

## SPORT

## Fine tuning or overall policy change?

ABDULLAH AL MEHDI



The recent history of the Bangladesh cricket team's fast bowling unit is a topsy-turvy one. In an era where the general quality of fast bowling is rising, the national team is not only lagging behind international standards but appears to be relatively 'out of ideas' when it comes to improving the state of the bowling unit.

Bangladesh signed pace legend Courtney Walsh in 2016 to guide a relatively young pace arsenal with veteran Mashrafe Bin Mortaza leading the charge. There was also an apparent resurgence in faith shown to fast bowlers as five pacers were included in the squad for the World T20 and the Asia Cup tournaments in 2016.

The likes of Taskin Ahmed and Mustafizur Rahman showed promise, looking capable of carrying the pace lineup alongside Mashrafe and the likes of Rubel Hossain. Four years on, Walsh has left his post after the 2019 World Cup and even as new pacers have come in, the Tigers have shown little signs of levelling up.

The ODI side regularly features four seamers, even at home, but the New Zealand series last year and the recently concluded World Cup showed that pace is a discipline where the Tigers suffer greatly. Even ace paceman Mustafizur Rahman got his wickets after the 30-over period at the World Cup and the new-ball woes adversely affected the team's ability to challenge in a major tournament.

Despite Walsh's best intentions, the pacers failed to execute ideas which were based on Walsh's theme of 'consistency'. In fact, bowlers showed more improvement during Heath Streak and Champaka Ramanayaka's tenures.

Plenty of faces have been tried in all three formats in recent times but the

team management almost always seem to fumble through the darkness before stumbling onto familiar faces like Taskin Ahmed.

However, while talent remains on an individual level, the quality never improved. Fizz is still mostly relying on his cutters that he had to perfect due to conditions at home. Taskin is looking to hit the wicket hard, but his inconsistent form shows that ideas did not materialise.

Abu Jayed perhaps suffered from a lack of opportunities while others such as Khaled Ahmed, Ebadat Hossain and Abu Hider have remained on the periphery of the management's plans, never showing signs of cementing their place. Subashis Roy, once thought to have great potential, played his last Test in 2017 before he too was 'lost' in the shuffle.

India, once thought to be primarily a batting side, improved in Tests by finding bowlers who attack. The question facing newly appointed pace-bowling coach Charl Langeveldt is whether small tweaks to individuals will do the trick or whether it is a matter of implementing an overall change in policy for the fast men.

He admitted that his coaching philosophy was different to Walsh's and he would focus on the individual. He understood the problem of playing pacers in the subcontinent while pushing them to perform in foreign conditions. However, the improvement shown by pacers is directly related to the nature of the pitches here as well, which has left a chasm between current and required standards.

Langeveldt talked about 'changing the mindset' of the bowlers, but the aggression that has to be shown on the field can only materialise through skills developed. "It's [fast bowling] hard work but you need to be clever," Langeveldt said during a press conference. It appears that for the pace battery to improve, a lot more than just fine tuning is needed.

Having replaced West Indies great Courtney Walsh, Bangladesh's new bowling coach Charl Langeveldt of South Africa (R) imparts some wisdom to Tigers' paceman Mustafizur Rahman during the ongoing preparatory camp in Mirpur yesterday.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED



## Bangladesh prepare for Afghanistan tie

SPORTS REPORTER



The Bangladesh national football team are set to begin a training camp ahead their opening match of the joint qualifiers of the 2022 World Cup and 2023 Asian Cup against Afghanistan, which will be held on September 20, at the Bangabandhu National Stadium today.

The Bangladesh Football Federation named a 25-member preliminary squad for the camp on Friday. Head coach Jamie Day informed that although he has called up an additional goalkeeper the finalised 23-member squad for the joint qualifiers will not feature all four keepers present at the camp.

"Like I said before, I like [Mazharul Islam] Himel. I think Himel has done well. Obviously we are not going to carry four goal keepers in a squad of 23 but I think it is important to keep him involved in the national team.

So I asked if he wanted to come and train with us up until the 31st and that's what he will do. It keeps him involved, it keeps him training with the other three goalkeepers and Bobby -- the goalkeeping coach -- can also assess all four keepers and train them. I thought it was right to add him to the squad," said Day at the team hotel in Paltan yesterday.

The Englishman also spoke of his plans for the national booters for the next two weeks, ahead of their departure for Tajikistan on September 1 for the upcoming match against Afghanistan.

"I think up until the 31st it is about just making sure the boys are where we want them to be fitness wise and mentally back in the swing of training every day and be in a camp to prepare for very important games. Then in the second week we will be more demanding of the tactical side of it. They have had a 10-day or 12-day break. I think they will be looking forward to coming back and doing a little bit of training."



JAMIE DAY

## BD lose by six again

SPORTS REPORTER

The Bangladesh U-21 women's hockey team suffered a 6-0 defeat at the hands of Sports Authority of Indian (SAI) academy's hockey team in the second match of the Junior Women's AHF Cup's preparation series at the Maulana Bhasani Hockey Stadium yesterday.

The home side fell one goal behind in the first quarter before going on to concede three more in the second quarter.

After resumption, the visiting SAI Academy's women's team added two more goals, raising the tally to 6-0.

However they could not add any more in the fourth and final quarter in the face of tough resistance from the home side, who lost the first match by an identical 0-6 margin on Wednesday.



I think the introduction of the [World] Test Championship is a good initiative for our country. Personally I am very happy because Test cricket doesn't get enough attention in our country. Now it will get the attention, so it is good for us. The Test match [against Afghanistan at home] before the Test Championship will be good in terms of preparation. It is a good opportunity for us and I am hopeful that it will be a good Test match.

MOMINUL HAQUE

BANGLADESH BATSMAN, SPEAKING IN MIRPUR YESTERDAY

## Tigresses edge past Thailand

SPORTS REPORTER

The Bangladesh women's cricket team beat their Thai counterparts by four wickets in a T20I at the Kampong Cricket Club in Utrecht on Wednesday.

Thailand scored 68 runs for the loss of five wickets in their allotted overs before Bangladesh overcame the target with three balls to spare.

Bangladesh will play a T20 practice match against the Netherlands before taking on Thailand in the second T20I on Monday.

After the completion of their 10-day camp in the Netherlands, the Tigresses will travel to Scotland to participate in the upcoming Women's World T20 qualifiers, set to begin on August 31.

Eight teams, divided into two groups, will take part in the qualifiers. The winners of the two semifinals will ensure their places at the ICC Women's T20 World Cup 2020, to be held in the Australian cities of Canberra, Melbourne, Perth, and Sydney from February 21.

In the qualifiers, defending champions Bangladesh have been drafted alongside Scotland, Papua New Guinea and the USA in Group A while Group B consists of Ireland, Thailand, Namibia, and the Netherlands.

## Archer's six skittles Aussies

AFP, Leeds



Jofra Archer took six wickets as England dismissed an Australia side without star batsman Steve Smith for just 179 on the first day of the third Ashes Test at Headingley on Thursday.

Fast bowler Archer, in only his second Test, took 6-45 in 17.1 overs -- the first time he had taken five or more wickets in an innings at this level.

England, looking to level this series at 1-1, reduced Australia to 25-2 after home captain Joe Root won the toss. But David Warner (61) and Marnus Labuschagne (74) frustrated England in a third-wicket stand of 111.

Archer, however, turned the tide by having Warner caught behind off a 90 mph delivery.

It was the start of a collapse that saw Australia lose three wickets for three runs to be 139-5.

Travis Head was bowled for a duck by Stuart Broad and Matthew Wade also fell for nought when a rising Archer delivery deflected off the thigh pad via his glove and into the base of the stump, dislodging a bail.

Root was hoping to make the most of overcast conditions at his Yorkshire home ground and capitalise on an Australia top order missing Smith, ruled out with a concussion suffered after being hit by bouncer from Archer at Lord's.

Warner's fellow top-order left-handers Marcus Harris and Usman Khawaja both fell for eight. Harris had been drafted in to open alongside Warner after Cameron Bancroft was dropped following 44 runs in four innings.

But Archer, bowling from around the wicket, squared Harris up with an 87.3 mph ball and had him caught behind.

Moments later, with Australia 12-1 off, rain stopped play. When play resumed, Khawaja's glance off Broad was caught by Bairstow. England, however, had to review the umpire's original not out decision.

More rain and bad light -- even though the floodlights were on -- halted play in the second session. After resumption, Warner was given out caught behind on 61 off Broad but successfully reviewed and Labuschagne completed a 73-ball fifty as wickets continued to fall.

Archer had James Pattinson well caught by first slip Root and then had Pat Cummins, the third duck of the innings, caught behind, the disbelieving batsman failing with a review.

Labuschagne's gutsy innings ended when he was lbw to Stokes after missing a full toss, with Archer ending the day's play when he had tailender Nathan Lyon lbw.

SCORES IN BRIEF:

AUSTRALIA: First innings 179 all out (Warner 61, Labuschagne 74; Broad 2-32, Archer 6-45)



England pacer Jofra Archer continued his hot streak in the Ashes by taking six wickets to send Australia packing for just 180 on the first day of the third Test at Leeds yesterday. PHOTO: REUTERS

## SL 85 for 2 on rain-hit day

AFP, Colombo



Skipper Karunaratne helped Sri Lanka to 85 for two at stumps on a rain-hit day one of the second Test against New Zealand in Colombo on Thursday.

Only 36.3 overs were possible after rain washed out the first session and bad light ended play for the day with Karunaratne unbeaten on 49.

Karunaratne, fresh from a match-winning century in the first Test in Galle last week last week, hit six boundaries during his 100-ball stay in overcast conditions.

The left-hander batted with positive intent despite losing opening partner Lahiru Thirimanne and Kusal Mendis either side of tea.

Thirimanne never looked comfortable and his 59-minute stay at the wicket produced just two runs.

His misery ended when he pushed a William Somerville delivery and was caught at extra cover by skipper Kane

Williamson. He had been earlier dropped by wicketkeeper B.J. Watling off Somerville.

Mendis looked good as he reached 32 with four fours and put on 50 runs with Karunaratne to steady the batting.

Colin de Grandhomme, who made the XI in place of Mitchell Santner, got Mendis caught behind on a seaming delivery outside the off stump and Watling gloved the catch.

Former captain Angelo Mathews joined Karunaratne in the middle to remain unbeaten on nought after facing 14 deliveries.

The hosts only need a draw to clinch the two-match series.

Both teams made one change for the first match.

Sri Lanka included veteran spinner Dilruwan Perera in place of Akila Dananjaya, who was reported for a suspect bowling action after the first Test.

SCORES IN BRIEF:

SRI LANKA: First innings 85 for 2 (Karunaratne 49 not out, Mendis 32; De Grandhomme 1-14, Somerville 1-20)

## Rahane takes visitors to 134 for 4 at tea

AFP, North Sound

Ajinkya Rahane's 18th half-century anchored India's revival to 134 for four at tea on the opening day of the first Test against the West Indies in Antigua on Thursday.

Reduced to 25 for three by opening bowlers Kemar Roach and Shannon Gabriel after they were put in to bat, Rahane joined opening batsman KL Rahul in mid-morning, the pair putting on 68 for the fourth wicket to blunt the early threat of the home side's pace attack in helpful conditions.

It took the off-spin of Roston Chase to separate them halfway through the afternoon session when Rahul, on 44, got a faint touch to an innocuous leg-side delivery for wicketkeeper Shai Hope to take a neat catch.

Rahane will resume in the final session on 50 alongside Hanuma Vihari (18 not out).

SCORES IN BRIEF:

INDIA: 134 for 4 (Rahane 50 not out, Rahul 44; Roach 3-29)