

SPORT

An opportunity for the forgotten

SPORTS REPORTER

Ever since the 2015 World Cup it has become a bit more difficult for domestic batsmen, who prior to that period were knocking at the doors of the national team, to make the cut.

And there are many reasons for that. The arrival of the likes of Sabbir Rahman and Soumya Sarkar, and Mahmudullah Riyad's brilliant form, has almost plugged all the possible gaps in the national ODI team. While things may be a bit different in the Tests and the T20Is, it would not be wrong to say that the Tigers have preferred to stick to a stable line-up and trust the current group of players instead of going for an immediate exchange.

That puts pressure on the back-up players or those on the fringes of a national call. There are a number of batsmen who were regular members of the national squad until 2015, but just lost their way after that. And then there are the so-called Test specialists who rarely get to see the light at the end of the tunnel, thanks to the lack of Tests that Bangladesh plays.

The upcoming Dhaka Premier League, of course, could be a way for them to rediscover their form and perhaps garner some attention.

And one such player who really does need that attention is Mominul Haque. While he is a regular member of Bangladesh's Test side, he however has been away from the national team since July last year.

While his former colleagues were involved in legendary wins and a World Twenty20, Mominul had to sweat it out in

the four-day domestic competitions.

With the DPL expected to receive a lot more coverage than the other competitions, this could be his chance to win back some support from the team management and also gear himself up ahead of the India Test in August. He has got the most number of national caps among his teammates in Victoria Sporting Club and there is a good possibility for him to lead the side.

The fact that he has had scores of 112, 89, 94 and 78 in his last four Bangladesh Cricket League games should give him confidence.

Anamul Haque is another player who will be looking to make the most of the DPL. He has been out of favour ever since he injured his shoulder during the World Cup in 2015. With the Tigers a tad uncertain about their limited-overs opening pair, a good performance from him could change his luck.

Soumya Sarkar has not been at his best and Mohammad Mithun could not do much in the T20 World Cup either. With the England and New Zealand series to come in the latter part of the year, he would want to make this competition count.

Liton Das, who mesmerised everyone with his on-drives last year, still happens to be Bangladesh's first-choice keeper in Test cricket at the moment. He played against South Africa in Bangladesh's last Test, but like Mominul, has been out of the picture ever since.

Das batted at number seven in the last Test and a good show from him here would put him ahead of some of the other wicket-keeper batsmen -- Nurul Hasan, Anamul, Mithun -- who have entered the national fray.



Haitian striker Leonel Saint Preux is in a tussle with Brothers Union skipper Ibayed Hossain during their KFC Independence Cup fixture at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday. (INSET) Reserve players and spectators rush down the VIP Box staircase in the wake of a tremor during the second match of the day between Sheikh Russel KC and Feni Soccer Club.

PHOTOS: FIROZ AHMED



Mumbai, Pune, Nagpur to lose IPL matches

AGENCIES, New Delhi

All IPL 2016 matches scheduled in Maharashtra after April 30 must be moved out of the state, the Bombay High Court ruled on Wednesday. The ruling came after a Public Interest Litigation questioned the hosting of matches in Mumbai, Pune and Nagpur due to a drought in Maharashtra.

The ruling affects 13 matches, including the final which was to be held in Mumbai on May 29. Pune will miss out on five matches, including the Eliminator and Qualifier 2, while no games will be held in Nagpur. The state was earlier scheduled to host 20 matches.

Ness Wadia, co-owner of the Kings XI Punjab franchise, welcomed the ruling. Kings XI were scheduled to play three home matches in Nagpur between May 7 and 15, apart from games in Mumbai and Pune on May 13 and 21, respectively. "I'm very happy with this, we welcome this decision," he said.

"Organising the IPL is a gigantic work. All preparations had been done.

Shifting the matches now will be a problem," Shukla told 'India Today'.

"So far, we have not got the written order, after we get that, we will work out an alternative plan. We will have to talk to the teams. We always respect the court."

BFF polls schedule released

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The Election Commission (EC) of Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) yesterday disclosed the schedules of April 30 polls to be held at the Radisson Blu Water Garden Hotel in Dhaka.

The EC will distribute nomination papers among aspiring candidates on April 16 and 17. The submission dates of nomination has been fixed on April 18 while objections on the nominations and hearing will take place on the following day.

The withdrawal date of candidature has been fixed from April 18 to 20 while the final list of candidates will be published on April 21, said a BFF press release yesterday.

FATE OF EIGHT FOOTBALLERS HC leaves it to Players' Status Committee

SPORTS REPORTER



Having admonished eight footballers in observation, a high court bench yesterday disposed of Sheikh Jamal Dhandhondi

Club's writ petition and directed the Players' Status Committee of Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) to resolve the issue in line with FIFA and BFF statutes.

The court also directed that those eight players would not be allowed to play for any team until the status committee takes a final decision within two weeks of receiving the written copy of the court judgement.

"High court division [comprising Justice Quamrul Islam Siddique and Justice Razik-Al Jalil] has disposed of the writ petition filed by Sheikh Jamal DC with certain observations and directed the Players' Status Committee of BFF to resolve the issue as per article 5 of FIFA's regulations on the status and transfer of players and article 53 of BFF statutes," Sheikh Jamal's lawyer Barrister Ruhul Kuddus Kazol said.

Following a writ petition filed by

Sheikh Jamal DC, the HC on March 28 ordered president and general secretary of BFF not to allow the eight footballers to play for any clubs except for Sheikh Jamal DC.

The BFF later challenged the directives of the HC to the Chamber Judge which forwarded it to the full bench and the Appellate Division of Supreme Court on April 4 rejected the leave to appeal of BFF to send it to the high court bench to solve the issue.

"As per the previous directive, those eight players were only allowed to play for Sheikh Jamal but this time those eight players will not be allowed to play for any club until the final decision is made by the BFF Players' Status Committee, which will take its decision as per the regulations of FIFA and BFF after getting the written judgement from the court," said BFF lawyer Barrister Mehdi Hasan Chowdhury.

"The court said in its observation that it is not acceptable for players to take money from other clubs despite being registered players of Sheikh Jamal DC. Such activities from players are unethical because they represent Bangladesh as ambassadors," said Kazol.

Mumbai Indians plunder KKR

STAR SPORT DESK

Rohit Sharma scored an unbeaten 54-ball 84 as Mumbai Indians handed a six-wicket defeat to Kolkata Knight Riders in their Indian Premier League encounter at the Eden Gardens last night.

The Mumbai Indians skipper showed anchored the run-chase, smashing 10 fours and two sixes, and got good support from Jos Buttler (22-ball 41) to script the sweeping victory.

Earlier, half centuries from Gautam Gambhir and Manish Pandey had lifted KKR to 187 for five. Gambhir led with 64 from 52 balls while Pandey scored a rollicking 52 from 29 balls to get the momentum going with a 100-run partnership from just 60 balls.

Andre Russell played a cameo, scoring 36 from 17 balls, but the Knights could manage just 24 runs in last three overs.

There was no place for Bangladesh all-rounder Shakib Al Hasan in the KKR XI for the second consecutive game.

SCORES IN BRIEF
KKR: 187 for 5 in 20 overs (Gambhir 64, Pandey 52, Russel 36; McClenaghan 2-25)

MUMBAI INDIANS: 188 for 4 in 19.1 overs (Sharma 88 not out, Buttler 41; Yadav 1-37)

Result: Mumbai Indians won by 6 wickets.

Sheikh Russel move into semifinals

Preux propels Chittagong Abahani

SPORTS REPORTER



Sheikh Russel KC became the first team to move into the semifinals of the KFC Independence Cup after a goalless draw against Feni Soccer Club in their Group B fixture at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

Coming into the match on the back of three successive wins, the draw was good enough for Sheikh Russel to qualify for the last four with 10 points. Feni Soccer, on the other hand, raised their tally to three points after four matches.

Earlier in the day, a brace from Haitian marksman Leonel Saint Preux powered Chittagong Abahani to an emphatic 3-0 win over Brothers Union.

Three successive wins put big-budget Chittagong Abahani on top of Group A along with Sheikh Jamal DC with nine points each while Brothers Union, with three points from four outings, are out of the race for the semifinals.

The port city side came into the match with wins over Muktiyoddha Sangsad and Uttar Baridhara Club and put up a collective effort with three forwards -- Preux, Zahid Hossain and Toklis Ahmed -- at the centre of all the action.

Brothers, however, launched the first attack of the match in the fourth minute when Awudu Ibrahim took a free-kick which narrowly missed the target.

It worked as a wake-up call for Chittagong Abahani, who saw Preux failing to beat opposition goalkeeper Piaruzzaman in a one-on-one situation in the 26th minute before he made amends four minutes later. The Haitian striker, playing his first match, played a meat one-two with Toklis and entered the box before smashing a cutback from Toklish home.

Preux came close to doubling the lead one minute before the break but Piaruzzaman thwarted the attempt.

Preux doubled the margin in the 56th minute placing home a rebounder after Brothers defender Krishna Pada made a brilliant goal-line clearance to deny Toklis's first attempt.

There was a little chaos in the middle of the second half following referee Bharat Chandra Gour's decision to award a goal for Brothers, even though the powerful shot from Brothers forward Ibrahim went inches wide of the sidebar, but the decision was later cancelled.

Zahid then wrapped up the victory in the 77th minute by converting a spot kick after Brothers defender Al Amin handled a Toklis cross inside the box.



Among the 11 photos shortlisted for Wisden-MCC Cricket Photo of the Year for 2016, the winning image, taken by Getty Images photographer Robert Cianflone, captured the moment the bat of Adelaide Strikers batsman Craig Simmons came away from its handle during the semifinal of last year's Big Bash League. (INSET) A photo of Nasir Hossain also made it onto the shortlist; depicting his reaction to being bowled by Chris Morris during Bangladesh's one day series against South Africa.



Wisden honours Brendon, Kane

AFP, London



New Zealand's Brendon McCullum and Kane Williamson, as well as Australia captain Steven Smith, have been chosen among the Wisden Almanack's Five Cricketers of the Year announced Wednesday.

The quintet is completed by the England duo of all-rounder Ben Stokes and Jonathan Bairstow.

In the personal gift of the editor of cricket's 'bible', a player can only be named as a 'Cricketer of the Year' once in his career.

Generally, the award is decided on players' performances in the previous English season and Australia's Smith was included when, despite his side being beaten 3-2 in the Ashes, he emerged as the series' leading run-scorer with a double century at Lord's and 143 at The Oval in the visitors' two wins.

The 2016 edition also saw New Zealand batsman Williamson named as the Leading Cricketer in the World after his 2,692 international runs across the formats in 2015 -- the third-highest annual aggregate ever.

McCullum, who retired this year, was included as much for his bold captaincy as his aggressive batting, with New Zealand's dynamic approach widely reckoned to have helped transform England's play in both Test and one-day cricket as well.

Williamson and McCullum were not the only New Zealanders honoured by Wisden, with compatriot Suzie Bates chosen as the women's Leading Cricketer.

Stokes was one of the stars of England's Ashes success, while wicketkeeper/batsman Bairstow also played his part as well as helping Yorkshire win the County Championship.

During England's recent tour of South Africa, the pair shared a monumental stand of 399 which featured Stokes's blistering 258 and Bairstow's maiden Test century.

Sharapova's case goes to ITF tribunal

TASS, Moscow

A doping case involving Russia's tennis star and former World No. 1 Maria Sharapova will be considered by the Tribunal of the International Tennis Federation (ITF) despite recently announced thaw of requirements concerning banned substance meldonium, the ITF told TASS on Wednesday.

Earlier in the day, the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) announced that the concentration of less than one microgram of meldonium in the body system of an athlete, whose doping tests were conducted before March 1, was acceptable and the athlete at the issue was not a subject to any sanctions whatsoever.

Asked by a TASS correspondent about the concentration of meldonium discovered in the doping sample of Sharapova, the ITF replied in its letter that it was not able "to discuss this case," adding that "You will have to wait for the Tribunal decision."