

Shakib set for early return

SPORTS REPORTER



Ace all-rounder Shakib Al Hasan is all set to make a comeback to competitive cricket with the Dhaka Premier Division Cricket League starting from October 10.

Shakib is serving a six-month ban for breaching the players' code of conduct and was not considered for the upcoming West Indies tour, but the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) is set to reduce his punishment in its executive committee meeting on August 25.

"We called a board meeting on August 25. I talked with everybody and it's now almost confirmed that Shakib will play the Zimbabwe series. I took the opinions from the technical people, and they thought that if we don't allow him (Shakib Al Hasan) to play the domestic league, then on what basis would he be considered for the Zimbabwe series?" said BCB president Nazmul Hassan Papon while talking to Maasranga

Television yesterday.

Shakib was not drafted in the national pool because of his suspension but defending champions Gazi Tank have already revealed that they confirmed Shakib for the league along with dashing opener Tamim Iqbal and pacer Rubel Hossain.

BCB boss Papon started to speak positively on reconsidering Shakib's punishment ever since the all-rounder appealed to the board for a reduction on his ban, and according to sources national coach Chandika Hathurusingha also wants Shakib to return for the Zimbabwe series as the World Cup will be pretty close by then.

Zimbabwe will arrive in Dhaka on October 17 to play three Tests and five ODIs and the tour will start with the first Test from October 26.

In the first week of July, the board slapped the ace all-rounder with a six-month ban from all cricket and decided against issuing him NOCs for foreign tournaments for 18 months because of disciplinary indiscretions.



Opening batsman Tamim Iqbal signs for Gazi Tank Cricketers for the upcoming Dhaka Premier League as club owner Lutfur Rahman Badal (R) watches yesterday. The club has also bagged Shakib Al Hasan, who is expected to play in the competition in October.

PHOTO: STAR

ASIAN GAMES

Contingent to be trimmed?

SPORTS REPORTER

Following the disappointing results in the Commonwealth Games in Scotland, the Bangladesh Olympic Association (BOA) is seemingly set to cut down the number of athletes as well as participation in disciplines in the upcoming Asian Games.

Bangladesh participated in 10 disciplines in the recently concluded Commonwealth Games but won only one silver medal in shooting. The results frustrated the BOA high-ups, who are thinking of revising their initial decision of sending athletes to 21 disciplines of Asian Games, scheduled to be held in Incheon, South Korea from September 19 to October 4.

"We have gained a lot of experience from international games over the last 43 years and the days of gaining experience have come to an end. We will keep supporting those disciplines which will produce good results and axe those who will fail to perform," said BOA secretary general Syed Shaed Reza yesterday.

The BOA high-ups are scheduled to sit today to take the final decision regarding the Bangladesh contingent for the Asian Games.

Kumar comes back as No 1

CRICINFO, Dubai

Kumar Sangakkara is once again the No. 1 Test batsman in the world, following his double-century in Galle. His 221 helped Sri Lanka beat Pakistan in the first Test.

Sangakkara overhauled AB de Villiers and returned to the top of the rankings for the first time since November 2012. He has now spent a total of 81 Tests and 671 days as the top-ranked Test batsman.

Sri Lanka's captain, Angelo Mathews, has also moved up the rankings following his 91 and dashing 25 not out which won the Galle Test. Mathews, who has enjoyed an excellent run of form in Test cricket, has moved up to No. 5 -- the highest ranking of his career.

But the Galle victory was set up by left-arm spinner Rangana Herath who ran through Pakistan on the final day with 6 for 48. The performance pushed him up to No. 6 in the Test bowling rankings.

Gazi retain star power

SPORTS REPORTER



Spinners Arafat Sunny and Shohag Gazi were the only players stranded without a team at the end of the first phase of the players' transfer of the Dhaka Premier League, scheduled to start in October.

Lutfur Rahman Badal, owner of reigning champions Gazi Tank Cricket Club, stuck to his traditional strategy of signing Bangladesh's heavyweights Tamim Iqbal and Shakib AL Hasan.

While it's still not sure as to whether Shakib, who is serving a disciplinary suspension, will get to take part in the league, it seems Badal has already struck an unofficial deal with him. Apart from him they have also retained pacer Rubel Hossain.

Tamim was confident of another Gazi Tank success story this year.

"I have been playing for him (Badal) for a while now and the best part about him is his team manage-

ment. We have always received complete support and at the same time enjoyed our freedom on the field," said Tamim.

Badal's primary choice as captain is Shakib. However, if the left-hander is not allowed to play, Tamim will lead the side.

Kalabagan Cricket Academy, who finished sixth last year, have signed the in-form Anamul Haque Bijoy and the young Sabbir Rahman.

Bijoy, who was also offered a deal by Abahani, chose KCA due to a more lucrative offer.

"I waited on Abahani for a while but I was not that interested in their latest offer," said Bijoy.

"I don't think there's an advantage (playing for big teams like Abahani and Mohammedan). I think every match in the league has pressure and so I don't think it will be a problem. Maybe if we do well this year, big players will want to play for this team," he added.

Victoria Sporting Club hope to improve on their eighth-placed fin-

PLAYER LIST

KALABAGAN CRICKET ACADEMY: Sabbir Rahman, Anamul Haque Bijoy

VICTORIA SPORTING: Imrul Kayes, Marshall Ayub

KALABAGAN KRIRA CHAKRA: Abdur Razzak, Robiul Islam, Shamsur Rahman

GAZI TANK: Tamim Iqbal, Rubel Hossain.

PRIME DOLESHWAR: Mominul Haque, Mushfiqur Rahim, Shafiqul Islam

MOHAMMEDAN SC: Mithun Ali, Mashrafe Bin Mortaza, Naeem Islam

PRIME BANK CRICKET CLUB: Taskin Ahmed, Mahmudullah Riyad

ABAHANI: Nasir Hossain, Al-Amin Hossain, Ziaur Rahman.

ished last year as they signed the in-form Imrul Kayes. Kayes, who played for champions Gazi Tank last year, was the second highest run-scorer of the competition and played a key role in their victory.

The first phase involved the transfer of those players in the 23-member pool, which mainly included the national players. The second phase of transfers will take place later this month.

YOUTH OLYMPIC GAMES BOA pins hopes on 3 disciplines

SPORTS REPORTER



The Bangladesh Olympic Association (BOA) expects good performance from Bangladeshi athletes in shooting, archery and hockey in this month's Youth (U-17) Olympic Games as a 23-member Bangladesh contingent will leave here for china on August 15 for the second edition, scheduled to be held in Nanjing from Aug 16 to 28.

Apart from these three disciplines, Bangladesh will also take part in swimming and weightlifting but the officials are not expecting much from these two disciplines.

"As shooters and archers have been receiving special training since February under foreign coaches, we hope that they will produce good results," said BOA secretary general Syed Shahed Reza at a press conference at the BOA auditorium yesterday.

Archer Prennoy Murong will compete in 70m recurve bow event while shooter Sharmin Akter of BKSP will take part in the 10m air rifle event.

"Apart from shooting and archery, we have also pinned our hopes on hockey team, who qualified directly for five-a-side hockey event of the Games," said Reza, adding that they had to send athletes to other disciplines despite knowing that those disciplines would not bring any positive results.



A new cricket bat named Falcon Blade (top) is compared with a conventional one at a gaming zone in Mumbai on Monday. Students from the Indian Institute of Technology have designed the 'Falcon Blade -- The cutting-edge willow' which the innovators claim will be lighter, faster through the air and give a downward force to the ball when an edge is hit. The bat's design has been approved by the Marylebone Cricket Club, the guardian of the laws of the game, and is expected to be commercially launched later in the year.

PHOTO: AFP

Sachin given leave of absence

AFP, New Delhi

India's parliament on Monday granted cricketer great Sachin Tendulkar a leave of absence after he was criticised for failing to attend a single session this year.

The former batsman had asked to be given leave from the House, citing work and family pressures, the Press Trust of India news agency reported.

Tendulkar, revered by Indians as a cricketer god, promised to be a vocal supporter of sport when he was sworn in as a member of the upper house of parliament in June 2012.

But parliamentary records show he has the worst attendance record of all members, with just three percent attendance last year and zero this year.

His poor showing was criticised last week in the House and on Monday some lawmakers objected to his request for leave.

The leave covers only the current session of parliament, which started on July 7 and will end on Thursday.

"Members' views are unanimous that he has no respect for the House," said Naresh Agarwal, a Samajwadi Party MP.

Veteran Congress leader Satyavrat Chaturvedi said a "wrong precedent" was being set and that "no one should be allowed to remain absent like this".

"This is not acceptable," he said.

Tendulkar, 41, the highest run-scorer in both forms of the game, retired after playing in 200 Tests and scoring 15,921 runs.

He was offered one of the 12 seats in the upper house reserved for those who have distinguished themselves in various fields such as the arts, sciences or social services.

'I'm not a big player'

SPORTS REPORTER



It is quite apparent from his recent performances that off-spinner Shohag Gazi has suffered a major slump in form ever since his emphatic performance against New Zealand last year, which saw him take a hat-trick and score a century in the first Test.

In the six ODIs that he has played this year he took four wickets at an average of 43.75. He failed to pick any wickets in the four T20 matches that he played this year and had an economy rate of 8.78, the highest among Bangladesh's specialist bowlers.

However, the biggest sign of his dwindling career was perhaps seen at the end of the Dhaka Premier League's players' transfer yesterday. Gazi was not signed by any club.

While some club officials blamed Gazi's form, others claimed that Gazi had a 'behavioural' issue when asked why they avoided picking the spinner.

The off-spinner, who went to the office of the Cricket Committee of Dhaka Metropolis -- the governing body of the DPL -- yesterday to register himself and thereby keep himself available, claimed to be unperturbed.

"If a player does not get picked, he generally does feel bad, but not me. I am not sad. If no team wants to pick me then so be it. I know my capabilities and I will prove myself," said Gazi.

"I am not a big player. Why should I get an offer? It's only the grand players who get the deals done," joked the discarded off-spinner.

Ajmal's action reported again

AFP, Colombo



Pakistan off-spinner Saeed Ajmal, the world's top-ranked bowler in one-day cricket, has been reported for a suspect action, the world governing body said Monday, the second such incident in his career.

Match officials at the just-ended first Test between Sri Lanka and Pakistan in Galle "cited concerns over a number of deliveries that were considered to be suspect and concluded that the bowler's action needed to be

tested", the International Cricket Council said in a statement.

"Ajmal's bowling action will now be scrutinised further under the ICC process relating to suspected illegal bowling actions reported in Tests, ODIs and T20s."

As per ICC regulations, Ajmal will have to undergo tests of his action within 21 days, but is allowed to play on until the results of the test are known, the statement added.

Ajmal claimed five wickets in Sri Lanka's first innings. The hosts won the game by seven wickets on Sunday to take a 1-0 lead in the two-match series. The second Test starts on

Thursday in Colombo.

"This has come as a surprise to us," Pakistan manager Moin Khan said in Colombo.

"But there is no panic. We support him and he will play in the next Test."

The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) said it would react after the testing was over.

"Once such a report has been made, the ICC rules take over and the entire process is controlled and regulated by these rules," the PCB said in a statement.

The first Test was umpired by Ian Gould of England and Bruce Oxenford of Australia, while Zimbabwe's Andy Pycroft was the match referee.

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The Bangladesh Boxing Federation (BBF) had pinned high hopes on the three boxers they sent to the Commonwealth Games and expected that they might reach the semifinals, especially after appointing Ukrainian coach Oleksandr Gurenko, one of four foreign coaches appointed by the Bangladesh Olympic Association (BOA) as per advice from respective federations.

However, the reality is all the three boxers were eliminated from the first round and Gurenko was not even allowed to stand beside the ring during the competition, as he does not possess a three-star license, as required by the International Boxing Association. So a Sri Lankan coach, who has

three-star certification, accompanied the Bangladeshi boxers during their matches.

Now the question has been raised as to why the BOA provided 4000-dollars-per-month for seven months to Gurenko, who was not eligible to instruct his boxers during the matches.

BBF general secretary MA Kuddus Khan, trying to defend his decision to select the Ukrainian coach, said, "There are a lot of good coaches who do not have three star license and Gurenko is one of them."

Replying to a query, Khan said, "A coach has basically nothing to do when the match gets underway. However, we managed a few three-star licensed coaches during the Games, but we were eliminated from the first round as the opponents were very strong."