

SPORT



After a lacklustre performance in Dushanbe, Bangladesh put in a much-improved performance against Tajikistan at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday. Although the booters succumbed to single-goal defeat, they created numerous chances which eventually went begging.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

Has the fight left Faruque?

BISHWAJIT ROY

Often reporters have to live under the burden of off-the-record information. Understandably one cannot feel bad for those interesting bits of information that can only be discussed privately in an 'adda' setting but the case is made more complicated when someone says one thing off the record and something completely different on the record.

At this moment the Bangladesh Cricket Board's (BCB's) controversial move to revamp the selection panel is the most discussed issue in the cricket arena. Much has already been said in the media about the peculiar thinking from the board high-ups but what is most disheartening is that those who have been vocal against the move off the record have chosen to keep quiet in public.

But do not think they were not aware that this kind of change in a proven system is going to take place with no good motive; just ask them to say something off the record.

It is well known that many off-record critics of this ill-conceived proposal are the same people who are intimately involved in the machinations and there are some who may even gain because of its approval. Will they actually voice their concerns when the proposal -- which has now turned into a two-tier format and one can only guess what shape it will ultimately take -- is put on the table during the next board meeting?

True, it will not make any difference if someone raises his voice but still it will add some value and variation to a hopelessly one-sided discourse.

In this context everyone will be looking forward to see what the current chief selector Faruque Ahmed will do if the new system, which will virtually change the selectors' role from judges to mere scouts, is finally approved.

"I think if this recommendation is passed it will bring to an end a good system of selection that we have been following for a long time. If this new system is adopted by the board, I won't stay," was the reaction from Faruque in response to the working committee proposal on May 27.

Since then one change has been made to the proposal -- the post of chief selector will be retained. Will Faruque be content to continue in his exalted position with all its rewards or will he continue his opposition and refuse to be part of a system that is set to destroy a functioning one and will set a bad example?

Will he compromise with his freedom to be an ordinary BCB staffer or will he live up to his reputation as a gutsy man?

Faruque did a wonderful job during his first tenure as a chief selector to bring new talent who are now leading Bangladesh cricket, and his second tenure as a chief selector was also successful. His bold decision-making set him apart, but that quality will leave the picture along with the old selection structure.

On Monday, this reporter rang him from the morning and got his response only in the evening.

"I am leaving for a long vacation tonight, so I am busy right now. I will talk with you at night," responded Faruque to a question about BCB's two-tier proposal.

Despite repeated calls it was however not possible to talk to him but it will be interesting to see if he speaks from his heart even if he is miles away after the BCB makes their final decision.



Narrow defeat this time

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh salvaged some pride by displaying spirited football against Tajikistan in their single-goal defeat in the second-leg play-off encounter of the Asian Cup Qualifiers against Tajikistan at the

same tempo at the rain-soaked pitch as they had at home, and exhibited some crisp passing and quick positional changes among the players.

However, the hosts were able to keep the margin to 1-0 as they staged a comeback in the second half, when they created a few

scoring chances but failed to cash in on those opportunities, thanks to some good defending from Tajikistan and brilliant saves from goalkeeper Mahkamov Abdauziz.

De Kruif had made five changes to his starting eleven, with defenders Nasiruddin Chowdhury and Mamun Mia replacing Ariful

Islam and Nasirul Islam. The two centre-backs did well to foil attacks, while midfielders Jamal Bhuiyan and Emon Babu kept the Tajik midfield inactive with their heavy marking in the first half.

Defender Raihan Hasan, however, committed to an unnecessary tackle on the edge of the

box and Nazarov found the back of the net from the ensuing free-kick after the ball had taken a slight deflection off defender Tapu Barman's head.

Having conceded, Bangladesh tried to attack through the wings, with right-winger Jewel Rana causing trouble for the opposition defenders. There were some promising attacks from Bangladesh but striker Nabib Newaj Jibon failed to avail two good opportunities in the first half.

After resumption, Bangladesh enjoyed the lion's share of possession and created a couple of scoring opportunities but Tapu saw his goal-bound header cleared by defender Tukhtasunov Dalerdjon for a corner while Nasiruddin's glancing header was well gripped by the Tajikistan goalkeeper.

Eight minutes from time, Mamunul Islam tried his luck from distance with a powerful left-footer, forcing a brilliant save from the Tajikistan goalkeeper.

In the end however came a further blow to Bangladesh as Jamal Bhuiyan picked up an unnecessary yellow card in his second successive match, meaning he will miss Bangladesh's next match, the qualifying playoff against Bhutan.

De Kruif looking positive

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh coach Lodewijk de Kruif was looking at the positives after a narrow 1-0 defeat against Tajikistan in AFC Asian Cup qualification playoff in Dhaka yesterday, which left his side with a 6-0 aggregate loss and waiting for an elimination playoff against Bhutan in September and October.

The 46-year-old coach, who will leave for Netherlands tomorrow, hoped he and the Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) could together build on this positivity for a better team in coming days.

Having lost the first leg 5-0 in Dushanbe last week, Bangladesh put in a much-improved performance at home yesterday, although they lost the match courtesy of an eighth-minute free-kick from Tajikistan defender Nazarov Akhtam, which took a deflection off the wall before beating the Bangladesh goalkeeper.

"It was very unfortunate to concede a goal from a set piece so early. It was a deflected shot or

else the goalkeeper could have easily taken the ball to initiate an attack from there. There was no luck at that moment," the Dutchman said at the post-match press conference.

"But I have to give credit to my boys... In 90 minutes we created a lot of chances. We deserved a goal; maybe we deserved a win because I cannot count any chances from Tajikistan today. I think the only team that deserved a win today was Bangladesh," de Kruif added.

The coach, who was brought back by the local game's governing body for this particular tie, answered cryptically when asked about his chances of returning to Bangladesh.

"I have a contract with my club back home. But we will talk about everything tomorrow with the president [BFF president]. I am very open to it. Mr. President is also very open and positive. We have to talk about the plans. I have a very warm heart for Bangladesh and Bangladesh football. If I can help the country in lifting football, I'm there for you," said de Kruif.

BANGLADESH -0
TAJIKISTAN -1
NAZAROV AKHTAM 8'

AGGREGATE:
BANGLADESH -0
TAJIKISTAN -6

Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

The defeat left Bangladesh with the task of facing Bhutan in another two-legged play-off in September and October, while Tajikistan, with an aggregate 6-0 win, progressed to the 24-team main qualifying round.

Bangladesh coach Lodewijk de Kruif might feel satisfied with the performance of his charges, however there was still cause for concern over set-pieces, as Nazarov Akhtam's eighth-minute curler proved decisive.

The visitors took the field with

Broad has no problems facing Amir

AFP, London

Stuart Broad has insisted he won't have any issues playing against Mohammad Amir should the convicted spot-fixer make his Test return at Lord's next month.

Lord's was the venue six years ago when left-arm quick bowler Amir and two Pakistan teammates were involved in the deliberate bowling of no-balls as part of a newspaper 'sting' operation to demonstrate the trio's willingness to take part in spot-fixing.

Team officials are optimistic the 24-year-old will receive his British visa in the next couple of days following a special request for leniency from the Pakistan Cricket Board.

But Broad said on Monday: "I don't think any feelings will be dragged into this Test match from that one. There are only four players in (this) England team from then, and Pakistan had a huge change-over."

"So I don't think any ill-feeling or negativity from the players will have carried through."

On Amir, he said: "I think he's served his time. I've not played him for six years, but in 2010 he was a constant threat and man of the series. It swung round corners for him."

An inexplicable shift of schedule

SPORTS REPORTER

With no long-term schedule in the ongoing Dhaka Premier League, the shifting of match venues and the changes of dates have been common occurrences in the league so far. However, the latest change in the schedule of the competition raised many eyebrows.

As per the normal schedule, there were supposed to be three games played in the 11th round today and it was important to stick to this schedule since most of these teams are battling neck and neck in the rankings table and their possible Super League berths may well be decided in these rounds.

While the Mohammedan-Sheikh Jamal clash in Mirpur and the Legends of Rupganj-Brothers Union tie at Savar will go ahead as planned, the game at Fatullah between Victoria and Gazi Group Cricketers has surprisingly been shifted to the reserve day tomorrow.

When asked for the reason, Amin Khan, the coordinator of the tournament said that the curator at Fatullah informed the tournament committee that the venue was unplayable today due to incessant rainfall.

So far in the tournament, the norm has been to go to the field and see if the teams could play at least a 20-over match. There have been a number of matches in the competition that were spread over two days, but they were completed.

However, the postponement of the game at Fatullah was the first of its kind. The league's committee decided not to wait on the ground at all and decided to move the game to the reserve day.

As a result, there were several questions raised regarding the move. Speaking on condition of anonymity few sources from the board revealed that the game was postponed since Gazi Group Cricketers wanted their foreign player, who would only be able to play tomorrow, to play in their must-win encounter against Victoria.

While the league has been competitive, decisions like the one above have tainted this season. Several players and members of the board have criticised the umpiring, with some even alleging bias. The BCB president during a press conference earlier this week had admitted that the umpiring was a concern and that measures would be taken accordingly in the future.

However, as far as the present is concerned, issues like these are proving to be a thorn in the side of Bangladesh's most celebrated domestic tournament.

Kalabagan KC stay alive

SPORTS REPORTER

Mashrafe Bin Mortaza's Kalabagan Krira Chakra (KKC) continued their brilliant run in the Dhaka Premier League with a win over bottom-placed Kalabagan Cricket Academy (KCA). The win takes them to 12 points in 11 games, which is brilliant considering that they had a horrendous start to the Dhaka Premier League.

They won five out of their last six games and from nowhere, stand a chance of getting a place in the top six of the competition. They secured a comfortable 29-run victory over Kalabagan Cricket Academy at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.

Battling first, Kalabagan CA were bundled out for 128 in 39.2 overs in a rain-reduced

game. In reply, Kalabagan KC had reached 91 for four in 23 overs when rain stopped play yesterday. As per the Duckworth-Lewis calculations they needed to have scored 63 runs at that point and therefore ended up winning the game comfortably. The key performers for Kalabagan KC were Abdur Razzak and Mashrafe. While Razzak finished with figures of 3 for 28, Mashrafe recorded miserly figures of 2 for 13.

With the bat, hard-hitter Hasanuzzaman smacked 47 for Mashrafe's side and ensured that they were

ahead of the Duckworth-Lewis par score.

As per the current rankings in the table, four teams have already booked their spots in the Super League. The remaining two places will be a battle between Mohammedan, Prime Bank Cricket Club, Kalabagan KC, Sheikh Jamal Dhanmondi Club and Gazi Group Cricketers.

It will be an intense finish with several calculations expected to come into play. Mohammedan, who have 12 points, will play Sheikh Jamal, who have 10. If Mohammedan win, they will



Players resign to the rains at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium yesterday. The wait though wasn't worth the while as the game between the two Kalabagan sides was called off after just 23 overs were bowled in the second innings.

PHOTO: STAR

Usha, Abahani win big

SPORTS REPORTER

Joint defending champions Abahani and Usha KC won their respective matches of the Green Delta Insurance Premier Division Hockey League at the Maulana Bhasani Hockey Stadium yesterday.

Abahani handed a 6-0 defeat to Azad SC, with Pakistani recruits Mohammad Irfan and Shakeel Abbasi scoring two goals each and Farhad Ahmed and Maksudul Alam striking one goal apiece.

In the second match, Usha inflicted a 5-0 defeat on Ajax SC where Pakistani recruit Aleem Belal struck three goals while Pushkor Khisa Mimo scored two goals.

The win left Usha on top of the table with 22 points from eight matches while Abahani remain in second position with 20 points from same number of matches.

ERRATUM

In an article titled 'BCB reverting to BCCB' published in the June 7, 2016 issue of Star Sport it was incorrectly printed that Imran Khan virtually hand-picked "cricketers like Wasim Akram and Inzamamul Haq to win the World Cup in 1996", when Pakistan actually won the cricket World Cup in 1992. We regret the error. --Sport Editor