



'Locals need roles to perform'

SPORTS REPORTER



If someone tends to pick some moments from the Dhaka leg of the Bangladesh Premier League (BPL), the way off-spinner Mahedi Hasan bamboozled the dashing Brendon McCullum deserves a place on the list.

Former New Zealand captain McCullum was totally outthought when he came down the track to negotiate a flat length ball only to give the wicketkeeper a world of time to dismantle the stumps.

The 22-year-old Comilla Victorians off-spinner however was not the only local player who shone in the Dhaka leg; a number of players stepped up to quieten the noise surrounding the poor performances of local recruits in the first leg in Sylhet. Local cricketers produced many moments to watch during the Dhaka leg; it was particularly nice to watch some impressive performances from young players like wicketkeeper-batsman Zakir Hasan, Ariful Haque and Hossain Ali.

The last day of the Dhaka leg probably got the best out of the local players in the two exciting games on Tuesday as Mahmudullah Riyad and Mushfiqur Rahim hit half-centuries, Shakib Al Hasan bagged a five-wicket haul, Ariful showed real big-hitting ability and some good spells of pace bowling from Mashrafe Bin Mortaza, Rubel Hossain and Abu Jayed.

Curiously had surrounded the forlorn performance of Sylhet Sixers icon player Sabbir

Rahman, but the right-hander found his groove with a 41-run innings against Rajshahi Kings and then hit a 49-ball 70 against Rangpur Riders, while Soumya Sarker has notched 30-plus scores in three games out of six.

Imrul Kayes may not have scored big knocks but the opener of table-toppers Comilla Victorians contributed with three 40-plus and one 30-plus score in six matches.

In the bowling department Abu Jayed is leading the list with 12 wickets while Abu Hider is close behind with 11 wickets. Champion all-rounder Shakib might not have yet shone with the bat but he has starred with his left-arm spin and captured 10 wickets. Mashrafe grabbed seven wickets and provided ample evidence that the T20I referee was no slouch in the shortest format.

When it comes to all-rounders, one must say that Mohammad Saifuddin proved that he has got the potential to serve the nation.

"You must see that when the local players got a role most of them tried to grab it. If you don't give them a role, how will they perform? As a coach I so far tried to give my local players a role and they gave me the return. Look at Saikat [Dhaka] Dynamites batsman Mosaddek Hossain, he is a good player but hardly got any role in the team. Yes, there is a difference in power-hitting between foreign players and local players, but otherwise there is nothing wrong with the local players," opined Comilla Victorian coach Mohammad Salahuddin.

The BPL caravan has already reached Chittagong and Salahuddin believed that the local players can continue their good showing if they get their fair share of chances.



Comilla Victorians off-spinner Mahedi Hasan (2nd from L) was one of the local players who shone during the Dhaka leg of the BPL, with his dismissal of Rangpur Riders' opener Brendon McCullum being the highlight of his scalps.

PHOTO: STAR FILE

SLC makes Chandika interest official

AFP, Colombo

Sri Lanka's cricket board Wednesday announced it was in talks to hire Bangladesh head coach Chandika Hathurusingha subject to him securing a full release from his current contractual obligations.

Sri Lanka Cricket said its chief Thilanga Sumathipala wrote to his

Bangladesh counterpart Nazmul Hassan expressing a desire to hire Sri Lanka-born Hathurusingha.

The board said it would offer the 49-year-old the position of head coach "subject to the full release of his contractual obligations" with the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB).

"There is no doubt that Hathurusingha (Hathurusingha) would be a great fit for us with the direction of both our short and long term goals," Sumathipala said

in a statement.

"I have written personally to the BCB informing him of our intention (to hire Hathurusingha)."

Hathurusingha had said earlier this month that he was stepping down from the Bangladesh team after a disastrous tour of South Africa.

However, there was no word from the Bangladesh board if they had agreed for him to prematurely end his contract and join the team of his native Sri Lanka.

Hathurusingha, you deserved better

AL-AMIN

So the Chandika Hathurusingha chapter in Bangladesh cricket is over. The Sri Lankan head coach of the now robust Tigers was contracted to be at the helm till the 2019 World Cup but surprised almost everybody when he tendered his resignation during Bangladesh's tour of South Africa last month.

Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) president Nazmul Hassan tried to keep it close to his chest in what now appears a futile attempt to change Hathurusingha's mind. But once it was leaked in the Sri Lankan media a week after the South Africa tour was over that Hathurusingha has resigned, the BCB president acknowledged it publicly.

While acknowledging it, the board president also expressed his earnest desire to keep hold of the most successful Bangladesh coach. In a last-ditch attempt, the board president wanted Hathurusingha to submit the reasoning behind his resignation so that it could open a window into mending the cracks, if there were any. But apparently a resolute Hathurusingha, who virtually stopped all communication since returning to his adopted home in Australia straight from South Africa, refused to comply with the request of making a visit to Dhaka as well as submitting his South Africa tour report.

The manner of Hathurusingha's departure is reminiscent of India's Mohinder Amarnath,

who flew straight back home after Bangladesh's ICC Trophy debacle in Kenya in 1994. Amarnath did submit his report afterwards and it tremendously helped the then BCCB.

The 49-year-old is also the second foreign coach of Bangladesh after Amarnath who made his exit plan on his own peculiar terms. Otherwise, it has mostly been the case of the board leaving a bad taste in the mouth while parting ways with coaches. The only exceptions were Australia's Stuart law, who expressed his desire not to continue after his one-year term, and England-born Richard Pybus, who quit after four months blaming interference from the board.

But after what the former Sri Lankan batsman and New South Wales coach has done in his three and a half years in charge, a period in which a team with a defeatist mentality turned into fierce competitors across all formats of the game, he could have chosen a far better way to say goodbye. Many feel he could have done it in a professional way instead of what now appears an emotional decision (unless he speaks otherwise).

True, Bangladesh badly lost all their seven games in South Africa. The series whitewash was always on the cards but Hathurusingha and his team were criticised for the manner in which they lost all those games. Besides, the series defeat in no way could be an excuse for Hathurusingha to resign.

Hathurusingha is one of a few low-profile coaches who made a huge impact in their maiden assignments with a Test team. He has faced a lot of criticism despite bringing amaz-

ing success to the Tigers. But most of those criticisms are ill-advised and belie logic.

Mahmudullah Riyad, who reportedly got rough treatment from Hathurusingha during Bangladesh's tour of Sri Lanka, perhaps summed up a head-strong Hathurusingha in an apt way.

"He has always tried to be equal to the junior and senior members of the team," Mahmudullah said during a promotional event recently.



And those who closely followed the Sri Lankan during tours would admit that he was always guided by logic, not nepotism; he tried to create a dressing room where everyone got equal treatment; he tried to create competition for every position; he never planned ahead for just one tour, but for the next and beyond. If

you have got the opportunity to share the dressing room with him during a game you would be amazed to see a typical school teacher in this part of the world blowing hot and cold. But all his emotions were directed towards the betterment of his students. He will also privately confess that he is a typical father you may find in Sri Lanka or in Bangladesh.

The BCB president said media criticism and the outburst of Test captain Mushfiqur Rahim may have played a role in Hathurusingha's resignation. The Sri Lankan was never comfortable with the army of Bangladesh media. But his biggest disappointment was 'the leaked dressing-room discussion'. This is something every coach has to live with and he was well aware of that.

Hathurusingha is of that rare breed who never publicly points their finger at an individual after a failure. During Bangladesh's tour of New Zealand, Shakib Al Hassan got out playing rash shots in successive games.

After Shakib's first antics, Hathurusingha said: "We have discussed a few mistakes and all have agreed to correct it in the next game."

His remark after Shakib's second gaffe deserves special attention. "They know what they have done and I think it's not possible to improve that mental toughness overnight." Interestingly, Hathurusingha never uttered the word 'he' even when the question solely targeted Shakib on both occasions.

The former Sri Lankan batsman has throughout the years followed the path of dignity and

honesty that he inherited from his father. He is as emotional as Mushfiqur Rahim is. The only difference between the two fine gentlemen is that every single decision of Hathurusingha regarding his team was solely guided by logic.

The board president, while talking to reporters, said that Mushfiqur's outburst at a briefing during the first Test against South Africa might have played a role in Hathurusingha's sudden departure. At that briefing an emotionally charged Mushfiqur had said: "If we lose, the blame goes to the captain. And if we win, the credit goes to the team management."

We do not know if there was a rant between captain and coach in the dressing room that sparked Mushfiqur's outburst in the media, which was totally unacceptable. But that particular incident was enough for speculation that something was going wrong in the dressing room for quite some time.

And if that had gone to the extent for someone to feel that the trust and respect, upon which the Tigers' success has been built, was missing in the dressing room then he has every reason to quit. We will never know if it was the case, but Hathurusingha's abrupt departure will hurt Bangladesh cricket for sure.

Bangladesh have had so many high-profile coaches with little influence. A modest Hathurusingha has done wonders with almost the same team others considered 'always committing the same mistakes'. His biggest influence is the transformation from that defeatist mentality.

Hathurusingha, you deserved a better send-off.