

BCB's vision needs to include all levels

BISHWAJIT ROY

 The Bangladesh Under-19 team had a tremendous build-up to the last ICC Under-19 World Cup, which took place in Bangladesh in 2016 and under the leadership of Mehedi Hasan the home side achieved their best result in the tournament by finishing third.

The Under-19 cricket team is always in focus as a number of the current national stars showed glimpses of their calibre during stints with the junior side before breaking into the senior team.

With another Youth World Cup knocking on the door, everyone is curious about the new talent and the team's chances in the next World Cup, scheduled to be held in New Zealand from January 13 next year.

The group of budding cricketers started their preparations for the mega event almost nine months ago and the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) has already hired Australian Damien Wright to fill the position of head coach and nurture them.

It is believed that there is no dearth of talent in the team, but they are lacking in international matches, which could add valuable experience ahead of the looming challenge in New Zealand.

There were plans of playing a tri-series in India involving Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and the hosts, but that fell through which is why the young cricketers are now scheduled to play some matches against local selections in Khulna involving players from the High Performance squad.

MATCHES SINCE 2015-16

TEAM	ONE-DAY	4-DAY	T20	TOTAL
Bangladesh A	6	3	0	9
Australia A	6	4	0	10
India A	15	3	0	18
South Africa A	10	5	0	15
England Lions	20	4	5	29
Sri Lanka A	16	9	0	25
Pakistan A	14	4	5	23
New Zealand A	2	4	0	6
West Indies A	3	3	0	6
Zimbabwe A	13	6	0	19

BCB CEO Nizamuddin Chowdhury reasoned that it was easy to play matches before the last World Cup because every team sought an opportunity to play here and become acclimated with the conditions, which is not the case this time around.

"We were also supposed to play a series against Sri Lanka but it has also been cancelled, but we have plans to send the team to New Zealand earlier so that they can take good preparations before the World Cup," said Nizamuddin yesterday.

However, the question is not about arranging tours ahead of global events; the issue here is the larger one of whether there are comprehensive programmes for the Bangladesh A and Under-19 teams. If the lack of international matches hinders the preparation of the Under-19 team for the World Cup, then the lack of requisite international exposure for those players who have dropped off the national radar as well as emerging talents depicts a sordid picture.

The reality is that series for the Bangladesh A team have been few and far between -- their last tour took place in October-November 2015 when the side visited South Africa and Zimbabwe.

It would be unfortunate if someone says that the BCB High Performance team's current visit to Australia is in lieu of the dearth of A team matches, especially when the HP team's matches have been far from competitive ones as they are playing against hastily assembled teams.

Is this happening because the authorities' focus is solely on the national team? There is a cricket operations committee which is supposed to communicate with different boards to arrange bilateral series for the A team, while the development committee is supposed to arrange international matches for the Under-19 team. However, Nizamuddin took full responsibility.

"I am absolutely responsible as CEO of the board. We have a four-year plan with New Zealand but they were unable to honour it this year. However, it will happen next year. We are also negotiating with the West Indies for an A team series. We are discussing a long-term programme with our Indian, Australian and England counterparts as well," informed Nizamuddin.



Bangladesh's youngsters had a lot of chances to play international matches ahead of the last Under-19 World Cup, but the scenario so far has been completely different

PHOTO: STAR



Mashrafe Bin Mortaza arrived at the BCB Gymnasium yesterday with his two children in tow. Most of the day was spent in good fun and the Bangladesh skipper apparently even taught his son how to properly grip a ball.



Tamim, Essex mutually excited

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh opener Tamim Iqbal flew for England yesterday to play for English county side Essex Eagles in the NatWest T20 blast. The left-hander was scheduled to fly on Friday morning but left on Saturday due to a flight delay.

Essex head coach Chris Silverwood was excited with the inclusion of the left-hander. "Tamim has shown how good a player he is in the recent Champions Trophy. As a batsman he is capable of being destructive and that is reflected in his career strike rate," said Silverwood.

Tamim was also excited by the Essex stint. "We [Bangladesh] played there a few days ago so conditions will not be a problem," said the opener prior to his departure.

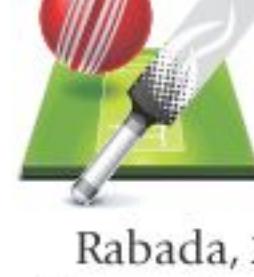
The southpaw however was also looking forward to the Tigers' next assignment against Australia at home. "The Australia series will be interesting. We will be ahead of them as we will be playing on our home turf. I will get enough time to prepare myself for the series when I return."

He also informed: "I got an offer from the Pakistan Super League. Last year I played a team whose owner has bought another new team. He invited me to play for that team. It is nice that he offered, but the BPL will be on at that time. The BPL is more important to me than the PSL so I did not agree to play."

Tamim will likely play eight games for Sussex if Australia's tour of Bangladesh goes according to schedule.

Stokes abuse sees Rabada suspended

AGENCIES, London



South Africa fast bowler Kagiso Rabada will miss next week's second Test against England after his verbal abuse of Ben Stokes during the series opener at Lord's, the International Cricket Council (ICC) announced Friday.

Rabada, 22, uttered an audible obscenity after dismissing all-rounder Stokes on the first day of the first Test on Thursday, his latest offence triggering a one-Test ban. He was given a fourth demerit point in the 24-month window, which equates to a one-game suspension.

Many reacted negatively to the news, including former South Africa captain Graeme Smith, who labelled it 'ridiculous'.

While Smith understood that the sanction was cumulative, he did not think the punishment should have been so harsh.

"It's ridiculous," Smith told ESPNcricinfo. "No one wrote about it, no one spoke about it. It was only because it was on the stump mic that it's become a thing. It could have been handled better. I don't think it was aimed at Ben Stokes. I just think it was out of frustration."

Rabada will now play no part in the second Test of a four-match series at Trent Bridge starting a week on Friday.

The ICC said Rabada had admitted the offence on Friday and accepted the sanction.

England pull ahead

AFP, London



Alastair Cook's unbeaten fifty strengthened England's grip on the first Test at Lord's after South Africa had to toil in the field without Vernon Philander on Saturday.

England were 119 for one in their second innings at stumps on the third day, a lead of 216 runs in this opening match of a four-Test series.

Former captain Cook was 59 not out, after more than three hours of typically painstaking effort, with fellow left-hander Gary Ballance unbeaten on 22.

Experienced paceman Philander did not bowl a single one of the 51 overs the Proteas sent down Saturday, after going for an X-ray on a hand injury suffered when he was hit by James Anderson while making 52 in South Africa's first innings 361 earlier in the day.

South Africa, with Dean Elgar leading the side for the first time in the absence of Faf du Plessis on maternity leave, wasted their two reviews in the first 80 overs on Cook.

Both times they challenged what seemed, even with the naked eye, sound not out decisions by umpires Paul Reiffel and S Ravindra in response to lbw appeals.

Keaton Jennings, born in South Africa but England qualified through his mother and residence, helped Cook put on 80 for the first wicket.

But he fell for 33 when, trying to cut a Morne Morkel ball that was too close to him, he was caught behind by de Kock.

Jennings's exit brought in Ballance, under pressure in what was his third chance at Test cricket and out for just 20 in the first innings.

Cook's three on another sun-drenched day at Lord's saw him to a 127-ball fifty including eight fours of which a cover-drive off Morkel was the pick.

SCORES IN BRIEF

ENGLAND: First innings 458 all out
SOUTH AFRICA: First innings 361 all out (Elgar 54, Bayliss 59, De Kock 51, Philander 52; Anderson 2-44, Ali 4-59)

ENGLAND: Second innings 119 for 1 (Cook 59 not out, Ballance 22 not out; Morkel 1-25)

Zimbabwe waltz in rain Ervine 69* leads visitors to series-levelling win

AFP, Hambantota

 Batsman Craig Ervine hit a quickfire 69 to help Zimbabwe pull off a four-wicket victory over Sri Lanka in the rain-shortened fourth one-day international and level the five-match series at 2-2 in Hambantota on Saturday.

Chasing a Duckworth-Lewis revised target of 219 in 31 overs, Zimbabwe rode on Ervine's 55-ball unbeaten knock to win with 10 balls to spare at the Mahinda Rajapaksa International Stadium.

Earlier, openers Niroshan Dickwella (116) and Danushka Gunathilaka (87) put together 209 runs in Sri Lanka's 300-6 -- becoming the first pair in ODI history to score back-to-back double century partnerships.

The left-handed batting duo had put on a 229-run match-winning stand at the same venue, played a patient 118-ball knock laced with eight boundaries before being trapped lbw.

Solomon Mire (43) and Hamilton Masakadza (28) set up the Zimbabwe chase before teenage leg-spinner Wanindu Hasaranga, who took three wickets, got the openers trudging back to the pavilion.

But Ervine and Malcolm Waller (20) made sure the chase remained on track with their 43-run sixth-wicket partnership after rain interrupted play for over one-and-a-half hours.

Ervine, a left-handed batsman and a right-arm spinner, smashed eight fours and a six to get the man of the match award.

For the hosts, Dickwella hit his second successive century with a commanding knock, while Gunathilaka was bowled 13 short of what could have been his second ODI ton.

Wicketkeeper-batsman Dickwella, who scored 102 on Thursday at the same venue, played a patient 118-ball knock laced with eight boundaries before being trapped lbw.

Zimbabwe off-spinner Waller got

the two prized wickets in successive overs to pull things back for the visitors.

Paceman Chris Mpofu also got two wickets to rattle the Sri Lankan middle-order as the hosts slipped from 216-1 to 263-5.

Skipper Angelo Mathews then lifted the total with his 40-ball 42, with help from Wanindu Hasaranga (19 not out) during their 37-run partnership for the seventh wicket.

The fifth and deciding ODI is scheduled on Monday at the same venue. The two sides will also play a one-off Test starting July 14.

SCORES IN BRIEF

SRI LANKA: 300 for six (Dickwella 116, Gunathilaka 87, Mathews 42; Waller 2-44, Mpofu 2-61)

ZIMBABWE: 219 for six in 29.2 overs (Ervine 69 not out, Mire 43, Musakanda 30; De Silva 40-3, Chameera 1-32)

Result: Zimbabwe won by 4 wickets.
Player-of-the-match: CR Ervine.



Zimbabwe batsman Craig Ervine hit a fluent 55-ball 69 with the help of eight fours and a six as the visitors defeated Sri Lanka by four wickets to level the ODI series yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP