

SPORT

Will BCB right or wrong?

AL-AMIN
Is the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) committed to right the wrong it has been part of since 2012? Or will it continue to engage in a legal battle to deny a landmark victory of its own?

At the moment it looks like the present BCB board of directors, led by president Nazmul Hassan, are adamant to follow the same path it embarked upon in 2012 leading up the BCB elections in 2013. Hassan became the first elected president of the BCB in 2013. But cruelly, he is facing the legality of holding his office at the end of his four-year term following a High Court ruling yesterday that served as a show-cause notice to the NSC (National Sports Council), asking why it should not be directed to restrain from the existing BCB executive committee from discharging its activities.

There is no denying that Hassan has taken Bangladesh cricket to a height that all should be very proud of. Under his stewardship the Tigers have now turned into a very competitive side. His cricket diplomacy also guaranteed Bangladesh more money from the TV rights, making the BCB more affluent than ever before.

Tuesday's ruling following a petition by Mobasher Hossain, a former BCB director, is only an extension of a long legal battle in which the NSC was more at fault than the BCB. The crux of the problem was that the NSC was not a legal entity in 2012 when Hassan led an ad-hoc committee with the primary purpose of holding the BCB elections.

The BCB on March 1, 2012 EGM adopted amendments to its constitution and sent it to the NSC for approval. But the NSC, instead of approving it, incorporated certain amendments to the BCB constitution and directed the board to include those amendments. In a letter to the BCB on August 21, 2012, the NSC also directed the BCB to

forward two copies to the NSC for approval. The NSC, the regulatory body of the country's sport, finally approved the amendments on November 29, 2012.

That prompted a writ petition challenging the NSC's authority to amend BCB's constitution. On January 1, 2013 the High Court ruled that the NSC made the amendments in the BCB constitution without lawful authority. It may be mentioned here that in the BCB constitution it is clearly stated that the BCB is the sole authority to amend its constitution and the NSC only has the right to approve or reject it.

Unfortunately, after the ruling the BCB lost an opportunity to correct that mistake. Despite having enough time to do that it went against its own rightful authority and decided to fight the battle alongside the NSC. They filed a Civil Petition in the Supreme Court and won a stay that paved the way for elections under the questioned 2012 BCB constitution.

However the highest court on July 26 this year upheld the High Court judgment while disposing the leave petitions of both NSC and BCB. Hassan immediately after the verdict termed it a victory for cricket. The court ruled that the BCB is at liberty to amend its constitution at any time as per provision of Article 11.1 and Article 26 of its constitution so that the requirements of International Cricket Council is met subject to the approval of NSC.

This is the part of the judgment that elated Hassan most. But at the same time he was in a defiant mood when the question of legality of the amended 2012 BCB constitution came to the fore.

If the 2012 BCB constitution is illegal then it is understood that the present executive committee under it is also illegal. But the question is if the present BCB committee is gamely enough to accept that. Will they stop digging the hole that they are in? At the moment it looks like they want to drag the legal battle further instead of solving it once and for all.



Bangladesh players attend a routine briefing at the Senwes Park in Potchefstroom yesterday, ahead of their first Test against South Africa which begins on Thursday.

PHOTO: SAKIB SUBHAN

'It's possible to score big here'

SPORTS REPORTER from Potchefstroom



Among all the Bangladesh batsmen, Imrul Kayes had the heaviest load hanging over him when the national squad landed in South Africa for a two-Test series against the second-ranked team in Test cricket. The left-hander had scored just 21 runs in four innings in the home series against Australia in August-September, albeit while batting the unfamiliar number three spot.

When naming the squad for the tour, chief selector Minhajul Abedin however said that he is adept at playing the ball square of the wicket. Imrul was considered for the demanding tour on fast, bouncy pitches. That faith seems to be well-founded so far as he scored 34 and 51 in the tour match at Senoani.

"Actually, whenever you score, you can get attention," said the 30-year-old to reporters ahead of the team's practice at Senwes Park yesterday. "It does not matter whether I score at home or

here. Runs always give you confidence."

Imrul has been the nearly man of Bangladesh cricket. He has had big moments, such as hitting 150 in a Bangladesh record 312-run opening stand with Tamim Iqbal against Pakistan in Khulna 2015. But he has not often been able to hold on to that spot, as a Test total of 30 in almost nine years and an average of 26.55 explains. But it was playing the kind of cricket required now that Imrul made his latest comeback to the side when, batting in the warm-up one-dayer against England in 2016 he hit a hundred and followed that up with another century in the first ODI just under a year ago.

He had then credited coach Chandika Hathurusingha for instructing him to be ever-ready to pull out the cut and pull against the English pacers. More of that will be needed here. He is also one of the three batsmen, along with Tamim and skipper Mushfiqur Rahim, to have played in South Africa on the 2008 tour.

"I think in Bangladesh batsmen tend to play on the front foot more but here the ball will be

back of a length more," said Imrul. "We are practising leaving the ball and playing off the back foot. The cut and pull are important scoring shots here -- we have to become strong in these shots."

All the talk has been about the pace and bounce here, but Imrul preferred to look at those factors as advantages.

"Obviously there will be more pace and bounce here. But I believe bounce and pace means the ball comes on to the bat nicely. If a batsman is good at playing shots square of the wicket then it is possible scoring big runs here," he added. "If we maintain the momentum with which our batsmen have been batting, of course we can challenge South Africa."

He was, however, under no illusions as to the difficulty of the task in hand. "I believe not only us, any country in the world would rate a South Africa tour the toughest. Similarly when South Africa goes to our country our conditions might be considered toughest to them. Home advantage always plays a part for everyone."

Players can be sent off

New rules starting with BD-SA first Test
AFP, New Delhi

Players could be sent off for the first time in cricket, starting with Test matches in South Africa and the United Arab Emirates this year, as new regulations come into force.

Changes governing umpire referrals and batsmen sizes will also come into force Thursday when South Africa host Bangladesh and Sri Lanka play Pakistan in Abu Dhabi.

The DRS -- in which a TV umpire reviews decisions made by umpires on the field -- will be allowed in T20 internationals after its success in Test and one-day matches.

Under the new rules, a player can now be sent off for the test of the match for serious misconduct. This could include threatening to assault an umpire, making inappropriate physical contact with an umpire, assaulting a player or any other person and any other act of violence.

To maintain the balance between bat and ball, there are new restrictions on the size of bat edges and its thickness.

The permitted length and width of bats remains unchanged but the edges cannot be more than 40mm thick and the overall depth is limited to 67mm.

Umpires will use a new gauge to check legality. The ICC said all changes "will be applicable across all (three) formats".

"Most of the changes to the ICC playing conditions remain unchanged but there are changes to the laws," ICC GM Geoff Allarday.

If a team refers an umpire's decision to the TV umpire and the field changes, the DRS shows that umpire's call, the team will not lose that review.

No bar on AGM, EGM

SPORTS REPORTER



The High Court (HC) yesterday issued a rule upon the government and the National Sports Council (NSC) to explain why it should not be directed to restrain the current executive committee of the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) from discharging its activities. However, it did not pass any order on the plea which sought to restrain the BCB from holding its upcoming AGM and EGM.

Deputy Attorney General Ekramul Haque Tutul told journalists that this effectively means that the BCB will not be impeded in holding its AGM and EGM as scheduled on October 2.

The bench of Justice Md Emdadul Haq and Justice Bishwadev Chakraborty issued yesterday's ruling following the writ petition filed by Mobasher Hossain, a former BCB director, challenging the legality of the existing committee.

He submitted the petition on September 24 saying that the committee was illegal as the Appellate Division, in its verdict, did not allow the BCB to form an executive committee. Mobasher had hoped to stop the board from functioning any further and to foil the AGM and EGM.

Mahbub Shafig, the petitioner's lawyer, said that the secretary of the Youth and Sports Ministry and the NSC's chairman and secretary have to reply to the

ruling within four weeks. Mahbub added that since the High Court made no mention on the subject of the petition or about preventing the BCB from holding its AGM and EGM, the decision to hold the meetings now rests on the cricket board.

Attorney General Mahbub Alam reassured The Daily Star that there is no legal bar on the BCB as the HC did not give any stay order.

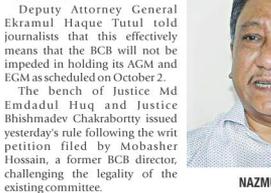
When replying to a question Mahbub said that though they raised question about the legality of the current executive committee, elected in October 2013, the nucleus surrounding the matter would now settle down through the disposal of the writ.

The current committee's tenure will expire on October 10, two weeks before the four-week timeframe set by the HC, comes to an end.

Meanwhile, BCB president Nazmul Hassan informed that as there is no bar to hold the upcoming AGM and EGM the board will continue their procedures as

planned. "As far as I know there are no obligations to continue our procedures and there is no bar to hold our AGM and EGM in the scheduled time. So I don't see any reason to get worried," Nazmul told reporters at his corporate office.

He also added that they will take further decisions regarding the upcoming election during the board meeting.



NAZMUL HASSAN

Stokes arrested & dropped 'Tigers gave me a dream start'

AFP, London



England all-rounder Ben Stokes has been arrested on suspicion of causing actual bodily harm in Bristol and dropped for Wednesday's fourth one-day international against West Indies.

The 26-year-old Durham star was arrested early on Monday in the Clifton district of the city and released under investigation -- without charges -- the England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) announced Tuesday.

Both Stokes and England opening batsman Alex Hales, 28, who was with him on Sunday night, will miss the game at the Oval.

A statement issued by Avon and Somerset Police said: "We were called to a disorder in Queens Road, Clifton, at around 2:35am (01:35 GMT) on Monday.

"A 27-year-old man was found to have suffered facial injuries and was taken to the Bristol Royal Infirmary for treatment. "A 26-year-old man was arrested on suspicion of causing actual bodily harm and has since been released under investigation."

The police statement also asked anyone who was in the Clifton Triangle area in the early hours of Monday "who saw any part of this incident" to contact them.

Wednesday's fixture at the Oval takes place just hours after England are due to unveil their squad for the Ashes tour of Australia at the south London ground.

ECB England cricket director Andrew Strauss, Strauss, reading from an ECB statement to reporters at The Oval on Tuesday said: "Ben Stokes and Alex Hales will not be available for tomorrow's (Wednesday's) one-day international match against West Indies at The Oval."

'The pitches are quick'

SAKIB SUBHAN from Potchefstroom



Senwes Park, the venue on which millions of Bangladeshis eyeballs will be tuned into from Thursday afternoon, is not

one of South Africa's premier Test venues. It has been a regular stop for ODI matches since October 2000, with 18 matches played here over the years, but there has been only one Test here, in October 2002. The visiting team then was a hapless Bangladesh side that was bundled out by the likes of Mahkaya Ntini, Shaun Pollock, Jacques Kallis and Ntshiri Hayward for 215 and 107 on way to losing by an innings and 160 runs.

Both teams are worlds removed from 15 years ago, with Bangladesh having progressed far from the two-year-old babes of Test cricket in 2002, and a new generation of South African players now representing the rainbow nation. Given Bangladesh's relative inexperience then and that the 2002 Test is the only frame of reference, not much can be said about the pitch that awaits the Tigers tomorrow from that solitary match.

A look at the leading wicket-takers here in ODIs may reveal a bit more. Only cricket tracts of scary proportions can name the chart-topper here -- Edgar Schiferli, the Netherlands medium pacer who took nine wickets going back to the 2003 World Cup. But the names from second onwards hint at this being a wicket for fast bowlers. Glenn McGrath took seven for 15 here against Namibia in 2003, and the nine of the top 10 wicket-takers here are pacers.

"The pitch doesn't break up much," Lemmer added almost as an afterthought. "It turns a bit from Day Four."

"I flattens out," said the tall seamer who has been bowling at the Bangladesh batsmen in the nets for the past two days. "Not flat in slow and low, but the ball comes on to the bat after the first hour, when there is lateral movement. I would say most times it is a bat-first wicket, unless there is a lot of grass on it."

The signs, therefore, are that Bangladesh's batsmen need not worry too much, especially as Sauter added that the net wickets were usually more speedy than the one out in the middle.

Also, according to Lemmer, with the surface being hard, the shine on the ball lasts for around 25-30 overs, so it is a matter of getting through the first two hours with minimal damage. But apparently there will not be much joy for the spinners.

"The pitch doesn't break up much," Lemmer added almost as an afterthought. "It turns a bit from Day Four."

Advantage or not, South Africa also has much to prove after a series loss in England, the fallout of which was a change in coaching personnel, with former West Indies fast bowler and ex-England bowling coach Ott Gibson taking over.

"It is quick," said Willem Lemmer, the assistant groundsman yesterday. He would not say anything about the pitch being prepared, for obvious reasons. "There is bounce, and it is quick."

The pitch itself bears a white look, hinting at a hard surface. The good news for Bangladesh's batsmen may be that, according to Lemmer, there will not be a lot of lateral movement.

"Lateral movement... maybe not so much. It does a bit early on."

Julian Sauter, a first-class player for the Northwest Dragons, for which Senwes Park is the home ground, gave Bangladesh further cause for hope.

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KAGISO RABADA

SPORTS REPORTER from Potchefstroom



Even in the likes of Dale Steyn and Vernon Philander were fit to play the first Test, the prospect of facing young South Africa fast bowler Kagiso Rabada would be a formidable one for the Bangladesh batsmen. They do not need to look too far back to remember what the 22-year-old right-arm fast bowler can do.

In 2015, bowling his second over in international cricket in the first ODI in Mirpur, he bowled Tamim Iqbal, had Liton Das caught and trapped Mahmudul Riyaed leg-before to announce his arrival with a hat-trick.

He went on to take six wickets in that match. Over two years later, Rabada still speaks fondly of that moment.

"I had a good experience playing there; I guess it was a dream start to international cricket," Rabada told reporters ahead of the South African squad arrival in Potchefstroom

yesterday afternoon, ahead of the first Test against Bangladesh starting tomorrow.

Later in 2015, Rabada made his Test debut against India in Mohali.

"That tour [of Bangladesh] gave me the taste of Test conditions, and it helped."

Rabada has since become a star in all three formats, and has taken 87 wickets in 20 Tests at an excellent average of 24.56.

The young firebrand added that even though the home side are always at an advantage, they were not taking Bangladesh lightly because the Tigers have improved a lot in recent times.