

SPORT

From obscurity to the HP

SPORTS REPORTER

There's no doubt that all of the 25 members of the current High Performance (HP) squad have big dreams. Speak to any one of them regarding their targets and they will all tell you about their hopes and aspirations of playing in the big leagues.

The HP squad has in fact been formed with an eye on the national team's future. The idea is that there should always be back-up players ready for the national team, no matter what position, and the HP generally answers that call.

While the start of the programme, which will run for three months, at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday was a special moment for each and every player, few could match the joy embodied by Ibadat Hossain Chowdhury.

Ibadat, unlike most of his teammates, has not played too many professional cricket matches. He had to go through a series of steps before he could join the HP programme.

The first step was the most crucial. He competed against thousands of pacers all over the country in the Robi Pacer Hunt and topped that competition. Ibadat had clocked

a speed of 139 Km/h during the pace hunt and caught coach Sarwar Imran's eye.

But that of course was not enough. He and the nine others selected had to go through another camp, where the players worked on their fitness and skill levels. It was only after he managed to satisfy the management there that he earned a spot in the HP squad.

"I have to thank Robi and the BCB [Bangladesh Cricket Board] for this rise. They have created a wonderful platform for us. After the competition we had to go through another camp. Imran sir had told us that if we did well, we would get a chance in the HP. I believe that I am here today because of Imran sir's suggestion," the lanky Ibadat told reporters at Mirpur yesterday.

"I will obviously try my best to make the most of this opportunity. My first target is to play consistently in the domestic leagues. Hopefully I can do that and then I am sure the rest will follow in time," he added.

Ibadat and Co spent a decent amount of time yesterday on various fitness tests.

In fact, as per the plan of the programme, there will be more fitness sessions in the coming days. Once the players are done with that, they will begin working on their individual skills.



A cricketer from the High Performance squad takes a leap during the fitness test at the Mirpur Indoor Stadium yesterday while his teammates keenly observe.

PHOTO: STAR



Mimicking Misbahul Haq's celebration after his century in the match's first innings, the Pakistan players lined up and did push-ups after defeating England by 75 runs in the first of four Tests at Lord's yesterday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Shah Lords over England

AFP, London



Yasir Shah marked his first Test outside of Asia and the United Arab Emirates by taking 10 wickets in the match as Pakistan beat England by 75 runs in their series opener at Lord's on Sunday.

Leg-spinner Shah took 10 for 141, including a second-innings haul of four for 69 on Sunday's fourth day.

His return, which surpassed Waqar Younis's previous Test-match best for Pakistan at Lord's of eight for 154, was central to the tourists going 1-0 up in this four-match series.

Mohammad Amir in his first Test appearance since he was given a five-year ban for his part in the 2010 spot-fixing scandal at Lord's -- Pakistan's last Test at 'the home of cricket' -- ended the match when he bowled Jake Ball.

Victory prompted the whole Pakistan team to perform several press-ups in front of the Lord's Pavilion -- a reference to their pre-tour military boot camp.

England, set 283 for victory, were all out for 207.

They were holding firm at 195 for six thanks to a determined stand of 56

between Jonny Bairstow and Chris Woakes.

But Bairstow's three-and-a-half hour innings ended when he was bowled trying to whip a Shah leg-break.

England were soon 196 for eight when left-arm quick Amir bowled Stuart Broad.

Shah then had Woakes, who took 11 wickets in the match, caught at slip before Amir ended the contest.

It was Pakistan's unheralded left-arm quick Rahat Ali who removed England's top three to reduce the hosts to 47 for three.

His back-off-a-length ball had England captain Alastair Cook (eight) edging through to wicket-keeper Sarfraz Ahmed. Cook's opening partner Alex Hales then carelessly chased a wide Rahat ball outside off stump, with Mohammad Hafeez holding a good catch at first slip.

Joe Root struck two superb cover-driven fours off Rahat but the star batsman fell into a hooking trap on nine when he paddled a Rahat short ball to Shah, set back at deep square leg.

James Vince too got off the mark with a cover-driven four off Rahat.

Vince was on nine when his edged drive off Rahat flew to Younis Khan

only for the second slip to drop both the initial low catch and the rebound.

Vince struck nine fours, mainly through the offside, on his way to a Test-best 41 not out at lunch without looking assured.

He had added just one run to his lunch score when, not moving his feet, he edged a booming drive of a Wahab Riaz delivery that moved away to second slip Younis, who this time clung on at the second attempt.

England were making steady progress at 135 for four when leg-spinner Shah, who took six for 72 in the first innings, bowled recalled left-hander Gary Ballance behind his legs for a painstaking 43 with a delivery that spun out of the rough.

Moeen Ali (two) then charged down the pitch in an attempt to drive Shah, only to be bowled between bat and pad by a well-flighted delivery.

The run-rate slowed as Bairstow and Woakes dug in, knowing they had just the tail behind them at a sun-drenched Lord's.

Riaz, the third of Pakistan's left-arm quicks, was desperately unlucky as he repeatedly beat the bat during an excellent spell of reverse-swing bowling.

SCOREBOARD

PAKISTAN: First innings 339
ENGLAND: First innings 272
PAKISTAN: 2nd innings (overnight 214-8)

Hafeez c Root b Broad	0			
Masood c Cook b Woakes	24			
Azhar lbw b Woakes	23			
Younis b Moeen	25			
Misbah c Hales b Moeen	0			
Shafiq b Woakes	49			
Sarfraz c Bairstow b Woakes	45			
Yasir c Bairstow b Broad	30			
Riaz c Bairstow b Woakes	0			
Amir c Bairstow b Broad	1			
Rahat not out	0			
Extras: (b-6, lb-11, nb-1)	18			
Total: (All out in 79.1 overs)	215			
Fall of wickets: 1-2, 2-44, 3-59, 4-60, 5-129, 6-168, 7-208, 8-214, 9-214, 10-215.				
Bowler	O	M	R	W
Broad	19.1	7	38	3
Woakes	18	6	32	5
Moeen	13	3	49	2

ENGLAND: Second innings				
Cook c Sarfraz b Rahat	8			
Hales c Hafeez b Rahat	16			
Root c Yasir b Rahat	9			
Vince c Younis b Riaz	42			
Ballance b Yasir	43			
Bairstow b Shah	48			
Moeen b Yasir	2			
Woakes c Khan b Yasir	23			
Broad b Amir	1			
Finn not out	4			
Ball b Amir	3			
Extras: (b-1, lb-5, w-1, nb-1)	8			
Total: (All out in 75.5 overs)	207			
Fall of wickets: 1-19, 2-32, 3-47, 4-96, 5-135, 6-139, 7-195, 8-196, 9-204, 10-207.				
Bowler	O	M	R	W
Amir	17.5	4	39	2
Rahat	14	0	47	3
Yasir	31	9	69	4

Three BPL venues dropped

SPORTS REPORTER

The professional football league of the Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) yesterday dropped three venues from the proposed seven for the upcoming Bangladesh Premier League, saying it would consume less time to complete the league, which starts on July 24.

"If the league is held at seven venues, it will take up to February next year to be completed and the clubs will have to pay more to their foreign players. So the meeting decided to hold the league at four venues -- Dhaka, Chittagong, Sylhet and Mymensingh -- which will help end the league by the middle of December," said BFF's senior vice president Abdus Salam Murshed after the meeting.

The three other proposed venues -- Gopalganj, Barisal and Rajshahi -- have been dropped in face of demand of a few clubs, who had argued that extensive travel will lead to less recovery time for players.

Salam also cited that the international engagements of the national team and Sheikh Russel's participation in the AFC Cup have also inspired them to drop the venues.

The league committee also accepted the demand of the clubs to increase participation money Tk 40 lakh from proposed Tk 30 lakh.

Shakib continues CPL hot streak

STAR SPORT DESK



Star Bangladesh all-rounder Shakib Al Hasan continued his fine form in the Caribbean Premier League with a stellar all-round show that helped Jamaica Tallawahs subject St Kitts and Nevis Patriots to a crushing 108-run defeat at Sabina Park on Saturday. It topped off a great two days for the left-hander from Magura after he put in a player-of-the-match display, scoring a calm 54, to take his team home against Guyana Amazon Warriors on Friday.

Shakib backed up his unbeaten 17-ball

34 late in Tallawah's first innings of 183 for six with another late burst with the ball, scalping two wickets for just two runs in two overs to send the Patriots crashing to defeat and taking the Jamaicans to second spot on the six-team table with one game in hand.

The Patriots were put to the sword by Kumar Sangakkara's sublime 47-ball 65 with seven fours and two sixes after Jamaica were asked to bat. The Sri Lankan legend put on a 74-run partnership with Rovman Powell after Jamaica were reduced to 20 for two. After Sangakkara was out in the 16th over with the score on 139, it was up to Shakib, batting at number six, to provide the finishing ballistics. And he did so in fine style, hammering five fours and a six in his unbeaten innings, which took the Tallawahs to a formidable total.

The Patriots were clueless in the face of a stiff total and a strong Jamaica bowling attack, slipping to 53 for six after losing four wickets on the same score. Pacer Kesrick Williams took three of those while Gary Mathurin picked up the other.

Then it was left to Jamaica's foreign stars in Shakib and South Africa speedster Dale Steyn. Shamrah Brooks moved too early against the Bangladeshi left-arm spinner, who slowed his pace and dropped his length so that Sangakkara behind the stumps could do the rest and have St Kitts seven down. Sangakkara then picked up an edge from Krishmar Santokie's bat off Steyn's bowling, before a classic Shakib arm-ball scattered the bails of Tabraiz Shamsi to have the Patriots floundering at 74 for nine. Steyn then put them out of their misery a run later by cleaning up Amari Joseph.

SCORES IN BRIEF

JAMAICA: 183 for six (Sangakkara 65, Powell 35, Shakib 34 not out; Santokie 3-24, Cottrell 1-28)

ST KITT'S AND NEVIS: 75 all out in 15.5 overs (Carter 23, Lewis 17; Williams 3-19, Shakib 2-2, Steyn 2-5, Russell 2-11)

Result: Jamaica won by 108 runs
Player-of-the-match: Kumar Sangakkara



Shakib Al Hasan was in red-hot form during Jamaica Tallawahs' 108-run win over St Kitts and Nevis Patriots during their CPL match at Sabina Park on Saturday.

PHOTO: CRICINFO



National team captain Mamunul Islam heads the ball as the other players look on during the last day of the brief training camp under Tom Saintfiet at the Birshreshtha Shaheed Mostafa Kamal Stadium in Kamalapur yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

Saintfiet satisfied

SPORTS REPORTER



Belgian coach Tom Saintfiet wrapped up his six-day introductory training camp of the national team yesterday on a positive note as he expressed his satisfaction with the 28 players involved.

"We have had nine training sessions. It gave me a lot of information. I'm quite satisfied with the players' commitment and motivation. It was a pleasure to work them for six days," Saintfiet said after conducting the last session at the Birshreshtha Shaheed Mostafa Kamal Stadium yesterday.

"I see some very good quality players here even though their physical shape is not up to the mark yet, but in the coming weeks when the league starts, I am sure they will be fit. I hope to find some other players who are ready to play for the national team.

But either way, I am quite satisfied with the 28 players of the camp," said the 43-year-old veteran coach.

Saintfiet also conducted a match between the ranks, stopping the match quite a few times to relay instructions to his charges.

Over the last six days, the Belgian worked on how the team should play effectively and result-oriented football against Bhutan in the Asian Cup qualifying playoffs in September and October. He worked specifically hard on shooting, free-kicks, corner-kicks, defending and quick attacking.

In absence of striker Nabib Newaj Jibon, Hemanta Vincent Biswas was deployed upfront for the practice matches, but the fit-again midfielder apparently failed to impress in his new position.

"I have only two real strikers -- Jibon and Turzo -- in the squad, but

Jibon was absent due to sickness. Today I spoke to Jibon and [Shakhawat Hossain] Rony and hope they will be ready in the coming weeks. The more choices I have, the more opportunities I have," said Saintfiet.

"I haven't spoken yet to the federation regarding my contract as my focus was fully on the camp but I will talk to them soon and finalise it," said Saintfiet, who admitted the officials of Nigeria's Football Federation have already communicated with him after he was short-listed for the position of the Super Eagles' coach.

BFF general secretary Abu Nayeem Shohag informed that they are to sit with the Belgian today to discuss the contract. He added that Saintfiet will leave for one week before returning to Bangladesh to watch the fixtures of the upcoming Bangladesh Premier League.