

# SPORT

## Do domestic performances matter?

SPORTS REPORTER

Performance in every profession is the major aspect in determining the quality of an individual and when it comes to sport, performance is supposed to be the key factor in getting reward, be that a recall to the national team or receiving some sort of recognition.

The Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) selectors will submit a preliminary squad today for the upcoming series against Afghanistan in June and the tour of West Indies in July-August. They will also announce the 22-member squad for the High Performance and A team, which will contain players from the same pool.

Regarding the national team, the decision-makers have a tendency towards two beliefs. First, if someone is past the age of 30 and out of the national fold, he should not harbour hopes of a comeback and second, even if they are doing something special on the domestic scene that success cannot translate to the international level.

Abdur Razzak's return to international cricket after nearly four years in the second Test against Sri Lanka in Mirpur earlier this year, when he picked four wickets in the first innings, bucked that trend but it remains to be seen whether that was a one-off or the first instance of commonly held prejudices against domestic performers of a certain vintage being broken.



ABDUR RAZZAK



TUSHAR IMRAN



NAEM ISLAM



MARSHALL AYUB

It is a question that the likes of Tushar Imran, Naem Islam and Marshall Ayub -- all of whom have been outstanding in the domestic circuit of late -- will be particularly interested in. They however seem set for disappointment as chief selector Minhajul Abedin did not seem willing to hand out comebacks based only on domestic performances.

"You have to remember that it's not necessary that a player who is performing well in the domestic circuit will perform at international level; you have to know about his ability. It's not that you have to pick the cricketer instantly if he performs. First let us give the HP team and the A team, then you will see. When you see the HP squad then you will realise," Minhajul told reporters at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.

It will indeed be a surprise if Razzak -- who ended the recently concluded Bangladesh Cricket League as the highest wicket-taker and was among the top three wicket-takers in the National Cricket League -- is not included in the preliminary squad.

If the selectors stick to the general mindset of rewarding domestic performers with inclusion into the A team then the 34-year-old Tushar -- the first Bangladeshi to score 10,000 runs in first class cricket and the second-highest run getter in the BCL with 725 runs at a staggering average of 90.62 -- should get one more opportunity to showcase his skills and also help youngsters with his substantial experience.

Another prolific run scorer in the domestic circuit, Naem, played his last interna-

tional match four years ago but has since been among the top run-getters in the first-class competitions. Marshall, also a consistent performer, was left out of the national team after playing just three Tests four years ago and has not even been considered for the second-string national side since.

One of the criticisms of former national coach Chandika Hathurusingha was that during his three-year tenure, there was a narrowing of the player pool because he never saw domestic matches first-hand and just focused on a certain group of players he knew from national assignments and preliminary squads. Now it seems that the blame was not only the Sri Lankan's as he operated within a culture that does not seem to trust in the ability of domestic cricket to produce quality performers.

## Tigresses tamed in opening ODI

STAR SPORT DESK



The Bangladesh women's cricket team could not capitalise on their positive outing in Wednesday's practice match as they lost the first ODI of the five-match series against their South African counterparts by 106 runs at Senwes Park in Potchefstroom yesterday.

South Africa put in a clinical performance, racking up 270 for nine after winning the toss and then restricting Bangladesh's stuttering chase to 164 all out in 49.3 overs. The one positive for Bangladesh was an unbeaten 69 from Fargana Hoque, who had scored 103 off 144 balls against North West Women in the warm-up on Wednesday. The difference in quality from the warm-up match was obvious in the fact that it took Fargana 146 balls to score 69.

Her innings was one of only three double-digit scores from the tourists, with opener Sanjida Islam scoring a 63-ball 35 and tailender Panna Ghosh chipping in with 23 during a 52-run 10th-wicket partnership with Fargana that leant the innings a touch of respectability after they collapsed from two for 74 to 112 for nine as South Africa used nine bowlers, the best of them being skipper Dane van Niekerk who took three for 23 from her 10 overs.

Earlier, South Africa's 270 for nine was powered by a 54 from opener Lizelle Lee and a 42-ball 65 from Chloe Tryon. Van Niekerk also chipped in with 44 in an all-round performance.

SCORES IN BRIEF

South Africa: 270 for 9 in 50 overs (Lee 54, Van Niekerk 44, Tryon 65; Jahanara 2-62, Nahida 2-22, Fahima 2-53)  
Bangladesh: 164 all out in 49.3 overs (Sanjida 35, Fargana 69 not out, Panna 23; Van Niekerk 3-23, Tryon 2-14)  
Result: South Africa women won by 106 runs.

## Mohammedan rout Sadharan Bima

SPORTS REPORTER



A Nasir Hossain hat-trick powered Mohammedan SC to an emphatic 7-2 win over Sadharan Bima in their second Green Delta Insurance Premier Division Hockey League fixture at the Maulna Bhasani Hockey Stadium yesterday.

With a second win in as many matches, Mohammedan joined second-placed Abahani with six points while holders Dhaka Marnier Young's Club notched a massive 7-0 win over Azad SC to stay on the top of the 12-team table with nine points from three matches.

Coming into the match on the back of a 4-0 win over Ajax SC, the Black and Whites faced a tough challenge from Sadharan Bima, who gave their superior opponents a real run for their money by levelling the margin twice in the first half before young forward Nasir shone in the second to help Mohammedan to wrap up the victory.

It was Sadharan Bima's Bishal who twice cancelled out Mohammedan's lead by scoring after Maksud Alam Habul and Rabbi Salehin scored respectively.

However, Ajit Kumar Gosh put Mohammedan ahead again just before the break. After that there was no stopping the Black and Whites as Rabbi widened the margin to 4-2 right at the start of the second half while Nasir struck three consecutive goals to complete his hat-trick.

In the day's other matches, under floodlights the national player studded Mariners easily edged past a youthful Azad, riding on a brilliant treble from national striker Pushkor Khisha Mimo after Mamunur Rahman Chayan struck the first two goals by converting penalty corners.

Mimo made the margin 3-0 in 30th minute and then completed his hat-trick by scoring two more goals in the 57th and 66th minutes respectively while teammates Mohammad Julhair and Hasan Jubair Niloy also got their names on the scoresheet.

In the third match, Wari Club defeated Dhaka Wanderers Club 4-2.



Mohammedan's Nasir Hossain (L) is ecstatic after one of his three goals against Sadharan Bima during their Green Delta Insurance Premier Division Hockey League match at the Maulana Bhasani Hockey Stadium yesterday. Mohammedan thrashed Bima 7-2. PHOTO: STAR

## Porterfield to lead Ireland in maiden Test

AGENCIES, Dublin

Cricket Ireland announced a 14-member squad for their historic maiden Test against Pakistan on Friday, starting May 11.

In June last year, ICC had announced two new entrants to the Test arena after the full council members approved full member status to both Ireland and Afghanistan at a board meeting in London.

While Ireland will start their journey against Pakistan, Afghanistan will play their own opening Test against India in Bengaluru from June 14.

Senior batsman William Porterfield will lead the Irishmen in the iconic match. The senior pros who will be a part of the match are Ed Joyce, Kevin O'Brien, Niall O'Brien and Boyd Rankin among others.

It'd been for some time that Ireland had been the most prominent associate nation, ever since their first taste of top league cricket in the 50-over World Cup in 2007, where they beat Pakistan in a truncated contest. Of late, Afghanistan have emerged as another major power among the associate nations and recently pipped Ireland before beating the Windies to qualify for the 50-over World Cup in 2019.

Squad: William Porterfield (c), Andrew Balbirnie, Ed Joyce, Tyrone Kane, Andy McBrine, Tim Murtagh, Kevin O'Brien, Niall O'Brien, Boyd Rankin, Nathan Smith, Paul Stirling, James Shannon, Stuart Thompson, Gary Wilson.

## IPL playoffs moved from Pune to Kolkata

AGENCIES, New Delhi

Indian Premier League chairman Rajeev Shukla confirmed on Friday that two playoff games -- the Eliminator and Qualifier 2 -- of IPL 2018 have been shifted from Pune to Kolkata.

Pune was scheduled to host the two games, but with Chennai Super Kings shifting their base to Pune due to security concerns, Eden Gardens emerged as the frontrunner to host the two playoff games.

"We are happy to host the play-off matches and are looking forward to it," Cricket Association of Bengal (CAB) joint-secretary Avishek Dalmiya said.

Mumbai will host Qualifier 1 and the Final on May 22 and 27 respectively.

## 'Lots to do to earn back trust'

AFP, Sydney



Deposed Australia captain Steve Smith has returned home from time out overseas, saying he is prepared to win back trust after his role in a high-profile ball-tampering scandal.

Smith, who was sacked and sent home in disgrace after the third Test against South Africa, had been lying low in New York but made his first appearance on social media in a month to thank the cricket public for giving him a second chance and his family for their support.

The former skipper posted a photo of himself and fiancée Dani back in Sydney and said he wouldn't be taking his fight to earn back trust for granted.

"It's great to be back home in Australia. I have had some time away to come to terms with everything and now it's time to get back into it," Smith wrote on Instagram on Friday.

"The amount of emails and letters I have received has been incredible and I have been extremely humbled by the enormous amount of support you have given me.

"I now have a lot to do to earn back your trust." Cricket Australia last month suspended Smith and team vice-captain David Warner from all international and domestic cricket for a year, while Cameron Bancroft was suspended for nine months.

Bancroft was caught by TV cameras trying to tamper with the ball using sandpaper, triggering a dramatic series of events that led to the banning of the three players and coach Darren Lehmann standing down from his role.

Smith was greeted back by Lehmann, who tweeted "welcome home mate" in response to the 28-year-old's post.

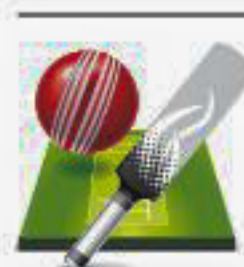
Former Test Justin Langer was Thursday appointed as Lehmann's successor in all three formats of the game.



STEVE SMITH

## Border, Lehmann back Langer

AGENCIES, Sydney



Allan Border and Darren Lehmann have backed Justin Langer, the new head coach of the Australia national side, to pull the team out of a tough period.

Lehmann, who stepped down from the role last month in the aftermath of the ball-tampering scandal in South Africa, said Langer, his former teammate and the man replacing him, would do well at "the best job in the world".

"I'm just so pleased that Australian cricket is going to be in such good hands," Lehmann told cricket.com.au. "He's got the best job in the world, and I know it's a job that I'll miss because I loved every minute of it.

"But this is a time that Australian cricket needs to move forward and they couldn't have a better person to lead them now."

"It's a holistic approach with Justin -- he develops the cricketer and the person," said Border, who was Langer's captain when he made his Test debut in 1993. "He's also a hard-nosed, very competitive fella."

Lehmann was happy that Langer, charged with redefining the team culture and leading "a great bunch of blokes", had not closed the door on the returns of former captain Steve Smith, David Warner and Cameron Bancroft, all of whom are serving out bans for their roles in the scandal.

"I was really pleased that Justin made mention of those three guys who aren't playing at the moment because they are, and they'll continue to be, valuable players for the future of Australian cricket. He didn't close the door on anyone, and I think that's an important message," said Lehmann.



JUSTIN LANGER

## Mumbai stay alive

STAR SPORT DESK



Krunal Pandia hit an unbeaten 31 off 12 deliveries as Mumbai Indians snatched a thrilling six-wicket victory over Kings XI Punjab, keeping their campaign in the Indian Premier League alive, at Indore last night.

The older brother of more renowned Hardik, Krunal showed he is no muck with the bat as he launched four fours and two sixes to resurrect what looked like a lost cause for the defending champions in chasing down the victory target of 175 in 19 overs. Skipper Rohit Sharma gave him able company with an unbeaten 24 off 15 deliveries after the foundation was laid by opener Suryakumar Yadav's 42-ball 57.

Afghan off-spinner Mujeeb Ur Rehman's two wickets and an economical spell from veteran Ravichandran Ashwin had seem-

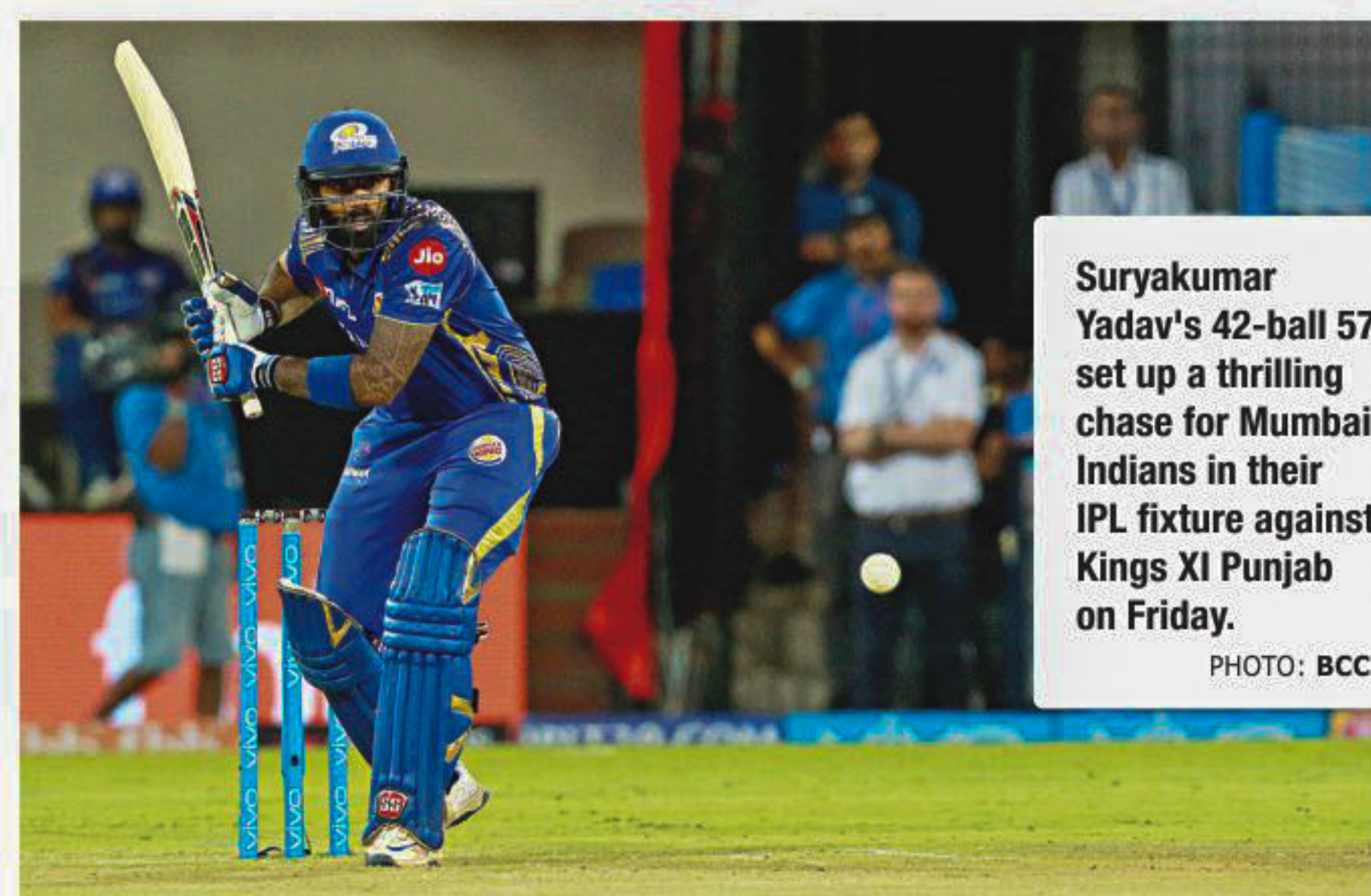
ingly stifled the run chase, only for the late pyrotechnics from the older Pandiya.

Earlier, Kings XI Punjab rode on a 40-ball 50 from Chris Gayle and some lusty blows from Marcus Stoinis towards the end to post a challenging 174 for six in their 20 overs.

The win kept the three-time champions alive in the tournament as they have six points from nine games, level on points with three other sides at the bottom. Punjab, despite the defeat, stayed on course for a last-four place with 10 points from eight games.

SCORES IN BRIEF

Kings XI Punjab: 174 for 6 in 20 overs (Gayle 50, Stoinis 29 not out, Rahul 24; Bumrah 1-19)  
Mumbai Indians: 176 for 4 in 19 overs (Yadav 57, Krunal 31 not out, Sharma 24 not out; Mujeeb 2-37)  
Result: Mumbai Indians won by six wickets



Suryakumar Yadav's 42-ball 57 set up a thrilling chase for Mumbai Indians in their IPL fixture against Kings XI Punjab on Friday. PHOTO: BCCI