

SPORTS

Mushfiqur's injury raises concerns

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh cricket team's injury crisis ahead of the ICC World Cup in February was compounded yesterday, as Mushfiqur Rahim suffered a shoulder injury during practice at Mirpur.

The wicketkeeper batsman picked up the injury while playing football with his Prime Doleshwar teammates ahead of today's vital Dhaka Premier League Super-Six match.

Mushfiqur's injury came as a shock following Tamim Iqbal's knee injury, but BCB's senior physician Dr Debashis Chowdhury informed that the initial examination suggested that it was not serious enough to threaten the batsman's participation in the World Cup.

"He will not play tomorrow's league match, that's for sure. Mushfiqur will be in complete rest for next 48 hours and a scan on Saturday will reveal how many days he will need to recover from the injury," said Chowdhury.

"But the initial examination suggests that his injury is not serious, as it's a shoulder subluxation. After receiving the scan report, we will compare it with his previous shoulder injury. Generally it takes one to three weeks to recover from this kind of injury, but we hope he will be okay within a very short period of time," he added.

Bangladesh's Test skipper had earlier sustained a shoulder injury while fielding against India in an Asia Cup match in February last year.

Chief selector Faruque Ahmed, who is all set to submit the 15-member team to the board within the next two or three days, was not too worried about his team's most consistent batsman at this moment.

"It's a bad news but I hope he will be okay very soon. Actually everything will be clear by Saturday," said Faruque.

Both injured Tamim and Mushfiqur will be included in the team, as they should be fit by the time the Tigers fly for Australia on January 24. The World Cup will be kick off from February 14.

The latest injury to Mushfiqur however again brings the debate to the floor about whether it would be wise for him to continue his duty behind the stumps.



WALKING WOUNDED: Bangladesh Test captain Mushfiqur Rahim heads towards the medical room at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur after injuring his right shoulder during training yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

Ashrafal involved in fixing in Sri Lanka?

More than a year after former Bangladesh captain Mohammad Ashrafal had made a confessional statement that he was involved in match-fixing in the Bangladesh Premier League (BPL) and beyond, the crest-fallen batsman now serving a five-year ban, hit the headlines in Sri Lanka yesterday.

Daily Mirror, an English language daily of Sri Lanka, in its Thursday's issue reported that Ashrafal had made a witness statement to the Anti Corruption and Security Unit (ACSU) of the ICC confirming that he had been involved in fixing the Sri Lanka Premier League (SLPL) match between Ruhunu Royals and Wayamba United played on August 26, 2012. Here is the excerpt of Daily Mirror report:

There had however been no concrete evidence to prove match-fixing in the controversial SLPL, but last month, Sri Lanka Cricket (SLC) which conducted the tournament had finally received solid proof from the International Cricket Council (ICC) that there had been match-fixing in the SLPL, SLC sources told 'Daily Mirror'.

Former Bangladesh skipper Mohammad Ashrafal has confessed to match fixing in the SLPL, sources added.

Ashrafal had made a witness statement on May 23, 2013 to the Anti Corruption and Security Unit (ACSU) of the ICC confirming that he had been involved in fixing the SLPL match between Ruhunu Royals and Wayamba United played on August 26, 2012.

The fixing issue has then created a major storm in SLC following information that SLC president Jayantha Dharmadasa had agreed with ICC at the ICC board meeting in November 2014 to refrain from taking further action on evidence provided by Ashrafal.

SLC Executive Committee had been unaware of Dharmadasa's action till ICC had forwarded the terms of the settlement agreement in December for a signature on behalf of SLC.

When SLC ex-co learnt of the ICC's request to sign the agreement, it had led to a heated discussion and the document had been referred to the SLC Lawyers for advice. Though ICC had asked the SLC to sign the agreement, they had not made available the full details of the investigation or the statement made by Ashrafal. SLC lawyers had advised the ex-co to refrain from signing the ICC document blindly without obtaining this vital information.

"The issue here is that Ashrafal cannot fix a match alone. There must be others, possibly local players involved. But if SLC signs this agreement, they cannot conduct further investigations based on this evidence to find what corruption had taken place" a source told 'Daily Mirror'.

The SLC ex-co had then decided unanimously to refrain from signing the agreement and to intimate their decision to the ICC. An ex-co member said that SLC firebrand Shammil Silva was vociferous in his protest to sign such an agreement with the ICC.

However, when SLC informed the ICC of the ex-co decision, ICC had informed SLC that Dharmadasa had agreed to sign the decision at the ICC Board meeting, leading to confusion at SLC.

Later when it was inquired, Dharmadasa had informed SLC Secretary Nishantha Ranatunga that he had in fact agreed in full to the settlement agreement which was unanimously approved at the ICC Board meeting. However he had not explained why he did not consult the ex-co before agreeing to such an important matter concerning Sri Lanka, apart from mentioning that the issue was of a highly confidential nature.

At a special ex-co meeting yesterday to untangle the confusion, several members had criticised Dharmadasa for keeping them in the dark over the issue. Dharmadasa had said that he was waiting for the minutes of the ICC board meeting to inform all matters to the

members and had claimed that he agreed to sign the document on the request of Bangladesh Cricket Board president.

However, the exco members had stood by their decision to refuse signing the document and had decided to write to ICC asking for a copy of Ashrafal's full statement as well as any other details ICC has on match-fixing in Sri Lanka before taking a final decision to sign the agreement. Dharmadasa's brother Upali who is also in the SLC ex-co in his ex-officio capacity as the immediate past president said he was strictly against any move to sweep the issue under the carpet.



I've already told the ACSU A to Z in my confessional statement and I have nothing to add to that statement.

Ashrafal said while talking to the Daily Star Sport over

Ashrafal, who had admitted to fixing matches BPL while playing for his team Dhaka Gladiators, had actually met his main fixing link in Sri Lanka during the SLPL.

Ashrafal had said that he had met with Dhaka Gladiators CEO Gaurav Rawat who was an Indian citizen but was living in Myanmar during the SLPL through an Indian bookie, whose name Ashrafal could not recall. Ashrafal had admitted that this same bookie had asked him to fix matches when he was still captain of the Bangladesh national team between 2007-2009.

He claimed that he rejected the offers and instead revealed this to media in 2009. But the bookie had remained on friendly terms with Ashrafal till 2012 even though Ashrafal claimed he continually rebuffed fixing opportunities.

However, in 2012 after meeting Gaurav through this bookie, Ashrafal got the chance to play in the SLPL. According to media reports, Ashrafal had also claimed that he was certain that both Gaurav and the unnamed bookie were involved in match fixing.

Interestingly, Gaurav was also the CEO of the SLPL franchise Ruhuna Royals.

Only one edition of the SLPL was played in 2012 and had to be scrapped the following years due to various issues despite the inaugural tournament raking in a rich profit of Rs. 289 million for SLC.

Booters brace for more BKSP camp resumes for Bangabandhu Gold Cup

SPORTS REPORTER

Having passed arguably their busiest year, the Bangladesh national football team brace for another action-packed year as they congregated for a training camp at the Bangladesh Krira Shikkha Protishthan (BKSP) camp in Savar yesterday.

In 2014, the senior national team and the U-23 team took part in nine competitive fixtures including FIFA Friendly matches against India, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Japan U-21s, as well as the Asian Games. The booters also went through a busy domestic schedule and participated in quite a few international club competitions for their respective clubs.

As the new year begins, the booters are set for more action as they have the AFC U-23 Championship Qualifiers in March in Dhaka, the Asian/World Cup Pre-Qualifiers in June/July, the SA Games at the end of the year and the SAFF Championship slated for December in India. The BFF is mulling over a few FIFA Friendly matches to offer players more international exposure and experience. The club teams,

especially champions Sheikh Jamal and Sheikh Russel, will also have some international club engagements during the year.

The action begins this month as BFF hosts the six-nation Bangabandhu Gold Cup in Dhaka and Sylhet. Even though the schedule or participating teams have not been finalised as yet, the booters have already started their preparation in Savar yesterday under coach Saiful Bari Titu.

The interim coach has set his sights on at least qualifying for the semifinal stage of the six-nation tournament.

"My initial target is to reach the semifinals, but we will take one match at a time and hope to go all the way," Titu told The Daily Star yesterday.

"Whatever time we get for preparation, be it two weeks or three, I would try to work on fitness and scoring ability of the forwards, among other things.

"There are a few players who are lagging behind in fitness, players who were not in continuous practice as their clubs did not have any training camp. I will give them extra work load to take their fitness to the level of the

others. I will try to have one or even two practice matches against clubs with African players before the Bangabandhu Gold Cup begins," Titu informed.

The team's ever reliable centre-back Nasiruddin Chowdhury, who has been recently given the captain's armband of Sheikh Jamal DC, feels the recent FIFA Friendly matches against Japan U-21s and Busan I'Park would give them confidence going into the six-nation tournament.

"The experience we have gathered from playing against Japan U-21s for the national team and against Busan I'Park for Sheikh Jamal team will give us confidence of taking on better opponents. We are prepared to do something good in the tournament," said the versatile defender.

23 out of the 26 called up, barring midfielders Mamunul Islam, Monaem Khan Raju and Jamal Bhuiyan, joined the camp yesterday. Mamunul is supposedly ill; and Jamal is currently vacationing in Denmark, while Raju has some family issues to look after. The coach informed that all of them will join the camp later in the week.

ASIAN WEIGHTLIFTING Reshma grabs silver

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladeshi weightlifter Zohora Akhter Reshma won silver medal in the 44-kg weight category of the 17th Asian Youth Weightlifting Championship held in Doha, Qatar yesterday.

The promising weightlifter lifted 116 kilos to win the silver while Mohini of India clinched the gold lifting 131 kilos. Al-Saidi Nazah of Iraq took the bronze lifting 102 kilos.

Earlier in the Second International Cup Weightlifting at the same venue on Wednesday, ace weightlifter lifter Mollah Sabira Sultana clinched silver medal in the 53-kg weight category lifting a total of 140 kilos.

Rebeka Koha of Latvia won the event's gold lifting 160 kilos while Dajana Dankubia of Bosnia earned the bronze lifting 135 kilos.



PHOTO: STAR

(From R) Mohammad Linkon, Hemanta Vincent Biswas, Ariful Islam, Nasiruddin Chowdhury, Sohel Rana and Nasirul Islam pose for photographs, with red roses in their hands, as the national team reported at the Bangladesh Football Federation House yesterday for the training camp for Bangabandhu Gold Cup.

Penultimate round today

SPORTS REPORTER

Prime Bank Cricket Club need to overcome the Mohammadan threat at BKSP today to come within one victory of lifting the Dhaka Premier League title.

Prime Bank, along with Prime Doleshwar and Abahani are in the title race, but Prime Bank lead the table on 22 points, with Abahani and Doleshwar two points adrift.

Mohammedan might not be favourites on paper but, fresh from a seven-wicket victory against Legends of Rupganj in the previous round, pose a big challenge to the title aspirants in the penultimate round of the DPL.

Prime Bank coach Khaled Mahmud however was confident with his young brigade. "Mohammedan is playing good cricket and you know Mashrafe (Bin Mortaza) can make the difference, but I am confident that my boys can keep

their disciplined effort. We have to win the next two matches to win the title and my boys are ready for that," said Mahmud.

Second-placed Prime Doleshwar are faced with a major setback ahead of their crucial league encounter against Legends of Rupganj at the Fatullah Cricket Stadium, as they will miss the service of captain Mushfiqur Rahim, who suffered a shoulder injury during practice yesterday. Coach Mizanur Rahman Babul said that anything other than a victory would kill their chance and should Prime Bank win and two other contenders lose the penultimate matches, then the league title will go to Prime Bank today.

On the other hand, Abahani coach Sarwar Imran believes that his top order must click in order to recover from their loss against Doleshwar, as well as to stay alive in the race when they meet Kalabagan Cricket Academy at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur today.

NATIONAL HANDBALL C'SHIP BGB retain title

SPORTS REPORTER

Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) continued their handball supremacy as they clinched the title of Exim Bank 24th National Men's Handball Championship beating Bangladesh Police by 41-31 goals in the final at the Shaheed M Monsur Ali Stadium yesterday.

It was 23rd and the 19th consecutive national handball crown for BGB, who led the first half of the final by 16-13 goals. Kamrul Islam scored 13, Khairuzzaman netted eight and Sudhan Barua scored seven goals for the champions while Mahub contributed with 11, Arif netted seven and Didar scored four for Bangladesh Police.

Khairuzzaman of BGB was adjudged the best player of the championship.

Earlier, Bangladesh Ansar finished third beating Chapainawabganj DSA by 39-24 goals in a place-deciding match. Robiul scored seven and Rakib netted five goals for the winners while Abdur Rab netted seven goals for the losing side.

Health and family welfare minister Mohammad Nasim was distributed trophies among the teams where president of Bangladesh Handball Federation AKM Nurul Fazel Bulbul and general secretary Asaduzzaman Kohinoor were also present.