

SPORT



Dhaka Dynamites skipper Shakib Al Hasan (R) speaks with coach Khaled Mahmud during a practice session at the BCB Academy ground yesterday ahead of today's BPL Qualifier-1 against Comilla Victorians.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

Tamim challenged to show his skills

SPORTS REPORTER

While the debate over the unfavourable pitches at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur has continued, Comilla Victorians coach Mohammad Salahuddin threw a challenge to captain Tamim Iqbal ahead of today's first qualifier of the Bangladesh Premier League (BPL) against Shakib Al Hasan's Dhaka Dynamites.

"Tamim has the ability to play much better cricket on this kind of wicket. Tamim played a good innings previously on this kind of surface; he helped Bangladesh win two Tests. I expect he will show how good his level of skill is by playing a good knock on this surface," answered Salahuddin when asked yesterday whether the show-cause notice has fired Tamim up.

If one is looking over the paradigm shift in Tamim Iqbal's batting, it is impossible to overlook his batsmanship during the home series against England [2016] and Australia [2017] in trying conditions and that was what Salahuddin was referring to: the left-hander's 104 and 40 against England in the Dhaka Test that Bangladesh won by 108 runs and his 71 and 78 against Australia this year in a Dhaka Test that Bangladesh won by 20 runs. Bangladesh might have lost the Chittagong Test against England but Tamim's 78-run knock in the first innings is still considered one of the best knocks from any Bangladesh batsman.

And if it seems strange to talk about Test

cricket during a T20 tournament, it should be remembered that a good batsman is good in all formats and Tamim has already showed his calibre in the ongoing BPL since coming into the fray after recovering from injury. Table-toppers Comilla however already proved that they were not dependent on one man; they have a good unit under the bright leadership of Tamim and Salahuddin said that they were not thinking about a second chance; instead they will take the field to directly qualify for the final.

But it will not be easy because Dhaka has also got an inspirational captain in Shakib who can change the fate of a match, and it will not much matter on the day that they go into the match with two defeats against Comilla.

"In this format, the most important thing is to seize the momentum at the right time and in that regard we won a very good match against Rangpur Riders [on Wednesday]. Shakib led from the front. Tomorrow is a crucial game and I am waiting for a fantastic match," said Dynamites coach Khaled Mahmud.

"We will play as underdogs because we lost both matches against Comilla, who have been playing fantastic cricket. We are also playing good cricket but we have lacked consistency," he added.

The two coaches had different opinions about the much-debated pitch as Mahmud, also a BCB director, unlike Salahuddin believed that the pitches were not that bad but echoed his counterpart's expectation of a better wicket for this match.

'I always try to do something different'

A true entertainer with his colourful presence both on the field and off it, West Indies all-rounder Dwayne Bravo, aka DJ Bravo, has established himself as one of the most exciting personalities in the cricket world, a perception only bolstered by the release of his song 'Champion' around the time West Indies won the 2016 World T20. The cricketer from Trinidad, playing for Comilla Victorians in the ongoing Bangladesh Premier League, once again brought the spectators to their feet with the famous Champion dance whenever he took a wicket. The 25-year-old spoke about his love for music and how it motivates him, the trademark dance celebration and his international career for West Indies in an exclusive interview with The Daily Star's Mazhar Uddin.

The following are excerpts from the interview:

TDS: You have been playing the BPL for a couple of years now. How do you view the growth of the tournament?

Dwayne Bravo (DB): It's getting more competitive every year. This year there are more international players of high standard so you look through the tournament [and see] that it's not a one-sided tournament as it used to be previously where Dhaka or Chittagong were dominating. But now all the teams are playing competitive cricket and it's attracting a lot of international players, which is good.

TDS: Tell us about the new Bengali song which you recorded. How was the experience?

DB: Actually I have not finished the recording and just started working with Taposh [music director]. I just received a message that after the game tomorrow [Friday] we will try to finalise the date and fully record the song. I am looking forward to it and I always try to do something different as I enjoy music and am passionate about music.

TDS: Do you get motivated through music?

DB: Most sportsmen listen to music as music is something that unified people and music has no boundaries and, regardless of culture, we all listen to music. Coming from the Caribbean, music is a big part of our livelihood and yeah I enjoy the happy side of life and I just enjoy doing different things.

TDS: Your dancing celebration after getting a wicket has become your trademark. When did it start?

DB: That's years and years ago... I can't recall but I get excited when I get a wicket and I celebrate it in my own way and try to be different from others. You know all my fans now can actually identify me through my dance and everywhere I go everyone wants to see the DJ Bravo dance and I try to please them.

TDS: You have changed your jersey number from 47 to 3. Why?

DB: Yes... I changed my jersey number to 3 last year during the World Cup. My daughter was born on the 3rd, my mother was also born on the 3rd and the year my son was born on the 3rd too, I decided to change my jersey number from 47 to 3.

TDS: Apart from you, who are the other

entertainers in the West Indies?

DB: It's the universe boss, Chris Gayle. He is the one who first endorsed the Champion dance and he is the one who set the Gangnam Style dance on fire. Chris Gayle is the real boss.

TDS: You and your half-brother Darren Bravo are playing for Comilla this season. How much did Brian Lara influence you two to become cricketers?

DB: It has been good as I made my Test debut under Lara's leadership and we come from the same home village. Brian is an idol for both me and Darren and we look up to him and he has always been there for us. I can message him no matter where we are in the world about anything, not only cricket, but about life as well. I am happy to have someone like him in our corner and he will always be our hero.

TDS: Do you think you could have given a lot more to the West Indies national team?

DB: Statswise everyone could do better, even the greats could have done better if you ask them. But the circumstances never allowed me to, for different reasons. But I have no regrets in my career; I think I had a fairly decent career [for someone] who started at a very young age. I did my part, I played my part and I developed late as an all-rounder and I am known as one of the better all-rounders in the game.

TDS: Do you desire to play for the West Indies again?

DB: I get this question all the time and what I used to say is: whether West Indies want me to play. Every time I am available for international cricket I am not selected. These are beyond my control but at the moment I have just come from a severe injury and now I am just looking to get my body in shape again and get back playing competitive cricket and let's see what happens in 2018.

TDS: Has any local cricketer impressed you in the BPL so far?

DB: Mehedi [Hasan] Miraz is a good talent, Liton Das is also good and there are quite a few young players as I said the talent is there in Bangladeshi cricket. So they just need proper management and good coaches to enhance their talents.



Titans and Riders fight for survival

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No more room for mistakes or second chances. Losing this game means goodbye. These are the thoughts that will play on the back of the minds for both Khulna Titans and Rangpur Riders in the eliminator, the days' first fixture of the Bangladesh Premier League at the Sher-e-Bangla National stadium in Mirpur today.

Despite having big names in either side, the focus will remain on the captains, both of whom who have lifted the morale of the side by leading from the front throughout the tournament.

The Titans are probably the only team this season whose local talents paid huge dividends, from Ariful Haque's ability to score quick runs in crucial moments to the season's top wicket-taker, pacer Abu Jayed with 18 scalps.

But it's captain cool Mahmudullah Riyad who will have to guide the youngsters in pressure situations, which he has done often in the past few seasons while the Titans will also look yet again to West Indian six specialist Carlos Brathwaite, who has a strike rate of 178.57 and has hit 18 sixes so far, changing the complexion of the game late in the innings on several occasions.

On the other hand there is the other captain -- the inspiration, motivator and game-changer named Mashrafe Bin Mortaza who has helped Rangpur stage a dramatic turnaround after a disappointing start to the tournament. He has done the job at times with the bat and also with the ball and of course with his firm presence on the field.

But the Riders would definitely want their two explosive batsmen in opener Chris Gayle and Brendon McCullum to fire, which so far has not

happened simultaneously to the extent everyone knows they can.

Sri Lanka pacer Lasith Malinga is also not at his best, but the only consistent foreigner in the side, Englishman Ravi Bopara, will certainly have an impact on the big game.

When it comes to the locals Rangpur do have handy spinners like Sohag Gazi who can play a crucial role with his off-spin along with left-arm spinner Nazmul Islam.

The league head-to-head between the two

sides is locked at one each, making today's knockout all the more interesting as a decider of sorts between the third and fourth placed sides.

But apart from all the equations, it's the pitch at the Sher-e-Bangla National stadium in Mirpur that has offered less pace, uneven bounce and low-scoring affairs, which has been the centre of discussion since the tournament shifted to Dhaka for the final stretch. Fingers will be crossed all around for a better surface worthy of the business end of the tournament.



Khulna Titans skipper Mahmudullah Riyad (R) discusses strategy with coach Mahela Jayawardene during a practice session at the BCB Academy ground yesterday ahead of today's BPL Eliminator against Rangpur Riders.

PHOTO: STAR

'I know it's Pybus'

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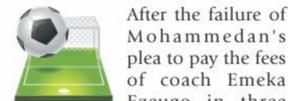
While the Bangladesh cricket community is all twitter with speculation about who the new national coach will be, it seems that a foreign player already knows the answer.

"I think they already named the new coach as I heard that Richard Pybus is the new coach," said Comilla Victorians' West Indian all-rounder Dwayne Bravo pretty confidently yesterday during an interview with The Daily Star. When told that Pybus was still only one of the candidates, Bravo reconsidered and gave a glowing endorsement of countryman Phil Simmons, who is due to reach Bangladesh to give a presentation to the board on December 9.

"No? Then I think Phil Simmons is the best coach ever and it will be great for Bangladesh cricket to have someone like him. I think he will be very good as Bangladesh cricket is rising up and they need someone who can help them grow; not someone who will change things as they have a settled team, good players like Tamim [Iqbal], Shakib [Al Hasan], Mashrafe [Bin Mortaza] are there so they just need someone to manage and guide them."

BFF seeks FIFA favour for MSC

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After the failure of Mohammedan's plea to pay the fees of coach Emeka Ezeugo in three instalments was rejected by FIFA, the Professional Football League Committee (PFLC) of the Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) yesterday said that they will use 'personal relationships' in an attempt to convince FIFA's disciplinary committee to waive the three-point deduction handed to Mohammedan in the ongoing Bangladesh Premier League.

In 2015, FIFA's disciplinary committee had instructed Mohammedan to clear unpaid wages of 20,000 dollars to coach Emeka Ezeugo, who lodged a complaint in 2012.

On October 30 FIFA's disciplinary committee instructed the BFF to deduct three points from Mohammedan in the ongoing league immediately. Mohammedan sought 30 days to clear the payment, and the BFF sent FIFA a letter on their behalf asking for a 30-day extension to clear the dues on November 18. However, on November 29 the game's governing body declined the request and instructed that three points be

cut and Emeka's unpaid dues be cleared immediately before further disciplinary action was taken.

"Actually the BFF is run according to the guidelines set by the AFC and FIFA, so if there is any instruction from them, we must implement it. There is a payment matter which Mohammedan are discussing with the BFF and we told them to pay it immediately. I asked my office (BFF) to end this issue only by the payment," said PFLC chairman and BFF senior vice president Abdus Salam Mursheedy after a meeting at the BFF House yesterday.

"We asked the [BFF] general secretary [Abu Nayeem Shohag] to ask our president [Kazi Salahuddin], who has a good position in the FIFA and AFC, to run interference on our behalf. Besides that we have an [FIFA] executive member [Mahfuza Akter Kiron] from Bangladesh and we have requested them to try and get the punishment [deduction of three points] waived and they will try for the next two days," he continued.

"As we work closely with the clubs, we want to work a bit on the deduction of Mohammedan's points. Although we don't know whether it is possible, we want to try it as we have good relations with AFC and FIFA," Mursheedy explained.

TT tournament underway

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The Prime Bank Pallima Sangsad School Table Tennis tournament kicked off at the club premises in the capital's Khilgaon area yesterday, to mark the silver jubilee of Pallima Sangsad.

Students from approximately 22 schools and 30 disabled table tennis players are taking part in the event.

Bangladesh Table Tennis Federation president Hedayetullah Al Mamun inaugurated the competition while Pallima Sangsad's founding member Hafizur Rahman, general secretary Lutfor Rahman and BITF general secretary Khandokar Hasan Monir were present among others on the occasion.

Badminton tourney from tomorrow

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In an effort to give the country's amateur shuttlers more exposure, the Click Racket Wreckage Badminton tournament will be underway at the Banani ground from tomorrow.

Shuttlers from different universities and corporate houses will participate in the seven-day tournament, which will be inaugurated by State Minister for Youth and Sports Biren Sikder.