

SPORT

I'm fully confident after BCL: Fizz

Test squad for Sri Lanka to be named on February 22

SPORTS REPORTER

Mustafizur Rahman finished with figures of 18-7-34-1 in the first innings, followed by 13-6-13-1 in the second innings in the just-concluded third-round match of the Bangladesh Cricket League at the Fatullah Cricket Stadium. He did not take many wickets but was economical. The most encouraging fact however was that 31 overs of bowling gave him enough confidence to say that he will be able to play the full series in the coming tour of Sri Lanka if the selectors and team management keeps faith in him.

"You know, I played the second round of the BCL and I felt a little discomfort on my back. I had a little problem initially in the third round match too, but gradually everything was fine. I bowled 31 overs with ease. Playing two rounds of BCL matches helped me a lot to get back full confidence in my bowling," Mustafizur told The Daily Star over phone from his home in his beloved Sakhira last night.

"I now have full confidence to play the Sri Lanka series but the selectors and team management will take the decision about what would be best for me. I missed the Test in India, so I am looking forward to Sri Lanka, but again everything will depend on the selectors, physio and other team officials," he added.



MUSTAFIZUR RAHMAN

The national selectors had decided to feature him in the four-day BCL so that he can fully recover from his shoulder surgery before the Tigers' next assignment in Sri Lanka, especially as there was a concern about his match fitness even though he was declared medically fit.

"Initially the plan was to play only one round but I had decided to play another round to get back full confidence in my bowling and I got it. Mentally I am also fresh now and I am happy with the way I bowled in the last round of the BCL," said a confident Mustafizur.

The left-arm pacer will join the national camp on February 24 but was ready to play the fourth round of the BCL if the management advises him to do so.

"I am really impressed with the way he bowled in the second innings. I think he got back his rhythm, so there is no need for him to play the fourth-round match. You can only know whether he will be in the Test team or not when we announce it but I can say that he is ready to play the full series in Sri Lanka," said chief selector Minhajul Abedin.

The selectors are likely to announce the Test team first on February 22 for the Sri Lanka tour.



Opener Sharmin Akhter (L) scored a vital half-century after medium pacer Jahanara Alam (not pictured) took three wickets, the last of which was that of Ireland tail-ender Lucy O'Reilly (R), during Bangladesh women's team's seven-wicket victory in their first Super Six match of the ICC Women's World Cup Qualifier at the Colombo Cricket Club Ground yesterday.



PHOTOS: ICC

Tigresses outclass Ireland

SPORTS REPORTER

A superb effort from the bowlers and an accomplished chase by the batters, in particular opener Sharmin Akhter, led the Bangladesh women's cricket team to a seven-wicket victory over Ireland in their first Super Six match of the ICC Women's World Cup Qualifiers at the Colombo Cricket Club Ground yesterday.

Ireland set the Tigresses a paltry total of 145 to win in 50 overs and Bangladesh, riding on an 85-ball 52 from Sharmin, reached the target in 39.1 overs.

Sharmin hit five boundaries and was part of two crucial partnerships.

Her opening stand with Sharmin Sultana (22 off 50 balls) realised 40 runs in 15 overs. Sharmin then built a vital 53-run third-wicket partnership with Fargana Hoque before the half-century fell to leg-spinner Ciara Metcalfe. That was the last of Ireland's joy as skipper Rumana Ahmed scored a brisk 24 and took the team home in the company of Fargana, who finished with a 57-ball 34.

Earlier, skipper Rumana called correctly at the toss and unleashed her bowlers on Ireland, who were soon in trouble at 15 for two in the ninth over. Bangladesh medium pacer Jahanara Alam took both wickets -- those of opener Cecelia Joyce and Kim Garth -- by getting the batters to edge to keeper Nigar Sultana.

Ireland then suffered a twin blow when, after a 45-run stand between Meg Kendal and Clare Shillington (36-ball 37), both departed within two runs of each other as off-spinners Khadija Tul Kubra and Salma Khatun got among the wickets. A 44-run fifth-wicket partnership between skipper Laura Delaney (68-ball 37) and Isobel Joyce followed.

but when the latter was trapped in front by the medium pace of Panna Ghosh, it set off a collapse of the last five wickets for 38 runs. Jahanara picked up three wickets while Panna, Khadija and Rumana picked up two each.

The four teams to progress from the Super Six stage will qualify for the ICC Women's World Cup this summer in England. However, Bangladesh will need to win all their Super Six matches, or at least two if other results go their way, to qualify as they have a losing record against fellow Group B qualifiers Pakistan and South Africa. Points from matches played in the group stages are carried through to the Super Six stage.

Bangladesh's next match is against India tomorrow.

SCORES IN BRIEF	
IRELAND: 144 all out in 47.2 overs (Delaney 37, Shillington 37; Jahanara 3-21, Panna 2-16, Khadija 2-26, Rumana 2-50)	BANGLADESH: 145 for 3 in 39.1 overs (Sharmin 52, Fargana 34 not out, Rumana 24 not out; Metcalfe 1-33)
Result: Bangladesh won by 7 wickets	



Jamaican sprint superstar Usain Bolt points towards his signature after winning the Laureus 'Sportsman of the Year' award during a gala in Monaco on Tuesday.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

LAUREUS WORLD AWARDS

Bolt 2016's best sportsman

World's "greatest" sprinter Usain Bolt pipped the likes of Cristiano Ronaldo and LeBron James to win the 'Sportsman of the Year' trophy for a record-equalling fourth time, while gymnast Simone Biles clinched the top honour in the women's category at the Laureus World Awards at a glittering ceremony.

They are the little and large of sport - while Bolt stands 1.95 metres, Biles measures just 1.45 metres - but they were both giants at the Rio Olympics, and enjoyed an ecstatic welcome as they received their statuettes here, the birthplace of the first ever Laureus awards 17 years ago.

Bolt, who won this award in 2009, '10 and '13, walked away with the 'Oscar of Sports' for the fourth time, thereby joining tennis legends Roger Federer and Serena Williams, and surfer Kelly Slater as four-time Laureus award winners.

Bolt received his award from legendary Michael Johnson, who

urged him not to break other people's records. To which Bolt responded by saying "sorry".

"I am sorry to have broken your record," Bolt told Johnson.

"Thanks for the wonderful award. Laureus is one of the biggest awards for me. This is my 4th award and to be equalling it with someone like Roger Federer is great. I am kin great company. It is special," he added.

Olympic gymnastics champion Biles notched up the 'Sportswoman of the Year' trophy, riding on her brilliant achievement at the Rio Games last year, where she finished with four yellow metals and a bronze.

The most decorated Olympian of all-time, Michael Phelps bagged the 'Comeback of the Year' award after returning to the swimming pool and scooping five more gold medals.

After the 2012 Olympics, Phelps retired from swimming but came out of the retirement and subsequently at the Rio Games last year, he bagged as many as five gold medals and a silver.

"Looking back at my career today, I can say that Rio was my greatest race," said Phelps after getting the award.

Formula One champion Nico

Roseberg claimed the 'Breakthrough of the Year' award. He ended runner-up in 2014 and 2015 but finally won the title last year.

Roseberg said that the last two laps in Abu Dhabi was the "most sensational moment in my racing career."

"I am really happy to have won the 'Oscar of Sports'. The last two laps in Abu Dhabi, I didn't know if my life's dream was coming true. That stands second behind my wife giving birth to our girl," said Roseberg after winning the award.

In other categories, Italy's Beatrice Vio, the only quadruple amputee in international wheelchair fencing, clinched the disability award, while the Olympic refugee team, led by Tegla Loroupe, won the Laureus Sport for Good award for sporting inspiration at the function, which was hosted by Hollywood star Hugh Grant.

The world's greatest downhill mountain biker Rachel Atherton won the Action Sportsperson of the year, while Leicester City bagged a special Laureus Spirit of Sport award to mark their remarkable achievement by winning English football's premier league.

When will national school football start?

SPORTS REPORTER

After Bangladesh national football team's debacle against Bhutan in the Asian Cup Qualifying play-offs, there have been some bold recommendations from all stakeholders to concentrate on grassroots and youth development in a bid to strengthen the pipelines for the senior national teams. The Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) has also responded well by including some programmes for grassroots and youth level in the much-talked-about four-year calendar. However, the game's governing body is clearly struggling to maintain the calendar.

The BFF has already completed the conditioning camp of the national team and the second Division Football League is going on as per schedule. They have deferred the Under-18 National Football Championship from January to March to allow special training for the participating district teams, but they are seemingly inactive about holding the National School Championships, which was supposed to start from February 1.

"We cannot hold the school championship due to a financial crisis even though I have already placed three proposals to start the tournament from union, upazila or district level," School Tournament

Committee chairman Bijon Barua said. "We will need some Tk 2.5 to 3 crore to start the tournament from upazila level while we will need Tk 1 crore to start the tournament with one school each from 64 districts."

The former national goalkeeper added: "As far as I know the expenditure of the school tournament has been included in the FIFA Forward Programme which is supposed to be approved at the meeting of the FIFA development committee later this month."

"If I am provided with the funds now, I can start the tournament in March as I have completed the groundwork," said Bijon, who had successfully arranged the Pioneer Football League four times over three-and-a-half years.

Bijon, however, believes that the country's football will not develop unless the school football tournament is held regularly.

"It is hard to develop the country's football without school football, a stage from where many famous footballers including some BFF officials emerged in the past. It is beyond imagination that players now get a chance in the national team without playing school, district and divisional football competitions," opined Bijon.

Mahmudullah lifts Quetta to 148

STAR SPORT DESK

Bangladesh all-rounder Mahmudullah Riyad scored an unbeaten 29 off 20 deliveries in his first Pakistan Super League outing as Quetta Gladiators posted 148 for 6 in their allotted 20 overs against defending champions Islamabad United last night.

The 31-year-old hard-hitting batsman struck two fours and a six in his short cameo at the Sharjah Cricket Stadium to end the Quetta innings with a flourish after Asad Shafiq (45) and Ahmed Shehzad had given the side a solid start. Thisara Perera (27) was also among the runs for Quetta.

A late draftee by his franchise, Mahmudullah had flown off to Dubai on Monday night after the end of Bangladesh's one-off Test against India in Hyderabad and he seemed to gel in seamlessly in his first outing in Pakistan's Twenty20 franchise league.

'Ashwin is the Don of bowling'

AFP, New Delhi

Former skipper Steve Waugh has warned that Australia's only hope of beating India in their upcoming series is by taming Ravichandran Ashwin, branding the record-breaking spinner "the Bradman of bowling".

After the off spinner became the fastest bowler to claim 250 Test wickets last weekend, Waugh paid Ashwin the ultimate Australian compliment by comparing him to the game's greatest batsman, the late Donald Bradman.

"He is the Bradman of bowling. Ashwin is doing what Don Bradman did with batting. Pretty incredible stuff and he is a handy batsman too," Waugh was quoted as saying in the Times of India on Wednesday.



STEVE WAUGH

"Ashwin is the player that Australia have to overcome and probably then we have a chance. His record in India is just phenomenal," said Waugh, who was attending an awards ceremony in Monaco.

Australia have not won a Test in India since their 2-1 series victory in 2004 and few observers give them much hope of success this time round against what is

currently the world's number one ranked team.

India are on a record-breaking 19-Test unbeaten run and have also won six series on the trot under the captaincy of their star batsman Virat Kohli.

Ashwin is the team's undoubted star bowler, ranked number one in Test bowling rankings and top of the allrounders' list after picking up 61 wickets in the last three series -- all of them at home.

"India are very hard to beat in India and that has been proved in the last couple of years. They are a very settled side and everyone is very confident in their role," said Waugh.

The four-match series between India and Australia begins in Pune on February 23. The other Tests are in Bangalore, Ranchi and Dharamsala.