

SPORTS



Coach Chandika Hathurusingha (L) has a conversation with opening batsman Soumya Sarkar during Bangladesh team's training session at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

Yo-yo selection process

SPORTS REPORTER



Mominul out, Mominul in. It is a drama that lasted just over 24 hours and the parting shot gives us an impression of a happy ending to a tale that started bitterly.

The villains of this drama are the deeply divided national selectors, who dropped the top-order batsman on Saturday afternoon from Bangladesh's 14-man squad for the first Test against Australia before re-introducing him to the squad as a replacement for Mosaddek Hossain on Sunday evening.

After a nervy day, where the axing of Mominul was greeted with severe criticism, chief selector Minhajul Abedin came up with an interesting theory of why they dropped him and then what prompted them to re-instate the left-hander.

"This was always part of the plan," said Minhajul. "We thought if Mosaddek does not recover from his eye problem someone will come into the squad, and that is Mominul. As we have been waiting for the final approval of the BCB president [Nazmul Hassan], Mominul has been included today."

This explanation however is in stark contrast to that noisy press briefing on Saturday where the three selectors in attendance, including coach Chandika Hathurusingha, did not give any indication of a back-up plan centring Mominul.

They have addressed the 'eye issue' of Mosaddek and Minhajul clearly mentioned that all-rounder Nasir Hossain, who made his return to the Test fold after a gap of two years, would act as back-up for Mosaddek and off-spinner Mehedi Hasan.

Mosaddek was picked in the squad in hopes that he could recover from his eye problem before the first Test.

But the chief selector yesterday told The Daily Star that "it will take seven to 10 days for him to fully recover, which means that he will miss the first Test beginning on August 27".

We are not sure if he got this crucial medi-

cal report on Sunday. If that is the case then there is a serious problem in the whole system on which the Bangladesh Cricket Board operates. If he was aware of it much earlier, then the selectors should have cleared it in Saturday's briefing.

14 is not a fixed number and it is also not clear why the selectors were very rigid when they had an option to announce a 15-member team.

Actually this selection panel lacks clarity, clarity in understanding and more importantly clarity in its whole system. When Faruque Ahmed resigned from the demanding post a year ago following a shake-up in an otherwise smooth system, he made an interesting observation -- that this complex and long selection panel would do more harm than good. Saturday's episode is only a small example of a peculiar selection panel where the captain's input is regarded as a luxury.

Australia captain Steven Smith might be amused to learn that over here the manager speaks for the captain and his deputy in the selection meeting. More amusing is that Bangladesh have deemed it not mandatory to appoint a team manager since it is a home series.

There is a popular notion that the present selection committee are puppets executing the will of certain others vested with inordinate power. Our selection for the last couple of series created so much controversy that it allowed the board president to intervene.

And Sunday was no exception when BCB president Nazmul Hasan stepped in.

"It's very unfortunate that Mominul is not part of the first Test. He is one of our best batsmen. There is no reason for him to be dropped. I have also discussed why he was dropped. The coach will talk to him, I will also talk with him. He has no reason to be disappointed," the BCB boss told reporters yesterday.

But is it not unfortunate on the part of the BCB boss to have this sort of selection panel?

'I want to score big now'

SPORTS REPORTER



A regular face in the national set-up only two years ago before he fell out of favour, things have changed drastically for Nasir Hossain, the talented all-rounder who played the last of his 17 Tests in 2015, as he has returned to the squad for the first Test against Australia.

Since being left out of the national side, the 25-year-old has been performing consistently in the domestic circuit, where he scored his maiden double hundred in the National Cricket League earlier this year.

According to Nasir he has been successful with this plan in domestic cricket and informed that he will look to continue the same way if he gets the opportunity in the Test side against Australia.

"I had some plans when I played the National League and the BCL [Bangladesh Cricket League] -- I was successful and scored runs. There is always a plan for the national side but there is a difference when it comes to planning for the national team as the environment is totally different here. But I will continue the way I planned if I get the opportunity to play," Nasir said to the media after

the training session at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.

The right-hander, who has scored 971 runs in 17 Tests including a hundred and six fifties, said that he might bat at number six or seven if he gets the opportunity and also informed that it will be



NASIR HOSSAIN

a challenge to bat in the lower middle order.

Nasir added that performance is the solution to everything and he is focused on performing well wherever he plays.

"Performance is the solution to everything.

Whether one is playing with the national team or anywhere else, if you don't perform well you won't be able to keep your spot. I am excited. We are playing Australia after 11 years and I haven't played against Australia before. Australia dominate Test cricket and performing well against them can change one's approach and career," he said.

According to the selectors Nasir was picked as the back-up off spinner for Mehedi Hasan and the cricketer from Rangpur, who has eight Test wickets to his name, informed that he enjoys bowling and is looking forward to giving his best if given the opportunity.

When asked for the differences between the Nasir who made his debut six years back to the player answering questions yesterday, Nasir said with a smile: "There wasn't a moustache that time. Obviously, when you play badly you can't be in the side; that's normal. But at the same time when you perform you will make a comeback to the team and since I was left out from the national team I tried to perform. There were a few mistakes in my career and if I wanted I could have played more big knocks -- I was a bit casual back then. But now I try to stay long at the wicket and score big," he added.

'No warm-up, no problem'

SPORTS REPORTER



Before making his international cricket appearance for Australia, top-order batsman Peter Handscomb used to

play junior level tennis. Although the cricketer from Victoria still watches his favourite tennis player Roger Federer and hardly misses the Australian Open tennis tournament, Handscomb has been phenomenal ever since making his Test debut last year.

"I used to play a bit of tennis but I'm not as good as I was back then. That was fun, playing tennis, but the decision to become a cricketer was pretty much for myself as I couldn't win tennis matches; rather I was able to score some runs and I just chased that. Yeah, I still love tennis and try to catch the Australian Open whenever I can. My favourite tennis player is Roger Federer," Handscomb told reporters ahead of their training session at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.

The Australians had an intense training session for the first time at the National Cricket Academy ground since their arrival in Bangladesh on Friday night.

The 26-year-old wicketkeeper-batsman, who is the first ever cricketer to not be dismissed below fifty in his first



PETER HANDSCOMB

seven Test innings informed that the recent tour of India will help his side get an idea of the sub-continental pitches.

Meanwhile, the Bangladesh Cricket Board is still hopeful of hosting the warm-up game in Fatullah slated for August 22

after there were doubts over the game due to the venue being waterlogged. But according to Handscomb, even if the tour game does not take place it won't much affect their preparation. He added that they are going to formulate their plans after a team meeting this week.

"I don't think we are going to play the first Test cold as we had a very good preparation in Darwin where we managed to play a three-day game there and I think everyone got the best out of that one. I don't think that if the tour game got cancelled it will affect our preparation that much. Obviously, BCB are doing everything to get the pitches up for us and whatever training we get here -- depending on the weather of course -- I am sure the boys will be fine and ready to go.

"Obviously we know they are a good side at home country on their own conditions are going to be a very strong team. We have got a team meeting this week where we will go through the whole [Bangladesh] team, at least the entire squad and try to formulate a few plans and see how we go," he said.



Australian team members had an intense training session for the first time at the National Cricket Academy ground yesterday since their arrival in Bangladesh on Friday night.

PHOTO: STAR

U-14 WOMEN'S C'SHIP Big scores on first day

SPORTS REPORTER

The JFA U-14 National Women's Football Championship got underway at four different venues across the country yesterday with Gopalganj, Madaripur, Bogra, Chapainawabganj, Comilla, Gazipur and Tangail notching victories.

Gopalganj handed a massive 10-0 defeat to Barguna at Rajbari Stadium, where Komola hit a hat-trick and later, Madaripur downed Faridpur 3-0 in tiebreakers.

At Rajshahi Stadium, Bogra beat Sirajganj 1-0 and Chapainawabganj blanked Natore 3-0 while Comilla defeated Noakhali 1-0 at Laximpur Stadium. Gazipur defeated Jamalpur 2-1 and Tangail thrashed Narayanganj 6-0, riding on a hat-trick from Mahfuz at the Sherpur Stadium.

Fatullah looking sunny again

SANAD SAHA, Narayanganj



The sincerest efforts are underway at the Khan Shaheb Osman Ali Stadium (KSOAS) in Fatullah to get the ground ready in time for the practice match between the visiting Australians and a BCB XI scheduled for August 22, and the possibilities of the match getting underway tomorrow have improved significantly with the recent decrease in rainfall.

The Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) and the Australian management are willing to wait till the last moment, in other words till today evening, before deciding the fate of a match that was plunged into uncertainty by the aggressive monsoon.

The situation at the KSOAS has improved substantially from even a week ago, when the entrance to the stadium and the ground itself was heavily waterlogged. Someone visiting the ground yesterday afternoon would have seen that the area outside the ground itself is no longer submerged, and crucially, the central area of the main ground -- the venue for the practice match -- is completely dry, with a little dampness persisting near the boundary.

Babul Mia, the stadium in-charge said: "The water has been siphoned out using two pumps of 20 horsepower each and two pumps of 20 horsepower each, and the result is that the ground is now dry. Only

the boundary areas are still damp, but that will be resolved if the sunshine continues over the next two days."

"The area around the wicket is dry," said Rahim, a member of the groundstaff who



Groundsmen try to fix the wet patches along the east side of the ground at the Khan Shaheb Osman Ali Stadium in Fatullah, with a ray of hope remaining regarding the proposed two-day match between Australia and BCB XI.

PHOTO: STAR

Mahmudullah off to CPL

SPORTS REPORTER

Caribbean Premier League franchise Jamaica Tallawahs have acquired the services of Bangladesh cricketer Mahmudullah Riyad, who was left out of the Test squad against Australia.

It was learned that Mahmudullah is waiting for his plane ticket and will head off to the Caribbean once that is arranged.

He is set to be the fourth Bangladesh player to play in the CPL after Shakib Al Hasan, Tamim Iqbal and Mehedi Hasan.

Shakib Al Hasan had already returned home after featuring for the same team in this year's edition. Shakib played three games for the Jamaican side and won two of them, playing an important role in the game against Barbados Tridents, where he took one wicket and scored 44.

The final of the CPL will be played on September 9 and Mahmudullah will be available to the Jamaicans for the rest of the tournament.