

SPORT

'IPL has made Mustafizur more aware'

Arguably the most successful Bangladesh coach, Chandika Hathurusingha's two-year contract with the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) will end in June this year. The Sri Lankan, who is on leave in Australia at the moment, is scheduled to return to Bangladesh later this month and is expected to negotiate a new contract. He spoke to The Daily Star's Naimul Karim yesterday over the phone regarding a number of issues. While he was not ready to speak on his new contract or the highlights of his two-year stint, he did speak in detail about the plans that the board has for Mustafizur Rahman and the preparations for the India series in August.

The Daily Star (TDS): Are you a little concerned that Mustafizur is getting a little too exposed because of the IPL [Indian Premier League]?

Chandika Hathurusingha (CH): It's the same with any bowler. The more you play, the more people get to know you. That's the nature of the game. The disadvantage is that people are getting used to him. But I think there is one benefit. He is becoming more aware of how batsmen handle him and is getting wiser in terms of using his variation and being effective. The experience he is gaining is already valuable. TDS: Tamim Iqbal had earlier said that he was surprised with the way Mustafizur executed the yorkers regularly. Did his performance in the IPL surprise you?

CH: No, not at all. He always had the ability to bowl yorkers. He didn't use it when in the national team as much because it was probably a tactical thing. He is probably using it more in India because of the surface and conditions. If you remember the yorker with which he bowled Steven Smith in the World Cup; that was all about tactics. These are based on discussions in the team management.

He always had the skillset. If you notice, he bowls differently with the new ball in the national team. And then when the wicket tends to grip the ball a lot more towards the end, he bowls different variations. One thing about Mustafiz is that he is a very, very intelligent bowler. Not many young bowlers I have come across have picked up things so soon. He is one

of those guys who has picked everything very soon and has managed to execute them as well.

TDS: There is talk about him playing in the Big Bash League. In fact, every T20 league may want him now. As a coach, how do you see this rising demand?

CH: He will definitely be a hot property for T20 leagues around. For me, it entirely depends upon his wellbeing and not so much about people getting used to his bowling. It's about him playing cricket on the park. If that is compromised then we have to think about restricting him. If it's affecting his health I'll probably advise him and the board not to do anything that hinders his wellbeing. We are not going to compromise on that. And we probably have to compensate for that as well, because you can't stop anyone. Those are the balancing acts that we need to consider.

TDS: What about his stint in Sussex?

CH: We have to see how he pulls up after the



Don't worry about it. I know Mustafiz. If you ask him something in Bangla, it's very difficult to get it out, if you ask in English it's impossible.

IPL. I am aware of his Sussex contract and I am in good touch with the officials there. We keep discussing. If he is fit enough and has no injuries, playing for Sussex will be very good because we have the Champions Trophy in England and getting exposed to those wickets will be good for him.

TDS: In terms of bowling in Tests, would you say he needs to add a few more tricks? Practise the art of swinging the ball, perhaps?

CH: Learning is an ongoing process, not only

for Mustafiz but for any other bowler. You have to develop your skill as you play. But then again, there are limitations in every bowler because of their actions. Some bowlers can swing, some can seam. Very rarely you can get someone who can swing and seam because of different things involved. It's not a thing that you can do for a particular series. You can't be like, okay I need to swing the ball in this series and then seam it the next. It's very hard. I think it's more important for Mustafiz to understand

his strengths and what he can do in different conditions.

TDS: In a recent interview, Mustafizur said that while he enjoys playing all formats, he prefers the games that are over in a day. Does that worry you a bit?

CH: Was that interview in English or Bangla?

TDS: It came on an Indian website. Was probably taken in Bangla but written in English.

CH: Don't worry about it. I know Mustafiz. If you ask him something in Bangla, it's very difficult to get it out, if you ask in English it's impossible.

But anyway, everyone has a preference. I think he is good enough to play all three formats. Sometimes when you are young your preference comes for the success rate that you have and he has just played two Tests.

TDS: Have you been following the Dhaka Premier League?

CH: I have been following it. I have sometimes followed it ball by ball as well. I am getting reports from the concerned people. It's very competitive and the pitches have been sporting. After the league we have plans of hosting practice matches that will emulate particular match scenarios, much like the ones that have taken place in the last two years.

TDS: You have spent two years with the team and you are probably set for a new contract. How does it feel?

CH: I am sorry I can only talk about this issue once I return to Bangladesh. I need the permission of the board to speak on this issue.

Three areas in focus in Robi-BCB deal

SPORTS REPORTER

Robi became a strategic partner of the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) to work on three areas over the next three years.

In this regard a press conference was held at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday where BCB's vice-president Mahbub Anam explained the reason behind the long-term, strategic business partnership with Robi, which is also the sponsor of the Bangladesh national team.

Under this agreement, Robi along with the BCB will run the talent hunt programme, restart the cricketers' award-night programme, and provide Smartphones with special bundles to players and BCB officials. Before this, Robi had taken up the initiative to unearth the best fast bowling talent from all over the country in partnership with the BCB from January this year.

"In the past, we had short-term programmes and we could not continue with those, which was why we could not bring the best out of them. This was the reason the board has decided to go for the strategic deal," said Anam.

BCB director Inam Ahmed, Robi director and CEO Supun Weerasinghe and Matiul Islam Nowshad, the chief corporate and people officer of Robi Axiata were also present during the

Kottan arrives today

SPORTS REPORTER

George Kottan is scheduled to arrive here this morning to take charge of Abahani for the second successive season and coach the club in the Federation Cup and the Bangladesh Premier League.

The Austrian led Abahani to a fourth-place finish in the premier league last season. The 69-year-old coach had earlier coached Muktijoddha Sangsad in 2003.



Lodewijk de Kruif wasted little time in getting to work with the Bangladesh football team after arriving here in the early morning yesterday.

'A good result is the best drug'

SPORTS REPORTER



Lodewijk de Kruif believes the important task ahead of the Asian Cup qualifying play-offs would be to boost the morale of the national team as well as bring back the concentration of the players which he feels has been lost in the last one year.

The 46-year-old coach said this after conducting a two-hour long training session at the Bangabandhu National Stadium in the afternoon after having arrived in Dhaka earlier in the morning.

"I think the important task is to bring players in good structure and bring every player on the right spot. It is important to focus on the motivation and concentration as they lost a bit of concentration. At end of the day, a good result is the best drug," de Kruif said.

The Dutch coach has been brought back by the Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) for the team's Asian Cup qualifying play-offs against Tajikistan next month. Bangladesh will play the away match on June 2 before hosting the Central Asian nation on June 7 in Dhaka.

"What is very important is that we need very good defensive organisation in the away game. In the home game, anything can happen because we proved it in the past. But in the away game, the players lose concentration. Now the main focus is to prepare a very strong team for the away game as they lost 5-0 [against Tajikistan] in the last game. If we can play a draw in away match, it will be a fantastic job," emphasised de Kruif, who helped

Bangladesh to a 1-1 draw against the Tajiks in the World Cup Qualifying match in Dhaka in June last year.

De Kruif also said he felt that Bangladesh football was in trouble over the last one year and he was ready to bring back some of the positivity.

"I think football in Bangladesh in the last year was in deep waters. You saw the results and no one was proud of the results of the national team. That is one of the tasks, to bring back the feeling we had one year ago. I know the circumstances. I know how to build up the players in short time. I have the credits from the players and I think this is the important reason for me to come back. We have to bring the form back and make people happy," said the Dutchman.

The 46-year-old coach also supported BFF's decision to scrap the Federation Cup to make space for the uninterrupted camp of the national team.

"Game practice in a tournament is very important for players, but they just finished a tournament a few days ago. In that aspect I am happy that the players did something. But I don't think it is fine for me as a coach to play the tournament at the moment. Now we have a relatively short time to bring them back with the right tactic.

"In end of the day it is a choice of BFF, who decided to run the camp. I think it is a good decision to let the focus be on the national team for these three weeks," added de Kruif.

The Dutchman conducted some special training regime with players like Mamunul Islam, Sohel Rana, Wali Faisal, Jewel Rana, Mohammad Linkon, Rezaul Karim, Nasiruddin Chowdhury, Shahidul Alam and Syed Rased Turjo.

Three cheers for Root

AGENCIES, London

Joe Root has added a few more honours to his burgeoning career after being named England's Test Cricketer of the Year and England's limited-overs Cricketer of the Year at the ECB's annual awards evening.

Root was also voted Men's Player of the Year by fans for the second year running.

Root beat off competition from fellow nominees Stuart Broad and Ben Stokes for the Test cricket award, with Jos Buttler and David Willey his rivals for the limited overs award.

Root's superb form with the bat also saw him climb to No.1 in the ICC Test rankings during last year's Ashes, and the 25-year-old is steadily building an incredible record in the game's longest format: in 39 Tests, he averages 54.93 with nine hundreds.

Among other awards handed out on the night, Anya Shrubsole won the Women's Cricketer of the Year award for the first time.

Bolt bothered by hamstring

REUTERS, Kingston



Olympic sprint champion Usain Bolt received treatment for "slight discomfort" in his hamstring following his 100 metres victory in Saturday's Cayman Invitational, his coach Glen Mills said on Monday.

Bolt, who is scheduled to run the 100m at the Golden Spike IAAF World Challenge in Ostrava, Czech Republic on Friday, travelled

to Germany after posting 10.05 seconds in his season opener and had treatment there, said Mills.

Bolt is targeting an unprecedented Olympic threepeat at the Rio de Janeiro Games in August where he will be defending his 100, 200 and 4x100 relay titles.

"I think he has a slight discomfort in his hamstring, so he didn't bother push it after that, but he'll be alright," Mills told Jamaican radio station Hitz 92fm. "He's in Germany as we speak and the doctors say he will be fine."

Bolt, the 100 and 200 world record holder, got off to a moderate start in his season-opening race before stepping away from the field in the last 60 metres and cruising to the tape.

He later told reporters he was a bit rusty but would be ready for Jamaica's Olympic trials from June 30 to July 3.

"If you saw the race, you could see he was grimacing a bit," said Mills. "[I] didn't think he was under any pressure, but he was just grimacing because he wanted to really push it, but he was just grimacing that he couldn't get the chance to do so."

Peninsula beat Elite Paints

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Chittagong

Team Peninsula qualified for the semifinals of the ongoing corporate cricket tournament in Chittagong on Monday after defeating Elite Paints by 54 runs in their T20 encounter at a field in the city's Alanker area.

Batting first, Peninsula scored 140 runs before being bowled out in 19.4 overs. In reply, Elite Paints were bundled out for just 86.

The other three semi-final qualifiers are Chittagong Wasa, AK Khan Telecom and AK Khan and Company Ltd.

AK Khan WaterHealth (Bangladesh) Ltd organised the knockout cricket tournament with the aim of increasing communication and understanding among corporate houses, said a press release.



An Ajax SC player (L) shields the ball from the challenge of a Bangladesh SC player during their Green Delta Insurance Premier Division Hockey League encounter at the Maulana Bhasani Hockey Stadium yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

Usha toy with Railway

SPORTS REPORTER



Joint champions Usha KC notched their second victory of the Green Delta Insurance Premier Hockey League with a massive 13-0 win over Bangladesh Railway at the Maulana Bhasani Hockey Stadium yesterday.

Though the Old Dhaka outfit had to play with only local players, they have had

no trouble toying with the newly promoted Bangladesh Railway, who had also suffered a 14-0 defeat to Abahani in their first match.

Forward Hasan Jubair Niloy slotted six goals including a hat-trick while Mahbub Hossain struck three goals. Rezaul Karim Babu, Mithun, Krishna Kumar and Nizamuddin scored one goal apiece in the one-way affair.

In the day's other game, Bangladesh SC handed a 4-2 defeat to Ajax SC.

Final respects for Cozier today

AGENCIES, St. Johns

Arrangements have been made for members of the public to pay their final respect to internationally acclaimed cricket writer, commentator and journalist Tony Cozier on Wednesday from 12 - 6 p.m. in an area behind the 3Ws Stand at Kensington Oval.

Cozier's body will be on display in closed casket and individuals will be able to sign 'remembrance books' in his honour. These books will be kept at the Barbados Cricket Association (BCA) for posterity.

The BCA extended special invitations to all members of the cricket and local sports family.

Cozier, a Barbadian, died in hospital on May 11 following an illness. He was 75.

His funeral service and cremation will take place on Friday at Coral Ridge Memorial Gardens, The Ridge, in the southern parish of Christ Church at 3 p.m.