

Fizz in ICC's 2018 ODI team



SPORTS REPORTER

Ace Bangladesh pacer Mustafizur Rahman was the only player from the country to find a place in the International Cricket Council's (ICC's) ODI team of the year announced on their website yesterday.

Mustafizur, nicknamed Fizz, had an excellent 2018, taking 29 wickets at an average of 21.72. He was also instrumental in Bangladesh's march to the Asia Cup final in September, during which he was the joint-highest wicket-taker with 10 scalps at an average of 18.5.

"His ability to swing the ball coupled with his bag of wily slower ones makes him a fine ODI bowler," the ICC article said.

Mustafizur also made the ODI team of the year in 2015, his breakout year. He was also named one of the Emerging Players of the Year in 2016 by the ICC.

Kohli sweeps awards

ICC



Virat Kohli has become the first player in history to win the Sir Garfield Sobers Trophy for ICC Cricketer of the Year, the ICC Men's Test Player of the Year and the ICC ODI Player of the Year awards following an extraordinary 2018.

But it was all about Kohli as he was not only the first player to win these three major ICC awards together but has also been named the captain of the ICC Test and ODI teams of the year.

"It feels amazing. It's a reward for all the hard work that you do throughout the calendar year. I feel really grateful and very, very happy with the team doing well at the same time myself performing," ICC's website quoted the Indian captain as saying. "Having recognition at the



global level from the ICC is something you feel proud of as a cricketer because you understand that there are many players playing the game.

"To be rewarded in this manner from amongst all of them is obviously a very proud moment for me and something that gives you more motivation to keep repeating the same things because you have to keep the standard of cricket up and keep bringing in consistent performances. From that point of view, these awards give you that extra motivation."

ICC chief executive Dave Richardson paid tribute to Kohli, singling out the priority the world's leading cricketer places on Test cricket. "This is well-deserved recognition for an extraordinary talent. His regard for the game and particularly for Test cricket is also recognized and appreciated. He is passionate in his support of the longest form of the game and its continued importance."

KOHLI'S 2018

- In 2018, Kohli scored 1322 runs from 13 Tests at an average of 55.08, striking five centuries and five half-tons.
- His ODI form last year was superhuman -- 1202 runs from 14 games, six hundreds, three fifties, an average of 133.55 and strike rate of 102.55.
- Kohli had won the Sir Garfield Trophy and ICC ODI Player of the Year awards last year and was also the ICC ODI Player of the Year in 2012.

Nilphamari set for stunning debut

SPORTS REPORTER



The Sheikh Kamal Stadium in Nilphamari will mark its debut as the 14th Bangladesh Premier League (BPL) venue with a high-voltage encounter between holders Abahani and hosts Bashundhara Kings today.

Although this is the first time that Nilphamari will host a fixture of the country's top-tier professional football league, the Sheikh Kamal Stadium had staged two international matches last year -- the FIFA friendly match between Bangladesh and Sri Lanka and the international club match between Bashundhara Kings and New Radiant SC of Maldives. After these two games the venue came to the attention of the sports fraternity for its lush green ground and the spontaneous arrival of fans in droves.

The Sheikh Kamal Stadium, built in 1984, took

on a new look after huge renovation works were completed last year with approximately Tk 14 crore being spent on building up nearly 750 square-feet of gallery, a new VIP stand, earth filling, and planting fresh grass among other tasks. The seating capacity of the stadium was subsequently increased to 20,000.

The Bangladesh Football Federation had previously discounted several venues such as the ones in Cox's Bazar, Beanibazar, Narsingdi and Tangail, as they failed to meet BPL standards. Meanwhile, venues like the ones in Narayanganj, Khulna and Feni are no longer used as their respective clubs refused to keep them as home grounds.

Although Nilphamari does not have its own club, the venue has all the necessary facilities to host tournament matches and so, it is expected that should any club chose to make the venue their own, just as Bashundhara Kings did this

season, then the tenure should last a while.

Before the 11th BPL got underway, some 13 venues were used but this time around, only six venues, including two new ones, will be used to host all the matches. The Shaheed Bulu Stadium in Noakhali is also all set to be announced as the 15th venue of the professional football league through a match between Team BJMC and Saif SC on Thursday.

While the Bangabandhu National Stadium in Dhaka and the Rafique Uddin Bhuiyan Stadium in Mymensingh struggle to draw spectators, the Sheikh Kamal Stadium is expected to see a healthy number of fans turn up as some 10,000 tickets have already been sold as of yesterday while more are to be sold on the matchday.

"Having inspected different venues, Bashundhara chose this stadium as it has all the facilities and also keeping the football-crazy fans of Nilphamari in mind," District Football Association president Arif Hossain Moon said. "I think the spectators will enjoy the match and there be support for both teams."

Abahani manager Satyajit Das Rupu also believes that they will get support from the gallery as the Sky Blues have fans across the country.

"Actually, both Abahani and Bashundhara Kings are visitors at this venue and we also expect to get supports from our fans from the gallery," said Rupu, whose side will travel to Nilphamari from Rangpur to play their first away matches.

Both Abahani and Bashundhara Kings began their league campaigns with victories and the two title contenders are surely looking forward to toppling each other in their second match of the ongoing BPL to take an early advantage on the 13-team points-table.

State minister for youth and sports Jahid Ahsan Russel and BFF president Kazi Salahuddin are expected to attend the opening ceremony of the venue.



Rafael Nadal celebrates his 6-3, 6-4, 6-2 victory against Frances Tiafoe during their men's singles quarterfinal of the Australian Open in Melbourne on Tuesday. PHOTO: AFP

Nadal marches on

AFP, Melbourne



Rafael Nadal continued his relentless march towards an 18th major title Tuesday as an emotional Petra Kvitova swept into her first Grand Slam semi-final since a terrifying knife attack almost ended her career.

On day nine of the Australian Open, the fairytale runs of Stefanos Tsitsipas and Danielle Collins were also extended as they too swept into the last four.

Second seed Nadal inched closer to winning an event he has only claimed once before when he trounced unseeded American Frances Tiafoe 6-3, 6-4, 6-2 in another ruthless display from a man who has not dropped a set so far.

Tiafoe had announced himself by beating fifth seed Kevin Anderson, but was no match for a player at the peak of his powers as he attempts to become only the third man to win all four Slams twice and the first to do so in the Open era.

"I had some trouble at this event all my career, so I'm very happy with the way I played tonight," said the Spaniard, who faces another young gun Tsitsipas in the semi-finals.

"I feel lucky to be where I am." Greek sensation Tsitsipas powered into the last four with a measured 7-5, 4-6, 6-4, 7-6 (7/2) win over Spain's Roberto Bautista Agut.

The 20-year-old, who ended Swiss great Roger Federer's tournament, became the youngest man to reach the semis at Melbourne Park since Andy Roddick in 2003 and the first player from Greece -- man or woman -- to get so far at Grand Slam.

"I'm just living the dream, living what

I've been working hard for," said the 14th seed, who lives in Cyprus but trains at the academy of Serena Williams' coach Patrick Mouratoglou in France.

"I feel a bit emotional but not too much -- I know I really worked hard to get here, playing in semis of a Grand Slam."

Czech Kvitova had not gone past the last eight at a major since a burglar slashed her left hand in December 2016, forcing her out of the game for six months and leaving her with lasting nerve damage in the fingers of her racquet hand.

But the eighth seed has bounced back and is on a sensational 10-match unbeaten streak after claiming the Sydney International warm-up title.

She proved too much for Ashleigh Barty, crushing the local hope 6-1, 6-4, and was in tears afterwards as she reflected on her long journey back to the top.

"Really, I didn't imagine to be back on this great stadium and play with the best," the two-time Wimbledon champion said. "I'm calling it as my second career. So it's the first semi-final of the second career. I'm really enjoying it."

Kvitova will face unseeded American Collins in the semi-final on Thursday and she desperately wants to reach Saturday's decider.

"I want it bad, that's right," she said.

Collins, the world number 35, had never won a Grand Slam match before entering this year's tournament but she stunned three-time major champion and second seed Angelique Kerber in round four.

And the 25-year-old from Florida continued her Cinderella run by bouncing back spectacularly to down Russia's Anastasia Pavlyuchenkova 2-6, 7-5, 6-1 in the quarter-finals.

Proteas level the series

AFP, Durban

South Africa beat Pakistan in the second ODI on Tuesday in Durban to level their five-match series as unbeaten half-centuries from Rassie van der Dussen and Andile Phehlukwayo guided the hosts to a five-wicket victory.

Pakistan tail-ender Hasan Ali hit a fighting half-century after his top-order teammates failed. They were bowled out for 203, a total which seemed unlikely when Hasan, batting at number ten, came in with his side in desperate trouble at 112 for eight.

SCORES IN BRIEF

PAKISTAN: 203 all out in 45.5 overs (Zaman 26, Malik 21, Sarfraz 41, Hasan 59; Rabada 2-35, Phehlukwayo 4-22, Shamsi 3-56)
SOUTH AFRICA: 207 for 5 in 42 overs (Van der Dussen 80 not out, Miller 31, Phehlukwayo 69 not out; Shaheen 3-44, Shadab 3-46)
Result: South Africa won by 5 wickets.
Player-of-the-match: Andile Phehlukwayo.

BFCA formed to develop football

SPORTS REPORTER

In a quest to develop the country's football, the Bangladesh Football Club Association (BFCA) was formed in the presence of representatives from 57 clubs out of the total 67 at a city hotel yesterday.

The Bangladesh Premier League, Bangladesh Championship League, Senior Division Football League, 2nd Division Football League and 3rd Division Football League club representatives gathered alongside some well-known organisers at the city hotel to discuss the different aspects of football.

Later, they formed the club association with Chittagong Abahani football team committee chairman and Saif PowerTec managing director Tarafder Ruhul Amin being named as president while Arambagh KS general secretary Mominul Haque Saeed was named as general secretary.

The full committee will be declared soon. Speakers at the discussion also suggested forming a fund to help small clubs, ailing organisers and injured footballers as the clubs do not get such help from anyone.

They also came down heavily on the Bangladesh Football Federation's activities as the national football team currently sit on the bottom of FIFA Rankings.

Newly appointed BFCA president Tarafder has declared that they will give away Tk 5 lakh each to Bangladesh Championship League clubs, Tk 3.5 lakh each to Senior Division Football League clubs, Tk 2.5 lakh each to 2nd Division clubs and Tk 2 lakh each for 3rd Division clubs.

The reason behind the formation of Bangladesh Football Club Association is widely believed to be a voting block ahead of the BFF polls next year.

Ronaldo hit by hefty fine

AFP, Madrid

Cristiano Ronaldo avoided jail on Tuesday but was ordered by a Spanish court to pay 3.57 million euros for committing tax fraud when he was at Real Madrid.

The court sentenced him to a two-year jail sentence that it immediately reduced to a fine of 365,000 euros, which adds on to another penalty of 3.2 million euros, the sentence read.

A court spokesman said he did not know whether this would be added on to the 18.8 million euros that Ronaldo had agreed to pay Spain's taxman under a deal reached in June with the player's lawyers.

Ronaldo, who last year joined Italian champions Juventus, returned to Madrid for a brief court appearance which lasted around 40 minutes as the deal was officially presented to the judge.

"I am very well," the five-time Ballon d'Or winner told the crowd of reporters gathered outside of the court in northeastern Madrid as he left the hearing.

SHORT CORNER

Youth Cricket from today

The third edition of the Youth Cricket League gets underway today as South Zone will take on East Zone at the Shahid Kamruzzaman Stadium in Rajshahi while Central Zone locks horn with North Zone at the Shahid Chandu Stadium in Bogura today.

The Youth Cricket League features the top Under-19 players to give them competitive matches ahead of the big leagues. The first time the competition was held was in 2016 in Chattogram.

The tournament will be played in two formats -- four-day and one-day matches -- with each team facing off against each other in a league system. All the four-day matches will take place between January 23 and February 9, the one-dayers will begin after a three-day break on February 13. The top two teams on the league table will then play the final at the Shaheed Kamruzzaman Stadium in Rajshahi on February 19. --SPORTS REPORTER

Bolt retires from football

Jamaican sprint great Usain Bolt has signalled that his hopes of a professional football career are over, saying: "It was fun while it lasted."

Bolt has had several stints in training and on trial at clubs around the world. Most notably, he scored twice in a friendly match for Central Coast Mariners but was unable to agree on a contract with the Australian club.

"I don't want to say it wasn't dealt with properly, but I think we went about it, not the way we should and you learn your lesson, you live and you learn," he said. --AGENCIES

Athletics C'ships from tomorrow

The 42nd National Athletics Championships will get underway tomorrow at the Bangabandhu National Stadium with an electronic board being used to get the athletes' real time results.



Juventus superstar Cristiano Ronaldo reacts after missing a penalty during their 3-0 Serie A win against Chievo in Turin on Monday. PHOTO: AFP

Some 500 athletes are expected to compete in 36 events -- 22 events for men and 14 events for women -- in the meet which was initially scheduled to take place in last December but had been deferred to January following the national polls.

"We have taken all preparation to make the championship colourful as we will cash-award the athletes who create new records. We believe new athletes will emerge through this championship," Bangladesh Athletic Federation general secretary Abdur Rakib Montu said. "A total of 360 athletes from 27 teams have already sent their entries but we are expecting that some 500 athletes will take part in the championships." --SPORTS REPORTER

England look to defy history

England are solid favourites although history is on the side of the underdog West Indies ahead of the first Test of the three-match series starting Wednesday at Kensington Oval in Bridgetown.

Riding a wave of five consecutive victories - eight in nine matches going back to the last English summer - which includes series wins over top-ranked India and an historic sweep in Sri Lanka, the tourists appear supremely confident of overturning the disappointments of their last two Caribbean campaigns.

England have only won one Test series in the West Indies in the past 50 years, a 3-0 triumph in 2004, and failed to live up to expectations in 2009, when they lost 1-0, and again in 2015 when a five-wicket triumph inside three days by the unfancied hosts at the same Kensington Oval venue resulted in a shared series. --AFP