three times on his way to taking the first set.



Kei Nishikori shows off his Barcelona Open trophy.

PHOTO: AFP

More of the same was to come in the second set as Nishikori raced out to a 5-1 lead before serving out for the championship.

However, Giraldo is hopeful that his run in the Catalan capital can spur him on for the rest of the season.

"I hope that this week can be a new stage in my tennis at the highest level.

"I want to thank my team and with them keep on improving."

Top seed and eight-time champion Rafael Nadal was knocked out by Spanish compatriot Nicolas Almagro in the quarterfinals.