

SPORT

Fahad's crowning glory

SPORTS REPORTER



The youngest FIDE Master of Bangladesh Mohammad Fahad Rahman, clinched the title of the 14th Dubai Juniors Chess Tournament, after winning a tense ninth and final round in the United Arab Emirates yesterday.

The 13-year-old chess prodigy, sponsored by Mahindra Coniva, beat Omran Al Hossaini of UAE to collect eight points from nine games and become the unbeaten champion. The triumph is yet another feather in his cap following his success in the ASEAN Age-Group (U-10) Chess Championship of Thailand in 2013 which had earned him his FIDE master title at age 10. Fahad had earlier won the title of the Asian School Chess Tournament (Under-10) in Kolkata in November, 2012.

After having forged a half-point



Fahad Rahman (3rd from R) holds the trophy of the 14th Dubai Juniors Chess Tournament after becoming the unbeaten champion yesterday. Fahad secured eight points in nine games to ensure the title, defeating CM Al Hosani Omran of UAE in the final round.

PHOTO: BANGLADESH CHESS FEDERATION

lead in the seventh round on Sunday, Fahad stayed in front of the pack by playing out a draw on

Monday against top seed FM Victor Matviishen of Ukraine in the penultimate round.

Although Matviishen and second seed Rahul Srivastava of India won their respective last

boards on Tuesday, Fahad clinched the title and won a paycheck of 2,000 dollars along with the Sheikh Maktoum Bin Hamdan Al Maktoum Cup trophy.

"It was a tough tournament for me as there were two strong opponents from India and Ukraine, who are higher rated players than me. However, I managed to beat my Indian counterpart as well as hold the Ukrainian to a draw. I am happy as I am performing well after recovering from a poor patch," Fahad said through social network yesterday.

The 13-year-old started playing chess through a tournament organised by Bangladesh Shishu Academy before drawing attention two years later when he became an age-group champion in the National School Chess Tournament in 2009. His star kept rising as he lifted the title of the National Sub-Junior Chess Champions in 2011.

Sabbir targets Test debut

SPORTS REPORTER



There was a time when Bangladesh's fitness tests used to be dominated by Mushfiqur Rahim. That the hardworking batsman would emerge as the fittest player in the team following tests was almost a given.

And then came Sabbir Rahman. The agile batsman broke into the national squad in early 2014 mainly for two reasons: his powerful hitting ability and his supreme levels of fitness. The management was so impressed by the latter trait that it compelled them to give him a chance in the national team ahead of an in-form Nasir Hossain.

Ever since then, it has generally been Mushfiqur and Sabbir battling it out towards the finish as far as the jogging, running, jumping and other fitness-related tests were concerned.

The fitness tests of the national players are currently underway and so it's still uncertain who has scored the higher numbers. However the one thing that's certain is that Sabbir is keen to top the charts again.

Topping the tests doesn't necessarily mean that he's going to be selected for all the upcoming matches, but it's a trend he wants to continue because he appears to be a fitness-freak.

"I work out throughout the year. It doesn't matter if I am in Dhaka or back home in Rajshahi. I make it a point to hit the gym and ensure that I am doing well. To be honest, I enjoy these fitness camps a lot and maybe that's why I get the best results sometimes," Sabbir told reporters following his training session at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.

While Sabbir has become a regular for the national side in both ODIs and T20Is, he is yet to play a Test and there are some who believe that Sabbir's aggressive demeanor suits the shorter versions more than Test cricket. The 24-year-old though, doesn't agree with that logic.

"I think the best ever achievement for a player is to do well in Test cricket. When he does well in this format, you know that he has true quality. If I get a chance in Tests I will definitely try to keep my place like I have done in the ODIs and T20Is.

"I don't see Test cricket as anything different. It's all about scoring runs. Look at the players around the world today. It's the aggressive players who have scored runs in Tests, apart from scoring in ODIs and T20Is. Virat Kohli just scored a double century. So it's all about how you think," he explained, adding that he would prefer playing down the order if given an opportunity.

The Tigers' next assignment against England is still more than two months away. Until then Sabbir wants to concentrate on the Bangladesh Cricket League (BCL), the country's premier four-day competition.

"If I want to enter the Test team then I have to do well in the BCL. It's a competitive league and I believe those who can do well here can replicate their performances against England," he concluded.

A 'Hero' in Tigers' den

SPORTS REPORTER



Over the last few months, 'Hero Alam' has almost gone on to become a household name through social media. Go to Facebook and there are multiple fan pages created by his followers. Go to Youtube and you will find the viewership on each of his music videos edging towards the lakh mark.

It's difficult to state as to what made his videos go viral, but whatever the reason, he has gone on to become one of the most recognised faces in the country's social media. So much so that even the national cricketers were eager to snap selfies with him.

Alom was present at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday afternoon, patiently waiting for the players at the journalist's lounge on the ground floor.

As the cricketers finished their training and headed out, each of them excitedly took out their mobile phones and snapped photos with Alom. Taskin Ahmed described him 'as our favourite hero,' while Mushfiqur Rahim described Alom as the 'one and only hero.'

It was a rather different experience for onlookers and journalists at Mirpur yesterday. For once, it was the cricketers who were craving to take selfies with an individual and not the other way around.



Bangladesh cricketers, including Test skipper Mushfiqur Rahim (L), jumped at the opportunity to take selfies with social media sensation 'Hero Alam' after training in Mirpur yesterday. PHOTO: COLLECTED

Ashwin back to number one

REUTERS, Antigua



India off-spinner Ravichandran Ashwin dethroned Pakistan's Yasir Shah to top the International Cricket Council's (ICC) Test rankings after his match-winning display against West Indies in the first Test.

The 29-year-old picked up figures of 7-83 in the second innings as the visitors cruised to an innings-and-92 runs victory inside four days in Antigua.

Leg-spinner Yasir, who became the first Pakistani bowler in 20 years to top the Test rankings, dropped to fifth after managing just one wicket in the second Test defeat against England at Old Trafford.

Ashwin, who also tops the all-rounders ranking, is followed by England's James Anderson and Stuart Broad, who both moved up one place respectively.

Joe Root's magnificent 254 in the 330-run victory against Pakistan has helped him move into the second place in the Test rankings for batsmen, behind Australian Steve Smith, who retains top spot.

England's Test skipper Alastair Cook, also moved back into the top 10 at ninth place on the back of a century and an unbeaten 76 in the second Test.

Op or not after another test

SPORTS REPORTER



Bangladesh pace sensation Mustafizur Rahman will need another examination before a final plan of action on his injured shoulder can be formulated.

Yesterday the 20-year-old met with consultant orthopaedic surgeon professor Tony Kochhar, who chairs the Sports Science department at the University of Greenwich. According to BCB sources, upon seeing Mustafizur's MRI report Kochhar recommended that the pacer, who was playing for Sussex before being laid low by a recurrence of his shoulder problem, undergo an MRI arthrogram. The arthrogram, according to Kochhar, is a special examination which will determine the exact severity of Mustafizur's SLAP tear in his left shoulder.

Once he has undergone the recommended test it will be clear whether he needs to have surgery to solve the shoulder issue. However, sources revealed that Kochhar was of the opinion that Mustafizur's shoulder was not in good shape.

When contacted, Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) physician Dr. Debashish Chowdhury said, "We have not yet

gotten the detailed report. We will get it from Dr. Kochhar through email, and then we will decide on the course of action. So far, what we have learned is that Mustafizur's problem is to do with his SLAP tear.

"In the case of a SLAP tear an operation is the solution, but we do not know the severity of his [Mustafizur's] injury. It is nothing new for us; Rubel [Hossain] has also undergone a similar surgery.

Bangladesh pace bowler Rubel Hossain had a successful operation on his injured right shoulder in South Africa in May 2012, and he was able to make a successful return to the national team in the aftermath.

"The only thing that is certain is that Mustafizur will not be playing for Sussex anymore this season," BCB director and national team manager Khaled Mahmud said. "We do not yet have the details, and so cannot say what the plan of action will be."

Mustafizur had first faced problems with his left shoulder during the National Cricket League in October last year. He had been dealing with it through shoulder-related exercises since the end of 2015. In January this year, he had injured his shoulder during the second T20I against Zimbabwe.



Sri Lanka shot out for 117

AFP, Pallekele



An unbroken stand of 59 between Steve Smith and Usman Khawaja placed Australia in firm command Tuesday of their opening Test against Sri Lanka after the hosts were bowled out for just 117.

When rain forced an early end to play on the first day in Pallekele, Australia were 66 for two, with skipper Smith (28) and his partner Khawaja (25) ramming home the advantage forged by their bowlers.

No play was possible after tea due to rain, prompting the umpires to call stumps at 4:15 pm. Play will resume on Wednesday at the earlier time of 9:45am to make up some of the overs lost by the weather.

The downpour in Pallekele cast a further gloom over the Sri Lankan side after they recorded their lowest total at the picturesque ground, undone by a combination of Australian pace and spin.

Sri Lankan captain Angelo Mathews decided to bat first on what began as a sunny day, but Australia made early inroads as they reduced the hosts to 84 for five at lunch.

They only needed a further 6.2 overs in the second session to finish off the batting line-up, with the wickets evenly spread between their fast bowlers and spinners.

Mitchell Starc, returning after eight months of injury, drew first blood for the visitors when he trapped Dimuth Karunaratne lbw for five in the fifth over, prompting the opener to call for an unsuccessful review.

Josh Hazlewood, bowling with pace and variety, then trapped Kusal Mendis lbw for eight and had Kaushal Silva caught at first slip by Adam Voges for four.

In his second spell, he had vice-captain Dinesh Chandimal caught from behind by wicketkeeper Peter Nevill 10 minutes before lunch.

Left-arm spinner Steve O'Keefe claimed the prized wicket of Mathews, caught at first slip by his opposite number Smith.

Debutant Dhananjaya de Silva scored a battling 24 but only four other Sri Lankans made it into double figures.

SCOREBOARD

SRI LANKA: First Innings				
Karunaratne lbw b Starc	5			
K Silva c Voges b Hazlewood	4			
Mendis lbw b Hazlewood	8			
Chandimal c Nevill b Hazlewood	15			
Mathews c Smith b O'Keefe	15			
De Silva c Burns b Lyon	24			
K Perera b Lyon	20			
D Perera lbw b Lyon	0			
Herath lbw b Starc	6			
Sandakan not out	19			
Pradeep c Smith b O'Keefe	0			
Extras: (lb-1)	1			
Total: (All out in 34.2 overs)	117			
Fall of wickets: 1-6, 2-15, 3-18, 4-43, 5-67, 6-87, 7-87, 8-94, 9-100.				
Bowler				
Starc	11	1	51	2
Hazlewood	10	4	21	3
O'Keefe	10.2	3	32	2
Lyon	3	0	12	3
AUSTRALIA: First Innings				
Burns b Herath	3			
Warner b Pradeep	0			
Khawaja not out	25			
Smith not out	28			
Extras: (lb-4, lb-6)	10			
Total: (For 2 wickets in 20 overs)	66			
Fall of wickets: 1-3, 2-7.				
To bat: Voges, Marsh, Nevill, O'Keefe, Starc, Hazlewood, Lyon.				
Bowler				
Pradeep	5	3	3	1
Herath	6	2	15	1
D Perera	4	1	19	0
Sandakan	2	1	13	0
Mathews	3	1	6	0



Sabbir Rahman has consistently been one of the fittest players in the Bangladesh national cricket team and even today he puts in the hours required to maintain his physique. Here he is seen lifting weights at the Mirpur Academy gym yesterday. PHOTO: STAR

CSA to apply racial quotas

REUTERS, Cape Town



Cricket South Africa (CSA) will formally introduce racial quotas at national team level, the board said on Tuesday.

The organisation has come under fire from the South African government for a lack of transformation in its national teams, leading to a ban on bidding for international tournaments that will be reviewed next year.

President Chris Nenzani said in a statement CSA will seek to "move with the times" and set a minimum number of black players to be selected in all their national teams.

He added that these "targets" would be calculated over a year and not apply on a match-by-match basis.

"In the past we had never set targets in our national teams but with changing circumstances we feel it is essential to move with the times," Nenzani said.

"The precise targets will depend on work to be undertaken by relevant committees to determine what is realistic and sustainable. This will be announced in due course."

The Proteas had already been seeking to introduce more black players into the national teams in all formats and have done so with some success.

The one-day international side that defeated Australia by 47 runs in the tri-series competition in the West Indies in June had eight players of colour for the first time ever.

CSA has already introduced quotas for the country's domestic franchise competitions where teams must field at least six players of colour, including

three black African players. South Africa's sports minister Fikile Mbalula has been critical of what he says is the slow rate of transformation in the country's major sporting codes, bar football.

The country has seen greater participation among black players across most sports at junior level despite the challenge of providing adequate school facilities in poorer districts.

But Mbalula wants to see this reflected quicker at national team level and in April slammed the federations from rugby, cricket, netball and athletics for failing to meet what he says were agreed to targets on transformation.

He banned them from bidding for or hosting international events until they met their targets, with a review of this decision scheduled for this coming April.