

SPORT

'Good times will come'

SPORTS REPORTER

Narail Express Mashrafe Bin Mortaza opens up for the first time since he exited the World Twenty20 halfway through due to multiple injuries two months ago. Following a training session at Mirpur yesterday, he spoke to reporters regarding his own fitness issues, the appointment of Heath Streak as bowling coach and the need for mental strength in cricket.



Question (Q): You had to drop out halfway through yet another world cup due to injury. How did that feel?

Mashrafe Bin Mortaza (MBM): This has happened throughout my career. So there's nothing to feel bad about. What's important is the desire to continue playing the game. When a player is injured he fights a lot with himself. It's important to have mental strength. Physical exercise is no doubt important but in order to do that you need to have the mental strength. It takes some time, yes, but once you start working it comes step by step.

Q: Confident of making a comeback after the disastrous World Cup?

MBM: Look, it is true that a team can perform badly. But what is important is whether you want to leave after that or you want to hang in there. If you want to hang in, then good times will come; that's a universal rule. From what I have seen, everyone is working to get out of the bad patch. And it's important because we depend on the whole team. We don't have a player who can take the game home single-handedly. India have Virat Kohli, South Africa have De Villiers. Even Shakib (Al Hasan) can't do that at the moment. He will need support from another player. So I hope we can all be strong mentally and do well in the upcoming series.

Q: You have played against Heath Streak in the early days. How would you rate his appointment as Bangladesh's specialist bowling coach?

MBM: As a bowler he was outstanding. In world cricket he was one of the best bowlers at one point of time. In the ICC rankings, he was always within the top ten. As a coach I never spoke to him. But from what I have heard, he is a good man. It's too early to comment on his coaching at the moment, but he worked with Zimbabwe and I am

hoping to have a good time.

Q: Is appointing a specialist bowling coach enough to develop Bangladesh's pacers? It's been a while since the BCB organised programmes for pacers. Is there something missing?

MBM: To me cricket is a mental game. Fitness and skill do matter. If Sachin (Tendulkar) did not have skill he would not have scored 30,000 runs. But, I believe that 70 per cent of the world's best bowlers and batsmen's careers depend upon their mental strength. For instance, Shakib is very strong mentally and that's why he is successfully performing all over the world. I believe we have a lot to improve in this area.

With regards to pace bowling, well everyone says our strength is spin, but we often lose games right at the beginning and at the death. These are the two areas where pace bowling is very important. In the modern world it's very important for pacers to form their own bowling programmes in order to survive. The coach after all can only guide you till a certain extent.

Q: How is the camp doing under (assistant coach) Sarwar Imran?

MBM: Imran sir has played an important role in my 14-year career. I worked with him at the start of my career against Zimbabwe in 2001 as well. I learnt how to bowl the inswinger from him. It depends on the players and how they perceive him. I personally think sir has a huge amount of experience and I think it was a good move to appoint him. Just because he is a Bangladeshi, it does not mean that the players will take the move negatively. From a communication aspect, since he is from here, everyone can speak freely to him which will help a lot I believe.

Q: Taskin Ahmed seems to be one such pacer who is following your footsteps. How do rate him?

MBM: He is very promising. It's too early to predict his future though. I hope he will be able to give at least 10 years of service to Bangladesh. No pacer in Bangladesh has survived here for long and a big reason behind this is that nobody backs fast bowlers; only spinners are backed. I hope there will be someone who will always back him.



Mohammedan skipper Zahid Hasan Emily (L) shoots one past a Feni Soccer defender during their Bangladesh Premier League match at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

Mohammedan edge past Feni

SPORTS REPORTER



Mohammedan extended their winning run in the Nitol Tata Bangladesh Premier League with a comeback behind 3-2 win over Feni Soccer Club at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

The ninth win overall, sixth in the second phase, in 17 matches helped the Black and Whites raise their tally to 32 points, just one behind second-placed Abahani, who have played a match more than their archrivals. Sheikh Jamal are on top with 39 points from 17 matches.

Yesterday's match was the first meeting between the two sides since the Independence Cup final where

Mohammedan beat Feni Soccer in tiebreaker. Feni seemed very much up for a revenge against their mighty opponents as they played very attacking football but Mohammedan had the last laugh.

Feni Soccer went ahead with a 21-minute strike from Gambian midfielder Mathew Mendy who dodged past three defenders to place the ball to the left-hand side of Mohammedan goalkeeper Titumir Chowdhury. Feni came close to doubling the lead on the half-hour mark but a Titumir thwarted the attempt to keep the Black and Whites in the match.

Mohammedan levelled the margin in the 36th minute with a touch of luck as Feni goalkeeper Mohammad Nehal saw his poor fist on an Ubbom Henry header sail into

his own net.

Luck was again on Mohammedan's side as they took the lead in the 50th minute when left-back Tapu Barman's harmless-looking cross from the touchline kissed the back of the net despite getting a fingertip from Nehal.

Zahid Hasan Emily made it 3-1 in the 72nd minute when he availed a square-pass from Wahed Ahmed and nicely placed the ball home from inside six-yard box. However, Feni reduced the margin from the spot-kick through Azamal Hossain Biddut one minute from time, for some consolation.

"Every team is cautious about Feni Soccer, who are a much balanced side now with their new foreign players. We never thought of winning emphatically, but we did perform well today (Tuesday) and

won the game with a little bit of luck," said Zahid Hasan Emily, who hopes his side can topple Abahani by winning their next match against Sheikh Russel KC.

"If Sheikh Jamal drop points against Sheikh Russel in tomorrow's (Wednesday) match and we can beat Sheikh Russel in our next match, Mohammedan will also be in the title race," said Emily.

"I can't blame the goalkeeper only, the defenders should also take the blame for the defeat," said Feni Soccer's Gambian coach Omar Sise. "We had a lack of combination in the match due to the absence of suspended midfielder Landing Darboe."

With ten matches still to go, Sise is hopeful of avoiding the drop. They are in ninth position with 11

MEXICO 1986

The one man show

It was a World Cup that produced many memorable matches and a succession of stunning goals but, while there were many stars of Mexico '86, the tournament will only ever belong to one man: Diego Armando Maradona.

The 25-year-old did not quite win the World Cup all on his own but at times -- notably in a pulsating 2-1 win over England in the quarterfinals -- it looked like he was capable of doing so. In the space of four minutes during that match, the little maestro scored two of the most famous goals in footballing history. The first, notoriously, with his hand and the second, gloriously, at the end of a magical solo run.

Played out in searing temperatures in a country that had been devastated by a huge earthquake just a few months before, the tournament saw teams hell-bent on attacking. Outsiders Denmark, who had their own playmaker in Michael Laudrup and a goal-machine in the shape of Preben Elkjaer, swept through the toughest group with wins over Scotland, West Germany and Uruguay.

The Soviets also only knew one way to play; to go for goal, while Brazil's ageing superstars thrilled in the same way they had done in Spain four years earlier and European champions France, inspired by Michel Platini, were also still full of flair. Those three sides all cruised through to round two but not every nation was finding things so easy. England lost against Portugal, drew 0-0 against Morocco and beat Poland 3-0, thanks to with Gary Lineker's first-half hat-trick to put them in the knockout stages.

The second round saw the end of the swashbuckling Soviets, who went down 4-3 to Belgium in a thriller, and also the self-destruction of the Danes, who lost 5-1 against Spain, thanks to



PHOTO: DAILY STAR ARCHIVE

On the shoulders of his teammates, Diego Maradona hoists the World Cup trophy after leading his Argentina side to a 3-2 victory over Germany in the final at the Azteca Stadium.

Emilio Butragueno's four goals.

France were too good for the holders Italy in their first knockout match and survived an epic encounter with Brazil in Guadalajara in the quarterfinals that was cruelly decided on a penalty shoot-out.

England brushed aside Paraguay with Lineker scoring two more goals to set up a last-eight clash with Argentina. Maradona weaved his magic, as described earlier, to conjure up two goals, before Lineker headed home a consolation goal for the English with 10 minutes left. England's journey ended there, but Lineker had the solace of winning the Golden Boot.

Maradona reigned supreme and scored two more superb goals to see off a stubborn Belgium side in the semifinals and set up a final showdown with West Germany, who had dispatched a weary French side, with goals from Andreas Brehme and Rudi Voeller.

The final saw Maradona being marked hard by Lothar Matthaeus and reduced to a peripheral role for much of the game. Centre-back Jose

Luis Brown had headed in Jorge Burruchaga's free kick and, when Jorge Valdano stroked the ball past Harald Schumacher, all looked lost for the Germans.

But substitutes Karl-Heinz Rummenigge bundled home a Voeller flick before Voeller himself headed in Thomas Berthold's flick with eight minutes to play. Argentina looked shaken but two minutes later, Maradona ended a weaving run with a delicate through-ball to Burruchaga, who scored the winner to seal the victory. After his disappointing showing in Spain four years earlier, Maradona had the trophy and also the legacy he craved.

FACTS & FIGURES

Winners: Argentina
Runners-up: West Germany
Leading Scorer: Gary Lineker (ENG)--6
Teams: 24
Matches: 52
Goals: 132
Attendance: 2,393,331

A team stunner

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh A bowlers Robiul Islam and Taijul Islam took three wickets apiece to restrict the West Indies High Performance Squad to 292 on the first day of their four-day match at Barbados on Monday.

And when this report was filed last night, the tourists stuttered on the second morning to reach 77 for 4 losing Imrul Kayes (32), Shamsur Rahman (28) Marshall Ayub (8) and Naem Islam (0).

On the first day, the visitors started promisingly after Robiul removed skipper Kraigg Brathwaite in the very first over. The hosts, however, stitched a comeback through a series of partnerships after the initial hiccup.

Jermaine Blackwood scored an aggressive century (140 off 160 balls), with the help of 23 fours. Blackwood and Leon Johnson took the HP team to a strong 197 for 2. However, slow left-arm Taijul took three quick wickets to run through the hosts' middle order. He finished with figures of 3 for 83.

Robiul was brought in towards the end and he took two more wickets to finish off the tail.

Div-I hockey

SPORTS REPORTER

Police AC posted a 3-1 win over Mukto Bihanga Tarun Sangha in the Green Delta Insurance First Division Hockey League at the Maulana Bhasani Hockey Stadium yesterday.

Mahfuzur Rahman struck two goals while Rana Das netted one for Police. Rakibuddin reduced the margin for Tarun Sangha.

Li, Caroline stunned

AFP, Paris



Former champion Li Na, the second-seeded Chinese superstar and Australian Open winner, was sensationally dumped out of the French Open in the first round Tuesday, beaten by a tearful Kristina Mladenovic.

Li, the 2011 champion, went down 7-5, 3-6, 6-1 to the 103rd-ranked blonde Frenchwoman -- the Roland Garros junior champion in 2009 -- to suffer her first opening round defeat in Paris in eight visits.

Li's shock defeat means that both Australian Open champions have been knocked out in the first round after Stan Wawrinka's listless defeat on Monday.

Ex-world number one Caroline Wozniacki, the 13th seeded Dane, lost 7-6 (7/5), 4-6, 6-2 to Belgium's Yanina Wickmayer in her first outing since her romance with superstar golfer Rory McIlroy ended.

"I was not prepared for this, it all came as a bit of a shock. I want to thank everyone for their support and sweet messages. I have to move on from this," said Wozniacki.

Also making an early exit was Bulgarian men's 11th seed Grigor Dimitrov who lost 6-4, 7-5, 7-6 (7/4) to giant Croat Ivo Karlovic.

Spanish fifth seed David Ferrer, last year's runner-up to Rafael Nadal, began his 12th Roland Garros by coasting past Igor Sjsling of the Netherlands, 6-4, 6-3, 6-1.

Britain's Andy Murray, the seventh seeded Wimbledon champion who made the semifinals in 2011, saw off Andrey Golubev of Kazakhstan 6-1, 6-4, 3-6, 6-3.

Former world number one Lleyton Hewitt, now at 46 in the world and playing his 14th Roland Garros, was beaten 3-6, 6-2, 6-1, 6-4 by unseeded Argentine Carlos Berlocq.

His fellow Australian Bernard Tomic, now down at 80 in the world, was also beaten as French 12th seed Richard Gasquet claimed his 100th career win on clay with a 6-2, 6-1, 7-5 victory.

Ana Ivanovic, the 11th seed and 2008 champion, beat French world number 43 Caroline Garcia 6-1, 6-3 while fellow Serb, sixth-seeded Jelena Jankovic, a three-time semifinaalst, saw off Canada's Sharon Fichman 5-7, 6-1, 6-3.

IPL Qualifier 1 postponed

CRICINFO, Kolkata

The Kolkata Knight Riders vs Kings XI Punjab IPL qualifier at Eden Gardens has been postponed to Wednesday due to torrential rain in Kolkata. The match will be played at 4:00 pm, while the eliminator in Mumbai, between Mumbai Indians and Chennai Super Kings, will be played at 8 pm as scheduled.

If the weather or ground conditions do not permit a full game in Kolkata on Wednesday as well, overs will be reduced till it is a five-over-a-side affair. If even that is not possible, as per the playing conditions, the winner will be decided via a Super Over. The latest the Super Over can begin at 9.10 pm.

If that, too, is ruled out, then the side which finished the league stage with more wins - that is, Kings XI - will go through to the final. Thundershowers "in spots" are forecast for Kolkata for Wednesday.

The ground had been fully under covers and the outfield was under ankle-deep water in places due to torrential rain lashing the city, PTI reported.

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