

SPORT

'Unfriendly conditions an advantage'



SANJAMUL ISLAM

SPORTS REPORTER

Six months ago, even the most optimistic Sanjamul Islam fans would not have expected the slow left-armed to make the Champions Trophy squad in England. Today, the 27-year-old uncapped player is not only a part of the 15-member Champions Trophy squad but will also be travelling to Ireland to play the tri-nation series.

A regular performer in domestic cricket, Sanjamul was never really noticed due to the army of left-arm bowlers Bangladesh possesses. However, with Arafat Sunny and Mosharraf Hossain out of national reckoning, Sanjamul was picked as the left-arm option for the Sri Lanka series and eventually into the big league.

Speaking to reporters yesterday, an excited Sanjamul said that he hopes to make an impact on the big stage. "These are big events, the tri-nation series and the Champions Trophy. I did not get a chance to play in Sri Lanka and that was a bit unfortunate. But being selected for these two competitions has boosted me up again," Sanjamul said.

"Before being selected for the Sri Lanka series I watched international cricket on TV. In Sri Lanka I watched it from the dugout, and there's plenty of difference. I practised with the team, stayed with them and gained a lot of valuable experience," he added.

The left-armed, who has taken more than 200 first-class wickets and has a fine List A bowling average of 26.92, is not afraid of bowling on the seaming wickets of England.

"If you bowl in these conditions you need to concentrate a lot and that's an advantage. If you do well, your value increases. It is challenging, but it's good for you as a player," he explained.

Sabbir Rahman, Sanjamul's senior colleague in terms of international experience, reiterated Sanjamul's views and expects Bangladesh to do well in the Champions Trophy.

"We are playing in the Dhaka Premier League to gain confidence. Yes, the wicket and the weather here are different, but scoring runs anywhere can do you plenty of good. Aside from playing in the league, we are practising in simulated conditions that will help us bat in England," said Sabbir.

"As a team, if we give our 100 percent, we can beat any side. We are not focused on the opponent. We want to give our best. So our first target is to play good cricket. I want to show the world how well I play in the big event," he added.

Action analyst to train coaches

SPORTS REPORTER

A bowling analyst from England is scheduled to arrive in Bangladesh next month in order to train coaches on aspects dealing with bowling actions.

According to Nasir Ahmed, who has worked as a computer analyst for the national team for a long time and is now involved in the committee that deals with correcting the actions of domestic bowlers, Pete Williams, a level 3 cricket coach and level 3 coach education assessor will arrive on May 7 to work on the technical aspects with the coaches.

Speaking to reporters yesterday, Nasir spoke about how he has been working with 12 bowlers who were called for their bowling actions in the first division cricket league last season.

"We have two new softwares and we also have high-definition cameras. The bowlers are asked to bowl in this environment. After that the panel views the video and with the help of the software we can estimate the degree of bend in the arm.

"If a bowler is clean he is allowed to go back. However, if he isn't he has to go through a rehab process until he is ready to give the test again," explained Nasir.

Siddikur's sparkling finish in Japan

SPORTS REPORTER



Bangladesh's premier golfer, Siddikur Rahman played a scintillating final round to finish tied for ninth position in the Panasonic Open in Japan yesterday. The 32-year-old, who started the final day at 37th position and eight shots behind the leader, carded a barrage of birdies at the Chiba Country Club to make his second top-ten finish in the Asian Tour season. Siddikur ended with eight-under-par (276), just three shots behind eventual winner Kenichi Kuboya of Japan.

"I really enjoyed all four days here in Japan. I holed many long putts today which helped me to finish really strongly. Also, I played without any pressure today and that helped too. The only pressure I felt this week was on Friday where I was trying to make the cut. After that, I started to enjoy myself on the golf course and I'm happy I managed to end the week with a top-10 finish," Siddikur told Asiantour.com at the end of the day's play.

The two-time Asian Tour winner had made it into the weekend rounds right at the cut-line after earlier rounds of 72 and 70. A two-under-par in the third round brightened his chances of a respectable finish, but a sparkling six-under (65) in the fourth round – the second best score of the round – meant he pocketed a hefty paycheque of 34,652 dollars from this



event. Against the seven birdies he hit yesterday, the only blemish was a bogey on the eighth hole. But if not for that bogey, Siddikur might have even been in the fight for the title of this prestigious event.

The title, meanwhile, went to Kuboya, who defeated compatriot Katsumasa Miyamoto at the first play-off hole after both had ended the fourth round with aggregate scores of 11-under-par (273).

Siddikur further said that this performance will help him do even better in the Yeangder Heritage in Taiwan starting this Thursday. "Performances like today are the kind which I draw a lot of confidence from. I finished second in Bangladesh and with another top-10 result this week, it'll help with my world ranking too. I'm headed to Taiwan with lots of self-belief now."

Mirpur unlikely for Pak matches

SPORTS REPORTER



Bangladesh is likely to host Pakistan in Fatullah, Khulna and Chittagong during their tour in July-August this year. The Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium is currently undergoing renovation work, which might take up to August to be completed. Pakistan, however, are expected to arrive in the first week of July.

"The itinerary is yet to be finalized, but the venues are likely to be outside of Dhaka. Fatullah, Khulna and Chittagong are the frontrunners to host the matches. The Mirpur stadium is not likely to be ready before the Pakistan series. It might just make it in time for the Australia series though," Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) director Jalal Yunus told The Daily Star yesterday.

While the itinerary is not finalised, the series might witness three ODIs, two Tests and two T20Is.

The change in venue could be good news for fans in Khulna, who do not often get to witness international matches. The last time an ODI took place there was in 2012. In 2015 though, Bangladesh played a Test against Pakistan there and the fans were lucky enough to witness a world record stand between Imrul Kayes and Tamim Iqbal for the opening wicket in the second innings.

On another note, the committee that was formed by the BCB on Saturday to investigate the second division match that saw a bowler from Lalmatia Club leak 92 runs in four balls as a form of protest against the umpires, began researching on the issue.

"We spoke to the bowler, to the captain of the team and a number of others. We have also received the report from ACSU (Anti Corruption and Security Unit). We are trying to find out what led to such an incident. This has tarnished Bangladesh cricket's image worldwide and we are taking this seriously. We will not let anyone intentionally tarnish the image of Bangladesh cricket," said Yunus.

'Tamim and I are the messiest'

STAR SPORT DESK



As he has been for the last seven years, Shakib Al Hasan is a fixture in the Kolkata Knight Riders set-up when the Indian Premier League rolls around every year. And being part of one of the more celebrated teams in the most popular T20 franchise tournament in the world, Bangladesh's newly-appointed T20I skipper draws attention from local Indian media as well. Yesterday, during practice, Indian cricket website Cricbuzz caught up with Shakib to do a light-hearted 'off the cuff' interview, and it revealed the lighter side of the usually guarded superstar.

EYES ON WC19

"Win the World Cup," was the simple answer from the top-ranked all-rounder when asked about his cricketing dream. During the recent Sri Lanka tour, former Sri Lanka captain Arjuna Ranatunga had said that Bangladesh have a good chance of winning the 2023 World Cup, but Shakib reiterated his opinion that they may not have to wait that long.

"Preparations are going on nice and I think we have a very good chance in the 2019 World Cup too. The way we are progressing, we will be a very competitive



side in the upcoming WC too," he told Cricbuzz.

When asked whether he would choose a World Cup win over a Test series victory, he chose the World Cup. What if it was a series win against the number one Test side, and what if it was against the top-ranked team in their own backyard? 'World Cup' was the reply each time.

REGRETS AND TRIUMPHS

His cricketing regrets, meanwhile, are predictable, especially if you have been following Bangladesh cricket.

"Ahh! There are actually two," Shakib answered. "2012 Asia Cup final where we lost to Pakistan by two runs [Shakib was the player-of-the-tournament]. And the [2016] T20 World Cup game against India [in

Bangalore, where Bangladesh lost after needing two to win off three balls]."

Despite choosing a World Cup win over a Test series victory against a top-ranked side, Shakib's best cricketing moments have come in Tests. "As a team, winning against England recently [in October 2016 in Dhaka]. Personally, the 200 I scored against New Zealand [at Wellington in January 2017]."

DRESSING ROOM INSIGHTS

Surprisingly, Shakib has named himself as the laziest, messiest and most vocal player in the Bangladesh set-up. "In KKR, there is hardly anyone [who can be called most vocal]. Maybe, Robin [Uthappa]. In the national team, it is me.

"In KKR, Kuldeep Yadav [is the laziest] (laughs). In Bangladesh, it's me."

He however shared the 'messiest' honour with national teammate Tamim Iqbal. "Here most of us are like that. In the national team, it is me and Tamim Iqbal."

He added that in the nets he loved batting against Bangladesh ODI skipper Mashrafe Bin Mortaza.

Half the El Clasico watchers late last night might be disappointed to know who Shakib is a 'fan-boy' of. When asked to give the name of one sportsperson he 'can't stop fan-boying about', the answer was Lionel Messi.



Rangpur skipper Fuad scores from the spot against BKSP in the second match of the final round of Walton U-18 National Football Championship, which kicked off at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

U-18 NATIONAL FOOTBALL Dhaka off to winning start

SPORTS REPORTER



Dhaka got off to a winning start in the final round of the Walton U-18 National Football Championship at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday. Dhaka beat Rajshahi 1-0, thanks to an expertly converted spot kick from Emon in the 83rd minute of the match.

In the other match of the day, BKSP drew 1-1 against Rangpur. Fuad gave Rangpur the lead from a penalty kick in the 72nd minute, but BKSP equalised 13 minutes later through Kabir.

Earlier, deputy sports minister Arif Khan Joy inaugurated the eight-team final round where FM Iqbal bin Anwar, additional director of Walton, was present, along with Bangladesh Football Federation officials.

Barisal will take on Satkhira while Chittagong will play against Sylhet in the two matches at the same venue today.

U-16 women booters win big

SPORTS REPORTER

The Bangladesh under-16 women's football team bounced back with a commanding 4-1 win over Shaanxi under-15 women's team, according to a report sent from the Bangladesh Football Federation yesterday.

Coming into the match on the back of a 1-0 defeat against China's under-14 women's team, the visitors started the match brightly and took the lead eight minutes in when left-winger Marzia scored with a wonderful strike. Skipper Krishna Rani Sarkar doubled the tally on the 32nd minute before Sirat Jahan Swapna extended Bangladesh's lead. During the 84th minute, Lou Xiemei reduced the deficit to 3-1 for the Chinese outfit, but Sultana scored the fourth for Bangladesh in the 88th minute after receiving a pass from Monica.

Bangladesh are scheduled to play against China's under-14 women's team again today.

Cricket scrapped from Asian Games

SPORTS REPORTER



It seems cricket, Bangladesh's second most successful discipline in the Asian Games, has been scrapped from the roster for the upcoming edition scheduled to be held in Indonesia next year.

Bangladesh has so far won a gold medal, two silver medals and a bronze medal in cricket in the last two editions since cricket's introduction into the regional sporting extravaganza in 2010. In the 2010 edition in Guangzhou, Bangladesh men's team won the gold medal – Bangladesh's only gold so far in Asian Games – while the women's team won the silver medal. Even though the men's team could only manage a bronze in 2014 in Incheon, the women's team held on to their silver medal.

However, according to an Olympic Committee of Asia (OCA) circular, cricket will not be part of the 2018 roster as the OCA looks to cut costs by reducing the number of sports, disciplines and events. The circular reads:

"As you are aware, the OCA has been discussing with the Indonesia Asian Games Organising Committee (INASGOC) to reduce the sports programme of the 18th Asian Games to make it more cost effective," writes director general Hisain Al Musallam. "As per the agreement reached with

INASGOC, the sports programme has now been reduced to 39 sports, 53 disciplines and 426 events."

The website also provided a list of all the disciplines and corresponding events to take place in the games, which will take place in Jakarta and Palembang from August 18 to September 2 next year, with no mention of cricket.

Meanwhile, Bangladesh Olympic Association's (BOA) director general Brigadier General Fakhruddin Haider confirmed that they have received a letter from OCA in this regard. "We received a letter on April 20, which said that cricket, among a few sports, will be scrapped from the upcoming edition, while bridge will be added as a new sport."

BOA's deputy general secretary Ashiqur Rahman Miku said they will sit with different federations regarding the Asian Games and discuss this issue at that time. However, a Bangladesh Cricket Board spokesman, when contacted last night, said they have not received any official information regarding cricket's exclusion from the Asian Games.

International Cricket Council's (ICC) chief executive David Richardson, meanwhile, claimed that the decision to scrap cricket has not yet been finalised and that the ICC might take up the issue with Asian Games organisers after discussing the issue at its development committee meeting next week.

DHAKA PREMIER LEAGUE End of Tigers' participation?

SPORTS REPORTER

There is a possibility that the national players may not feature in the Dhaka Premier League any more this season as the inclement weather has forced organisers to reschedule the fourth round of the competition.

The fourth and fifth rounds of the competition as per the new schedule will take place on April 26 and 28 respectively. However, the national players are scheduled to depart for Sussex for their conditioning camp on the night of April 26.

According to Bangladesh Cricket Board cricket operations chairman Akram Khan, the players scheduled to play on the 26th will play their games before boarding the flight. However, only time will tell if the players will actually go on to play that day.

If things go as per Akram's words, then Mosaddek Hossain, Taskin Ahmed, Mahmudullah Riyad, Mashrafe Bin Mortaza and Mushfiqur Rahim will play the fourth round and then leave.