

# SPORT

## BPL augments pace options

SPORTS REPORTER

A single tournament cannot provide all the solutions so one cannot expect the recently concluded Bangladesh Premier League (BPL) to endow the team with all the answers needed to make Bangladesh a good T20 side. Still the national selectors had some expectations from the third edition of the tournament ahead of Asia Cup and ICC World Twenty20, but did they gain anything from the endeavour?

"Honestly speaking, not that much," was the response from national selector Habibul Bashar. "Comparing the first two tournaments to the third one, it was more organized but from the selectors' point of view, we have gained hardly anything. Everybody knows that we are yet to learn the craft of the shortest version of the game; especially our batting lacks the proper skill. Batting wise the performance was frustrating and we didn't get anything to think about ahead of two big tournaments," said the former national skipper.

"With a few exceptions, our batsmen were erratic. We don't play T20 cricket



ABU HAIDER

regularly and played the BPL after a long break which could be a reason behind the batsman's wrong approach. The pitches were not perfect for batting either so our purpose was not served. First of all we have to make sure that we can put reasonable runs on the board on a regular basis and for that we need batsmen who can understand the nature of this format," he continued.

However, Bashar said that everything was not futile as the tournament increased the range of pace bowling options. The lack of good pace bowlers and constant injury problems is always a cause of concern for the national selectors, but Bashar said that they were excited to see that 10-12 local pace bowlers made a mark in the tournament.

"Spinners, particularly the left-arm spinners, always took centre stage

when it came to any domestic competition in the country, but refreshingly there was a different scenario in BPL as at least our 10-12 pace bowlers bowled well and drew attention. Yes, the conditions might have helped them a bit but the way they bowled was still encouraging for us," said Bashar.

"Al-Amin Hossain's comeback was fantastic, Mohammad Shahid surprised everybody and Mash's [Mashrafe Bin Mortaza] charismatic leadership overshadowed his good bowling efforts. But overall it was the story of a young pace bowler in Rony [Abu Haider]," he added.

Bashar believed that the just-concluded BPL gave birth to a new young talent in the form of Rony, champion Comilla Victorians' left-arm paceman.

"In my opinion Rony was outstanding. It was nice to see that he returned with his natural weapon in this tournament. He could swing the ball brilliantly while he was in the Under-19 team but suddenly became an ordinary bowler, losing the craft. But in this BPL he swung the ball brilliantly and also improved his pace to emerge as a national prospect," opined an excited Bashar.

So it would be of no surprise if Rony gets a call-up to the senior fold ahead of the two big events.



CHASING SHADOWS: An Afghanistan booter is chased by three Bangladesh players during their SAFF Suzuki Cup match at the Greenfield Stadium in Trivandrum yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

## Arambagh suspended

SPORTS REPORTER

Arambagh Kriya Sangha have been 'provisionally suspended' from all football-related activities by the Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF). The BFF took the decision as part of a disciplinary measure against the Bangladesh Championship League, after their loyalists vandalised the BFF House and Birshreshtha Shaheed Mostafa Stadium which was allegedly carried out by Arambagh loyalists.

Arambagh's fate will be decided on Sunday at a meeting of the BFF's executive committee, informed BFF general secretary Abu Nayeem Shohag.

"Following the vandalism at the BFF House and the stadium by the supporters of Arambagh KS after their Bangladesh Championship League match against Bangladesh Police, the club have been asked to refrain from all football activities until the BFF issues further notice," read a BFF statement.

After suffering a 2-3 defeat at the hands of Bangladesh Police in a league match on Tuesday, some rowdy Arambagh supporters were involved in a scuffle. Later they allegedly rushed into the BFF headquarter and vandalised everything in sight, prompting the BFF to lodge a case against some 150 unidentified people.

The decision means Arambagh will not be allowed to take part in the Bangladesh Championship League -- which is set to resume from today -- or the three-day mid-term transfer window, which will be opened from Sunday.

## Anderson out of first Test

AFP, Durban

England paceman James Anderson has been ruled out of the first Test against South Africa with a calf strain, the England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) announced on Thursday.

"@jimmy9 ruled out of the first Test vs @OfficialCSA with a calf strain. He'll be assessed for 2nd Test," the ECB wrote on its official Twitter account.

Anderson, England's leading Test wicket-taker, underwent a scan on his right calf muscle on Tuesday and will not be risked for the first Test, which begins on Boxing Day.

England hope that the 33-year-old will be fit for the second Test in Cape

## Maruful still hopeful!

SPORTS REPORTER from Trivandrum

Bangladesh coach Maruful Haque put on a brave face at the post-match press conference despite his side suffering a humiliating 4-0 defeat at the hands of defending champions Afghanistan in their first Group B fixture of the SAFF Suzuki Cup at the Trivandrum Sports Hub yesterday. The recently-appointed coach said this was 'only a match lost', and that their progression from the tough group stages was still quite within their reach.

"We have lost only a match, not the tournament. This defeat doesn't change our focus as we will take the field in the next matches with a winning target," said the 46-year-old coach.

The veteran coach, who recently earned the UEFA A license, gave a very bookish reply when assessing the difference between the two teams.

"The difference was in physique and physicality. That means they [Afghanistan] are more physically imposing and fitter than us," Maruful said. "Our mistakes were that we kept losing possession with missed

passes and that was when they pounced on us with counter-attacks."

Maruful felt Bangladesh could have brought themselves in the match had the forwards capitalised on the chances they got. "The other difference was made by the forwards. At one stage they had scored three goals from three chances, and we failed to score any from two chances. This is something which is ingrained in our domestic football which we can't seem to get out of," opined Maruful.

The Afghanistan coach, who was seen pumping his fists as his players kept pounding the Bangladesh goal, was humble in his assessment.

"Bangladesh didn't play as bad as the final scoreline suggests. They got a few chances and they could have had two goals," said the German, who previously managed the Georgia national team on caretaker basis after a two-year spell in charge of the Georgia under-21 team.

The German, though, expressed his satisfaction with the clean and commanding victory as he felt that the win, not conceding a single goal, and no cards or injuries to his players were all pleasing aspects of the game.

## A shambolic start

ATIQUA ANAM from Trivandrum

All the pre-tournament talk of resolve and redemption from the Bangladesh players came to nothing as they made a shambolic start to their SAFF Suzuki Cup campaign, a phenomenon becoming all-too-familiar in recent times, going down against defending champions Afghanistan 4-0 at the Sports Hub of Trivandrum yesterday.

The men in green, who made a group stage exit in the last edition, looked like a side far below in quality and composure against a side they had never lost to previously.

The defeat not only stretched Bangladesh's winless streak in the championship to eight matches, but more worryingly pushed them to the bottom of Group B after Matchday 1, with a goal difference of -3. Maldives' 3-1 win over Bhutan in the day's opening match saw the island nation occupy the second position.

That the Lions of Khorasan are a far-improved side than they were a decade ago is an open secret. That they have been blessed in recent years with an influx of

quality players from European lower leagues is also well-documented. However, this is the same Afghanistan side, or perhaps with a few changes in personnel and a new high-profile coach in charge, who only escaped defeat against Bangladesh in a friendly match in June this year. But the way the game panned out yesterday made everyone realise how far the Afghans have improved and to what depths their beleaguered opponents have plummeted.

There was everything present in the Afghans' game that Peter Segr could ask for - threatening wingplay, the ability to win and control possession and calmness in finishing - all of which were strikingly absent among Maruful Haque's charges.

The more-than-60 percent possession enjoyed by the Afghans or the more than four times shots on goal taken by their strikers is perhaps an understatement of the dominance by the

defending champions. On the other hand, all that the Bangladesh team could create were three half-chances, two of which fell to centre-forward Shakhawat Hossain Rony and one to midfielder Sohail Rana. Needless to say those chances never came close to being cashed in. The rest of it was a tale of missed passes, lost possession in the midfield, nervous defending and a hapless Shahidul Alam trying to keep the defeat to a respectable level.

After the first 20 minutes which was the only even passage of play, and during which Shakhawat failed to beat the opposition goalkeeper after a rare howler in Afghan defence, the Lions kept growing in stature as Bangladesh's started looking nervous and mistakes started creeping in.

Masih Saighani's 30th minute strike opened the floodgates, with Faysal Shayesteh neatly turning in a cross before Zubayr Amiri, the man who created the first two goals, took the match out of Bangladesh's reach with a toe-poke over Shahidul in the 40th minute. The Bangladesh keeper did his best to keep the margin to keep out a number of attempts, but failed to stop a rebound in the 70th minute as substitute striker

**BANGLADESH 0 - 4 AFGHANISTAN**  
Saighani 30, Shayesteh 32, Amiri 40, Amani 69



Bangladesh Navy players celebrate with the Victory Day trophy after defeating BKSP in the final at the Maulana Bhasani Hockey Stadium yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

## Navy celebrate maiden title

SPORTS REPORTER

Star-studded Bangladesh Navy lifted the title of the Victory Day Hockey tournament with a hard-fought 3-2 win over Bangladesh

Kriya Shikha Protisthan (BKSP) in a pulsating final at the Maulana Bhasani Hockey Stadium yesterday. Defender Farhad Ahmed Situl struck the winner to provide Navy with their first-ever trophy at any level so far, as well as to deny the country's premier sports institute from capturing their second Victory Day hockey title after their triumph in 2006.

'the national hockey team' as 16 national players represented them, of whom 11 players including Chayan, Jimmy, Ashim, Sarwar, Krishna and Taposh are non-commissioned officers at different levels in Navy. Five other national players wore the Blue and White jersey under temporary contracts as well.

It was anticipated that Bangladesh Navy would dominate the match, however BKSP proved otherwise as they took control of the first half and gave the Navy a run for their money.

Despite this, BKSP conceded the lead against the run of play as Kaushik pounced on Safiul Islam's defensive blunder in the 14th minute. The margin was levelled in the 21st minute by top-scorer Ashaful Islam, who converted a

penalty corner. However, Roman Sarkar restored Navy's lead in the 46th minute. BKSP resurrected their hopes in the 52nd minute through Sohanur Rahman, but their ambitions were shattered just nine minutes later. Situl, not to be denied, converted from a well-executed penalty corner, securing his side's win.

"We all are happy because we repaid the trust Bangladesh Navy put on us. It is the first trophy for Bangladesh Navy and we hope to provide more in the future," said national striker Rasel Mahmud Jimmy.

BKSP coach Kawser Ali said, "Experience made the difference but we could have won the match had we not squandered a couple of good scoring chances."

## Hafeez, Azhar refuse to train with Amir

AFP, Lahore

Pakistan cricket Thursday braced for another storm when former Twenty20 captain Mohammad Hafeez and current one-day skipper Azhar Ali refused to train with tainted paceman Mohammad Amir in an ongoing fitness camp.

Hafeez told head coach Waqar Younis he would not attend any part of the camp in which Amir will participate.

One-day captain Azhar Ali also backed Hafeez in boycotting the camp staged to train the team for next month's tour of New Zealand.

## Windies to host India tour

AFP, St. John's

West Indies cricket chiefs said Wednesday that they are edging closer to an agreement which would see them belatedly complete their 2014 tour of India which was controversially abandoned.

Dave Cameron, the president of the West Indies Cricket Board (WICB), confirmed that the Caribbean side will host India in the Caribbean in 2016. This agreement, however, is subject to the WICB and the West Indies Players Association (WIPA) "giving a joint commitment to complete, at a later date, the tour which prematurely ended in October 2014", said a WICB statement.

## RECKLESS DRIVING TAKES A STAR

SPORTS REPORTER

Mirza Farid Ahmed, popularly known to the sports community as Milu Bhai, was on his way to the Maulana Bhasani Hockey Stadium to watch yesterday's Victory Day Tournament final between Bangladesh Navy and BKSP.

But he could not make it to his fever-pitch. A bus hit him fatally in Uttara at around 3:00pm when he was crossing a street and the magnificent hockey player-turned organiser was declared dead by the attending doctors at the Apollo Hospital, where he was rushed in after the accident. He was 70.

Milu Bhai, who made the hockey stadium his second home, became the latest victim of reckless driving in a city where loyalty to traffic rules is a far cry.

One of the finest hockey players the country has produced, Mirza Farid had represented the East Pakistan hockey team in 1962 as well as the Dhaka district and Dhaka University side several times before becoming an organizer in 1975.

He served as the chairman of the hockey committee from 1975-78 before working as a joint-secretary of the Bangladesh Hockey Federation. He was also general secretary from 1984-88. Mirza Farid was also the lone international (Grade A) umpire in Bangladesh.

He is survived by two daughters, one son and his wife. The renowned organizer will be buried after the return of his daughters and son, who are living in the USA.



Mirza Farid Ahmed

## Baz wants to ride out

AFP, Wellington

Brendon McCullum intends to bow out in style when he starts his farewell tour Saturday leading New Zealand into a one-day series against Sri Lanka.

Sri Lanka have called up reinforcements for the five ODIs after their 2-0 hammering in the Tests. Lahiru Thirimanne, Tillakaratne Dilshan, Nuwan Kulasekara and, depending on fitness, Lasith Malinga are among a number of players injected into the ODI squad.

But as much as they want to get on the winning side of the ledger McCullum is equally adamant he wants to sign off his illustrious 13-year-career on a winning note.