



INITIAL VIEW

Russell Domingo, the newly appointed head coach of Bangladesh, aims to build a good relationship with the players initially. He talked about gaining their trust as an important aspect of his plans with Bangladesh during his first press conference in Mirpur yesterday.

Domingo, a major factor in whose appointment was that he would be able to give the sufficient time to players and on developmental aspects of cricket in the country as mentioned by the Bangladesh Cricket Board president Nazmul Hassan, also talked about keeping an eye on the domestic circuit that would help him identify future prospects and develop them.

The South African also mentioned that he needs to have trusted colleagues around him who could help him with their insights. He hoped for good input from selectors and also emphasised on communication with High Performance coach Simon Helmot.



Having taken the reins in a time of transition, with the ever-bankable seniors now looking a touch vulnerable, new Bangladesh head coach Russell Domingo (C) will have to start off by getting consistent results from the next generation of performers like Soumya Sarkar (L). PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

CHALLENGES

There has been talk of having more players in the pipeline who can offer more rotational options when needed. Domingo will be expected to enrich the pipeline by spending more time with the future prospects and grooming them.

It would be a tough challenge for Domingo to deal with all the expectations of the board members and the fans.

Bangladesh are yet to bounce back from their disappointing World Cup campaign as the Tigers were handed a 3-0 ODI thrashing away in Sri Lanka last month. And with Bangladesh not playing in their favoured format -- ODIs -- this year, Domingo is set for a tough start.

With the introduction of the World Test Championship and a revamped system that makes it harder for Bangladesh to qualify for the 2023 World Cup, Domingo will find it even tougher to live up to expectations.

Tough start beckons Domingo

SPORTS REPORTER

Russell Domingo appeared overwhelmed when greeted by a room full of reporters when the newly appointed Bangladesh head coach came in for his first press conference in Mirpur yesterday. In the full-house reception, there was a hint of the level of expectation the South African will have to live up to during his tenure as coach of the national team of a cricket-crazed nation.

Such was the case with Domingo's two immediate predecessors -- Chandika Hathurusingha and Steve Rhodes. Rhodes, who Domingo replaced, could not deliver what he had promised initially after taking charge of the Tigers back in June 2018. The Englishman had started with a view to building towards the 2019 World Cup and may have dreamt a bit too big -- sketching a bold picture of seeing the Tigers lined up in the last four of the World Cup. And the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) also did not take long to part ways with the Englishman who -- as has been mentioned by the BCB when they terminated Rhodes' contract before its agreed duration --

had failed to live up to expectations.

It was rather a different story with Hathurusingha. The Sri Lankan commenced his journey as the Tigers' head coach back in May 2014 with a goal-oriented approach as he had put his focus on establishing the best possible environment around the team to ensure better results.

This time, however, Domingo spoke of taking it rather slow. He begun with an immediate goal of building a good rapport with players as he mentioned that gaining the players' trust was an important aspect of his plans.

The South African will however begin with a rather tougher ask than either Rhodes or Hathurusingha. Firstly, the 44-year-old is set for a tough start as he will not have the opportunity to guide the Tigers in ODIs -- their favoured format --



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at all this year. Domingo's first assignment is the one-off Test against Afghanistan starting from September 5, which will be followed by a triangular T20I series featuring Bangladesh, Zimbabwe and Afghanistan.

Moreover, he will not have the full complement of seniors who have eased the entry of the last two coaches. Tamim Iqbal has taken a break from the two upcoming home series, and finding a suitable replacement for one of the best batsmen in the country will be the South African's first headache. No ODIs until March next year also means having to do

without the most influential dressing room presence in Mashrafe Bin Mortaza, whose era is nearing an end anyway as the timing of his retirement now dominates news more than his exploits on the field. That, and the recent 3-0 ODI thrashing in Sri

Lanka last month leaves the team in a state where a rotation policy will have to be used to unearth new players.

Domingo, who seemed a bit surprised and also concerned about Bangladesh's lack of opportunities in Tests, will also have to toil to get the best out of the team in this format.

"Bangladesh played their last Test six months ago. It is a long time. I think it is hard to improve if you don't play enough Tests. I think with the [World] Test Championship, the team will get a chance to focus more on Tests. Bangladesh often play two-match Test series, others play three or four-match series. There is so much focus on white-ball cricket," said Domingo during the press conference yesterday.

There is no denying that being a coach of any country is challenging and it is truer when the team is Bangladesh -- a nation that has fans and board members with high expectations. Rhodes and Hathurusingha had a lot of challenges too, but the fact that they had a more settled Bangladesh side with the seniors in fine fettle may have made things a bit easier for them. With Domingo, however, it seems he will have a tough initiation as Bangladesh coach.



CHARL LANGEVELDT

Can Langeveldt hit the right spot?

SPORTS REPORTER



There are once again high hopes from the Bangladesh pacers as new fast bowling coach Charl Langeveldt took over duties with the aim to reform the Tigers' pace bowling attack.

The fast bowling department has been one of the most vulnerable parts of the Bangladesh team over the years and remains the biggest area of concern for the team management.

There were signs of improvement during Champa Ramanayake's tenure in 2008, when the likes of Mashrafe Bin Mortaza and a few other pacers made big strides.

Then, another high-profile fast bowling coach was appointed in the form of Zimbabwe's Heath Streak to give the Bangladesh seamers that extra punch and at one point during early 2015 it looked like the pace bowling department started to rise.

Hoping to take the fast bowling department to a new level, the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) followed up Streak's era by roping in Courtney Walsh, one of the all-time great fast bowlers.

However, despite the huge expectations during the West Indies legend's four-year tenure as the Tigers' bowling coach, Walsh seemed helpless for various reasons: whether it was a lack of consistency from pacers, their bashfulness due to the language barrier or even a lack of exposure for seamers due to limited opportunities.

Former South Africa pacer Langeveldt seems to have done his homework when it comes to the language barrier and interacting with players to bring out their best and said that he was going to be working on a one-on-one basis to understand each cricketer's mentality.

"It [the language barrier] is a challenge that I had in Afghanistan. After working there I found that if you work one-on-one with a player, he tends to open up a bit more. From my experience in Afghanistan, a player tends to say yes even if they don't understand something. So, I will look to work one-on-one with players and make sure if someone doesn't understand, I can get someone to explain... slow down, not speak too fast and listen to what he has to say," Langeveldt said yesterday during his first interaction with the media since being appointed.

"Even if they want to speak about their families and gets comfortable, you will get to understand them and it also prompts them to come to my room and try to talk. I know it's a challenge but I am looking forward to it."

Although the word 'consistent', which was also a mantra for Walsh, was echoed by Langeveldt too, he pressed the issue of bowling well away from home.

"The new ball is important in ODI and Test cricket, especially in these conditions. The test for me is to find seamers who can bowl outside Bangladesh, who can bowl in conditions of South Africa or Australia. If you look at India, they have three seamers and they can win games in South Africa and Australia. We have to find pacers like that, who can compete at home and abroad."

When asked about replacing Walsh as bowling coach, the 44-year-old former Protea pacer said that he had a different method to coaching and would be looking to prepare another Mustafizur Rahman or Taskin Ahmed for the future, which he is taking as a challenge.

Victorians rally against rule changes

SPORTS REPORTER



The Comilla Victorians yesterday refused to accept the decision to refurbish the regulations of the Bangladesh Premier League (BPL) during the ongoing meetings between the tournament's governing council (GC) and franchises.

Earlier this month, the GC announced that they would set fresh rules as the tournament is to start a new four-year cycle.

Following the last edition of the BPL, the BCB had claimed that the edition was the best among the six seasons.

"My question is why would I change the model if it has been claimed as

the most successful one? Why not continue with it? The BCB president [Nazmul Hassan] said that the BPL would not have any change to its rules and we want to honor his statement. We want continuity of a successful model," said Comilla Victorians owner Nafisa Kamal after the meeting at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium.

"It is being said that there will be a new cycle but that doesn't mean the rules have to be changed. We can always have the old and core rules in new cycle and, if needed, make a few changes only," she added.

The GC's recent decision to withdraw the local players' retention policy and name everyone in the players' draft or auction alongside

their refusal to acknowledge direct local signings has irked the majority of franchises as Shakib Al Hasan's move from Dhaka Dynamites to Rangpur Riders is still pending approval.

"We had signed Mushfiqur [Rahim] during the [2019] World Cup. Tamim [Iqbal] is said to have signed Khulna [Titans] before the World Cup. Why was it not an issue then? We could have had better preparation if we were informed then. Now, all of a sudden, just because of one issue they cannot change the whole system," Nafisa said.

Two-time champions Comilla also pressed the issue of revenue sharing and Nafisa informed that Comilla had been unable to break-even in any of the seasons so far.



New Zealand captain Kane Williamson inspects the P. Sara Oval pitch during practice in Colombo yesterday. PHOTO: AFP

NZ look to exploit SL's Oval weakness

AFP, Colombo

New Zealand will be hoping to add to Sri Lanka's poor record at their own Oval ground and level the series in the second and final Test starting Thursday.

Unlike the spinner's paradise at Galle and the batting haven that is the P. Sara Oval -- the only ground in Asia where Don Bradman played -- favours seam bowlers.

Sri Lanka have been often exposed here by quality seam bowlers and one up in the two-match series, they will have New Zealand's Trent Boult and Tim Southee -- and possibly Neil Wagner -- to contend with.

In the last 10 years, Sri Lanka have played seven games at The Oval and lost five, including once to New Zealand. In that game seven years ago, Southee claimed eight wickets while Boult finished with seven.

"We have some fond memories from last time, and we managed to win that," New Zealand wicketkeeper B.J. Watling said at a pre-match media briefing on Wednesday. "The boys like to talk about their wickets and there's a few stunning catches from memory as well. Having good memories is always good, but it is a new game, a new day, and we need to be switched on," Watling added.

Left-arm quick Wagner claimed nine wickets in New Zealand's last Test match and was unlucky to miss out in Galle as conditions heavily favoured spin. He is expected to make a return possibly at the expense of Mitchell Santner.

Sri Lanka, meanwhile, will leave out off-spinner Akila Dananjaya, whose action was reported to be suspect for a second time by match officials after the Galle Test. Dilruwan Perera has been drafted into the squad and is expected to play.

Yasir, Nazmul make it 1-1 for HP

SPORTS REPORTER



The BCB High Performance team bounced back from a dismal performance in the first match of a three-match one-day series by beating their Sri Lankan counterparts by two wickets in the second one-dayer at BKSP yesterday.

The home side put up a much-improved batting display after the 186-run defeat in the first game at the same venue as a 120-run third-wicket partnership between Yasir Ali and Nazmul Hossain helped them overhaul Sri Lanka's 273 with two wickets and three balls to spare. Yasir Arafat, however, deserved some credit as his two sixes in three deliveries made the equation -- scoring 20 runs from last two overs -- easier.

The two teams will travel to Khulna

today to play the series deciding the third and final one-dayer at the Sheikh Abu Naser Stadium on August 24. The first four-dayer of a two-match series will also take place in Khulna.

Back to yesterday's match, Yasir exhibited his big-hitting credentials as he smote five sixes and three fours during a 93-ball 85 which netted him the player-of-the-match award. Nazmul smashed 77 off 88 balls, which featured nine fours and a six.

Shiran Fernando and Jehan Daniel claimed two wickets each.

Earlier, Sri Lanka rode on two half-centuries from Padhun Nissanka (55 off 57 balls) and Kamindu Mendis (65 off 81 balls) to set a challenging target for the home team.

Shafiqul Islam was the most successful bowler with three wickets for 51 runs while Nayeem Hassan took two wickets for 35 runs.

Pak to play 3 Tests in Eng in 2020

REUTERS, London

England will host the West Indies and Pakistan in a total of six Test matches from June-August 2020 as part of the inaugural ICC World Test Championship, the England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) said on Wednesday.

England begin their 2020 programme with three Tests against the West Indies, with the first match starting at The Oval on June 4, followed by matches at Edgbaston and Lord's.

A three-Test series with Pakistan starting July 30 at Lord's will be followed by three T20s against the same opponents and three ODIs against Ireland.