

SPORT

Four HP players in ODI pool

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh have selected four players from their current High Performance (HP) squad in the ODI pool for the upcoming tours against Afghanistan and England.

Aside from the regular national players, the 20-member squad, which was announced yesterday evening includes slow left-armed Mosharrif Hossain, former under-19 captain Mehedi Hasan Miraz, pace-bowling all-rounder Alauddin Babu and pacer Shubhashish Roy.

"The HP squad, in a way, works as a gateway to the national team. The squad includes players who can automatically replace a particular position in the national team whenever we need replacements. And these four players have performed the best amongst the HP players in the last few months and so we have decided to pick them," said BCB chief selector Minhajul Abedin, when asked about the move yesterday. Also in the squad is young Mosaddek

topped the list. Described as a 20-year-old who has 'a brain of a 45-year-old' by Tamim Iqbal, Mosaddek also has a brilliant record in longer version cricket. It will not be a surprise if the player, who has so far played just a solitary T20I for Bangladesh, gets a call-up for the Test series against England as well.

Alauddin Babu, Shubhashish Roy, Mehedi Hasan Miraz and Mosaddek Hossain are the only players in the side who are yet to play an ODI.

"We picked Alauddin Babu because we are looking for a fast bowling all-rounder. He has improved a lot. In the current squad Mashrafe [Bin Mortaza] is the only player who fits that role. Also, Alauddin performed the best in the matches that the HP squad played.

"Mehedi Hasan Miraz, on the other hand, has been picked for his bowling. He is a good off-spinner and we hope he can be another good option aside from Shuvagata Hom," explained Minhajul.

At the same time, good words from former Indian spinner Venkatapathy Raju, who had earlier conducted a bowling session with the Tigers, helped Mosharrif Hossain find a place



Mosharrif Hossain, who had a brilliant run in the last Dhaka Premier League. 20-year-old Mosaddek scored 622 runs and scalped 15 wickets in 16 games in the Dhaka Premier League. He also finished with a stunning batting average of 77.75 that

ODI POOL

Tamim Iqbal, Tajjul Islam, Soumya Sarkar, Mashrafe Bin Mortaza, Imrul Kayes, Shafiqul Islam, Anamul Hoque, Taskin Ahmed, Mosaddek Hossain, Rubel Hossain, Shakib Al Hasan, Shubhashish Roy Chowdhury, Mahmudullah Riyad, Mehedi Hasan Miraz, Nasir Hossain, Mosharrif Hossain, Mushfiqur Rahim, Alauddin Babu, Sabbir Rahman, Al-Amin Hossain

in the pool.

On the whole, the pool has six pacers. The uncertainty with regards to Taskin Ahmed might have compelled the selectors to keep a number of back-up options in the squad. This, along with uncertainties regarding Tamim's finger injury might be a reason for the selectors naming a pool rather than a definitive squad.

The selectors have made four changes from Bangladesh's last ODI series against Zimbabwe in 2015. Arafat Sunny, Kamrul Islam Rabbi, Jubair Hossain, Liton Das and Mustafizur Rahman featured in the last series. With Liton not in the side this time, Mushfiqur Rahim and Anamul Haque are the two keepers in the pool.



Bangladesh booters squandered numerous opportunities to take a lead to Bhutan and they left the field filled with remorse after playing out a 0-0 draw in the first leg of the Asian Cup Qualifying Playoff at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

Bhutan hold wasteful booters

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh's hopes of capitalizing on home advantage in their Asian Cup Play-Off Qualifiers

were shattered as the home side were held to a goalless draw against Bhutan at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

Bangladesh will now have to secure a win in their away match to be held in Male on October 10 if they want to progress to the 24-team Asian Cup Qualifiers in 2017.

Bangladesh coach Tom Saintfiet made drastic changes to the squad, dropping seven senior players including Mamunul Islam some 30 hours before the match, but the mixture of young and experienced players, especially striker Shakhawat Hossain Rony, frustrated the Belgian coach as well as some 3,000 spectators under floodlights.

A series of missed opportunities from Rony and substitute striker Nabib Newaj Jibon denied the home side a victory and put the booters in danger

of a play-off stage exit.

Bangladesh perhaps started on the backfoot as Saintfiet's charges looked shaky from the get-go against Bhutan, a team who have never beat Bangladesh in their footballing history. A darting run from Chencho Gyeltshen was evidence of how shaky the backline -- marshalled by Raihan Hasan, Mamun Mia, Tapu Barman and Atiqur Rahman Meshu -- was, before Mamun Mia, arguably the best player on the pitch, denied Chencho inside the box.

With Bangladesh suffering from a lack of confidence, Bhutan looked determined to turn the table as they pressed high up the slippery pitch before the boys in red and green gradually grew in confidence with winger Rubel Mia threatening the visitors from the right flank time and again.

Rubel created a couple of good opportunities to break the deadlock, but Rony squandered two sitters. First, Rony tried to volley a Rubel cross but failed to give the home side a lead in the 16th minute as he lost his composure. The striker was a bit unfortunate as his close-range header from Rubel's

cross was brilliantly saved by goalkeeper Hari Gurang in the 22nd minute.

Rony was again the culprit four minutes from the break, shooting straight at the goalkeeper after a poor clearance from Hari fell directly to his feet inside the danger zone. And the inclusion of striker Soheli Rana was questionable as the striker neither threatened the opponents nor defended deep.

After resumption, Saintfiet made three changes to pile the pressure on the opposition and it paid off, as the opponents looked unsettled in the second half. Yet, Bangladesh failed to break the deadlock. Instead, it was Bhutan who were on the verge of getting a goal. However, much to the relief of goalkeeper Ashraf Islam Rana, a curled shot from Tshering Wangdi went narrowly wide of the far post, while Tapu slid in to deny the rapid Chenchen.

After Rony's dismal finishing, Jibon was provided two fine opportunities in the dying moments of the match, but the Abahani striker unbelievably squandered both chances before Rony added to his agony by spoiling the last chance, heading a Jibon cross over the bar.



Bangladesh players have currently been pitted against each other in their practice matches during the national training camp, which ended with Shakib Al Hasan scoring his second consecutive half-century yesterday. Once they return after Eid vacations on September 18 however, the onus will be on clicking as a unit as they prepare to take on Afghanistan and England in back-to-back series.

PHOTO: STAR

'We did everything but score'

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh coach Tom Saintfiet hinted at the possibility of naturalising a foreign striker as he expressed his frustration after a goalless draw against Bhutan in the Asian Cup Qualifying Playoff first leg at the Bangabandhu National Stadium last night.

The 43-year-old Belgian praised the commitment and spirit of his players, but bemoaned the lack of finishing skills of his strikers after the hosts had spurned a number of scoring chances against the visitors.

Referring to Qatar's naturalised Uruguayan-born striker Sebastian Soria, the Belgian complained that he didn't know where to get goals from.

"I think we agree that we, Bangladesh,

did everything to score a goal," the coach said. "I could have put on a midfielder [in the second half] but we played with five players attacking the goal because I wanted to win. In the last 10 minutes I think we should have scored five to 10 goals. We had the ball but couldn't finish."

Playing with a youthful attacking line-up, the Belgian saw his most experienced striker Shakhawat Hossain Rony spurn three chances in the first half. He made three attack-minded substitutions in the second half, but nothing worked as the Bangladesh forwards did all they could except for finding the back of the net.

"Our defence was good. Our midfield was alone, but they played well. The young players played with a lot of heart. The only thing that didn't happen was a goal. We don't have strikers. I don't know what we have to do because we

can't score," lamented Saintfiet.

The coach, however, tried to see the brighter side of things as he felt a goalless draw was a much safer option to take to the away fixture than a defeat. "I came to the dug-out and some players were crying. It shows how much these players love the country. I told them we didn't lose the battle. 1-1 or 2-2 in Bhutan, we will qualify. If it was 1-1 here, it would have been more difficult. I believe with the motivation and spirit, we can win in Bhutan."

The Bhutan coach, Pema Dorji, said the result was a fair one. "Bangladesh created a number of chances, especially in the last five to 10 minutes. But I'm happy to take a draw home," Pema said. "It won't be easy in the return leg. The home game is always important because the public wants more from us. There will be crowd pressure, so it won't be easy."

Bayliss wants all to tour

STAR SPORT DESK

England coach Trevor Bayliss has said that he was keeping 'fingers crossed' for all those selected for the Test tour of Bangladesh next month to agree to tour the country despite security concerns, ESPNcricinfo reported yesterday.

Security concerns regarding the tour in October came to the fore after the July 1 militant attack on the Holey Artisan Bakery in Gulshan which left 20 dead.

The England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) green-lit the tour upon the advice of a security delegation that conducted an inspection of the relevant venues in Bangladesh in mid-August.

The two-Test series in Bangladesh will be followed by a five-Test tour of India and Bayliss is hoping for the same squad to be used for the seven-Test stretch.

"It would be a bit hard to actually pick one [squad] and then another one. That could get down to who wants to go and who doesn't I suppose, but ultimately it would be best for the team to have one team [for both tours]," Bayliss was quoted to have said in

the report.

Spin-bowling all-rounder Moeen Ali is the only England Test player to publicly confirm that he will go on the tour, while yesterday Chris Jordan had confirmed his intention to tour if selected while speaking at Old Trafford before the T20I against Pakistan. It has been reported in the British media that Test captain Alastair Cook had given private assurance that he will lead the Test side. Jonny Bairstow has also come close to confirming his participation.

Bayliss himself, as with his assistant Paul Farbrace, said he had no concerns about the trip.

When pressed if a player's place in India was directly linked to touring Bangladesh, Bayliss added: "Well, they might not say that, but it's a bridge we've got to cross if that happens. I've sort of got the fingers crossed that it doesn't occur. It might be a difficult decision if that happens."

Meanwhile, writing in his column for Daily Telegraph, former England batsman Kevin Pietersen warned ODI skipper Eoin Morgan against skipping the tour and risking a 'red cross' next to his name for ignoring the advice given by his bosses.

42ND CHESS OLYMPIAD

Men's team up to 26th

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh chess teams endured mixed fortunes in the fourth round of the 42nd Chess Olympiad in Baku, Azerbaijan on Monday.

The men's team, who had beaten Jordan by 3.5-0.5 points in the third round, beat Albania by the same margin in the fourth round on Monday to move up to 26th position. GM Ziaur Rahman, GM Niaz Murshed and GM Enamul Hossain Rajib won their boards while GM Abdullah Al Rakib drew his board.

The men's team were scheduled to take on a strong Germany side on Tuesday night. Meanwhile, the women's team dropped to 66th position after losing against Turkey by 0-4 points in the fourth round.

Cake & wishes for Fizz's 21st

SPORTS REPORTER

Mustafizur Rahman does not much enjoy his time outside his hometown. That is something that he has repeatedly said over the last year. However, the player, who is currently put up at the Bangladesh Cricket Board's Cricket Academy since he has to work on his rehab, had a good time yesterday on his birthday with wishes flowing in from all ends. He turned 21 yesterday.

All the national players hung out with the player after the practice match at Mirpur yesterday. The national team sponsors Robi Axiata later on sent the left-armed a cake at night. He was even wished by his IPL colleague David Warner, who used Google translate to wish Mustafizur in Bengali. He tweeted: "shubho jônmodin @Mustafiz90."

He also received wishes from the International Cricket Council. The ICC tweeted: "He's one of cricket's brightest young prospects - Happy Birthday to Bangladesh bowler @Mustafiz90!"



FIZZ TURNS 21: Mustafizur Rahman would have definitely preferred celebrating his 21st birthday without his shoulder sling and with his national teammates on the field. However, that won't stop him breaking into a smile. His 21st year after all was a life-changing one.

PHOTO: STAR