

SPORT

'Don't want the system spoiled'

SPORTS REPORTER

The major talking point in cricket administration circles recently has been the controversial proposed revamp of the national selection panel, which is set to be approved in the next Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) meeting. Soon after news of the proposal, which was the result of a BCB working committee meeting on March 26, broke current national chief selector Faruque Ahmed said that he would resign if the revamp was adopted. However, after BCB president Nazmul Hassan Papon expressed his support for a two-tier version of the proposal on June 5, Faruque did not respond and went away to vacation.

Yesterday however, he talked to The Daily Star over phone from New York and said that his stance remains the same and that the proposed revamps stand to harm Bangladesh cricket in the long run. Faruque is currently in his second tenure as a national selector, and during both his stints he has presided over successful periods for Bangladesh cricket that have taken the team to new heights.

Although the selection process has been running successfully, reflected in the advent of many new stars in Bangladesh cricket, BCB high-ups suddenly saw it fit to revamp an apparently functioning system. The latest proposal which Papon revealed to the media will, if adopted, see the three-man panel answerable to the national coach, the team manager and the head of the cricket operations committee.

When news of the working committee proposal first came out, Faruque met with them and made some suggestions. "The working committee completely misunderstood my suggestions. My concern was for the system. I didn't want the system spoiled. That was what I tried to make them understand. Even if I remain the chief selector, it will not make much difference if the proposed system is adopted," he said.

The former national batsman made it clear that he was not fighting for his own position but instead standing up for a system that he thinks works.

"The names can change but the system has to remain the same. If the same names stay and the system changes, that should not happen," he said. "If the current system is changed, it will not be good for our cricket."

"As I said earlier, I would welcome the coach to the selector's role, but whoever comes to that role must fulfil a selectorial function. They have to be on the same wavelength of debating the merits and demerits of a player, whether that player will be excluded or included," he said.

During the conversation, Faruque placed special emphasis on one point: that the independence of the selection committee should not be compromised in any way.

It is not hard to see how the independence may be compromised under the new system; while a three-man committee specialising on selection can be expected to do the job efficiently and independently, adding more personnel -- all of whom have other jobs -- to the process will undoubtedly make it more complicated.



FARUQUE AHMED

Highs & lows of the first phase

SPORTS REPORTER

After a gruelling 11 rounds, the Dhaka Premier League (DPL) has finally arrived at the Super League stage, where the top six teams will battle it out for the championship. The fact that four teams are tied with 14 points each and that they are just one point behind league leaders Victoria goes to show how competitive the DPL has been so far, while also promising a thrilling finale.

The inclusion of the national players in the league stirred up the competition and it also led to the rise to prominence of a number of youngsters. On the downside however, administrative problems were quite blatantly visible. The following are some of the key points of the first phase of the league:

The rise of the youngsters

With no international commitments, the national players had an opportunity to take part in the entire league after a long time. Many expected them to be the key drivers for their respective teams. However, contrary to

popular belief, they were outshone by youngsters and players who generally have not been that sought-after. The highest run-getters in the league so far are Shamsur Rahman, Abdul Majed, Imtiaz Hossain and Al-Amin. None of them are in the national team and are not expected to find a place in the near future, but they have impressed in the league.

Apart from the highest scorers, there were others who managed to put in magnificent performances. Tasamul Haque recorded his highest List A score, an unbeaten 126; Saif Hassan and Salman Hossain stood apart with the bat even though their team Cricket Coaching School struggled.

Mash's magic and Riyad's all-round performance

Neither Mashrafe Bin Mortaza nor Mahmudullah Riyad will be taking part in the Super League, but that does not take the sheen off their performances. Mashrafe seemed to take a page out of his past when he scalped a six-wicket haul and slammed the fastest List A hundred by a Bangladeshi. With 22 wickets, he is currently the second-highest wicket-taker in the competition.

Riyad's all-round performance reflects

how much he has grown as a player over the last two years. He finished as the fourth highest wicket-taker with 21 wickets and fifth-highest run-getter with 497 runs.

The Mosaddek show

The stand-out player of the league so far has been Mosaddek Hossain. The calmness with which the youngster batted throughout the competition makes it hard to believe that he is still not a member of the ODI and Test outfits for the Tigers. His batting average of 86.20 is easily the highest in the competition so far. He has scored 431 runs for Abahani. He is not up there with the highest run-getters because he bats down the order. He impressed in longer-version cricket last year and is doing the same in the Dhaka League this year.

Poor umpiring and the controversies

Ask any player or official in the competition and they will tell you that they have not been happy with the level of umpiring in the league. A run-out controversy during a game between Abahani and Prime Doleshwar Sporting Club where Taskin Ahmed was not given out despite the fact that he clearly seemed to be quite some distance from the crease perhaps garnered the most attention.

There were a number of questionable leg-before decisions as well. That combined with the tournament committee's decisions to not officially reveal the bowlers who did not follow the 15-degree bend rule and their sudden decisions to change fixtures almost at will, further painted a bleak picture. With the Super League set to begin, one hopes for better times.

TOP FIVE BOWLERS

Player	Mat	Wkts	BBI	Ave	Econ
De Silva	11	23	6/35	19.95	4.81
Mashrafe	11	22	6/42	20.22	4.83
Kamrul	11	22	4/38	22.81	5.25
Mahmudullah	11	21	5/66	19.04	5.38
Naem	11	20	4/21	22.15	5.04

TOP FIVE BATSMEN

Player	Mat	Runs	Ave	100	50
Shamsur	11	558	55.80	1	4
Mazid	11	538	48.90	2	3
Imtiaz	11	526	52.60	2	3
Al-Amin	11	502	55.77	1	5
Mahmudullah	11	497	49.70	2	0



Arambagh midfielder Mohammad Abdullah (L) shoots as Abahani's Topu Barman (C) and Lee Tuck watches the ball sail into the net during their Federation Cup fixture at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

Abahani lose; MSC held

SPORTS REPORTER



Arambagh Krira Sangha stunned title contenders Abahani with a 1-0 victory in the second match of the opening day of the Walton Federation Cup at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday, thanks to a 25th-minute strike from Mohammad Abdullah.

The unheralded young midfielder beat Abahani goalkeeper Shahidul Alam Sohel with an angular shot from inside the box after he was set up with a defence-splitting pass by Kester Akon.

The runners-up of the KFC Independence Cup, who had started the game with seven national players, found it hard to break the solid defence of Arambagh, who adopted a counter-attacking strategy which paid off brilliantly.

The opening day had earlier witnessed another small upset as M o h a m m e d a n Sporting Club were held to a 2-2 draw by Rahmatganj MFS.

In what was a rematch of last edition's opening fixture, the ten-time Federation

Cup champions looked like they were on course for a repeat of the scoreline as they took a 2-1 lead after having come from a goal down. But Rahmatganj's Congolese striker Siyo Zunapio, adjudged man-of-the-match, scored his second goal with ten minutes remaining to deny the last edition's semifinalists a winning start.

Mohammedan came into the match with a target of a positive start, but they were stunned to silence in the fourth minute when Zunapio scored the opener and for the rest of the half, the Black and Whites chased their own shadows.

Mohammedan regrouped after the restart and put on a bold performance with Bangoura posing a constant threat in front of goal. The Guinean, who had scored the winning goal in last edition's opening match, scored the equaliser and set up the second goal in space of five minutes.

Bangoura had come close to equalising the margin in the 57th minute with only Rahmatganj goalkeeper Al Amin to beat, but his close-range effort was incredibly cleared by Eleta Benjamin for a corner.

Bangoura, however, made amends by levelling the margin from a rebound on 63 minutes after a volley from Jonny was parried to his path. Five minutes later his back-heel was turned in by Shahadat Hossain as the Black and Whites took the lead.

Mohammedan kept pressing, but Bangoura failed to find the target from close range in the 71st minute despite having rounded off the opposition goalkeeper as defender Rafiqul made a sliding attempt to block the effort.

Having survived the scare, Rahmatganj tried to stand tall and found the equaliser in the 80th minute when Zunapio, availing a through-pass from Faysal Ahmed, ran down the left flank and darted into the box to curl in a left-footed drive into the far corner of the net. The goal denied Mohammedan a winning start and kept Rahmatganj with a shout for the quarterfinals with Team BJMC being the other team in Group D.

MOHAMMEDAN - 2
RAHMATGANJ - 2
ARAMBAGH - 1
ABAHANI - 0

Abahani, Usha keep winning

SPORTS REPORTER

Usha KC and Abahani extended their winning streaks in the Green Delta Insurance Premier Division Hockey League with big-margin victories in their respective matches at the Maulana Bhasani Hockey Stadium yesterday.

Usha notched up an emphatic 7-1 win over Sadharan Bima -- their eighth victory of the league -- to maintain the lead in the 12-team table with 25 points from nine matches. Hasan Jubair Niloy struck four goals while Aleem Belal, Krishna Kumar and Ashfaq Newaj scored one goal apiece for the Old Dhaka outfit. Mohammad Rasul struck the consolation goal for Ajax, who have suffered six defeats in nine matches.

In the day's other match, Abahani posted their seventh win by inflicting a 6-0 defeat on Ajax SC to follow the league leaders on 23 points.

Maksudul Alam Habul slotted three goals; Rumman Sarker struck two goals while Sheikh Mohammad Nannu scored one goal. This was the seventh defeat for Sadharan Bima.

WI series in the works: Papon

SPORTS REPORTER



In addition to the series against England and New Zealand later this year, Bangladesh may face the West Indies as well, indicated Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) president Nazmul Hassan Papon.

Speaking to reporters, Papon said that the two boards were trying to chalk out a plan to play some time before the England series, which is set to take place in October.

"We are playing England in October and then in November we have the Bangladesh Premier League. After that we have the New Zealand tour. Players won't have much time after the Dhaka Premier League either."

"We are already communicating with the West Indies. We have not confirmed anything yet but they have shown interest. We are yet to fix a date," said Papon.

Furthermore, the BCB president also indicated that there was a high chance that the one-off Test against India, which was supposed to take place in August, would be shifted to

next year.

"We were supposed to go in August. But then they have the Ranji trophy and a number of other commitments in that period. They gave us a proposal to play in January, but during that time we will be in New Zealand. At the moment, it seems like we may play in February."

"A specific date has been not confirmed, but the India tour is likely to take place around the January-February mark," said Papon.

Going by the BCB president's statement, it seems that Bangladesh will tour India for the first time next year. While the board preferred playing in Kolkata, the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) has confirmed Hyderabad as the venue.

There were also talks about adding a few more limited-overs games to the series aside from the Test. However, any such plans are in the initial stages and do not seem likely for the time being.

With regards to the poor umpiring and the controversies in the ongoing Dhaka Premier League, the BCB president, akin to some of his previous press conferences, vowed to fix the areas of concerns.



SL make Eng work

AFP, London



Jonny Bairstow continued a brilliant year of run-scoring with a Test-best 167 not out against Sri Lanka at Lord's on Friday. But the debate about whether Bairstow should continue to keep wicket for England intensified when he dropped a routine catch to reprieve Dimuth Karunaratne on the second day of the third Test.

At stumps, Sri Lanka were 162 for one in reply to England's first innings 416, a deficit of 254 runs.

Kaushal Silva was 79 not out and Kusal Mendis unbeaten on 25 after left-handed opener Karunaratne made exactly 50.

Karunaratne should have been out for 28

on Friday when he nicked all-rounder Chris Woakes, only for Bairstow to drop the two-handed waist-high chance. Karunaratne was dismissed when well caught by a diving Bairstow to give under-pressure fast bowler Steven Finn a wicket.

Friday saw Bairstow receive good support from Woakes (66) in a seventh-wicket partnership of 144 after England resumed on 279 for six with Bairstow 107 not out and Woakes unbeaten on 23.

SCORES IN BRIEF

ENGLAND: First innings 416 all out (Cook 85, Bairstow 167 not out, Moeen 25, Woakes 66; Lakmal 3-90, Pradeep 2-104, Herath 4-81)

SRI LANKA: First innings 162 for 1 (Silva 79 not out, Karunaratne 50)



England batsman Jonny Bairstow picked up where he left off yesterday, adding 60 runs to his overnight total to reach 167. However, he was denied a double-ton despite being unbeaten, as England were bowled out.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Lord's honours 'The Greatest'

AFP, London

Garfield Sobers, arguably cricket's greatest all-rounder, led a special tribute to Muhammad Ali at Lord's on Friday that coincided with the boxing legend's funeral.

The two sporting icons met at Lord's back in 1966 when Sobers was a member of the West Indies side playing England in a Test match at "the home of cricket" and heavyweight star Ali was in London for his second fight with Britain's Henry Cooper.