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Mixed bag on one Test less

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Cricket Board's (BCB's) proposal of cutting down a Test match from the bilateral series against Zimbabwe in January has drawn mixed responses from former national cricketers.

Last week, the BCB's cricket operations committee chairman Naimur Rahman had said that the board had thought about the new proposal keeping in mind the Asia Cup T20 and World T20, scheduled to take place after the series.

Test captain Mushfiqur Rahim too voiced his support to the proposal last Thursday citing fatigue issues.

Bangladesh's first Test centurion, Aminul Islam, though believes that the BCB should re-think their stance.

"We always go everywhere and say that we have to play more Tests. And the move that we want to take now is in contrast to that. If you see our position at the moment, we are still learners in this format. Honestly speaking if you see the reality, there is a good chance for us to win this Test series and that would have been really good for us," Aminul told The Daily Star over phone yesterday.

"I have been working in this line for a while. If you see world cricket, the shorter version of the game is driven by money and I personally don't think it helps much in the development of the game. Test match is a test of everything. If we do well in this format, players will automatically improve in the T20s and the 50-over format," he added.

In the same vein, Bangladesh's former opener Athar Ali Khan admitted that he was a bit confused with the path the BCB was planning to take.

"I don't understand why we are going towards this path? Why won't we play more Tests when it's there in the schedule? I understand that we are thinking in terms of the Asia Cup and T20 World Cup, but why miss an opportunity? I have also read that there is a fatigue factor, and I for one, don't want to see any injuries; but I still feel that we should not let go of this chance," said Athar.

"I firmly believe that we should not let this go from our hand. I think they should think of playing three Tests instead of two," he asserted.

On the other hand, former national cricketer Gazi Ashraf Hossain was of a different opinion.

"Before the Zimbabwe series, these players will be playing a number of domestic tournaments. So I think considering that scenario, the BCB has taken a good decision.

"The fatigue factor is important. I think seven to eight players from our national side play in all the three formats. The team management has to assess how much each player has played in order to expect the optimum level of performance from the players," said Gazi Ashraf.

Former national cricketer Roquibul Hasan shared a similar sentiment.

"Since the tournament is taking place right before the World T20, I think this was a very well thought out decision. I don't think there is much of a difference between playing two and three Tests.



FUN IN THE RAIN: After it started raining cats and dogs, there could hardly be anything more fun than sliding in the water and that's exactly what the Tigers did after their training session at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday, before halting to have an adda over the covers.

PHOTO: BCB

'Don't expect a cricket score'

SPORTS REPORTER



While Bangladesh's Dutch coach Lodewijk de Kruijff was busy working on the defence organisation of his team in Perth yesterday, ahead of the World Cup Qualifiers against the mighty Australia, Socceroos midfielder Matt McKay warned the home fans not to expect a cricket score on Thursday.

Bangladesh's rivalry with Australia on a cricket field is quite common. But the footballing clash at the Nib Stadium in Perth will be Bangladesh's first against the Asian champions. And ahead of the game between the two

unequal opponents, Bangladesh's biggest concern would be to avoid an embarrassing defeat.

Australia however have kept their foot on the ground after their nervy 2-1 win against Kyrgyzstan and amid injury, which is growing with number one goalkeeper Mat Ryan yesterday joining the long list that included captain Mile Jedinak, winger Robbie Kruse and striker Tomi Juric.

"You can face obstacles against countries like Kyrgyzstan and Bangladesh, though I think the pitch will be a bit better than what we played on, but we don't focus too much on the scoreline," said Socceroos defender Mathew Spiranovic while talking to Fox Sports news.

"You don't really think about that (winning by big margins), you worry more about the process and if you do that right the result generally takes care of itself," he added.

Bangladesh, who are ranked 170 in the FIFA Ranking, are better known for their cricketing exploits and midfielder Matt McKay said the Socceroos must set the tone for their whole campaign and there would be no return to some of the massive scorelines from their Oceania days.

McKay believes the match against Bangladesh would not be an easy affair as they had a different experience against Kyrgyzstan.

"It's not always like that, we saw that with Kyrgyzstan game, where we thought — (they're ranked)

100-and-something in the world — international football is never easy and we won't be taking Bangladesh lightly," McKay was quoted by Fox Sports.

"I don't know too much (about Bangladesh) yet, we've got a bit of footage. We had staff that have gone and watched their previous game and I'm sure they've done their homework," continued McKay.

Obviously, Bangladesh have been working on Australia, how to hold them and de Kruijff is giving importance on that aspect.

"The coach has given the emphasis on the defence organisation in training and instructed us not to make any mistakes during the match against Australia. Besides,

the coach is also working on the speed of the players to cash in on the opportunities if we get any," said Bangladesh captain Mamunul Islam over phone yesterday.

"Tonight (Monday) we are supposed to watch the Malaysia match to assess our weak points and tomorrow (Tuesday) we will watch the footage of Australia to set the strategy," said the midfielder adding that they have been enjoying the moments of their first visit in Australia.

Both Bangladesh and Australia had their practice sessions in Perth but only nine players turned up to the first day's training of Socceroos as most of them were on their way to Perth after their club commitments in different countries.

SAILOR-BFF U-15 NATIONAL FOOTBALL Feni to take on N'ganj in final

SPORTS REPORTER

Feni set up their final clash of the Sailor-BFF U-15 National Football Championship against Narayanjanj after they defeated Dhaka 5-4 in a penalty shootout at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

The regulation time of the second semifinal failed to separate the teams as both sides could hardly play their natural game on a rain-soaked pitch. The only highlight of the game was captain Iftekarul coming close to giving Feni a lead in the 82nd minute. The match was eventually decided in sudden death.

Feni goalkeeper Yakub blocked three shots from the spots to be adjudged the player of the match.

The final will be held tomorrow at the same venue.

Eng survive Smith

AFP, Cardiff

England captain Eoin Morgan marked his return to cricket by top-scoring in a five-run win over Australia in the lone Twenty20 international in Cardiff on Monday.

Morgan made 74 and shared a third-wicket stand of 135 with fellow left-hander Moeen Ali (72 not out) in a total of 182 for five after England, sent into bat, had slumped to 18 for two.

Australia, however, were on course for victory while skipper Steven Smith was making a Twenty20 international best 90. But they lost five wickets for 16 runs in 14 balls and finished on 177 for eight.

Australia needed 12 to win off the last over, bowled by all-rounder Ben Stokes. However, they lost three wickets, two to run outs, with Stokes also having Nathan Coulter-Nile out for a duck when Adil Rashid held a skyer at short third man.

Stokes conceded just six runs off the over and finished with one for 29 in his maximum four-over stint. Earlier, England lost openers Alex Hales (three) and Jason Roy (11) in four balls from paceman Pat Cummins to be 18 for two in four overs.

Morgan, however, struck a superb straight six off all-rounder Shaun Marsh that sent the ball soaring out of the ground and into the River Taff. England took 19 runs off Cameron Boyce's lone over of the innings.

SCORES IN BRIEF

ENGLAND: 182 for 5 (Moeen 72 not out, Morgan 74, Buttler 11; Cummins 2-25)
AUSTRALIA: 177 for 8 (Smith 90, Maxwell 44; Willey 2-34)
Result: England won by five runs



The Bangladesh football team do warm-up exercises during a practice session at Perth Soccer Club in Dorreil Garden yesterday. Bangladesh will take on the Socceroos in a World Cup-Asian Cup qualifier in Perth on September 3.

PHOTO: BFF

The shooter's apology to Akram

PTI, Karachi

Pakistan's former cricket captain Wasim Akram has received an unconditional apology from the retired military man who fired on his car during a road rage incident in Karachi early last month.

Major (ret'd) Amir Rehman, in a letter to Akram, said that he regretted the incident which was a result of a misunderstanding. Sources said the issue is now resolved and Akram has accepted the apology after some mutual friends pacified and convinced the former captain to forget the incident which took place while he was supervising a fast bowlers' camp at the national stadium here.

India go ahead on heated day

AFP, Colombo

Fired-up India sighted their first series win in Sri Lanka for 22 years when the home team's top order collapsed during the decisive final Test in Colombo on Monday.

Sri Lanka, set a tough victory target of 386, lost three wickets for 21 runs before moving to 67 without further loss by stumps on a tense fourth day at the Sinhalese Sports Club.

Tempers flared in the final session as Ishant Sharma and the Sri Lankan fielders had a heated exchange after Dhammika Prasad bowled three consecutive bouncers to the Indian tail-ender.

Dinesh Chandimal nudged Sharma with his shoulder, forcing umpires Nigel Llong and Rod Tucker to step in to calm down the players.

As Sharma hurried off the field after the Indian innings ended, Prasad sprinted behind him and television pictures showed the two players speak-

ing to each other outside the dressing rooms.

Sharma, who was fined 65 per cent of his match fee for misconduct during the second Test, vented his anger with the ball when Sri Lanka's second innings began.

The lanky seamer had Upul Tharanga edging his sixth delivery to wicketkeeper Naman Ojha, and Chandimal was caught by skipper Virat Kohli at second slip after the ball bounced out of third slip Lokesh Rahul's hands.

In between, Umesh Yadav forced Dimuth Karunaratne to edge a catch to Ojha. But opener Kaushal Silva and skipper Angelo Mathews stemmed the rot with an unbroken 46-run stand for the fourth wicket.

Sri Lanka will begin the final day's play on Tuesday needing 319 more to win in a minimum of 98 overs, with Silva unbeaten on 24 and Mathews on 22.

India have not won a Test series in Sri Lanka since 1993 when Mohammad Azharuddin's men

clinched a 1-0 victory.

Resolute batting by India's lower order had lifted their second innings to 274, with the last six wickets contributing 210 runs after the top four had fallen for 64.

The revival began with a 54-run partnership for the fifth wicket between Rohit Sharma (50) and Stuart Binny (49) before Ravichandran Ashwin smashed 58 to boost the total.

Sri Lanka won the opening Test in Galle by 63 runs, but India drew level with a 278-run win in the second match at the P Sara Oval in Colombo.

SCORES IN BRIEF

INDIA: First innings 312
SRI LANKA: First innings 201

INDIA: Second innings 274 (Kohli 21, R Sharma 50, Binny 49, Ojha 35, Mishra 39, Ashwin 58; Prasad 4-62)

SRI LANKA: Second innings 67 for 3 (Silva 24 not out, Chandimal 18, Mathews 22 not out; I Sharma 2-14, Yadav 1-32)

Fixing trio's long road to redemption

AFP, Karachi

Former Pakistan captain Salman Butt and pace bowler Mohammad Asif can return to cricket this week following five-year spot-fixing bans, but age and public hostility mean the pair faces a hard road to redemption.

On Wednesday they will join left-arm quick Mohammad Amir, whose own ban was relaxed by the International Cricket Council six months ago, in being free to restart their careers.

Batsman Butt, now 30, had captained Pakistan to Test victories over Australia and England and looked set for a long period as the team's leader before his career crashed to a halt.



Feni players celebrate after defeating Dhaka 5-4 in a penalty shoot-out during the Sailor-BFF U-15 National Football Championship semifinal at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR