

SPORT

Batsmen shine in unbearable heat

SPORTS REPORTER

A Facebook status from former Bangladesh captain and current Prime Bank Cricket Club coach Khaled Masud shone a light on how much the cricketers have to suffer for their art when the Dhaka Premier League is played at the height of the scorching Bangladeshi summer.

He described in detail the pains that batsmen have to undertake to play long innings, wondering whether they can give their best in the apex proving ground for national selection.

"It is probably not possible to postpone the matches this season, but it is possible to think about the dates for next season," wrote Masud in a lengthy post last evening. "I am requesting the BCB [Bangladesh Cricket Board] to finish the season's one-day or longer-version matches by mid-April."

However, while the heat may militate against the players giving their best day in and day out, there have been enough encouraging performances from professional domestic cricketers.

"It is always a great pleasure to watch Liton [Das] playing a big knock," Abahani coach and former national skipper Khaled Mahmud thus praised his opener who finished the first phase of the competition as the highest scorer.

The wicketkeeper-batsman scored 578 runs in 10 innings with two hundreds and three fifties and Mahmud believed that many more will come from the in-form batsman in the Super League, which will start from May 24 at BKSP and Fatullah.

"Liton is an excellent player and watching his batting is a different taste. Initially he struggled to convert his good starts into big ones but I talked with him and then he was just outstanding," said Mahmud.

"I think batting in the first phase was brilliant. Most of our batsmen played positive cricket. Some

familiar faces like Naeem Islam [527 runs], Junaed Siddique [490], Anamul Haque [463] and Rakibul Hasan [444] played good cricket and there was another batsman -- Robiul Islam Robi [457] -- who also justified his talent this season," he continued.

There was a time when teams believed that 240-250 would be good enough scores to win the match but now players believe that they can chase down anything. "Players are very positive and confident now to chase down any total. I will request you to see the Abahani-Mohammedan match. The competition among the players is very high. Everybody knows that if they want to draw the attention of the [national] selectors they must come up with big scores because how else can you challenge any current national player? The standard of practice has improved greatly," said Mahmud.

The bowling was however a concern for Mahmud as he believed that pace bowlers did not show much aptitude to bowl according to a plan on flat pitches, except left-arm pacer Abu Hider, who is the only pace bowler in the top five of the wicket-takers' list with 22 wickets.

It was however the left-arm spinners -- Arafat Sunny (28 wickets), Taijul Islam (25), Nihaduzzaman (23) and Abdur Razzak (21) -- who dominated the proceedings.

"Yes, Sunny bowled well but overall the bowling is a concern. I am not impressed by the bowler's performance in the first phase. Our pace bowlers should learn the craft of how to execute plans on flat surfaces," opined Mahmud.

Finally, Mahmud wholeheartedly thanked the players for playing good cricket in such scorching heat. "You know, even when it's almost unbearable to watch the match from the sidelines, the players give their hundred per cent in the middle under such heat, so they deserve special credit."

Considering the immense heat, the Cricket Committee of Dhaka Metropolitan (CCDM) has decided to give two days break in between the Super League matches.



ARAFAT SUNNY



LITON DAS



Bangladesh ODI captain Mashrafe Bin Mortaza bowls at opener Soumya Sarkar during net practice on the centre wicket of the Malahide Cricket Club in Dublin yesterday. The Tigers will take on New Zealand in the last tri-series match tomorrow.

PHOTO: BCB

Mustafizur on an all-time high

SPORTS REPORTER



Bangladesh pace sensation Mustafizur Rahman moved up to a career-best 18th in the ICC Players Rankings for ODI bowlers, informed an ICC press release issued

yesterday.

The left-arm pacer, dubbed the cutter master for his slower-ball variations that have flummoxed batsmen the world over, has taken six wickets in the tri-series in Ireland that included a four-wicket haul against the home side in their third game that Bangladesh won by eight wickets on May 19. With one game still to go against New Zealand, against whom he took two wickets, on May 24 he has the chance to move further.

The 22-year-old, who has shown that he is getting his pace and rhythm back in the

tournament after recovering from shoulder operation, is now placed just beneath South African quick Dale Steyn with 583 points. In his 17 ODIs since June 2015 he has taken 42 wickets at an average of 15.28.

Bangladesh opener Soumya Sarkar has also moved up seven places to 27th after scoring two half centuries in the tournament.

Meanwhile, according to the ICC rankings predictor Bangladesh can clinch the sixth position in the ICC rankings if they beat New Zealand in the last match of the tri-series tomorrow. They will gain two ranking points to go level with Sri Lanka on 93 and it will help them in their qualification bid for the 2019 ICC World Cup as hosts England and seven other

top-ranked sides gain direct places on 30 September 2017. Losing the match, however, will see them lose a point and sit just two clear of eighth-placed Pakistan.



Pay dispute won't distract us: Stoinis

TIMES OF INDIA

Australia all-rounder Marcus Stoinis is confident the pay dispute engulfing Australian cricket won't prove a distraction for Steve Smith's men during the upcoming Champions Trophy in the UK.

Australia is one of the favourites for the prestigious 50-over tournament starting on June 1 but the festering pay dispute is hovering over the team. The dispute shows no signs of abating before the June 30 deadline and Australian players have warned of a boycott after that date if resolution can't be brokered. The sticking point between the sparring parties is centred on a revenue sharing model that Cricket Australia wants to overhaul in a bid for greater flexibility to deliver funds.

"It's not really been talked about, it is what it is," Stoinis said on Sunday. "This kind of stuff happens when the MOU is up and we've got the ACA looking at that on our behalf. Hopefully, it doesn't get to that stage [strike action], nobody wants to see that happen."

"I don't think it will happen ... but we'll see. We're here to play cricket and try and win this tournament," he added.

TOP FIVE BATSMEN

Player	Mat	Runs	HS	Ave	100	50
Liton Das	10	578	136	57.80	2	3
Naeem Islam	10	527	123	65.87	2	2
Junaed Siddique	11	490	114	79.41	2	2
Anamul Haque	11	463	97	42.09	0	5

TOP FIVE BOWLERS

Player	Mat	Wkts	Ave	Econ	4	5
Arafat Sunny	11	28	17.53	4.82	1	2
Taijul Islam	11	25	19.04	4.72	1	1
Nihaduzzaman	11	23	19.82	4.58	1	0
Abu Hider	11	22	20.36	4.67	3	0

Kumble asks for more

PTI, Mumbai

Chief coach Anil Kumble and skipper Virat Kohli proposed on Monday a massive hike to the tune of 150 per cent for Grade A players in the central contracts and a substantial raise for the support staff.

In Hyderabad, Kumble gave a detailed presentation to the Committee of Administrators (COA) along with BCCI office-bearers - CEO Rahul Johri, joint secretary Amitabh Chaudhary and treasurer Aniruddh Chaudhary.

Skipper Kohli was not in Hyderabad and interacted with the panel separately via Skype.

As of now, Grade A players get Rs 2 crore, Grade B Rs 1 crore and Grade C Rs 50 lakh.

As per reliable sources, both Kumble and Kohli feel that players in Grade A, who are certain in all formats should be getting in the range of Rs 5 crore for one season.

Vinod Rai and Vikram Limaye heard everything that Kumble and Kohli had to say and they have instructed the BCCI office-bearers to take note of Kumble's presentation.

"Although Anil and Virat spoke separately, both stressed on the fact that performers in Test cricket should be kept in the highest bracket. Also there is someone like Cheteshwar Pujara, who is not getting IPL contracts whereas someone like Pawan Negi, who doesn't even play Ranji Trophy gets Rs 8.5 crore for 45 days. That's something that needs to be worked out," a senior BCCI source.

SOUTH ASIAN BASKETBALL

Cagers face India today in title decider

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh continued their winning spree in the 5th South Asian Basketball Championship by winning their third match on the trot in Maldives yesterday.

Riding on to the back of victories over Nepal and Sri Lanka, Bangladesh comfortably triumphed over hosts Maldives yesterday by a score of 86-52 points. Shamsuzzaman Khan Shoeb was adjudged the best player of the match.

The win also means Bangladesh will play against India today in what has turned out to be the virtual final of the league-format championship.

India, who also won all three of their matches so far, beat Sri Lanka by 88-61 points in their encounter yesterday.

India are the four-time defending champions of this event. The team with the most points from this event will qualify for the FIBA Asia Cup 2017 in Beirut, Lebanon.



A Bangladesh player tries to stave off a dunk from his Maldivian counterpart during their match of the 5th South Asian Basketball Championship in Male yesterday. Bangladesh won the encounter by 86-52 points.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

Stokes happy to choose Eng

AGENCIES, London

Ben Stokes has no qualms about having to miss the IPL final with Rising Pune Supergiant, saying England duties will always take precedence over domestic competitions.

He was absent in the play-offs, where Pune reached the final before losing by one run to Mumbai Indians in a thrilling contest on Sunday.

Kevin Pietersen, former T20 star turned commentator for this year's IPL, blasted the decision for Stokes to join up with an England training squad in Spain, rather than compete for Pune, but the 25-year-old is happy with his lot.

"Playing for England is always the main priority in decisions like that. It was made very clear at the start of the tournament."

'We want to improve against Bangladesh'

AFP, Dublin



New Zealand captain Tom Latham is still looking for improvement when the Blackcaps aim for a clean sweep of victories in the final match of the one-day international Tri-Series against Bangladesh in Clontarf on Wednesday.

An emphatic 190-run success against hosts Ireland at Malahide on Sunday ensured the Blackcaps will win the trophy but for Latham the important point was that a team missing many leading players was getting better with every game.

"You try to improve each game and we did that today," said Latham, who led from the front with a century against Ireland as New Zealand continued their build-up to next month's Champions Trophy tournament in England.

"You talk about each player doing their jobs and playing their role and everybody did that today and that was the most pleasing thing," said Latham, who is filling in as skipper until Kane Williamson returns from the Indian Premier League.

"We want to improve again against Bangladesh and give the selectors plenty to think about going into the Champions Trophy."

The first two New Zealand players back from the IPL, Matt Henry and Corey Anderson, played on Sunday with Henry the most successful bowler, taking three for 36 as Ireland were dismissed for just 154 in response to the Blackcaps' 344 for six.

"It was nice to have the experienced guys back from the IPL and playing a part," added Latham. "That is important moving forward to the Champions Trophy and hopefully they can contribute again in the next match."



TOM LATHAM

Swadhinata KS Sr Div champs

Sponsors Saif Powertec threaten pullout

SPORTS REPORTER



Swadhinata Krira Sangha emerged as unbeaten champions from the Saif Powertec Senior Division Football League after playing out a 1-1 draw against PWD Sporting Club at Birshrestha Shaheed Mostafa Kamal Stadium in Kamalapur yesterday.

With a defeat, three draws and seven wins from 11 matches, Swadhinata KS topped the 12-team table with 24 points, one more than runners-up

Wari Club who finished with seven wins and two draws. The top two sides have secured places for next season's Bangladesh Championship League.

In the day's other match, Shadharan Bima KS handed a 2-0 defeat to Bangladesh Boys to avoid relegation. Badda Jagarani Sangsad were demoted to the second division as a result.

However, a lot of match-fixing allegations were raised in the just concluded league and sponsor Saif Powertec's managing director Tarafder Ruhul Amin has threatened to pull out of the four-year sponsorship deal if the game's governing body does not take

initiatives to punish teams who allegedly played fixed matches.

"We can't tolerate it [match fixing] because we are sponsoring football with our hard-earned money. If the football federation does not take initiatives to punish those clubs who played fixed matches, we will withdraw all type of sponsorship from football," said Tarafder.

Saif Powertec signed a four-year deal this year to sponsor the First, Second and Third Division Football Leagues. They also earned a five-year sponsorship deal for the Bangladesh Premier League last season.