



Mezbahuddin Ahmed and Shirin Akter kiss their boots after winning the 100m sprint titles in men and women's category of the 39th National Athletics Championship at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

Mezbah, Shirin retain crowns

SPORTS REPORTER



Mezbahuddin Ahmed and Shirin Akter remained the fastest man and woman of the country after successfully retaining their 100m sprint titles in the 39th National Athletics Championships at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

Mezbah, of Bangladesh Navy, clocked 10.60 seconds (hand-timing) to beat teammate Kazi Imran by 0.10 seconds to win the fastest man's title for the fourth time in a row -- twice in national championships and once each in Bangladesh Games and summer athletics meet.

Mezbah, however, failed to better his personal best of 10.24 seconds in hand-timing, which he had produced in the last summer meet. His personal best, on the electronic timing though, is 10.99 seconds which he had set in the Asian Athletics Championships in 2013 while he had clocked 11.13 seconds in the recently-concluded World Athletic Championship in Beijing, China.

timing was used instead of hand-timing. "It would have been more pleasing if there was electronic timing used in this championship," said Mezbah.

Nevertheless, Mezbah felt his performance would help him do well in the upcoming South Asian Games, which is scheduled to be held in India in January, 2016.

"Bangladesh hasn't won a gold medal in the 100m sprint in the SA Games since 1993 and I want to end the drought," added Mezbah.

Meanwhile, Shirin won the 100m sprint dash to complete a double after grabbing the 200m sprint gold on Thursday.

Shirin beat teammate Zakia Sultana Subarna by clocking 11.84 seconds to become fastest woman for the third successive time -- twice in national championships and once in summer meet.

Zakia finished 0.46 seconds behind Shirin while veteran Shamsunnahar Chumki bagged the bronze at a time of 12.37 seconds.

Shirin, too, is dreaming of doing even better in the South Asian Games, but she also wants to eclipse the women's national record of 11.60 seconds, which was set by Nazmunahar Beauty in 2006.

The man from Navy felt the win would have been more satisfactory if electronic

Ex-nationals look to NCL for redemption

SPORTS REPORTER



Ask the selectors and they will say that they never write-off any player's chance to make a comeback to the national fold. But in reality, is there any chance for out-of-favour players -- the likes of Abdur Razzak, Shahriar Nafees, Naeem Islam and many more -- to regain their places in the national side?

This question has come to the fore following the announcement of the Bangladesh A team's tour to India. They will play three one-dayers and one three-day match against their Indian counterparts, while also playing a three-dayer against Ranji Trophy champions Karnataka.

The think-tank showed their vision how they were planning for the future, selecting a team which made it clear that they were ready not to look at the past for a backup for the national team. When asked, chief selector Faruque Ahmed was understandably diplomatic but hinted that the ex-national players were not in their plans. Instead, they are more focused on the younger players like Mosaddek Hossain, Shadman Islam and Mahmudul Hasan.

"You cannot write off any player, but the competition among the current bunch of players is very intense. The atmosphere is fantastic as everybody is pushing each other in the team.

"Look at the players; their fitness level is amazing and they are very hungry to stay in the team because they know that someone is waiting to grab their place," Faruque told The Daily Star.

"We have a pool of around 40 players, so at this moment it's

very difficult for an outsider to get inside the pool," he added.

The former national captain though added that there was always a chance for the players to impress in the domestic circuit and push the selection panel.

The situation is really tough, but players like Razzak and Nafees are not ready to give up the fight. That's why they are looking towards the domestic cricket. And their immediate target is to play well in the National Cricket League (NCL), which starts on September 18.

At the age of 33, Razzak believes that he still can be of service to the national team.

"I badly miss the national team. I am hopeful about a comeback to the national side. It's true that everybody in the team is doing well now, but that doesn't mean my career is over. My duty is to stay fit and do well in domestic cricket and be ready so I can grab the chance," said the left-arm spinner, who played 12 Tests and 153 ODIs so far. Razzak played his last international match in August 2014.

Nafees, who is now 30, echoed Razzak's sentiments. "I am still hopeful. The

selection is not in my hand, but I can show my ability on the domestic circuit. Nothing is impossible. I am looking forward to scoring a huge number of runs this season. I have been training hard for the NCL for the past one and a half months.

"Fitness? Please come to the field then you can understand how fit I am," said Nafees, who played 24 Tests and 75 ODIs till 2013.

It was nice to hear that the former players exuded confidence. But without any doubt, they need to reach the pinnacle of their performances to claim back their places. And that only seems possible through some extraordinary performances on the domestic circuit.



ABDUR RAZZAK



SHAHRIAR NAFEEES

Morgan leads England

AFP, Leeds



England captain Eoin Morgan led his side to a history-making three-wicket win over Australia in the fourth one-day international at Headingley on Friday to tie the five-match series 2-2.

Morgan made 92 as England successfully chased a total of 300 for only the fourth time in one-day cricket to set up a series decider at Old Trafford on Sunday.

Morgan shared a 91-run partnership with Ben Stokes and 58 with Yorkshire's Jonny Bairstow as England held their nerve to get home with ten balls to spare in an exciting finish.

With Morgan gone, Glenn Maxwell took Liam Plunkett's wicket with a spectacular

catch, with England still needing 18 to win.

However, Moeen Ali and David Willey saw England over the line, with Willey hitting John Hastings for England's sixth six of the innings to complete victory in the penultimate over.

After winning the toss, Australia reached 299-7 thanks to half-centuries from top scorer Glenn Maxwell, who made 85, George Bailey and wicketkeeper Matthew Wade, whose late onslaught at least gave his side something to try to defend.

SCORES IN BRIEF

AUSTRALIA: 299 for seven in 50 overs (Bailey 75, Maxwell 85, Wade 50 no; Willey 3-51, Ali 2-40)

ENGLAND: 304 for 7 in 48.2 overs (Taylor 41, Morgan 92, Stokes 41; Cummins 4-49, Marsh 2-52)



Warner out of BD tour

AGENCIES, Sydney

David Warner has officially been ruled out of the upcoming Tour of Bangladesh due to a fractured left thumb.

Warner was reviewed by a hand specialist in Sydney yesterday, and although he won't require surgery it was determined that he will not recover in time for the two-Test series against the sub-continental nation.

However, he is expected to be fit for Australia's home series against New Zealand in November.

Warner sustained the injury from the first ball he faced in Australia's second one-day international against England last week.

"It's really disappointing," Warner said. "I never want to miss a match for Australia but I'll be doing everything possibly can to get back as quickly as possible."

Nathan Lyon appears the likely candidate to take on the vice-captaincy, though experienced first-class pair Adam Voges and Peter Nevill could also be in the mix.



England captain Eoin Morgan (R) scored 91 runs while forging two crucial partnerships to lead his side to victory over Australia in the fourth ODI at Headingley.

Tour of India worries Smith

PTI, Johannesburg



Former South Africa captain Graeme Smith has said that he is "nervous" about the Proteas' upcoming "tough" tour of India, starting with the first Test in Mohali on November 5.

"I'm a bit nervous. It's a tough tour for us and this is a big season for South African cricket with the Indian tour and the English tour later this year. This could be the defining period for this team," Smith was quoted as saying by The Times.

"Four Test matches in India are not going to be easy, especially because it involves a lot of travelling, a lot of people and the conditions are going to spin.

"I'm holding thumbs that everything will go well. If we have a good Indian tour, I think we'll then do very well against the English," said Smith, who led South Africa to two series draws against India in 2008 and 2009.

Smith said the Proteas, who have not lost a Test series away since 2006, had no option but to keep it going.

"Our record of not losing a Test series away from home since 2006 has been incredible. Hopefully these guys will keep going and keep doing us proud," Smith added.

He directed a comment particularly to Quinton de Kock, who was earlier relegated from the national squad and sent to India with the national A side to hone his skills.

"It's all about building character. If you're going to have a long career playing at the top of the game, you're going to be able to deal with failure and how to bounce back from disappointment," Smith said.

Asian teams lag behind in fitness

As the 'Dutch era' in Bangladesh football came to an end with Lodewijk de Kruij's departure, an 'Italian era' begins with the appointment of Fabio Lopez. The 42-year-old Roman, although very new in Bangladesh and appointed for a four-month period initially, has already formed some ideas about the national team and the problems facing it. Here, the Italian discusses his plans about the Bangladesh team and his football philosophy with The Daily Star's Anisur Rahman.

The Daily Star: Since this your first assignment as head coach of a national team, how challenging do you think it will be for you to accomplish your aim?

Fabio Lopez: The national team looks like a club team because the season in here is over and I will get the players for four months. I have the experience of coaching in Asia, so I don't think I need to adapt to the culture here. Bangladesh is very similar to Maldives, Malaysia and Indonesia where I have coached before.

DS: What do you think is the speciality of Asian football?

FL: About Malaysia in particular and Asian football in general, the one thing I can say is that they are lagging behind in tactical skills and fitness. Many clubs don't even have a fitness coach. Even those who do, have an athletics coach but not a football fitness coach. We work with different specialist football fitness coaches. The fitness coach who is coming here has worked with Lazio and has very good knowledge on football.



DS: The results achieved by Bangladesh's former foreign coaches is mixed. What according to you are the components of success?

FL: Success takes time. I can't say what the solution is. Normally you must be ready to adapt to the country's culture. Every coach has a different methodology. I personally study everything very well. I even study how

the players look at me on the field, how their feeling is towards me. I am also very disciplined. If you want to become a professional at a certain level, you must have to be disciplined. I will have a list. If they don't follow it, they will be penalised. Because we are representing the country, we are not here for a visit.

DS: In the last decade, Bangladesh have had problems finding a good striker. Can you bring a change in this aspect?

FL: It is not always necessary for the strikers to score. If we don't have strikers who can score, we must find another way. That's our job. It is not only in your country that foreign strikers are taking places of local strikers. This is a problem all over the world. Thailand and Malaysia face the same problem. I think it is just about the work done at the clubs. If the players are good in Bangladesh, they will get chances.

DS: Will you have any special training for the strikers?

FL: We have special and individual training

for strikers after the normal training sessions. I had faced such problems in Lithuania. I had a 20-day training session with one striker and after that, he had struck 22 goals. The training works sometimes, sometimes it doesn't. But we will have special training.

DS: You said that Bangladesh were tactically poor against Australia and Jordan. What do you think about their technique?

FL: I can't understand the technical skills of the Bangladeshi players. Against Australia, we did not touch the ball and did not see where the ball was. Against Jordan, the grass was so bad and we threw the ball 20 meters away every time.

DS: Can you name any player from Bangladesh who impressed you?

FL: No. But potentially the number 6 (Jamal Bhuiyan) looked good. He is a fighter and I saw a strong personality in him. I hope we can produce a surprise and wish I can make a difference.