



Abahani's most consistent performer throughout the tournament, Mosaddek Hossain (R), congratulates skipper Tamim Iqbal after his match-winning performance against Prime Bank in Mirpur yesterday. The result saw Abahani lift their 18th Dhaka Premier League trophy.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

Sorry Mash, sorry Mushy

BISHWAJIT ROY



We know that Mashrafe Bin Mortaza is the epitome of courage. The current Bangladesh ODI and T20I skipper is not only a rare example for his fighting spirit to overcome one injury struggle after another and continue playing after seven operations on both knees, but also as a "braveheart" cricketer for his on-field courage that has brought many recent successes in international cricket.

There may be a debate over Test captain Mushfiqur Rahim's captaincy, but there are not too many who will argue about his guts.

But if you listen to what Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) President Nazmul Hassan Papon has been saying for the last few days your belief might be shaken. The BCB boss appeared in front of the media for the third time in the last four days and what he said during a 42-minute rant in Mirpur yesterday brought more frustration rather than any hope.

If his comments regarding his interference in the selection process simply demeaned the work and stature of three former national cricketers, his disclosure that the captains' lack of courage compelled him to include the team manager in the selection committee casts aspersions on the characters of cricketers who are seen as national heroes.

"The only difference with the old system is the inclusion of the manager. I will tell you now, and I will tell you with a heavy heart.

"I go and listen to what everyone says and I realized that the coach plans out the strategy. The players never challenge the coach. After the meeting, the players come to meet me in my room and then tell me that they want to make changes. They won't say it there, because nobody wants to argue with the coach. Not the captain, vice-captain or any of the players. So when I am not there, they talk to Sujon [Khaled Mahmud], and then the manager calls me and I have to make the changes from wherever I am. I have to be involved and I don't want this. So I want my involvement to be minimised. That's why I brought the manager.

"I didn't want to say this, because it will go all around the world. But until I said it, you people won't leave me alone," was the explanation from Papon during his marathon briefing.

In response to a volley of questions, Papon said: "I want to say that you people have to trust me."

Yes, as a custodian of the country's most affluent and popular sports body we want to trust you and previously we did not hesitate to praise the good that you have done but if you want us to believe that players like Mashrafe, Mushfiqur, Shakib Al Hasan and Tamim Iqbal lack courage and forced you to create chaos in a proven system, we beg to differ.

You also said: "I am in politics, but I have had a professional background for 30 years."

However, when you form a committee to decide the fate of the Abahani-Prime Doleshwar match and you call a press conference to inform of their decision, and then you leave the conference with a personal opinion of wanting "to see the match", which undermined the committee's decision, then we are compelled to ask whether a professional system is indeed what you believe in.

'He has the brain of a 45-yr-old'

SPORTS REPORTER

622 runs and 15 wickets in 16 games, a stunning batting average of 77.75 that tops the list and a series of match-winning performances, 20-year-old Mosaddek Hossain barely did anything wrong in the Dhaka Premier League.

Yet it will not be incorrect to say that the response he received for this breathtaking effort was subdued. And the reason behind that was the team that he played in.

Abahani was the centre of discussion for most parts of the league, and it was not just because of their star-studded squad or their record wins in the Dhaka Premier League.

Right from the start of the league there were allegations made by club officials that the umpires were biased against Abahani's opponents. Certain other moves by the organisers, such as the decision to not play the postponed game between Prime Doleshwar and Abahani on the reserve day, only added fuel to the fire.

These and several other issues, which were picked up by the media, in a way tainted the brilliant performances that Abahani's players put in.

That was an aspect that disappointed Abahani skipper Tamim Iqbal.

"It's common to be in the eye of the media and to be criticised, but I thought it was a bit too much at one point because there were some players in my team who didn't get the credit they deserve.

"Mosaddek Hossain had a fantastic tournament. He has a brain of a 45-year-old. He won matches for us both with the ball and the bat. There may be discussions on controversies, but that does not mean that a player's performance will be overshadowed," said Tamim.

"He is a mature boy. If he keeps playing the way he is, it won't be long before he enters the national team," he added.

On another note, Tamim also said that he accepted the BCB's punishment with regards to the match between Abahani and Prime Doleshwar. Tamim had reacted angrily to a decision that the umpires had made after which the umpires decided not to continue the game that day.

"I accept this punishment because I was at fault. I should learn from this because there are boys who follow me and love my game, so I should try to be a better human being first," he said. Aside from Tamim, even Prime Doleshwar's Nasir Hossain was fined Tk 20,000 for breach of the disciplinary code in that game.

Tamim, who hit a brilliant 142 yesterday, said that he was happy to have played such a knock in such an important game.

"I think I could have scored 200 if I stayed on till the 50th over, but I got out in the 43rd. I was just trying to get as many runs as possible," said Tamim.

Abahani clinch 18th crown

SPORTS REPORTER



The Dhaka Premier League 2016 may have been sullied by off-field issues, but it ended with a fittingly dominant display by the team who lifted the trophy for a record 18th time at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.

Abahani, after a troubled beginning that saw them make it to the Super League in fourth position after the first phase, went from strength to strength till a sublime century from skipper Tamim Iqbal, yet another special half-century from Mosaddek Hossain and a stellar seven-wicket haul by Saqlain Sajib set up a 115-run win over defending champions Prime Bank Cricket Club in the last round of the Super League.

Prime Doleshwar did all they could to

keep their title hopes alive by beating the third team in contention, Legends of Rugganj, by seven wickets at the BKSP. But Abahani's dominant show means that they sit on 22 points while Rugganj and Doleshwar have 20 each.

Abahani had no hesitation in batting when the coin landed in their favour and made full use of a Mirpur belter by racking up 316 for seven. Tamim and Mosaddek came together at 97 for three in the 23rd over, and were not separated till 173 runs and 21.1 overs later when Tamim was caught by Raihan Uddin off the bowling of Unmukt Chand for a 132-ball 142. He hit 11 fours and four maximums in his second hundred of the season. Mosaddek, carrying on his purple patch, fell soon after for a 74-ball 78 with three fours and five sixes. But with momentum firmly with Abahani, lusty blows from Abul Hassan took them past the 300 mark.

For Prime Bank, Indian import Chand took three for 59.

In reply, Prime Bank were shot out for 201 with Saqlain's seven-wicket haul playing the starring role.

At BKSP, a four-wicket haul from Doleshwar's Rahatul Ferdous and Al-Amin Hossain's three wickets helped dismiss Rugganj for 143, despite a courageous unbeaten 59 from Asif Ahmed.

Opener Rakibul Hasan then hit an unbeaten 66 to take Doleshwar home with seven wickets and 24.1 overs to spare.

The day's third match in Fatullah was an inconsequential one between title no-hopers Victoria and Mohammedan. Victoria won the low-scoring encounter by 17 runs after scoring 205 in the first innings.

SCORES IN BRIEF

ABAHANI: 316 for 7 in 50 overs (Tamim 142, Karthik 25, Mosaddek 78, Hasan 26; Unmukt 3-59, Rubel 2-69, Nazmul 2-48)

PRIME BANK: Club 201 all out in 37.2 overs (Mehedi 69, Unmukt 23, Shuvagata 51; Tazkin 2-45, Saqlain 7-58)

Result: Abahani won by 115 runs.

LEGENDS OF RUGGANJ: 143 all out in 41.2 overs (Asif 59, Pawan 16; Al-Amin 3-29, Rahatul 4-36)

PRIME DOLESHWAR: 144 for 3 in 25.5 overs (Raqibul 66, Rony 42, Sachin 23; Alauddin 1-22)

Result: Prime Doleshwar won by 7 wickets.

Amin 55, Nadif 28, Kamrul 26 not out; Enamul 3-45, Habibur 2-28)

MOHAMMEDAN: 188 all out in 42 overs (Nazimuddin 50, Shykat 35, Mushfiqur 46; Mominul 3-29, Mahmud 2-25)

Result: Victoria Sporting Club won by 17 runs.

'Wouldn't work then for 5 yrs'

SPORTS REPORTER



Former Bangladesh captain Minhajul Abedin was named chief selector while Habibul Bashar was brought back to the selection panel after a lot of chaos yesterday.

Last Sunday Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) president Nazmul Hassan Papon confirmed the approval of the controversial two-tier six-member selection committee headed by the chairman of the cricket operations committee. Following that, chief selector Faruque Ahmed was quick to declare that he would not continue under the new system. The following day Papon said that Faruque could leave if he wanted to while talking to reports at BSKP and sensationally disclosed that there was not a single instance where a team submitted by the Faruque-led committee was

not changed.

Papon reiterated yesterday that he had to change the squads which the last committee, where Minhajul and Bashar -- who was made selector of the national women's team during the last board meeting to make way for Sazzad Ahmed Shipon -- were also selectors, submitted every single time.

There is no way to spin Papon's words as respectful to Minhajul and Bashar, so it was not an occasion for them to cheer.

"It feels good that the BCB gave us the responsibility. [Habibul] Bashar and I have been working for the past five years. We will follow the previous process," said Minhajul, adding that there would be no difference to his work despite the two-tier system.

When his attention was drawn to the BCB president's comments regarding interference, Minhajul said: "There's no way I could have worked for five years had there been such interference."



MINHAJUL ABEDIN

Clash of the dark horses

SPORTS REPORTER



A revamped Arambagh Krira Sangha will be looking forward to making it to the Federation Cup final after 15 years when they take on Team BJMC in the first semifinal at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

After getting promoted to top-tier football at the end of last season, Arambagh stated with a defeat against Sheikh Russel KC, but have since remained unbeaten in seven matches -- four in Independence Cup and three in Federation Cup. And the 2001 Federation Cup runners-up have hogged the limelight after beating Abahani and holders Sheikh Jamal DC on way to reaching the semifinals of the ongoing tournament.

Team BJMC, a mid-table side of the professional league, have had an impressive run as well as they are still unbeaten and have overcome opponents such as Mohammedan and Muktiyoddha Sangsad. Team BJMC are eagerly waiting to break a five-year jinx by reaching the Federation Cup final for the first time since their maiden final appearance in 2011.

With big names such as Sheikh Jamal, Mohammedan, Brothers Union, Muktiyoddha Sangsad and star-studded Chittagong Abahani all biting the dust, Arambagh and Team BJMC are gearing up for a place in the final. The first semifinal between the two success-hungry sides should be very competitive even though the style of play of the two sides is very different from each other's.

Saiful Bari Titu's Arambagh prefer to play with a compact defence and pounce on the break while Saifulul Haque's Team BJMC like to play attacking football.

"We have taken similar preparation to what we had taken against Abahani and Sheikh Jamal DC. We respect the opposition, who have been together for long with some matured players. I think it would be a 50-50 match," said Titu.

"We will go there for a win and I am hopeful that the boys will leave the field with a victory," said Team BJMC coach Saiful Haque, who believes team spirit and quick positional changes of the players is key to his side's his success.

Mariners, Usha keep winning

SPORTS REPORTER

Leaders Usha Krira Chakra and second-placed Mariner Youngs Club continued their winning spree in the Super Six stage of the Green Delta Insurance Premier Division Hockey League.

Usha came from behind to hand Bangladesh SC a 6-2 defeat at the end of the day. The Maulana Bhasani Hockey Stadium yesterday while Mariner Youngs came from a goal down to beat Dhaka Wanderers Club 8-2. Having started the day with a three-point lead, Usha were still leading the table by three points at the end of the day. The Old Dhaka outfit have 37 points from 13 outings while Mariners have 34 points from same number of matches.

After a 1-1 deadlock in the first half, Bangladesh SC provided a hit of an upset, but Usha turned things around in the second half by scoring five goals. Krishna Kumar struck twice while Pushkor Khisha Mimo, Mohammad Irfan and Hasan Jubair Niloy netted one goal apiece. Shahid and Belal struck one goal each for Bangladesh SC.

Meanwhile, Mainul Islam Kaushik slotted four goals including a hatrick for Mariners after Wanders took an eighth minute lead through Sarwar Morshed, who also struck Wanderers' second goal. Mohammad Toufiq, Ashrafur Islam, Rimon Gosh and Fable Rabbi also got their names on the scoresheet for Mariners.

Australia reach final

REUTERS, Bridgetown

Australia qualified for the final of the triangular ODI series with a six-wicket win over West Indies in Barbados on Tuesday.

West Indies were sent in to bat and compiled 282 for eight off their 50 overs, with Marlon Samuels scoring 125 off 134 balls for his maiden ODI century against Australia.

SCORES IN BRIEF

WEST INDIES: 282 for 8 in 50 overs (Samuels 125, Ramdin 91; Starc 3-51)

AUSTRALIA: 283 for 4 in 48.4 overs (Smith 78, Marsh 79 n.o., Maxwell 46 n.o.)

Result: Australia won by 6 wickets.

One title won twice

SPORTS REPORTER



Although Abahani won their game against Prime Bank Cricket Club at 4pm yesterday, it was not until 8:30 pm that they were officially declared champions of the Dhaka Premier League.

There was plenty of drama at Mirpur regarding the decision and the Abahani players actually did not know whether or not to celebrate.

After winning yesterday, Abahani topped the table with 22 points with Prime Doleshwar finishing second on 20 points. The problem however was that the Super League game between these two sides, that was halted with just over half the match played earlier this month, could not be completed.

Following Abahani skipper Tamim Iqbal's angry reaction to a stumping appeal disallowed, the umpires had decided to not continue the match and came off the field.

Days later the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) formed a committee to figure out the fate of the match. The committee had decided yesterday afternoon to abandon the game and provide both sides with a point each.

Keeping that in mind, Abahani players started celebrating after their win yesterday and even the stadium's computer scorecard congratulated Abahani on their championship.

However, minutes later BCB president Nazmul Hassan Papon in a press conference told reporters that he personally wanted both these teams to play again. He then said that a decision regarding the match would be declared later in the night.

If a rematch were to take place then Doleshwar would have had a slim opportunity to win the championship. However, they would have had to beat Abahani by a huge margin in order to topple them based on net run-rate.

However, eventually, the BCB moved back to square one and decided to uphold the committee's original decision.

India seal series

AFF, Harare

Kedar Jadhav's brisk half-century proved the difference as India just held off Zimbabwe in the third Twenty20 international at Harare Sports Club on Wednesday to clinch the series 2-1.

Jadhav rescued India hitting 58 from 42 balls to guide the tourists to a final score of 138 for 6.

Vusi Sibanda stroked an attractive 28 on his return from injury for Zimbabwe as they finished on 135 for 6.

SCORES IN BRIEF

INDIA: 138 for 6 in 20 overs (Rahul 22, Rayudu 20, Jadhav 58, Patel 20 not out; Tiripano 3-20)

ZIMBABWE: 135 for 6 in 20 overs (Sibanda 28, Moor 26, Maruma 23 not out; Sran 2-31, Kulkarni 2-23)

Result: India won by 3 runs and clinched the 3-match series 2-1.

Player-of-the-match: Kedar Jadhav.