

SPORT

Underrated players come to the fore

SPORTS REPORTER

On Thursday Victoria Sporting Club, while chasing 274 lost both Mominul Haque and Abdul Majed, their two inform batsmen, by the 15th over. At 56 for two it seemed unlikely that they would get over the line.

However, Sohrawadi Shuvo, primarily a bowler who averages around 18 with the bat in List A cricket, stepped up and changed the complexion of the game. He scored an unbeaten 105 off 118 balls and with brilliant support from the tournament's second-highest run-getter Al-Amin, led Victoria to a win.

While Sohrawadi does have two first-class centuries, he scored his first List A century yesterday.

He's a lower-order batsman, and the fact that he opened the innings in itself was surprising. However, the underdog fired and Victoria ambled past the reigning champions Prime Bank Cricket Club comfortably.

The above narrative has been the story of the Dhaka Premier League this season so far. It is not the national players, but the cricketers who are not as sought after who are dominating the show. For instance, Mushfiqur Rahim is the only national batsman in the list of the top 10 highest run-scorers so far. Uplu Tharanga, Mohammad Al-Amin and Imtiaz Hossain make up the top three in that list.

The wickets column presents a slightly similar picture with spinners Chaturanga De Silva, Naeem Islam Junior and Habibur Rahman leading the table at the moment. It would however be a bit unfair to compare the woes of the bowlers to that of the batsmen since a majority of the bowlers in Bangladesh's national team are pacers.

And it's quite difficult for Bangladesh's pacers to top the wickets column in the domestic circuit. In fact, that is a very rare occurrence. However, that does not take anything away from youngsters like Naeem and Habibur, who have never played international cricket before.

Now it is not as though the league has always been dominated by national players. In fact, it is not uncommon to see some of the more underrated players top the lists. However, this season is different. And the reason behind that is that all the national players except for Mustafizur Rahman and Shakib Al Hasan are present in this league, which is quite rare.

National players do not often get to play so many matches in the league due to international commitments. However, that is not the case this season. That is also another reason why the national selectors have already termed this season's league as one of the more competitive seasons.

And the fact that most of the underrated players have outperformed the national players so far has pleased the selectors.

"I am definitely happy. The competition this season has been really good. We don't get to see our national players take part here that often and this time they are and that's great.

"As a selector I am really happy to see players outside the national team stepping up and doing well. This kind of a performance puts a lot more pressure on the national players," selector Habibul Bashar told The Daily Star yesterday.

The Dhaka Premier League has often been the foundation from which a number of new players have entered the national team. If the current trend continues throughout the season, there may be more than just a few players who the selectors may be interested in.



After having his suspension lifted, former skipper Mamunul Islam wasted no time in joining the national team's camp as the booters trained on the artificial turf at the Bangladesh Football Federation premises yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

Fed Cup after national camp?

SPORTS REPORTER



The Federation Cup is likely to be deferred by a few weeks and it may start after the completion of Bangladesh national team's

engagement in the Asian Cup qualifying play-offs as only three clubs out of 12 responded positively to taking part in the tournament, which was supposed to start from tomorrow.

"We did not get positive response from the participating clubs as only three clubs sent their entries for the Federation Cup till the deadline on

Thursday. So we are going to sit with the clubs tomorrow [Saturday] and take necessary steps," said Bangladesh Football Federation's senior vice-president Abdus Salam Murshedy yesterday.

Sheikh Jamal Dhanmondi Club, Arambagh KS and Muktiyoddha Sangsad sent their consent for taking part in the tournament while Sheikh Russel KC wanted their players, who have been called up for the national team, to be released one day before their Federation Cup match as the game's governing body wished to release the national players to their respective clubs only on the match days.

Feni Soccer Club informed that they have lack of preparation at the moment while other teams like Abahani, Mohammedan, Chittagong Abahani and others have not yet responded to BFF's invitation.

"Each of the participating teams is supposed to play their Federation Cup match after a one-day rest and in that case, if we release the national players the day before the match, the players will have no involvement in the ongoing training camp of the national team. So considering this, we may defer the Federation Cup by a few weeks," said Murshedy, who is also chairman of the professional football league committee.

Usha off to a flyer

SPORTS REPORTER

Defending champions Usha Krira Chakra made a winning start to the Green Delta Insurance Premier Division Hockey league with a 4-1 victory over Wari Club at the Maulana Bhasani Hockey Stadium yesterday.

Mahbub Hossain, Krishna Kumar, Hasan Jubayer Niloy and Nayeem Uddin scored one apiece for Usha while Shihan scored a consolation goal for Wari Club.

Siddikur stays at four-under

SPORTS REPORTER

Siddikur Rahman stayed at four-under but slipped one place after an even-par second round in the AfrAsia Bank Mauritius Open yesterday. The Bangladeshi golfer, who had started the day at second position with four-under, traded two birdies for same number of bogeys at the Four Seasons Golf Club yesterday for an aggregate of four-under-par (140).

Siddikur was four shots off the leader, Andrew Dodt of Australia, and one shot behind second-placed Jeunghun Wang of South Korea. The one-million-pound event Asian Tour event is a great opportunity for the Bangladeshi golfer to get back into contention for a direct entry into this year's Olympic Games in Rio de Janeiro.



Usha Krira Chakra players watch as the ball sails into the back of the Wari Club net during their Green Delta Insurance Premier Division League match at the Maulana Bhasani Hockey Stadium yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

Swimming coach in jeopardy

SPORTS REPORTER

The Bangladesh Olympic Association (BOA) has expressed its concern over noncooperation of coaching staff towards swimming coach Park Tae Gun, who helped Bangladesh win two gold medals in the South Asian Games held in India in February.

Park was appointed for one year with financial assistance from BOA in a bid to grooming up young swimmers as well as polishing the current ones, but it has been learnt that the Korean coach is not getting proper assistance by a few federation officials and especially by the coaches' panel. Park's room at the Mirpur Krira Palli has also been robbed twice where he lost some valuables.

"Though we have not received any official complaint of noncooperation with Park, we are planning to send a warning letter to the federation after an investigation because we have come to learn that some officials inside the federation have been obstructing his training programme. It is a woeful incident. We will not tolerate this," BOA's training and development committee chairman Ashiqur Rahman Miku told reporters.

Bangladesh Swimming Federation's joint secretary MB Saif Mollah said that they would look into the matter and see whether any officials were doing this due to any personal reason.

Meanwhile, under the guidance of Park, the BSF and Bangladesh Navy will jointly launch a talent hunt programme across the country from May 19.

Mahela, Rahul in ICC cricket committee

AFF, New Delhi

Batting greats Rahul Dravid and Mahela Jayawardene joined the ICC's cricket committee Friday in the first major appointments at the game's governing body since India's Shashank Manohar was elected chairman.

Dravid and Jayawardene, two of the biggest run-scorers of all-time, will join the likes of Australian coach Darren Lehman and umpire Richard Kettleborough on a body which has a crucial say in playing matters.

The ICC said Jayawardene and Dravid had joined the committee after Sri Lanka's Kumar Sangakkara and former Indian Laxman spinner Sivaramakrishnan completed their three-year terms.

Anil Kumble, another former India leg-spinner, will remain as chair of the committee after being re-elected for a second stint, the ICC added.

Steyn still the gold standard: Broad

AFF, London



Stuart Broad may have risen to number one in the world Test bowler rankings but, as far as the England paceman is concerned, South Africa quick Dale Steyn is the "bowler of our generation".

Broad's record of 333 wickets in 91 Tests at an average of 28.66 is worthy of considerable respect. But Steyn's figures of 406 wickets in 82 Tests at 22.53 stands comparison with all-time great fast bowlers such as the West Indies' Malcolm Marshall, Australia's Dennis Lillee and England's Fred Trueman, all of whom had Test bowling averages in the early 20s.

"On the ranking, I'm certainly not going to sit here and say I'm a better bowler than Dale Steyn - I've said before he is the bowler of our generation," explained Broad in London on Thursday at an event ahead of next week's first Test between England and Sri Lanka at Headingley.

"It's very nice to be at the top of the rankings, but for me it's come really for me through playing a lot of cricket," added Broad.

"I've played 40-odd Tests on the bounce now, so I've been out there having the opportunity to take wickets and bowling

within a bowling unit that's creating a lot of pressure," said Broad.

"It's always nice when you do get to a ranking like that, but it's not something I focus on a huge amount," he added.

Broad, the son of former England opening batsman turned International Cricket Council match referee Chris Broad, was clear where his goals lay.

"For me, it's all about trying to take top-order wickets and get us into a winning position," he said. "When you finish your career, you don't look back on where you got to in the rankings, you look back on Test match wins and what the team wins."

Broad has a reputation as something of a 'streaky' bowler who can produce unplayable spells such as the one on his Trent Bridge home ground last year where his stunning return of eight for 15 set up England's Ashes series-clinching win over Australia.

But Broad believes he has become increasingly consistent.

"I feel with experience, I know what I'm looking for as a bowler now, know what tempo I'm trying to find in my run-up," he said.

"I feel like I can adapt to different conditions quicker. When I was my learning my trade, I only seemed to strike when conditions were really in my favour."

Pakistan hope to host WI in Lanka

AGENCIES, Karachi

Pakistan hope to host West Indies in Sri Lanka instead of the United Arab Emirates this October, eyeing the island as a neutral venue for the first time since 2002.

Pakistan are scheduled to host the Windies in two Tests and six limited-overs internationals later this year, but the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) is reluctant to continue using the UAE as their home away from home due to the cost.

"PCB is not generating enough revenue from its home series therefore we are looking at the option of hosting West Indies in Sri Lanka. The board is doing its homework in this regard," PCB Executive Committee Chairman Najam Sethi told the BBC.

Pakistan previously used Sri Lanka as a neutral venue when they hosted Australia for one Test in Colombo in 2002.

Punjab thrash sub-par Mumbai

STAR SPORT DESK



A mediocre batting performance from Mumbai Indians on a difficult pitch, and a fine bowling performance from Kings XI Punjab medium pacer Marcus Stoinis gave Punjab only their fourth win, by seven wickets, of the Indian Premier League (IPL) season in Vishakhapatnam yesterday.

Set just 125 to win, opener and Punjab skipper Murali Vijay anchored the innings with an unbeaten half-century while Wriddhiman Saha provided the firepower with a fifty of his own to propel Punjab home with three overs to spare.

Vijay and Saha put on 116 runs for the second wicket in only 14.4 overs. Vijay scored a 52-ball 54 with five boundaries and a six while Saha hit 56 off 40 balls with the help of six fours and one six.

Earlier, Mumbai skipper Rohit Sharma chose to bat on a sluggish pitch, only to see Punjab seamer Sanjeev Sharma get rid of Unmukt Chand and Ambati Rayudu by the end of the third over. Stoinis then took over; his four overs went for just 15 and he took four wickets, including that of the highest scorer Kieron Pollard. All the Punjab bowlers except KC Cariappa bowled economically, restricting Mumbai to just 124 for nine.

SCORES IN BRIEF

MUMBAI: 124 for 9 (Pollard 27, Rana 25; Stoinis 4-15, Sandeep 2-11, Mohit 2-26)

PUNJAB: 127 for 3 in 17 overs (Saha 56, Vijay 54 not out; McClenaghan 2-24)
Result: Punjab won by 7 wickets.

Rwandan sets new cricket record

AGENCIES, Kigali

Rwanda's international cricketer, Eric Dusingizimana 29, has etched his name in the Guinness Book of World Records after spending the longest time in history batting in the cricket nets.

Dusingizimana -- captain of the Rwandan Cricket team -- scooped US 1 million dollars after batting for an epic 51 hours.

He wanted to help raise money for the Rwanda Cricket Stadium Foundation (RCSF), a charity the club has supported in the past seeking to build the first ever international cricket stadium in Rwanda.

As he batted, the World Economic Forum on Africa was ongoing in the capital Kigali.

At the start of his attempt, he was backed by the former British Prime Minister Tony Blair, who hailed an enthusiastic cricketer for breaking the Guinness record ever made.