

CHESS OLYMPIAD
Bangladesh's poor showing

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh finished at a miserable 64th place in the Open Section of the World Chess Olympiad when they suffered a 1-3 defeat to Sweden in the 11th and final round in Tromso, Norway yesterday.

China and Hungary became champions and runners-up with 19 and 17 points respectively while neighbours India did extremely well to finish third with 17 points from 11 matches.

Bangladesh earned the 33rd place in the last Olympiad and their target this time was to stick around that position, but four defeats, two draws and five wins shot them down to the 64th place among 177 participants with 12 points.

Bangladesh, who started the final round in an overnight 51st position, could have even had a better finish than they finally ended in, had they pulled a straight win over Sweden.

Grand Masters Ziaur Rahman and Niaz Mursheed drew against GMs Nils Granelius and Emanuel Berg respectively, but young GM Abdullah Al Rakib and GM Enamul Hossain Razib lost to GM Tiger Hillarp Persson and GM Hans Tikkkanen respectively to dash Bangladesh's hopes of finishing around their previous position.

Interestingly, Sweden grasped the 33rd position with 14 points after starting the final round on 12 points.

In the women's section, Bangladesh finished 56th among 136 participants after beating Zambia 2.5-1.5 in the final round to have 12 points from 11 outings.

Russia and China became champions and runners-up in this section respectively.

ASIAD PREPARATIONS

Two matches with Nepal

SPORTS REPORTER

The Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) has confirmed the Nepal Football Association that the Bangladesh U-23 team will play two friendly matches against their Nepalese counterparts here, said a BFF official yesterday.

"We have verbally confirmed Nepal that there will be two friendlies later this month. And we are also thinking of playing one match outside the capital, probably in Sylhet, though the venue has yet to be finalised," said BFF general secretary Abu Nayeem Shohag.

In response to a BFF request, the Himalayan nation showed interest to play two matches on August 25 and 28.



Hemanta Vincent Biswas (2nd from R) of Bangladesh U-23 team, who scored twice, dribbles past a Bangladesh Army player during their 3-1 win in an Asian Games preparation match at the Army Stadium in Banani yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

Broad back in nets

AFP, London

England paceman Stuart Broad took part in a net session on Thursday, on the eve of the fifth Test against India, while wearing a splint to protect his broken nose.

The fast-medium bowler missed England's training session at The Oval on Wednesday but was back in action on Thursday.

Broad has his nose broken while batting at Old Trafford by a Varun Aaron bouncer which he deflected between the peak of his helmet and the grille.

He batted in The Oval nets wearing a different helmet, facing spin and short-pitched throw downs from England batting coach Mark Ramprakash and later bowled at close to full pace.

Shapeshifting coaching staff

SPORTS REPORTER



Bangladesh head cricket coach Chandra Hatherusingha's team has been strengthened with the addition of another member to the coaching staff, but yesterday's appointment of Richard Halsall as national fielding consultant for the series against West Indies has raised many questions. Perhaps the most intriguing of those surrounds Ruwan Kalpage's exact role in the team management, in light of the numerous changes to his job description.

The 46-year-old Halsall, who performed the role of assistant coach of England from 2011 to 2014, already reached the West Indies to join the Bangladesh team, scheduled to reach Grenada in the early hours today to play the first two ODIs of the three-match series on August 20 and 22.

Halsall was England's fielding coach from 2008 to 2010 and he was the first choice of the search committee of the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) for the fielding coach's job. Halsall's contract with the England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) will expire on October 3 this year and after that he may join Bangladesh long-term.

But the board initially had to forego their choice to fulfil the desire of the new head coach and accordingly confirmed former Sri Lanka all-rounder Kalpage, known as a good friend of Hatherusingha, for the position of fielding coach.

Kalpage, who had spent two years between March 2008 and April 2010 as head coach of the National Cricket Academy, was suddenly appointed as an assistant coach to teach spin bowling after another Sri Lankan, Piyal Wijetunge, declined the role.

All told, it seems a flawed decision. Kalpage never had much favour with the BCB, but they bowed to the wishes of the coach. What is more alarming is the fact that they have long been saying that the assistant coach's position will be filled by a local.

BCB could have waited for a good spin-bowling coach instead of making a makeshift arrangement that basically makes a mockery of the post. One may justifiably question the value of the roles of a spin-bowling coach or that of a fielding coach if these two vastly different disciplines are

interchangeable or if a fielding coach, because he was a spinner in his playing days, could take over the spin role on a whim. On the other hand, if he is indeed good enough to tackle both these departments competently, then one may question the wisdom of taking on the expense of a separate fielding coach.

"Actually Halsall was our initial choice because he had a good reputation and when we didn't get our expected spin-bowling coach, we changed our minds and changed the role of Kalpage, who was basically a spinner. Let's see how things go," said BCB's media committee chairman Jalal Yunus, who is also a member of the search committee, when asked about the logic of changing the role of Kalpage and apparently appointing two fielding coaches in the team.

"Yes there was an issue of the head coach's choice and we thought that it's always good if the head coach picks as per his choice. You know there is a crisis of finding a competent coach. We will evaluate Kalpage's work as a spin-bowling coach in the next six months and then take the final decision on a long-term arrangement," said Akram Khan, BCB's cricket operations committee chairman.

There is nothing inherently wrong with the BCB accommodating personnel that the new head coach feels comfortable with. But to do it by sacrificing their vision and, more culpably, compromising on proven expertise -- the initial decision to abandon Halsall's pursuit -- is counterproductive and a sign of weakness.

It is nothing new; questions about the BCB's ability to follow through on vision and govern the country's cricket with commonsense are as old as the board itself. Shakib Al Hasan's mishandling and subsequent disciplinary issues are a prime example of the BCB's lack of good management.

As it has done with Shakib, the BCB has a tendency to go from one extreme to another. With Hatherusingha too, it has gone from being dictatorial with previous coach Shane Jurgensen to bending over backwards for the incumbent. As the board keeps chopping and changing roles within the team management, it would do well to change tack and settle on a middle ground that allows for their vision to coexist with the coach's.

No one has exemplified their batting difficulties better than the talented Virat Kohli, who has so far scored only 108 runs this series at an average of 13.5.

But it was the manner of India's collapse, which saw nine wickets lost after tea on Saturday that was perhaps the most concerning aspect of the Old Trafford debacle.

"There were no backbone shown by India," former Indian opening great Sunil Gavaskar told BBC Radio's Test Match Special as he reflected on the humbling loss.

But the Oval is not the fast pitch it once was or indeed Old Trafford currently is.

If it stays true to recent type, a slow low surface should remind India of

home but will also make the job of 'bouncing out' England that much more difficult.

The biggest recent problem for an India side coached by former England boss Duncan Fletcher has been their batting, as exemplified by the team's struggles to barely get beyond 150 in both innings at Old Trafford.

No one has exemplified their batting difficulties better than the talented Virat Kohli, who has so far scored only 108 runs this series at an average of 13.5.

But it was the manner of India's collapse, which saw nine wickets lost after tea on Saturday that was perhaps the most concerning aspect of the Old Trafford debacle.

"There were no backbone shown by India," former Indian opening great Sunil Gavaskar told BBC Radio's Test Match Special as he reflected on the humbling loss.

But the Oval is not the fast pitch it once was or indeed Old Trafford currently is.

If it stays true to recent type, a slow low surface should remind India of

Coach worried despite win

SPORTS REPORTER



A brace from Hemanta Vincent Biswas powered the national U-23 football team to an easy 3-1 win over the Bangladesh Army

team in an Asian Games preparation match at the Army Stadium in Banani but Dutch coach Lodewijk de Kruif is not happy with his defence, which came under huge pressure in the second half.

Kruif, who played his charges in the 4-3-3 formation for a majority of the SAFF Championship, has been trying to bring changes in his attacking formation with counter-attack strategy in light of the stronger opponents of the Asian Games. Yesterday, he tried the 4-4-2 formation with a compact defence against the Army side with new inclusion Farhad

playing as the defensive midfielder ahead of defenders Raihan Hasan, Kesto Kumar, Yeasin Khan and Yeamin Munna.

The organisation of the backline was impressive in the first half and the goalkeeper Rasel Mahmud Liton was not troubled but the backline looked

very vulnerable in the second half amid the drizzle and the Army men even pulled one goal back at the start of the second half thanks to a fumble by defenders and the goalkeeper.

"The last 10 to 15 minutes the defenders were in trouble and conceded a goal. We also conceded a last-minute goal against India (SAFF Championship). It is a big concern for me.

It is not only a question of 90-minute concentration. The players have to be focused and we have to train them (defenders) and make them ready mentally and physically. They are not ready yet," said Kruif after the match.

In the diamond midfield formation, Shohel Rana and Hemanta were playing in the left and right positions respectively and captain Maman Islam was at centre point, keeping Wahed Ahmed and Aminur Rahman Sajib up front.

The midfield is not a concern for Kruif as he has the three best midfielders of the country at the moment and the inclusion of expatriate Jamal Hossain Bhuiyan, who is scheduled to join on September 3, will further strengthen the midfield.

"We don't have players like

Robben who can trouble the opponents from the wing and we tried something new today with a 4-4-2 formation with a diamond midfield and they really played well in the first 45 minutes. It was important that they followed the disciplines that we taught them, which they did in the first half but the second half was difficult for them," said Kruif.

Mohammedan mid-fielder Hemanta put the national side ahead in the 10th minute with a low drive from the edge of the box after Wahed Ahmed played a dummy over a Shohel Rana low cross from the left. Hemanta then doubled the lead two minutes later with an angular shot, availing a fumble by Army defender Apu, who failed to stop a forward pass from Wahed.

Wahed made it 3-0 two minutes before the break with a brilliant side-volley while Shakib pulled one goal back for the charges of former national striker Alifaz Ahmed eight minutes into the second half.

Kruif informed that he has almost confirmed 80 to 90 per cent players of his starting 11 and sent his final 20-member squad to the Bangladesh Football Federation.

300 up for Federer

AFP, Cincinnati

Roger Federer became the first man to win 300 matches at the ATP Masters 1000 level, beating Vasek Pospisil 7-6 (7/4), 5-7, 6-2 on Wednesday in Cincinnati.

The victory in just over two hours put the 33-year-old world number three into the third round of his final tune-up tournament for the US Open.

The Swiss great, who had notched his 200th Masters match win against Lleyton Hewitt at Cincinnati five years ago, arrived at the tournament he has won five times off a runner-up finish to Jo-Wilfried Tsonga in Toronto.

He delivered a dominant third set to finally subdue the 46th-ranked Pospisil, who was a finalist last month in Washington. He stretched his career record over the Canadian to 3-0.

While Federer safely followed top seed Novak Djokovic into the third round, three of the men's top nine were toppled.

Taiwan's Lu Yen-Hsun stunned Czech fourth seed Tomas Berdych 3-6, 6-3, 6-4 while Poland's Jerzy Janowicz upset number seven Grigor Dimitrov 6-4, 3-6, 6-3 -- four days after the Bulgarian played a semifinal in Toronto. American Steve Johnson stopped ninth seed Ernest Gulbis 6-4, 6-4.

Number five Milos Raonic was untroubled by wild card Robby Ginepri 6-2, 6-2.

Women's top seed Serena Williams advanced on cue, downing Australian Samantha Stosur 7-6 (9/7), 7-6 (9/7), but third-seeded Wimbledon champion Petra Kvitova stumbled out of the gate.



Pakistan pacer Junaid Khan (R) successfully appeals for an lbw decision against Sri Lanka's Dilruwan Perera on the first day of the second Test at the Sinhalese Sports Club ground in Colombo yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

India await Ishant return

Final Test at The Oval starts today

AFP, London

Had India, who've now won just one of their last 18 Tests on foreign soil, been offered the chance to arrive at The Oval 2-1 down with one to play in this five-match series before their tour started, they might have taken up the offer.

A tightly-packed schedule of five Tests in the space of 42 days has done India few favours as they head to south London for the start of the series finale on Friday.

Just a few weeks ago, India beat England by 95 runs in the second Test at Lord's to go 1-0 up in the series.

But that success was sealed by fast bowler Ishant Sharma exploiting England's vulnerability against the short ball with a Test-best return of

seven for 74.

Since then Sharma has missed both India's 266-run defeat in the third Test at Southampton and their even more crushing innings and 54-run loss in the fourth Test at Old Trafford last week with a leg injury.

However, India are increasingly optimistic he could return to action in the fifth Test.

Despite losing inside three days in Manchester, India did again make England's batsmen look decidedly jumpy when confronted with the short ball to the extent that all-rounder Stuart Broad suffered a broken nose trying to hook Varun Aaron when the ball found its way between the peak of his helmet and the grille.

But the Oval is not the fast pitch it once was or indeed Old Trafford currently is.

If it stays true to recent type, a slow low surface should remind India of

home but will also make the job of 'bouncing out' England that much more difficult.

The biggest recent problem for an India side coached by former England boss Duncan Fletcher has been their batting, as exemplified by the team's struggles to barely get beyond 150 in both innings at Old Trafford.

No one has exemplified their batting difficulties better than the talented Virat Kohli, who has so far scored only 108 runs this series at an average of 13.5.

But it was the manner of India's collapse, which saw nine wickets lost after tea on Saturday that was perhaps the most concerning aspect of the Old Trafford debacle.

"There were no backbone shown by India," former Indian opening great Sunil Gavaskar told BBC Radio's Test Match Special as he reflected on the humbling loss.

But the Oval is not the fast pitch it once was or indeed Old Trafford currently is.

If it stays true to recent type, a slow low surface should remind India of

Mahela Jayawardene scored four streaky runs in his last Test as Pakistan's bowlers dismantled Sri Lanka's first innings at the start of the second and final match in Colombo on Thursday.

The hosts, who won the toss and elected to bat on the easy-paced wicket, found runs hard to come by against the steady attack and plodded to 261-8 by stumps on the opening day at the Sinhalese Sports Club.

Upul Tharanga hit 92 and fellow opener Kaushal Silva made 41, but Sri Lanka lost seven wickets on either side of the tea interval after coasting at 144-1.

Pakistan's two left-arm seamers Junaid Khan and Wahab Riaz toiled manfully under the hot sun to share seven wickets and lead a spirited display by the tourists seeking a series-leveelling win.

Junaid ended the day with four for 69, including two wickets in the first over with the second new ball taken towards the end of the day's play. Riaz had three for 66.

Sri Lanka skipper Angelo Mathews made 39 when he was caught behind off Riaz for what became the last delivery of the day.