


Football claims Mushy too? Salary increase unlikely for Tigers

SPORTS REPORTER

 Mushfiqur Rahim joined the long list of injured national players and, according to sources close to the action, the second in as many weeks to be laid low while playing football. Mushfiqur's ankle sprain is almost certain to keep him out of today's Bangladesh Cricket League fifth-round match between North Zone and East Zone and may even miss the rest of the league which ends on April 27.

It was learned that Mushfiqur hurt his left ankle after a collision with North Zone teammate Nazmul Hossain Shanto while playing football during the warm-up session on the fourth and final day of the Bangladesh Cricket League fourth-round game against Central Zone at the Shaheed Chandu stadium in Bogra on April 13.

All-rounder Nasir Hossain had earlier sustained torn ligaments on his right knee, reportedly while playing football after attending a friend's wedding in Sirajganj following the end of the Dhaka Premier league. He will be out of action for six months.

"He has an ankle sprain. Right now, he has to take rest," Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) chief physician Debashish Chowdhury told The Daily Star yesterday. "It has already been four days, we will assess the situation week by week. It may take time, but it is hard to say at the moment how long it will take."

After Nasir's injury, Chowdhury had warned the national cricketers to ease up on their football warm-up games as the high intensity could lead to injuries. Mushfiqur's injury is one more cautionary tale about the warm-up games which the national cricketers play intensely and very competitively.

The 30-year-old struck his first hundred at his home town of Bogura on the third day and actually batted after sustaining the injury, adding only 10 runs to his overnight score of 101. That he batted at all suggests that the



North Zone batsman Mushfiqur Rahim (L) became the second cricketer in as many weeks to be injured while playing football.

PHOTO: STAR FILE

injury was not thought to be serious at the time, but four days on Mushfiqur is almost certain to miss the fifth-round match against East Zone at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur today.

Among the national players, Tamim Iqbal is

going through rehabilitation after suffering a meniscus injury on his left knee and it will take another three weeks for the left-hander to recover. Mehedi Hasan Miraz is also suffering from a right shoulder injury while pacer Taskin Ahmed is suffering back pain.

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 A proposal to increase the national players' salaries in the central contracts is unlikely to be tabled at Wednesday's Bangladesh Cricket Board executive com-

mittee meeting. According to sources, a meeting took place between the working and financial committees recently where the board decided not to increase salaries of the cricketers as there has not been a considerable increase in the BCB's revenue.

It was also learned that the board has decided to decrease the number of players to be centrally contracted from the 16 players who were named in the central contracts list in 2017 in five categories.

The old contract expired in December last year and the players will receive their outstanding salaries as per the new structure. The BCB increased the salary up to 63 per cent last year after players made their demands, saying that even lower-ranked teams earned more than them. The match fees were also doubled in ODIs from Tk 1 lakh to Tk 2 lakh, while the fees for Tests and T20Is were also nearly doubled.

"We are yet to finalise the proposal for the central contracts and most probably we will do that by tomorrow [Tuesday]. But it's confirmed that we are going to decrease the number of players in the central contract as we had to discuss quite a few matters as well," Akram Khan, chairman of the BCB's cricket operations committee, told reporters yesterday.

Among the 16 cricketers from the central contract, Sabbir Rahman has already been ruled out of the new contract after being handed a six-month ban from domestic cricket and was also scraped from the central contracts on the first day of 2018 by board president Nazmul Hassan after the cricketer

2017 MONTHLY SALARY STRUCTURE

A+ Tk 4,00,000

Mushfiqur Rahim, Mashrafe Bin Mortaza, Shakib Al Hasan, Tamim Iqbal

A Tk 3,00,000

Mahmudullah Riyad

B Tk 2,00,000

Imrul Kayes, Mominul Haque, Sabbir Rahman and Soumya Sarkar

C Tk 1,50,000

Rubel Hossain, Taskin Ahmed, Mustafizur Rahman and Mosaddek Hossain

D Tk 1,00,000

Tajjul Islam, Kamrul Islam and Mehedi Hasan Miraz

Match fee: Test Tk3,50,000, ODI Tk 2,00,000, T20I Tk 1,25,000

allegedly assaulted a young fan during a National Cricket League game last year.

According to sources, pacers Taskin Ahmed from category C and Kamrul Islam Rabbi from category D are likely to be excluded from the new central contracts because of poor performance, which means the number of centrally contracted players are likely to come down to 13.

Meanwhile, Mahmudullah Riyad who is the only player in category A, is all set to be promoted to category A-plus alongside Mushfiqur Rahim, Tamim Iqbal, Mashrafe Bin Mortaza and Shakib Al Hasan.

Pacer Mustafizur Rahman, who was in category C, is also set to get a promotion in the central contract.

My arms can do the job: Dhoni

PTI, Mohali

Mahendra Singh Dhoni's powerful forearms won many a match for India and no wonder the former India captain has confidence to clear the boundary even when he is suffering from excruciating back pain.

For lofted shots, a batsman needs to maintain shape while transferring body weight into the shot. However against Kings XI Punjab last night, the Chennai Super Kings captain was in real pain but kept clearing the ropes with consummate ease.

Dhoni's unbeaten 79 off 44 balls got CSK agonisingly close to the target before the visitors fell short by four runs.

When asked how he could hit those lofted shots with a painful back, Dhoni replied: "The back is pretty bad but God has given me a lot of power and I don't need to use my back a lot. My arms can do the job."

"It shouldn't be too bad because I know what happened. And when you know the extent of your injury, you know how bad it really is," he said.

Novak returns with a win

AFP, Monte Carlo

Former world number one Novak Djokovic showed signs of a return to form with a 6-0, 6-1 thrashing of fellow Serb Dusan Lajovic in the Monte Carlo Masters first round on Monday.

It was an impressive performance from the 30-year-old in his first match since splitting from coach Andre Agassi and starting to work again with long-time former coach Marian Vajda.

Ranked 13th in the world after lengthy spells off the court with an elbow injury, Djokovic is training with Vajda for the first time since last year's Monte Carlo Masters.

Djokovic dominated from the outset as Lajovic struggled, and despite some nervy moments on serve in the second set, wrapped up victory in under an hour to book a second-round meeting with Borna Coric.

Search for wins set to heat up

SPORTS REPORTER



It was cold and foggy when the first three rounds of the Bangladesh Cricket League (BCL) were played, but when the four-day meet resumed

after more than two months the players have faced a diametrically opposite challenge in hot and humid conditions.

The weather hogged the spotlight yesterday, ahead of the fifth-round matches, especially as the match between South Zone and Central Zone will take place at the Shaheed Kamaruzzaman Stadium in Rajshahi. The climate of the central city of the northern part of the country is generally marked by high temperatures and considerable humidity during summer.

It will not be much easier for North Zone and East Zone players, who will lock horns at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur. That is why former national and current East Zone coach Sarwar Imran gave some advice to his players, especially the pace bowlers, so that they can avoid injuries resulting from the hot weather.

"The first three rounds were played in winter. The matches were interrupted due to dense fogs, which is the reason why most of the matches ended in draws but I am hoping for a result in Mirpur if the wicket is even for both bowlers and batsmen. The players should take special care by taking ice baths in every hour to avoid the dehydration," Imran told reporters at Mirpur yesterday.

He was however more excited with the progress of the league. "There is only a difference of two points between leaders North Zone (41 points) and East Zone (39 points) while another team (South Zone) is trailing us by just one point. Everything will depend on the last two games," he said.

So far only one match produced a result, when North Zone beat Central Zone -- who have 29 points -- in their first-round game.

North Zone opener Jahurul Islam was also hoping for a result in Mirpur. "This fifth round is very important as the race is wide open. We are looking for a result in Mirpur as there is a possibility of rain and thundershowers in the coming days," said Jahurul.

"There is grass on the wicket [in Rajshahi]. I hope it will be a good battle. We are yet to win a match but we will try to make it happen here. Mashrafe (Mashrafe Bin Mortaza) bhai will not play the fifth-round match but he will be available for the last round," said South Zone skipper Nurul Hasan.

South Zone opener Imrul Kayes, who missed the fourth round, said: "Players are very aware of the hot and humid conditions in Rajshahi and they know how to cope with it."

Central Zone captain Mahmudullah Riyad echoed the sentiment. "It's too hot but for a professional player it doesn't matter whether it is cold or hot. It seems to be a sporting wicket and I am looking forward to an interesting game here," said Riyad.



East Zone opener Liton Das (R) talks with teammate Alok Kapali during training at the BCB Academy ground in Mirpur yesterday ahead of today's BCL fifth-round fixture against Central Zone.

PHOTO: STAR

Knight Riders slay Daredevils

AGENCIES, New Delhi

Spinners Sunil Narine and Kuldeep Yadav shared six wickets as they helped Kolkata Knight Riders beat Delhi Daredevils by 71 runs in their Indian Premier League match at the Eden Gardens in Kolkata yesterday.

Kolkata bowled out Delhi for 129 in 14.2 overs to register their second win of the season. They jumped to second in the points table with four points from four matches, just behind Sunrisers Hyderabad who have six points from three games.

Narine took three wickets for 18 runs in three overs, while Yadav finished with figures of three for 32 in 3.2 overs. Piyush Chawla, Andre Russell, Shivam Mavi and Tom Curran also took a wicket each.

Sent in to bat, Kolkata stepped on the gas with Andre Russell in the middle as they overcame a slow start to post a challenging 200 for 9 against Delhi.

The only blip in Russell's innings was when he was dropped on 7 by Jason Roy off the bowling of Mohammed Shami. Russell missed out on a fifty, but Rana brought up his in 30 balls in a highly impressive knock, which contained five fours and four sixes. Rana held Kolkata's innings together before being undone by a slower one by Chris Morris.

Chasing a 201-run target, Delhi had a disastrous start as they lost three wickets in the first three overs. A great gloveworks from Karthik saw Jason Roy stumped off Piyush Chawla in the first over. In the second, Nitish Rana took a good catch at slip to Shreyas Iyer off Andre Russell. And in the third, young pacer Shivam Mavi castled Gautam Gambhir to reduce Delhi to 24 for 3.

Pant was looking good for a half-century, but he hit straight into the hands of Chawla at deep mid-wicket off Yadav in the ninth over. Pant scored a 26-ball 43 which included a six and seven fours as he added a valuable 62 runs for the fourth wicket with Glenn Maxwell.

Pant's wicket triggered a batting collapse for Daredevils as they lost next six wickets in 5.5 overs for 43 runs.

Khoka Da, an inspiration

QUAMRUL ISLAM RUBAIYAT from Thakurgaon



Nurul Islam was one of those nondescript yet selfless individuals who devoted their lives to promoting sports in the country. Popularly known as Khoka Da, he was the man to turn to at Thakurgaon playground to play football. He was not a licensed coach, but he kept on training young enthusiasts for 42 years in that remote northern district of the country until he breathed his last on Sunday night at the age of 70.

A founder member of Uttaran Krira Chakra, a popular club of the district which was established in 1976, Islam was an epitome of so many selfless coaches and organisers who are practically married to football. A confirmed bachelor, Islam was an employee of the mechanical department of Thakurgaon Sugar Mills when he developed his pas-

sion for football. He arranged two training camps, the morning session was before he set off for work and the afternoon session was after he was done. He kept on training the boys even after his retirement and his door was always ajar for everyone. In addition, he never asked for a penny from those youthful enthusiasts.

He was confined to his home for the last two months due to old age complications and the news of his demise understandably cast a pall of gloom on the sports fraternity of the district. A long and silent procession of mourners outside his Public Club Road residence yesterday



only demonstrated a bit of the treasure-trove of love he earned for his selfless endeavours. Arafat Rony, a defender who played for Mohammedan Sporting Club, is one of the few names who have come all the way from Khoka Da's nursery to the top fight while Yasin Ali and Robi played in the U-16 and U-17 teams. But all of them, while reflecting on their mentor, recalled his heart's wish: "You boys will play and build your carrier in right way, a way to enhance a healthy nation, this is my satisfaction."

"His contribution to the district's football is indescribable. He spent his

whole life with the boys in the playground. He was the main source of producing players in the district," said District Sports Association general secretary Masudur Rahman Babu.

"I have been to Thakurgaon on a number of occasions to conduct age-level training and every time I saw him, it gave me the feeling of a football-mad trainer ready to do whatever it takes for the welfare of his students. He was a rare breed and it is sad that he is no more," said Mahabub Hossain Polo, a Bangladesh Football Federation coach.

The beloved Khoka Da was buried at Munshipara graveyard after Zuhr prayers following his namaj-e-janaza at the Thakurgaon Government Boys High School's Boro Math.

But he will live on as an inspiration and hopefully the Thakurgaon playground, which now wears a deserted look, will find another Khoka Da sooner rather than later.