

SPORT

Papon reveals new selection structure

SPORTS REPORTER

The Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) seems to have finally resolved all the issues that it had with regards to its national selection structure. There were several approaches that were spoken of by various BCB directors in the last few days, one of them almost compelling chief selector Faruque Ahmed to resign.

However, following a meeting at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday, BCB president Nazmul Hassan Papon said that the board would follow a selection system that would involve two separate groups.

The BCB will form a selection committee that will include the three national selectors, the head coach and the team manager. The meetings of this committee will be convened by the head of the cricket operations committee.

This essentially means that the committee will include selectors Faruque, Habibul Bashar and Minhajul Abedin, coach Chandika Hathurusingha and manager Khaled Mahmud. The meetings will be convened by director Akram Khan.

The job of this committee will be to guide the three selectors, or in other words the national selection panel.

"Before every series, the selection committee will have a meeting. In that meeting the coach will provide the national selectors with a strategy. For instance, he may want more spinners or more pacers for a particular opposition. The selectors will then take the coach's requirements into consideration and then form a squad. The team manager has been included here so that he can voice the opinions of the captain and the players," said Papon.

"Once the selection panel, or the selectors form their squad, the selection committee will once again have a meeting. Only when all the members of the selection committee agree to the squad, it will be sent to the BCB president for a final approval. In this way, there is no chance for any disagreement between the selectors and the team management," he added.

As per the current system, the three-member selection panel has the final say with regards to the squad. While they did have meetings with the coach and did take his advice, Hathurusingha did not have an official say in the selection system. As a result, there were quite a few disagreements reported between the selectors and the coach in the past because of which the president of the BCB had to interfere.

In order to avoid this problem, the board has decided on creating a new selection system.

The BCB president further said that it would not be compulsory for the coach or the manager to observe players in the different domestic circuits. That duty, according to Papon, will rest solely on the three selectors.

"If the coach wants to watch a player or if he wants to watch a game, he is more than welcome to. But it's not compulsory for him to go out and look for players. His main duty in the committee will be to present the selectors with a strategy," said Papon.

With discussions regarding the strategy of the selection policy done, it is expected to be made official in the upcoming board meeting.

BCB CONTACTS AAQIB JAVED

Papon also said that the BCB has contacted former Pakistan national bowling coach Aaqib Javed to take a similar role with the Tigers. "We will get to know a decision from him in a day or two. It may be a yes or a no. Aside from him we have also made an alternative list of coaches. We are also looking for spin coaches," he added.

Furthermore, Papon also spoke about the need for Mustafizur Rahman to rest and recover. When asked if the board will allow Mustafizur to play for Sussex in the T20 Blast, he said: "If Mustafizur plays, it will be really good for him. But we won't compromise his fitness. As per the reports we have received, his physical condition is not that good and we won't take any risk."

"He is resting now and will return to Dhaka after a few days for another evaluation. He will go through a programme after that. But if we find that he is fit enough, he may go to play."

UMPIRING CONCERNS

The BCB president also said that he was aware of the complaints that were raised with regards to the poor umpiring in the Dhaka Premier League and that the board would take stern actions in order to prevent any 'unfair' practice in the domestic circuit.

INDIA TOUR

With regards to Bangladesh's tour of India this year, which seems to be on jittery grounds, Papon said: "Our CEO sent them an official letter in order to know the status of the one-Test tour that is scheduled to take place this year. I am sure we will get to know an answer within the next few days."



Abahani skipper Tamim Iqbal (R) passed on some words of wisdom to young all-rounder Mosaddek Hossain during their training session at the BCB Academy Ground in Mirpur yesterday ahead of their must-win Dhaka Premier League encounter against Cricket Coaching School.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

Usha regain top spot

SPORTS REPORTER

Usha Krira Chakra regained the lead in the Green Delta Insurance Premier Division Hockey League after an emphatic 6-1 win over Azad SC at the Maulana Bhasani Hockey Stadium yesterday.

Hasan Jubair Niloy scored three goals while Pushkor Khisa Mimo and Krishna Kumar struck one goal piece for Usha. Tahmidul Haque struck the consolation goal for Azad SC.

The win took Usha back to the top of the 12-team table with 19 points from seven matches, and they remain two points ahead of both Abahani and Mohammedian.

In the day's other match, Dhaka Wanderers Club thrashed Railway SC 5-0, with Ali Nahian Shuvo, Khalilur Rahman, Bishal, Rakibul Hasan and Jagajit Singh scoring one goal each.

Visa problems deny Siddikur

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh golfer Siddikur Rahman will not be able to take part in the Lyoness Open in Austria, thanks to a failure to acquire a visa in time. The two-time Asian Tour winner, who was eager to take part in this one-million-euro event beginning on Thursday to solidify his Olympic chances following a second-place finish in the Mauritius Open last month, said he had to cancel his ticket as he could not acquire the visa in time.

"I had bought the ticket for Sunday night on the assurance that I would get the visa by midday. But since I was informed that the visa procedure has not been completed, I had to cancel the ticket because even if I get a visa tomorrow [Monday], I won't be able to get to Austria and have practice before the start of the tournament. I thought it wasn't worth taking part in such a tournament without any practice," Siddikur told The Daily Star over phone last night.

Since there is no embassy of Austria in Bangladesh, the golfer had applied for a Shenzhen Visa through the French embassy.

Siddikur informed that he would leave for Thailand on June 9 for the Queen's Cup, beginning on June 16. He will then fly straight to Japan to participate in an event of the Japan Tour.

The ace golfer, who misses quite a few tour events each year due to the very reason of not getting visa on time, hoped the government could, through its own mechanism, help in this regard so that he could fly the national flag all over the world.

Salahuddin in charge of dist football

SPORTS REPORTER

While there were almost no changes in formation of the sub-committees of the Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF), the one major change that came out in the executive committee meeting yesterday was the appointment of BFF president Kazi Salahuddin as the head of District Football League Committee.

The BFF boss had recently told The Daily Star that he had a big plan about district football and wanted to provide at least Tk 5 lakh yearly to each district in this regard.

Meanwhile, the meeting formed 21 sub committees but there were no substantial changes in the important committees such as the professional football league committee, the national teams' committee and the development committee.



Tajikistan footballers jog during a training session at the BUET Ground yesterday. The Central Asian nation will take on Bangladesh in the second leg of Asian Cup qualifying playoff in Dhaka tomorrow, after having won the first leg 5-0.

De Kruif defends selections

SPORTS REPORTER

There have been whispers and allegations that Lodewijk de Kruif always gives priority to those players he had picked three years ago at the start of his Bangladesh tenure, but the 46-year-old coach has denied the allegations while admitting that those players are not as good as they were before.

"I can't battle with the whisper but everyone knows the door is always open and we can discuss the matter. As a coach what I can do is to pick the best talented players of the country. I think at this moment and in every area that I am coaching, I want to bring the tactical and technical plans on the pitch and I pick the best players at the moment. I admit we travel with 20 to 23 players but the bunch of players should be 25 to 40 players."

"The podium of young players like U-19, U-21 and U-23 is not there. We need to play domestic league regularly and it is our concern to give them a good podium," de Kruif said, defending his decision of giving priority to players who were chosen by him three years ago.

In the last three years, hardly any new faces have been thrust into the national fold even though a lot of players perform regularly at the domestic scene. The Dutchman came on heavily on the players raising questions about their professionalism and the quality after the recent 5-0 defeat against Tajikistan.

"I am absolutely convinced with the fact that the players can do what ability they have. From the first day of training, the players are looking very hard-working, dedicated and I'm giving everything in training to bring them to a certain level. That is my task, that is my duty and what

I'm doing is like other coaches to prepare them for the battle.

"What is difficult for me to understand is that, 18 months [10 months ago] we made a draw [against Tajikistan]. At the moment I know the quality of the players. Now the players are not as good as they were 18 months ago," said the Dutchman, who believes the team needs magic to turn the table against Tajikistan in the home match on Tuesday.

"At the moment the most important thing is to play good football and show people at the stadium and in front of televisions that we have good players. We are able to play a good game with good pace. The first task is to stick to the plan and tactics. The players have to do what we are asking in 90-plus minutes," de Kruif said after holding a half-an-hour's discussion with the president of Bangladesh Football Federation yesterday.

Chandan, Nazirul suspended

SPORTS REPORTER

Mohammedan defender Asaduzzaman Khan Chandan and Wari Club official Nazirul Islam were each handed one-match suspensions for separate incidents of unruly behaviour during their respective clubs' Premier Division Hockey League encounters recently.

Chandan, who assaulted two Pakistani players during his club's match against Bangladesh SC on Saturday, was subsequently given marching orders during the match. That marching order, coupled with the fresh suspension, means Chandan will miss Mohammedan's next two matches.

Chandan's teammates -- Rasel Mahmud Jimmy, Rasel Khan Bappi and Zahid Hossain -- were also given warnings for their involvement in the incident. Meanwhile, Wari Club official Nazirul Islam was suspended for one match for chasing the referee during the club's recent match against Shadharan Bima.

The decisions were made on Saturday at the league committee meeting, which also decided that only 18 players and four officials of each club would be allowed at the dugout and only the manager of the team would be allowed to step out of the dugout during matches.

It has been learnt that the league committee wanted to mete out an exemplary punishment to Chandan, but handed out a marginal punishment fearing the decision might not go down well with Mohammedan SC, which returned to domestic competitions after nearly four years.

Meanwhile, Bangladesh SC general secretary Hazi Mohammad Humayun alleged that the club was facing trouble keeping Siraj Ali and Shabaz Ali, who were assaulted by Chandan, as the two Pakistanis were eager to go back home.

The coach the Tigers swear by

BISHWAJIT ROY

"When my father-in-law received my marriage proposal his first question as usual was; what does the boy do? It seemed like he was thunderstruck when he was told that the prospective bridegroom was a coach," said Mohammad Salahuddin, a graduate from Jahangirnagar University who could not realise his dream of becoming a cricketer, but gradually gained a strong foothold in the coaching arena.

He may not be a big star in the country's cricket fraternity -- his name only came to the spotlight when a megastar like Shakib Al Hasan suddenly flew home from the Indian Premier League to seek Salahuddin's advice in order to get back his batting rhythm. But he is a man who is highly respected by the players. To the star players like Shakib, Tamim Iqbal, Mushfiqur Rahim, Mominul Haque and many others, he is their beloved 'Salahuddin sir'. In good or bad times they always trust his advice.

"My nine-year old son doesn't care because to him all the star players are his bhais (brothers) but my family and relatives do care a little bit (smile) when they see players like Shakib, Tamim and Mushfiq care

for me," he said in jest.

"Anyway I don't know why players trust me but I always try to give them honest advice and never hesitate to tell them the truth in order to help them correct their mistakes or flaws," he continued.

One can't judge him only by his relationship with the big names, but he also has some success stories to his name.

"I had a six-year stint in domestic cricket as a player before injury finally ended my playing career. I joined BKSP as a part-time coach in 1997 and I had a record first-class first result from Patiala in 2000-2001, then I joined Victoria Sporting Club as a coach for the 2001-2002 season and we became champions. The next season we also became champions before finishing third in the third season.

"In the 2004 corporate cricket league my team, Arafat Apparels, became champions. I joined the national team as a fielding coach in 2005 and worked till 2010 in different capacities. Then I spent five years in Malaysia to coach a university team. I coached Sylhet Royals in the 2013 BPL, reaching the semi-final and last year I was the coach of champions Comilla Victorians. Now I am coaching



MOHAMMAD SALAHUDDIN

Gazi Group Cricketers in the Dhaka Premier League. This is my story actually," said the 42-year old coach, who also coached Singapore's national cricket team.

Salahuddin enjoys the work behind the scene but any appreciation still inspires him. "When I heard that BKSP's new DG advised the coaches -- referring to Shakib's sudden return from the IPL -- to follow my path, it encouraged me a lot.

"A coach can't create a player, but he can only manage a player. I follow this mantra," he added.

A gleaming observation came from Salahuddin when he was asked to speak about the success story and future prospects of Bangladesh cricket.

"I don't think any significant changes came to our cricketing structure but a generation of cricketers completely changed our cricket. Shakib, Tamim, Mushfiq and some other players brought huge changes in the mentality of our cricketers. These are the players who were thinking big from the very beginning of their careers. They always assessed themselves according to world standards. Our cricketing culture is now

such where you need not say to any player what is needed to reach the top level.

"I want to thank one person for making a big change in our cricket and he is none other than Richard McInnes with whom I had also worked. He completely changed the work ethic of the players," he said.

He also gave a recent example of that attitude-changing generation. "Shakib has so far earned huge successes in his career but still he is hungry for more success. Just for your information he is planning to buy a bowling machine so that he can get more batting practice and improve his batting. It simply reflects his character."

Salahuddin also aspires to uplift the standards and social status of local coaches.

"Once I asked my brother-in-law, who is now a doctor in Australia, why they had accepted my marriage proposal and he only said 'because I felt that you had the fire in you to fulfill your dreams'."

Mohammad Salahuddin still loves to dream big. His immediate dream is to work in an academy to scout talent from all over the country.

Do his dreams include becoming a head coach of the Bangladesh national team? "Why not? Had anyone thought a few years back that one of our players would one day become the world's number one all-rounder?"