

SPORT

It's boys playing in men's league

De Kruif implies as Bangladesh host Tajikistan at BNS today

SPORTS REPORTER

When Bangladesh take on Tajikistan in their home-leg fixture of the Asian Cup Qualifiers at the Bangabandhu National Stadium today, it will be more like damage control instead of any thought of overturning that massive 5-0 deficit against the vastly superior Central Asian nation.

And ahead of the game, Bangladesh's Dutch coach Lodewijk de Kruif made no secret about that when he described his charges as 'primary school graduates playing at the university level'.

Smarting from the 0-5 drubbing in Dushanbe, Bangladesh however can only take inspiration from their last home fixture when they drew 1-1 against the same side in the World Cup qualifier last year.

The match, to be broadcast live by state-run BTV, will get underway at 4:30pm.

The 46-year-old Kruif however has promised that his charges would at least try to display a better performance than their last match at Dushanbe.

"Tomorrow [Tuesday] is our home game and I hope lots of spectators come to support us. Our target is to bring a better performance than the away match."

"I'm convinced that when my players get

onto the pitch, they give their 100%. The one thing you have to realise though is that, my players seem to be finishing primary school and directly jumping to university. Nothing in between there," said de Kruif at a pre-match briefing at the BFF House yesterday.

Before leaving for Tajikistan, de Kruif's target was to secure a point from Tajikistan and then notch up a victory at home to advance to the Asian Cup Qualifiers. However, having realised the difference between the two sides, the Dutchman can no longer dare to even say that they wish to play for a draw.

"It was a disappointing result and it became clear from that that we need time to build a good side. In the home game, if there is a possibility, we have to go for a better result, but if it is a draw, we're still happy. If we lose giving everything, I'll still be satisfied as the opposition are much better [than us]," concluded de Kruif.

Captain Mamunul Islam was also pessimistic about producing a good result, even going as far as blaming himself and his colleagues for not carrying out the instructions from the coach properly.

"There was no shortage of information from the coaching staff about the opponents but we failed to implement it on the pitch. For the last four years, we have been



Bangladesh coach Lodewijk de Kruif (L) speaks as captain Mamunul Islam listens during their pre-match press conference at the Bangladesh Football Federation House yesterday, ahead of today's Asian Cup qualifying playoff against Tajikistan. PHOTO: BFF

suffering from set-pieces. We are failures.

"We have been shown what mistakes we did in Dushanbe and so we will try not to repeat those and put our best tomorrow [Tuesday]," said Mamunul.

De Kruif's counterpart Khakim Fuzaylov was a bit worried though over the weather conditions, but he has high hopes of

posting another win against the home side.

"We are having difficulties here with high humidity, nutrition and the hotel as well because of the cultural differences. Even though we are motivated, the first result must be forgotten in order to prepare for tomorrow's match as this is a playoff and anything can happen."

BCB reverting to BCCCB?

AL-AMIN



With the Tigers off from international assignments after one-and-a-half years of hectic schedule, it gives the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) plenty of time to reflect and prepare itself to build on an unprecedented success in a magnificent 2015, which allowed Bangladesh to emerge from the shadow of 'push-overs' to a 'real threat' to the established force, especially in the shorter versions of the game.

But is the BCB, which has every reason to wade in that success, heading towards the right direction to prepare itself for bigger battles at a time when the International Cricket Council is once again seriously contemplating a two-tier system, allowing the high and mighty more exposure and relegating the lower half to beg for the leftovers?

The BCB has agreed in principle to renew the contract of Bangladesh coach Chandika Hatuhusingha, which can be a reward for the Sri Lankan for masterminding Tigers recent success story. It is a good decision but not an unexpected one. But then the departure of bowling coach Heath Streak is a classic example of how the board has treated an outgoing coach after every failure over the years. We are not sure if the Zimbabwean was served with a letter of appreciation from the BCB headquarters. Even if it was the case, we are sorry to say it's not decent not to make such things public.

The board is now planning to restructure the selection committee. A revamp is always appreciated if it adds value. But if we take what the BCB president Nazmul Hassan Papon said recently about the restructuring of the selection committee at face value, then we are definitely in for a shock.

"We will have a three-man selection panel and a new selection committee which will include the coach, the manager and the head of cricket operations committee along with the three selectors.

"Before every series, the selection committee will have a meeting. In that meeting the coach will provide the national selectors with a strategy. The team manager has been included here so that he can voice the opinions of the captain and the players," said the BCB boss while explaining the new-look selection policy.

The coach imparting his input is understood. But it is hard to gauge the manager's role and his proxy for captain and vice-captain. We know about one Imran Khan, who was not only an inspirational captain but played the role of a dictator when it came to selecting players. He virtually hand-picked cricketers like Wasim Akram and Inzamam-ul-Haq to win the World Cup in 1996.

Bangladesh's one-day and T20 captain Mashrafe Bin Mortaza, who could have easily been the Test captain also had he been physically fit, may not be as big in stature as Imran. But he is more than an Imran Khan in the context of Bangladesh cricket. And he does not need someone to speak his mind via somebody. We deem the BCB president's remark as an insult to Mashrafe and what he did for the nation.

The board's ploy to add more people in the selection procedure is nothing new and the inclusion of the manager and the chairman of the cricket operations committee is a dirty game the BCB high-ups tried to play to have more control over the selection of the team. There was a time when 'Control' was the third word in the acronym BCCCB. And it seems we are backtracking to BCCCB from BCB at a time when Chandika's mantra of 'freedom of expression' had shown the light at the end of a dark tunnel.

Abahani skipper Tamim Iqbal cautiously runs one down the leg side during his 105 against Cricket Coaching School at the BKSP yesterday. His century guided Abahani home. PHOTO: STAR



Aaqib rejects BCB offer

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Former Pakistan pace bowler Aaqib Javed refused the role of the Bangladesh national cricket team's bowling coach, Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) media committee chairman Jalal Yunus informed yesterday.

The former Pakistan national bowling coach refused the offer from the BCB as he mentioned that it would not be possible for him to perform two duties at a time. According to Yunus, Aaqib preferred his role with Pakistan Super League side Lahore Qalandars.

On Sunday, BCB president Nazmul Hassan Papon said that they had contacted Aaqib and also added that they have made an alternative list of coaches.

Tamim ton takes Abahani thru'

SPORTS REPORTER



Tamim Iqbal scored his first one-day century of the year at the BKSP yesterday and powered Abahani into the Super League. His ninth List-A hundred came at a time when Abahani were chasing a meagre 168 in 35 overs in a rain-affected game.

Batting first, Cricket Coaching School rode on Rajin Saleh's 95 and Mohammad Saifuddin's 50 to score 205 before being bundled out. Abahani's Shakib Al Hasan scalped three wickets while Taskin Ahmed, Abul Hasan and Mosaddek Hossain took two wickets each.

In reply, Abahani raced home in just 26.4 overs. They needed 168 to win after the Duckworth-Lewis calculations were applied due to a rain interruption yesterday. While they did lose the early wicket of Yusuf Pathan, who opened the innings alongside Tamim, they went on to win the game comfortably by nine wickets. Tamim smacked four sixes and eleven fours during his 86-ball 105 and remained unbeaten. He

was ably supported by Nazmul Hossain Shanto, who scored 53 off 70.

In the day's other game league leaders Prime Doleshwar suffered an unexpected defeat at the hands of Prime Bank Cricket Club in Fatullah. Batting first, Prime Doleshwar were bundled out for 188 in 47.4 overs. Monir Hossain and Mohammad Azim took three wickets each while Rubel

SCORES IN BRIEF

CRICKET COACHING SCHOOL: 205 all out (Rajin 95, Saifuddin 50; Shakib 3-35, Taskin 2-22, Abul 2-30)

ABAHANI: 170 for 1 in 26.4 overs (Tamim 105 not out, Nazmul 53 not out; Nazmus 1-16)

Result: Abahani won by nine wickets.

PRIME DOLESHWAR: 188 all out in 47.4 overs (Rakibul 44; Azim 3-28, Monir 3-31, Rubel 2-39)

PRIME BANK: 164 for 3 in 31.3 overs (Sabbir 62 not out, Unmukt 59 not out; Rahatul 2-37, Sanjamul 1-42)

Result: Prime Bank won by seven wickets.

Hossain finished with a decent two for 39.

After the exchange, Sabbir Rahman scored an unbeaten 62 and India's Unmukt Chand scored 59 as Prime Bank raced home in 31.3 overs. Due to the inclement weather, Prime Bank's target was revised to 165 required from 36 overs. The century partnership for the fourth wicket took Prime Bank to 164 for three in 31.3 overs.

The game between Kalabagan Cricket Academy and Kalabagan Krira Chakra could not be completed due to inclement weather. It ended with Kalabagan Cricket Academy struggling at 35 for four in 14.2 overs with Mashrafe Bin Mortaza taking two wickets in seven overs.

With 14 points in 11 games Abahani are now second in the table and along with Prime Doleshwar, Victoria Sporting Club and Legends of Rugganji, have confirmed their spots in the Super League. The last two places will be a battle between Mohammedan, Prime Bank, Gazi Group, Kalabagan KC and Sheikh Jamal Dhanmondi Club.

Aus thrash hapless WI

AFP, Providence

David Warner scored an unbeaten half century as Australia romped to a six-wicket thrashing of West Indies in their opening Tri-Nation Series day-night game at the Guyana National Stadium on Sunday.

Warner's 55 not out saw Australia home with almost 25 overs to spare after the West Indies earlier collapsed from 50 for one to 116 all out from 32.3 overs.

Australia then wasted little time in getting to the modest target, Warner anchoring the effort to ensure a victory that was never in doubt despite the loss of three wickets for seven runs with the end in sight.

The emphatic victory earned Australia a bonus point to move ahead of the West Indies in the three-team standings before Tuesday's game at Providence against South Africa.

West Indies had beaten South Africa by four wickets on Friday. Each team will play the other thrice and the top two in the table will contest the final on June 26.

SCORES IN BRIEF
WEST INDIES: 116 all out in 32.3 overs (Charles 22, Brathwaite 21; Zampa 3-16, Lyon 3-39, Starc 2-37)
AUSTRALIA: 117 for 4 in 25.4 overs (Warner 55 not out, Khawaja 27; Narine 2-36, Benn 1-21)
Result: Australia won by 6 wickets.

Calendar Slam on Novak's mind

AFP, Paris



Having sealed his place as one of the greatest players of all time, Novak Djokovic was on Monday backed to keep breaking Grand Slam records with little seemingly standing in his way.

The 29-year-old captured his first French Open on Sunday to become only the eighth man to complete a career Grand Slam.

More impressively, he is just the third man to hold all four majors at the same time and the first since Rod Laverback in 1969.

That is something even his eternal rivals Roger Federer and Rafael Nadal have failed to achieve.

"He will be the big favourite again at Wimbledon and at the tournament after that and all of those after that one," predicted three-time French Open champion Gustavo Kuerten who was on hand

Sunday to witness Djokovic end a three-final losing streak at Roland Garros finals with a 3-6, 6-1, 6-2, 6-4 win over Andy Murray.

That was Djokovic's 12th Grand Slam title to add to his six at the Australian Open, three at Wimbledon and two at the US Open.

He also became the first man since Jim Courier in 1992 to clinch the Australian and French Opens back-to-back and therefore put himself in a position to grab a calendar Grand Slam which has only been achieved three times -- by Don Budge in 1938 and Laver in 1962 and 1969. "Well, I don't want to sound arrogant, but I really think everything is achievable in life," said the Serb.

"I'm trying to grasp and I'm trying to cherish, obviously, these moments right now. Whether or not I can reach a calendar slam, that's still a possibility."



Serbia's world number one Novak Djokovic poses with the French Open trophy -- which he won by beating Andy Murray in the final on Sunday -- near a Paris landmark yesterday. PHOTO: AFP

Mariners join Usha at the top

SPORTS REPORTER



Dhaka Mariner Youngs Club went to the top of Green Delta Insurance Premier Division Hockey League table with a come-from-behind 4-2 win over Wari Club at the Maulana Bhasani Hockey Stadium yesterday.

With six wins -- they won their fifth consecutive game yesterday -- in eight matches Mariner Youngs joined leaders Usha KC at the top of the 12-

team table with 19 points, though Usha played one match less than Mariner Youngs.

Former national captain Musa Mia stunned Dhaka Mariner to give Wari a seven-minute lead before Arshad Hossain levelled the margin in the 15th minute. Musa again restored the lead for Wari in the 24th minute but all for naught as Mamunur Rahman Chayan scored the second for Dhaka Mariner, two minutes from the break.

After resumption, Dhaka Mariner pressed hard for the win, eventually taking the match home as promising

youngster Fazole Hossain Rabbi scored the third in the 43rd minute before Pakistani Waqar Sharif sealed the win with a strike in the 58th minute.

In the day's other match, Bangladesh Sporting Club stunned Sonali Bank 5-4, thanks to three goals courtesy of Prince. Bangladesh SC took a strong 4-1 lead in the first half but they faced a tough challenge in the second, almost giving away the match as the Bankers reduced the margin to 3-4 before Prince wrapped up the victory for Bangladesh SC through his third goal.