

SPORT

Nutrition on The Go



Pace bowler Rubel Hossain (L) was as enthusiastic as the other members of the Bangladesh cricket team at the Hazrat Shajalal International Airport yesterday. But he had to return home following visa complications and is likely to take a lone flight to South Africa today. PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

Rajshahi snap up Fizz

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh's fast bowling sensation Mustafizur Rahman's destination was the only anticipated part of the players' draft for the fifth edition of the Bangladesh Premier League and was the highlight of the programme at the Radisson Blu Water Garden Hotel yesterday. And the Rajshahi Kings managed to steal away the left-arm seamer for 45 lakhs in the very first call for the A plus category.

The presence of Sri Lankan legend Mahela Jayawardene, the head coach of Khulna Titans, and defending champions Dhaka Dynamites icon player Shakib Al Hasan in the franchise table also drew attention.

However, the excitement surrounding the occasion was diminished as all the franchises had already retained four local players from the previous edition while also roping in foreign recruits from outside the draft.

Each franchise had to select a minimum seven local and two foreign players from the draft. Through lottery, last year's runners-up Rajshahi had the fortune of selecting both their foreign and local recruits first and their decision to pick uncapped Pakistani leg-spinner Usama Mir surprised Raza Ali Dar, among others.

This season Tigers' Test captain Mushfiqur Rahim was named the icon player for Rajshahi, who also roped in young talents in the form of wicket-keeper batsman Zakir Hossain and left arm spinner Nuhad Uz Zaman. They also retained Mehedi Hasan, Mominul Haque and Forhad Reza and look to be a solid side on paper alongside Dhaka Dynamites.

Left-arm pacer Abu Haider was swooped up by Dhaka as the second overall pick from

the draft where they also opted for Jahurul Islam, Nadif Chowdhury, Saqlain Sajib and Shadman Islam. The star-studded team also got English batsman Joe Denly and West Indian left-arm spinner Akeal Hosen while retaining Mosaddek Hossain, Mehedi Maruf and pacer Mohammad Shahid.

Dhaka have an army of top class foreign players with the likes of Sri Lankan legend Kumar Sangakkara, Australian all-rounder Shane Watson, the Pakistani duo of Shahid Afridi and Mohammad Amir, and West Indies' Kevin Cooper, Evin Lewis and Sunil Narine.

Meanwhile, Mahmudullah's Khulna went for left-handed batsman Nazmul Hossain Shanto as their first pick along with pacer Abu Jayed, Afif Hossain, who registered a hat-trick on debut for Rajshahi last year, and Under-19 skipper Saif Hasan to form a good unit.

Rangpur Riders took Shahrir Nafees with their first call and also picked veteran left-arm spinner Abdur Razzak. ODI captain Mashrafe Bin Mortaza was Rangpur's icon player and the team retained Mohammad Mithun, Rubel Hossain and Sohag Gazi. As for their foreign quota, Rangpur picked two Afghan cricketers, all-rounder Sami Ullah Shenwari and left-arm chinaman Zahir Khan alongside English batsman Sam Hain. They also have big-hitter Chris Gayle teaming up with Ravi Bopara and the Lankan duo of Thisara Perera and Kusal Perera.

Comilla Victorians snapped up Tamim Iqbal as icon player and pacer Al-Amin Hossain while Chittagong Vikings, who have Soumya Sarkar as their icon, went for left-arm spinner Sunzamul Islam. Lastly, newcomers Sylhet Sixers took local pacer Abul Hasan the first time around with their icon player Sabbir Rahman in the line-up.



Khulna Titans owner Kazi Inam Ahmed (R) shares a light moment with the franchise's Sri Lankan head coach Mahela Jayawardene (C) and manager Nafees Iqbal during the BPL players' draft at Radisson Blu yesterday. PHOTO: STAR

'It can be another milestone'

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh cricket has been going through a time when the Tigers' are reaching one milestone after another in their favoured 50-over format and showing marked improvement in Test cricket. But will the Tigers' break new ground on their upcoming tour of South Africa?

Prior to the departure of the Test squad yesterday, Mushfiqur Rahim exuded confidence over his side's chances as he believes the most important thing they have achieved in the past year is 'self-belief'.

However, the Test captain did not forget to provide a reality check during a press conference at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur as he said: "It's [South Africa] such a place where all teams struggle."

He also made it clear that one could not expect performances akin to the team's poor showings on their last visit in 2008 because his side were 'more mature' and 'highly improved'. The wicketkeeper batsman further reminded of their recent performances in New Zealand where he believes they played better cricket than on previous tours despite defeats in both Tests.

"We may struggle there [in South Africa] like many other teams, but this Bangladesh team

always plays to win. Many may think that we have no chance against South Africa on their home soil but I cannot agree with them. Personally I believe this series can be a big milestone for our cricket. This is a big opportunity for us and we will be able to send a message to the world if we can play good cricket there. And we are ready to take this challenge," a confident Test skipper said.

Mushfiqur rightly pointed out exactly what his team would need to do if they want to justify his words.

"This side's batsmen are more mature than those who visited South Africa last time and they are capable of taking any challenge. Yes, our bowling attack is a bit inexperienced but they are skilful. If the bowlers can bowl according to plan then they will be also be able to create problems for the South African batsmen. And you know you can have good results when you make fewer mistakes against the top sides. If we can apply our skills then we have a good chance of doing well there," he continued.

There is no doubt that in the absence of ace all-rounder Shakib Al Hasan from the two-match Test series a few non-performing players in the last series, such as Soumya Sarkar and Imrul Kayes, must step up. And Mushfiqur was also aware of that which is why he tried to protect some players and requested reporters to end the press conference to avoid putting unnecessary pressure on Soumya, Imrul and Sabbir Rahman.

"One can criticise, but I am requesting to avoid unnecessary criticism," he urged.

Mushfiqur also said that it was a part of life for the cricketers to overcome questions or criticisms when he spoke about Bangladesh Cricket Board president Nazmul Hassan's recent comments about him.

"It's natural that you feel bad when you have been doing your job with honesty," he said, adding that he would comply with the team management's decision regarding the redefinition of his role.

After saying that 'you could call [Mahmudullah] Riyad bhai an all-rounder', Mushfiqur once again said it was quite impossible to replace Shakib and that his absence was in no way good news, but added that it was an opportunity for others. At one point he also responded to a question of whether he needs a break like Shakib, replying: "I'm not a big player like Shakib."

The first batch of cricketers left for Johannesburg in the morning while Mushfiqur accompanied the second batch, which took the evening flight.

Bangladesh will play two Tests, three ODIs and two T20Is on the tour. The Tigers will start their campaign with a three-day practice match against a South African Invitation XI on 21 September before the start of the first Test on September 28.

India-Aus ODI series starts today

AFP, Chennai

India skipper Virat Kohli said Saturday that competitiveness and "mind games" can be good for cricket as his team prepares to face their arch-rival Australia in a one-day series starting Sunday.

While Australia captain Steve Smith has batted for peace and urged the five-match series to be played in "good spirit", Kohli hinted that a bit of aggression can be useful to get the best out of players.

"All those things are to get that aspect of mind games which I think creates an excitement for the fans watching as well," Kohli told reporters on the eve of the limited-overs series in Chennai.



VIRAT KOHLI STEVE SMITH

"Also the players involved in the series you know, that becomes more exciting and players are more pumped up to win games and outdo each other," he added.

"I feel that intense competition should be there for the game to have that excitement and keep this game alive. I think it is very important to have that competitiveness in every series that you play."

The hosts are on top form after recently beating Sri Lanka 9-0 in Tests, one day games and Twenty20, but second-ranked Australia poses a different challenge.

Kohli was furious after a Test in Bangalore in March this year, when Smith looked up in his dressing room from the field -- where replays could be seen by teammates -- while deciding whether to challenge an lbw dismissal.

Players are not allowed to have outside input while challenging an umpire's decision.

Smith later apologised for his self-admitted "brain fade" moment but Kohli slammed the Aussies at the time.

After landing in India, the combative Australian skipper said he was anxious to halt the acrimony that marked the series, which his team lost 2-1.

Ireland A to arrive on Oct 7

SPORTS REPORTER

Ireland A will arrive in Bangladesh on October 7 to play one four-day and five one-day matches against their Bangladeshi counterparts.

The four-day match will be held at the Sylhet International Cricket Stadium from October 11 while all five one-day encounters will be staged at the Sheikh Kamal International Cricket Stadium in Cox's Bazar on October 17, 19, 21, 24 and 26.

The Bangladesh A team had last played matches against their Indian counterparts during their tour to India in September 2015.

Bangladesh were supposed to visit Zimbabwe in July and New Zealand in September this year but both Zimbabwe and New Zealand pulled out.

WOMEN'S CRICKET

Rupali Bank face Hillon

SPORTS REPORTER

Defending champions Rupali Bank Krira Parishad will take on Hillon Jubo Sangho in the opening game as the Women's Premier Division Cricket League 2016-17 season kicks off from tomorrow.

Khelaghar Samaj Kallyan Samity will face Kalabagan KC in the opening day's other match. Both games will take place at the BKSP.

Nine teams will face each in a league format in the first round from where the top four will advance into the super league phase.

Three tons and a wicket-fest

SPORTS REPORTER

It was another memorable day of cricket as three centuries were struck alongside some batting collapses on the second day of the first round of the 19th National Cricket League yesterday.

Twin tons from Rony Talukder and Saif Hasan steered Dhaka Division towards a big first innings total as they posted 309 for two against Barisal Division in the Tier 1 match after the previous day was abandoned due to a wet outfield following overnight showers at the Sheikh Kamal International Cricket Stadium in Cox's Bazar.

Right-handers Rony and Abdul Majid scored 83 runs for the opening stand before the latter was dismissed for 31. However, Rony and Saif banded together and added 141 runs for the second wicket.

Rony scored his eighth first class century but was stumped off Monir Hossain after scoring 121 off 195 balls with half a dozen sixes and eight fours.

Saif, the Bangladesh Under-19 captain, registered his third first class hundred and remained unbeaten on 106 off 193, smashing five sixes and nine boundaries while Rakibul Hasan was unbeaten on 45.

At the Shahid Kamruzzaman Stadium in Rajshahi a total of 16 wickets fell on the second day and the Tier 2 match looks destined to produce a result.

Resuming the day on 123 for nine, Sylhet were bowled out for 128 in their first innings. In reply Rajshahi were bundled out for just 79 runs in 27.4 overs courtesy of some brilliant bowling from left arm spinner Sayem Alam, who ended up with figures of six for 32. Abul Hasan aided him with three wickets as Sylhet took a crucial first innings lead of 49 runs.

However Sylhet found themselves in a spot of bother after losing five wickets for just fifty runs in their second innings before stumps were drawn. Forhad Reza bagged two wickets to keep Sylhet's lead to 139 for the moment.

In the other Tier 2 encounter Dhaka Metro are in the driving seat despite



Young left-arm spinner Nihad Uz Zaman (C) is the toast of his teammates. His five-wicket haul gave Dhaka Metro a healthy 226-run lead over hosts Chittagong at stumps on the second day of their National Cricket League match at the Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium yesterday. PHOTO: STAR

SCORES IN BRIEF

- DHAKA METRO VS CHITTAGONG**
DHAKA METRO: 344 all out (Ashraf 104, Mehrab 66; Nayeem Hasan 4-84) and 12 for 2.
- CHITTAGONG**: 130 all out (Pinak 28, Nihad Uz Zaman 5-45, Sharif Ullah 2-37)
- KHULNA VS RANGPUR**
RANGPUR: 471 all out (Naeem 135, Dhiman 105, Sohrawordi 89; Al Amin 4-102, Razzak 3-126)
- KHULNA**: 185 for no loss (Anamul Haque 105 not out, Robiul Islam 67 not out)
- RAJSHAHI VS SYLHET**
SYLHET: 128 all out and 50 for 5 (Rajin Saleh 39; Saqlain Sajib 3-26, Forhad 3-33)
- RAJSHAHI**: 79 all out (Zunaid Siddique 22; Sayem Alam 6-32, Abul Hasan 3-24)
- DHAKA VS BARISAL**
DHAKA: 309 for 2 (Rony Talukder 121, Saif Hasan 106)

having lost two early wickets and ending the second day on 12 for three as they have a lead of 226 runs at the Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium in Chittagong.

Earlier Dhaka were bowled out for 344 after resuming the day on 257 for five after Mohammad Ashraf struck a century after four years in the first innings.

After the exchange young left-arm spinner Nihaduzzaman bagged five wickets to bundle Chittagong out for just 130.

At the Sheikh Abu Nasir Stadium in Khulna holders Khulna replied well on the second day after riding on an unbeaten 185-run opening stand between Anamul Haque and Robiul Islam in a Tier 1 match.

Wicket-keeper batsman Anamul, who was among the contenders for the Tigers' squad for the South Africa series according to the BCB president, struck his 13th first class hundred and was unbeaten on 105 off 171 with eleven fours while Robiul was on 67.

Rangpur had earlier posted a huge first innings score of 471 before being bowled out after resuming the day on 325 for six. Rangpur's overnight centurion Naeem Islam was finally dismissed yesterday after scoring a brilliant 135 off 249 balls with a dozen fours and a six.

ASIA CUP HOCKEY

India recall veterans

PALLAB BHATTACHARYA, New Delhi

Veteran midfielder Sardar Singh returned to the national team as India yesterday named an 18 member squad, led by Manpreet Singh, for the Asia Cup Hockey tournament to be held in Dhaka from October 11 to 22.

Sardar, recently awarded India's highest sports honour Khel Ratna Award, was dropped from the Indian team which toured Europe last month, but he got a recall for next month's event.

Two other key players who were dropped for the Europe tour -- forwards SV Sunil and Akashdeep Singh - also made comebacks as did defenders Harmanpreet Singh and Surender Kumar who were rested for the Europe tour.

Sunil has been named deputy to Manpreet who has been retained as the captain despite a poor show by the team in the hockey World League semifinal in London in June and a mixed result in last month's European tour.

India feature in Pool A alongside hosts Bangladesh, Pakistan and Japan. They will start their campaign against Japan on October 11 before facing Bangladesh on October 13.

The Indian team will play their third and final league match against arch-rivals Pakistan on October 15.

India had finished runners-up to South Korea in the previous edition of Asia Cup in Ipoh, Malaysia, in 2013.