

SPORT



Although rain spoiled the last day of their three-day practice match at the Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium in Chittagong yesterday, there was no shortage of intensity as Bangladesh's cricketers engaged in a football match at the venue before bidding farewell to the Chittagong leg of their preparation camp ahead of the Australia series.

PHOTO: ANURUP KANTI DAS

Rain cuts short Chittagong leg

SPORTS REPORTER



Rainfall in Chittagong did not allow a single ball to be bowled as the third and final day of the three-day practice match between Bangladesh Red and Bangladesh Green was washed out, with the match called off yesterday at 12.45pm, thus bringing an end to the Chittagong leg of Tigers' preparation camp ahead of the Australia series.

This might be a recurring tale in the much-awaited two-Test series against Australia, who are set to arrive on August 18 for Tests beginning on August 27 and September 4 in Dhaka and Chittagong respectively. The Bangladesh Meteorological Department, when contacted, would not be drawn into making a definitive forecast for the series as it is still too far off, but indicated that rainfall is expected throughout August and will only abate after the second week of September.

However, it was a fruitful weeklong outing in Chittagong for the cricketers who practised with high intensity on the centre square, one of the pitches of which will be the surface for the second Test at the Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium.

Shafiqul Islam had a good time with the ball on the first day of the practice match for Tamim Iqbal's Green team as the pacer bagged five wickets and, more importantly, showed a glimpse of his ability to surprise batsmen with pace.

Mushfiqur Rahim's Red team declared their first innings on 140/9 after young Nazmul Hossain Shanto top-scored with 53 while the skipper added 30. In reply, Bangladesh Green were all-out for 283 with the recently out of favour Mominul Haque displaying his quality with a team highest 73, while fellow fringe player Nasir Hossain added 62.

Fast bowler Rubel Hossain and left-arm spinner Saqlain Sajib picked up three wickets each while Taijul Islam took two for the bowling side. The Red team concluded the second day on 24 for one.

The cricketers will return to Dhaka today and will resume their preparation from tomorrow afternoon at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur.

According to batsman Sabbir Rahman they have been able to achieve 70-80 per cent of the purpose for the training in

Chittagong, adding that he is working on his technique and trying to be more patient. "The reason we were here for the practice match, I think 70-80 per cent of that was covered. Although the third day was washed out due to rain, the training we have done here in Chittagong along with playing two days of the match, I think we have done what we wanted."

"Basically I am working on batting technique -- the bat-lift along with how to adjust to both the front and back-foot deliveries, how to leave the ball and trying to be more patient," Sabbir told reporters at the venue yesterday.

The 25-year-old, who almost took



I am working on my batting technique: Sabbir Rahman

Bangladesh past the finish line on his Test debut against England at the same venue last year -- when he remained unbeaten on 64 batting at number seven -- informed that he is likely to bat at number six.

"Obviously it would have felt good if we won the game on my debut as we were very close to a win, but hopefully against Australia we will try to perform well and not look for a win rather as much as focusing on playing better cricket -- ultimately that will help us to get a result in our favour," he said.

Abahani held by BJMC

SPORTS REPORTER



Defending champions Abahani got another jolt in the Bangladesh Premier League as they were held to a goalless draw by Team BJMC at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

Federation Cup champions Abahani had made a fine start to the league, winning the opening game comfortably. But the Sky Blues have since experienced fluctuating fortune as they lost against minnows Farashganj SC before edging archrivals Mohammedan SC narrowly. The five-time champions yesterday stumbled against a mediocre Team BJMC outfit on a muddy pitch at the big bowl, thereby dropping five points overall in four matches.

"It is not possible to give natural

performance on a heavy pitch. However, I thank BJMC who came here to get one point and did it successfully," Abahani's Croatian coach Drago Mamic said after the match.

"To be honest, I can't recognise my players like Rubel [Mia], Emeka [Darlington], Saad [Uddin] on the pitch," said the frustrated coach

ABAHANI 0 - 0 TEAM BJMC

adding that he is facing trouble in midfield and defence in the absence of injured Sohel Rana, who sustained a ligament injury during the match against Farashganj. The coach is also missing the services of regular captain Mamun Mia, who has been struck down by a fever.

Abahani had to wait till the last few minutes to find a winning goal against Mohammedan in their last match.

Probably keeping that in mind, the coach drafted Gambian forward Landing Darboe in the starting eleven alongside Emeka while sacrificing defender Samad Yussuf to bolster the attack. However, the foreign duo had little impact on the game against Team BJMC, who fought bravely to keep the giants at bay.

The Sky Blues were, though, a bit unlucky as two attempts came off the post. Midfielder Emon Babu, availing a cutback from Landing, ratted the post in the third minute of the game while at the other end goalkeeper Shahidul Alam Sohel thwarted an attempt from BJMC striker Meehdi Hasan three minutes later.

On the rain-soaked pitch, both sides struggled to assert control, but Abahani came close to taking the lead in the 20th minute when Saad was fed through with a forward-pass by Landing, but the young forward

blasted the ball over the bar.

Then Landing was denied by the woodwork from a free-kick in the 38th minute before Rubel drove miles off target four minutes later.

BJMC thought they broke the deadlock in the stoppage time of the first half when Mehdi Hasan beat goalkeeper Sohel but the goal was ruled out for off-side. Landing, meanwhile, failed to connect to a cross from Tutul Hossain Badsha, with the goalkeeper to beat.

The second half was a rather dull affair compared to the first half as no sides created any scoring chances even though Pashban Mollah of BJMC saw his dipping shot from outside the box go inches over the bar in the stoppage time of the second half.

Abahani have seven points from four matches while Team BJMC have two points from same number of matches.



Abahani striker Emeka Darlington (R) loses his footing in a tussle with a Team BJMC player during their Bangladesh Premier League fixture on a heavy pitch at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

Former stars lash out at de Villiers

STAR SPORT DESK



South Africa Test skipper Faf du Plessis's claim that batting mainstay AB de Villiers, who is yet to decide whether he will continue as a Test player, has 'earned the right to do whatever he wants to' has unleashed a torrent of negative comments on Twitter from former players against both de Villiers and du Plessis.

"Interesting article this...never thought a player on a pedestal! Never thought I'd see this...anyway," tweeted former batsman Herschelle Gibbs, before adding later: "[Jacques] Kallis achieved more than ab [de Villiers] ever will but he kept on playing and never disrespected the team and the game. Remember that."

"Has nothing to do with administrators...that's the national captain speaking! Did Smith ever say Kallis could do that? and he achieved more," another tweet added.

Former batsman Ashwell Prince also joined the fray. "Ridiculous statement @hershbrubru [Gibbs] just wondering at

which point then @amlaash [Hashim Amla] will be allowed to do what he wants. Soon it's free for all."

And that led to a war of words between Prince and former players Simon Harmer and Paul Harris, surrounding whether such condemnations should be broadcast on Twitter.

Du Plessis confirmed this week that while de Villiers had not officially retired from the five-day game, he was not expected back in the white clothing any time soon. "The last time I spoke to him, he wasn't keen to play yet again," Du Plessis was quoted by the Cricket Australia website as saying.

"But we've played a year and a half without him. I hope that he comes back and plays, but I'm not expecting him to, and I'm preparing to look ahead without him."

"AB has earned the right to do whatever he wants to. He's played 100 Tests, he's played away from home from 12 years. He's done everything he could possibly achieve, apart from winning the World Cup."

Kohli wants consistency in ICC rules

PTI, Kandy

Missing the services of premier spinner Ravindra Jadeja due to a suspension, Indian captain Virat Kohli today urged the International Cricket Council (ICC) to be more consistent in implementing rules pertaining to the players' code of conduct.

"I think players have to be much more aware going ahead and just hoping that the guidelines are very similar from now on. Because it shouldn't vary according to how the situation is looked at," Kohli said in the pre-match press conference ahead of the third and final Test against Sri Lanka.

"So if it is consistent then I think it is going to be a good going ahead because players will obviously be more aware of how they need to conduct themselves on the field. It will only help the game get better," he added.

World's No.1 Test bowler and all-rounder Jadeja was handed a one-match suspension for logging six demerit points in the last 24 months.

India seek maiden away whitewash

SL look to save face in third and final Test

AGENCIES, Pallekele



The absence of world number one all-rounder Ravindra Jadeja from India's team has given Sri Lanka hope that they can avoid a series whitewash in the third and final Test starting Saturday, home skipper Dinesh Chandimal said.

Virat Kohli and his men stand on the cusp of history aiming to become the first Indian team to complete a whitewash in an overseas three-Test series.

Left-arm spinner Jadeja was banned for one match for dangerous play in India's second Test win that secured an unassailable 2-0 lead in the series.

But despite the hosts suffering huge defeats in the first two matches, Chandimal is confident of pulling one back against the world's top Test side in Pallekele.

"We are two down but still we are a really good team and are hoping to win this game. If we can do that, definitely we can get more confidence and move forward," Chandimal said Friday.

"We all know he (Jadeja) is the number one bowler at the moment. It gives us a bit of confidence -- bit unfortunate for you (India) guys. As a team we have something up our sleeves," Chandimal said.

Sri Lanka have suffered a string of injuries to key players in the series. Their bowling mainstay Rangana Herath will miss the third Test with a stiff back.

Paceman Nuwan Pradeep, who bowled only 17.4 overs in Colombo before pulling out with a hamstring injury, and all-rounder Asela Gunaratne, are already out.

"India is a really good team, especially in the last two to three years. (But) every time players of my team are getting injured. We cannot get the combination right," said Chandimal.

"Especially if you lose players like Rangana, Nuwan Pradeep and Asela.

We are struggling because of that also.

Fast bowlers Dushmantha Chameera and Lahiru Gamage have been added to Sri Lanka's squad that has faced mounting flak for their poor showing in recent months.

"It's a big challenge for the whole team but if one or two youngsters can come out and shine to a level that we can win this game, it's a great morale booster," said Chandimal.

In light of Jadeja's suspension, left-arm spinner Axar Patel was added to the Indian squad. However, Kuldeep Yadav is expected to take Jadeja's place in the



VI RAT KOHLI

playing eleven ahead of Patel.

And perhaps keen on clinching a clean-sweep, India skipper Kohli said he would like to maintain continuity.

"To play consistent cricket, you need to make sure that players are playing on a regular basis. Those who are performing and those who are doing well should continue in more games than not and to be a consistent side I think we need to have continuity," Kohli said in the pre-match press conference.

"So we certainly don't want to take anything lightly. We want to play the same kind of cricket that we have and hopefully retain the team that played the last game as much as we can, because you don't want to start taking things for granted and lose that momentum," he added.

Sajjad to be cut from selection?

SPORTS REPORTER

The Bangladesh Cricket Board is set to cut the six-member selection committee to five as according to sources close to the board, Sajjad Ahmed, who was a part of the three-member selection panel, will likely return to the game development section of the BCB.

Earlier, BCB president Nazmul Hassan informed that the board is willing to cut one of the selectors from the existing panel and it was learned that Sajjad's contract has not been renewed.

It was also learned that the board is not looking to replace Sajjad in the selection panel. There are already five members -- chief selector Minhajul Abedin, selector Habibul Bashar, coach Chandika Hathurusingha, team manager Khaled Mahmud and cricket operations chairman Akram Khan. The decision regarding the selection panel is expected to be taken by Sunday.

Sajjad, who previously worked as the junior selector, was promoted to the selection panel last year.

SRESANTH BAN LIFTING BCCI to appeal against court ruling

AFP, New Delhi

India's cricket board will appeal against a court order that lifted fast bowler Shanthakumaran Sreesanth's life ban for match-fixing, a senior official told AFP on Friday.

The Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) does not agree with the Kerala state high court order that acquitted Sreesanth for lack of proof, the official said on condition of anonymity.

"We don't agree with the order. It definitely needs to be challenged and within a week the appeal would be filed in the Kerala high court."

"We were always clear on this case as the board is firm on its zero tolerance policy on corruption and match-fixing," the official said.

Sreesanth, 34, slammed BCCI's decision to appeal the verdict and vouched to play again for the country.