

SPORT

Tamim's thoughts on a leggie and amazing Fizz

In the past year, Bangladesh's cricket has been blessed by two bowlers who have the ability to help the national team move away from their conventional bowling strategies. It goes without saying that Mustafizur Rahman has been a revelation since his arrival. The first left-arm Bangladeshi pacer to get a prolonged stint since Monjurul Islam, the fact that he wasn't a right-handed pacer in itself proved to be a breather for Bangladesh. And then came the variations and the pin-point accuracy, features that have already made him one of the most feared bowlers in the world. The second bowler in question is Jubair Hossain. The first specialised leg-spinner to play for Bangladesh, Jubair's inclusion helped add a completely different dimension to the attack. Unlike Mustafizur though, Jubair hasn't been as in-demand. In fact, he has barely played any domestic cricket in the past year. Bangladesh opener Tamim Iqbal yesterday spoke to *The Daily Star's* Bishwajit Roy on the potential that both these youngsters have and the impact they can make in the near future.

On Mustafizur Rahman

What I can say about Mustafiz? Mashallah. As the days go by I get more and more impressed with what he is showing. He is just an exceptional guy. His cricketing brain and smartness on the field are amazing features. He will be advised from various quarters but ultimately he should take his own decision. Yes, there are discussions and different opinions about what he should do, how much he can play and whether there is a need for a guarded approach to prolong his career. What I personally believe is that he will be invited for every T20 league around the world. Everybody will want to rope him into their team. It will be his choice and his call about how much he plays. But in my opinion he must get his body ready to meet the demand from around the world. And I want to reiterate that. Getting his body ready will be the biggest challenge of his career. I am sure Mustafiz knows that very well and he knows what he will need to do. Just think about his slower deliveries and the yorkers that he has executed in the ongoing IPL. There are some aspects of his bowling that we have seen in the IPL that we didn't even have an idea about. So you can understand how smart a cricketer he is. He understood that only cutters would not be good enough to bring success in the IPL, so he developed new weapons. Nobody told him what he needed to do and I believe nobody will need to tell him what needs to do in the future. But still, my opinion is that if you want to be a great cricketer, you must be successful in Test cricket and I am sure Mustafiz, his family and our board will guide him in the best possible way.



On Jubair Hossain

I have faith in Jubair's talent. He can only improve if he gets to play more games. I still believe that he can be an asset to the national team. You must take the challenge and risk when you want to play a leg-spinner. He bowled well in the National Cricket League for Chittagong and bowled long spells with success. In the Dhaka Premier League he has played four matches for Abahani and is top of the bowling chart with 12 wickets. He may cost you few runs but he has the ability to get wickets in crunch situations. He can completely change the complexion of a match with a single delivery. On flat wickets you have an edge with a leg-spinner. If I am not wrong, since the Test against India in June last year he played only ten matches. So how can you expect to see anything from him. In the first game of the league he was exceptional. He took six wickets. But he had a bad day in the second game. There was a mixture of good and bad in the third match while in the fourth game I reserved his two overs so that he could bowl in the later stages. You must accept that a leg-spinner will do well some days, but not be at his best on others. Yes, he has problem with short deliveries and full tosses but even the world's best leg-spinners have had similar problems. He won't improve just by bowling in the nets; he needs to play more games and that's the only way he can mature. That's a simple recipe for grooming a leg-spinner. He is still very young and inexperienced, so we must give him confidence. Not only the captain but if the whole team stands behind a player, he is bound to give you good service and if it is a player like Jubair you will definitely get a good result.



Chittagong Abahani players celebrate with the KFC Independence Cup trophy after beating Abahani 2-0 in the final at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

Namesake new champs

SPORTS REPORTER



Chittagong Abahani wrote a piece of history by winning their first top-flight title after a 2-0 victory over their illustrious Dhaka counterparts in the final of the KFC Independence Cup at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

Second-half strikes from Lionel Saint Preux and Rubel Mia gave the port city side their first domestic title, which comes six months after a successful campaign in the Sheikh Kamal International Club Cup.

A team which was till last year regarded as relegation battlers in the top-flight football, and only came into light after clinching the Sheikh Kamal Club Cup, can now be considered a dominating force for the upcoming professional league. The triumph is even more worthwhile considering the fact that they had to play the tournament without five key players - Mamunul Islam, Sohel Rana, Raihan

Hasan, Nasir Chowdhury and Yeamin Ahmed Munna - due to a court verdict.

Ahead of the final, Dhaka Abahani were considered the better side on paper as well as performance of the previous two matches against Sheikh Russel KC and Sheikh Jamal DC, but the four-time premier league champions failed to live up to the expectations when it mattered most.

With wingers Zahid Hossain and Rubel wreaking havoc from the wings and Preux proving a constant threat, Abahani defenders were kept on their toes throughout the match.

Defender Rezaul Karim came close to giving the port city side the lead in the 24th minute, but his close-range attempt at near post was cleared for a corner by Abahani goalkeeper Sultan Ahmed Shakil before Mamun Khan made a brilliant clearance to deny Preux two minutes before the break.

The deadlock was finally broken ten minutes after restart when Zahid, capitalising on a miss-pass from Faisal Mahmud, put a defence-splitting through-ball for Preux, who raced into

the box and rounded up Shakil before driving it into far corner of the net. Rubel then doubled the margin seven minutes later, executing a bicycle kick on a cross from Kaushik Barua.

Abahani had a chance to pull one back but Mohammad Ibrahim denied Faisal's effort with a goaline save one minute from the end as Abahani's long cup title-drought extended.

Preux, later adjudged player-of-the-tournament, said that Chittagong Abahani were the worthy winners. "I did my best to show the people who I am. I think now everybody should know the quality of Chittagong Abahani, with good local and foreign players," said the Haitian striker.

Rubel, whose goal was hailed as a special effort by all and sundry, said he made good use of the chance he was given.

"As five players couldn't play the tournament, I wanted to take my chance. My target was to show the coach my potential. The coach encouraged me to play my own game and I tried my best," said the youngster.



Abahani's Pakistani recruit Shafqat Rasul (C) spreads his arms wide in celebration after scoring the winning goal against Mariner Youngs in their Marcel Club Cup semifinal at the Maulana Bhasani Hockey Stadium yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

Mathews not a fan of points system

AFP, London

Sri Lanka captain Angelo Mathews has questioned plans to introduce a points system for his side's upcoming tour of England.

The proposal is to aggregate the results of all the international fixtures this season between England and Sri Lanka.

"I don't like to move away from the traditional game but whatever the administrators decide we'll have to go with and move on," Mathews told reporters at Lord's.

"We have to experience and see whether it's good or bad," added the 28-year-old all-rounder.

"I don't like to move away from the traditions of the game. I like the good old five days," he said.

Abahani set up final against Usha

SPORTS REPORTER



Dhaka Mariner Youngs' dream of playing in the Club Cup final after 12 years was shattered when the Arambagh-based outfit suffered a nerve-racking 3-2 defeat against Abahani in the second semifinal at the Maulana Bhasani Hockey Stadium yesterday.

The departure of the rejuvenated side means Monday's final of the Marcel Cup will be a repeat of the last two editions where Abahani and Usha KC had locked horns, with the latter coming on top in both occasions.

When it seemed as if the match was heading for a penalty shootout like the first semifinal with two minutes left of regulation time, Abahani's three Pakistani recruits showed their skill to take the Sky Blues to the final for the eighth time in 11 editions.

Mariners' national discard Mamunur Rahman Chayan made a mistake by depositing the ball straight to Rummon Sarker, who raced into the attacking third to square it to Tushiq Arshad. Arshad then released it for his compatriot Mohammad

Irfan inside the circle and the tall midfielder, instead of taking a hit, cut it back to compatriot Shafqat Rasul, who just tapped home into the open net for the winning goal in the penultimate minute.

The match was more enthralling compared to the first semifinal on the previous day as there was adequate show of skill, pace and planned attacks from both sides.

Abahani snatched the first penalty corner of the game in the third minute and made full use of it, with Shafqat, Rummon and Arshad combining to convert it to the Sky Blues the lead. The lead, though, lasted only eight minutes as Mariners' Malaysian recruit Zia converted a penalty corner in the 11th minute.

Mariners then took the lead in the 24th minute, with Chayan converting another penalty corner but the charges of Gerhard Peter Rach surrendered the lead in the 51st minute when Rummon found the back of the net with a reverse-hit after three penalty corners were wasted.

Then with minutes remaining of regulation time and both teams pressing hard for the winner, Abahani's Pakistani recruits took full toll of Chayan's miss pass to wrap up the game in stipulated time.

Booters' ban to be lifted?

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Football Federation will consider lifting suspension on four national players if they apply for exemption for punishment. Mamunul Islam and Zahid Hossain were slapped with one-year bans while Yeasin Khan and Sohel Rana were handed six months suspensions - all from the national team - effective from March this year.

Yesterday after the newly elected executive committee meeting, BFF vice-president Kazi Nabil Ahmed said lifting of suspension could be considered. "I have spoken to Kazi Salahuddin about this issue. We if the players feel repentant and really want to get back to the national team and apply for exemption, their application can be considered," Nabil told reporters.

ECB reprimand Broad

AGENCIES, London

Kent seamer Matt Coles has been suspended for two weeks for throwing the ball in a "dangerous manner", while England international Stuart Broad was reprimanded over his behaviour while playing for Nottinghamshire against Yorkshire.

Coles was reported by umpires during Kent's match against Glamorgan for a Level Two breach of the code - throwing the ball at or near a player, umpire or official in an inappropriate and dangerous manner.

Meanwhile, Broad was reported over an incident during the Specsavers County Championship Division One clash at Trent Bridge.

He was found guilty of a Level One breach for "showing dissent at an umpire's decision by word or action."

De Kruif coming back

SPORTS REPORTER



The Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) yesterday decided to bring back former coach Lodewijk de Kruif ahead of the national team's Asian Cup qualifier play-offs

against Tajikistan next month, some eight months after releasing the Dutchman following the team's disastrous performance in World Cup qualifiers.

Bangladesh will travel to Bishkek to play their away leg match on June 2 before hosting the Tajiks on June 7 in Dhaka. If Bangladesh fail to progress on aggregate results, they will then have another shot at qualification where they will face Bhutan over two legs on September 6 and October 11. A win in that fixture would see Bangladesh through to the final 24-team qualifying phase.

The decision to bring back de Kruif was made at the first meeting of the newly-elected executive committee of the game's governing body yesterday.

"The play-off matches against Tajikistan are important for us in order to move into the Asian Cup Qualifiers and having given it the highest priority, we have decided to bring back former coach [Lodewijk] de Kruif for one month," BFF vice-president Kazi Nabil Ahmed said after the meeting, adding that de Kruif would arrive in Bangladesh soon.

"He is a proven coach, who has good idea about our players, our football and weather. If we bring a new coach, he will need time to understand everything, and our purpose of bringing a coach ahead of the play-off matches will go in vain," Nabil explained the reasons behind bringing back de Kruif, who had guided Bangladesh to a second-place finish in the Bangabandhu

Gold Cup in 2015.

After de Kruif's release, Bangladesh had three more coaches - Fabio Lopez, Maruful Haque and Gonzalo Sanchez Moreno, the latter given charge for a single match - but none of the three managed to yield positive results.



Kohli century guides RCB

PTI, Bangalore



Captain Virat Kohli smashed his second century of the season in a magnificent batting display to lead Royal Challengers Bangalore to a seven-wicket win over Rising Pune Supergiants in an IPL match yesterday.

Kohli struck an unbeaten 108 off just 58 balls with the help of eight fours and seven sixes in a display of batting pyrotechnics at the Chinnaswamy Stadium here as Bangalore chased down the challenging target of 192 with three balls to spare to notch up their third win in eight matches.

The RCB skipper entered into record books as he became the only batsman to score two tons in a single IPL season. He also joined the likes of Brendon McCullum, Shane Watson, David Warner, AB de Villiers, Adam Gilchrist and Virender Sehwag to hit two IPL centuries overall. The most number of IPL tons - five - though still belongs to Chris Gayle.

SCORES IN BRIEF

PUNE: 191 for 6 in 20 overs (Rahane 74, Tiwary 52; Watson 3-24)

BANGALORE: 95 for 3 in 19.3 overs (Kohli 108 not out, Rahul 38, Watson 36; Zampa 2-35)

Result: Bangalore won by seven wickets.

Player-of-the-match: V Kohli.

Kings XI stay alive

CRICINFO, Mohali

54 runs off 36 balls with eight wickets in hand should have been a cruise for Delhi Daredevils. Instead, they were undone by an outstanding display of end-overs bowling by Marcus Stoinis, Sandeep Sharma and Mohit Sharma as Kings XI Punjab breathed life into a flagging campaign with a rejuvenating three-run win at the PCA Stadium in Mohali.

Carlos Brathwaite and Chris Morris were subsided by a combination of the short-ball trap and a train of slow leg-cutters as Kings XI overcame the effects of dew to defend 181 for 5. The pressure of being asked to force the big hits resulted in one mistake too many as Daredevils were kept to 172 for 5.