



Twists and turns of BPL 7

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The last ball bowled in the Bangladesh Premier League (BPL) was in February 8 this year when the sixth edition was won by Comilla Victorians, but there has been action aplenty off the field over the intervening seven months. The seventh edition is scheduled to be held from December 6, but after myriad boardroom machinations, the identity of the tournament has seemed to change fundamentally as the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) announced yesterday that the seventh edition will be run solely by the BCB without the involvement of franchisees, who have been integral to the tournament since its inception. We try to track the twists and turns that led to this point:

July 31, 2019: Rangpur Riders announce that they had roped in top all-rounder Shakib Al Hasan, who had been playing for Dhaka Dynamites for three seasons. Earlier, Khulna Titans announced that they had lured star Bangladesh opener Tamim Iqbal away from defending champions Comilla Victorians.

August 4, 2019: The BPL governing council (GC) reveals that all deals struck in the off season by franchisees will be null and void because the seventh edition would be part of a new four-year cycle that, according to BCB director Mahbubul Anam, would require a 'fresh franchisee agreement/contract' after which rules and regulations would be finalised. A consequence of the decision was that the seventh edition would see an auction or draft for listed players of all categories. Rangpur Riders CEO Ishtiaque Sadeque hinted that the decision had blindsided franchisees: "They sent us an email on May 11 thanking us for our efforts in the last season, informing that a date was fixed for the next edition and asking us to 'take necessary preparations' for the next edition. If everything changes to benefit one franchisee, then why would people spend all the money to participate?"

August 21, 2019: Comilla Victorians refuse to accept the decision to refurbish the regulations of the BPL. Alluding to the BCB's proclamation that the sixth edition of the tournament was the best, Comilla owner Nafisa Kamal asked why there needed to be a change if that was the case. Speaking after meeting with the BPL GC as part of the governing council's discussions with the franchisees, Nafisa said: "We had signed Mushfiqur [Rahim] during the [2019] World Cup. Tamim [Iqbal] is said to have signed with 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."

September 4, 2019: Finance Minister AHM Mustafa Kamal, who served as BCB president till 2014, says that the BPL cannot be held this year because, as per the bylaws, the BPL could not be held twice in the same year. The following day, he withdrew his statement.

September 11, 2019: BCB president Nazmul Hassan tells reporters that BPL 7 will be organised by the BCB without the franchisees because the latter's demands were 'totally in conflict with our main module of the tournament'. He also said that the tournament will be named Bangabandhu BPL to commemorate the 100th birth anniversary of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman in 2020.

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There had been a lot of doubt about if the seventh edition of the Bangladesh Premier League (BPL) would take place this year as the BPL Governing Council was lagging behind in fixing important issues. Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) president Nazmul Hassan however confirmed yesterday that the country's lone T20 tournament will take place as scheduled but surprised everyone by saying that the tournament would not take place in its usual form.

The BPL apparently is going to lose its essence as this time it will not be a franchise-based tournament; instead the board is set to arrange the premium T20 competition.

The BCB came to such a curious decision as they failed to resolve conflicts with franchisees, with whom they met over the last few weeks. Hassan said demands from franchisees were unacceptable. He added that they wanted to mark the occasion of the 100th birthday of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman in 2020. This seventh edition will now be named after the Father of the Nation.

The most pertinent question in light



of the announcement was: what were the demands from the franchisees that forced the board to change the very character of the popular tournament?

A majority of franchisees urged that a percentage of revenue generated by the BPL be shared among the franchisees. They also emphasised on permanent and consistent rules and regulations. The BCB boss only responded to the revenue sharing issue.

"We were set to strike a new deal with the franchisees and we talked to them and saw their reaction in the media. They have quite a few demands which are totally in conflict with our main module of the tournament. We were not able to accept in any way. They also prefer that the BPL not take place this year since two tournaments

in a single year will put a lot of pressure on them. After considering everything we have decided to run the BPL ourselves without taking any franchisees," Hassan said during a press conference in Mirpur yesterday.

"It's not possible to share revenue. Let them give us Tk 80 crore and we will give them Tk 40 crore. Previously, it was Tk 8 crore and we left 7 crore, keeping one crore. We want that those who come to the BPL think of the development of cricket and players, not just business," he added.

Several franchise owners said that they were yet to get any official letter from the BCB and are waiting to see how the board wants to run the show this year.

"We learned about the BCB's decision. I don't want to make any comment at the moment as we are yet to receive anything officially. We just heard about it [the decision]. We will inform after discussing," Rangpur Riders CEO Ishtiaque Sadeque said.

With less than three months to go before the slated December 6 start of the tournament, the biggest question is whether the BCB have delayed all this chopping and changing to an extent that it hurts the quality of the tournament that it treats as the country's flagship domestic event.



Shakib is less interested in Tests: Hassan

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Bangladesh Test and T20 skipper Shakib Al Hasan had said a few times over the last two or three weeks that he was not really interested in being captain in any format of the game as he would have more time to focus on his own game as just a player. While talking about that during a press conference in Mirpur yesterday, Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) president Nazmul Hassan said that Shakib's statement could be an indication that he is not interested in playing Test cricket.

"I am not really interested in leading in any format," said Shakib after Bangladesh's 224-run thumping at the hands of Afghanistan in Chattogram on Monday.

Asked about Shakib's captaincy, the BCB president said that although he never saw any lack of interest from Shakib regarding captaincy, but him being naturally less interested in playing Test cricket might have prompted Shakib to make such comments regarding captaincy across all formats.

"It's true that we have seen he is less interested in Tests for some time now. You have seen that when the team is touring outside, he asks for a break. Naturally, maybe he is not very interested in Tests. But we have never heard that he is not interested in captaincy. But if you are captain then you will have to play Tests. If you aren't captain then maybe you can sit out. I think that's why all this talk of captaincy is coming," said Hassan.

Shakib was tremendous in the recently-concluded World Cup before he sat out the ODI series in Sri Lanka, only returning to the side for the one-off Test against Afghanistan. The BCB president also acknowledged the services of the premier all-rounder for the country.

"He [Shakib] has given a lot of service and we think he is the best captain. Among the options we have [for captaincy] he is the best one. He hasn't told us anything yet about it. I talked to him yesterday [Monday] and there was no discussion on this topic," Hassan revealed.

Bangladesh's abysmal loss to Afghanistan in the Chattogram Test drew a lot of criticism, but according to the BCB president, this defeat was not the hardest to swallow.

"It is really upsetting that we lost the Test. But this defeat is not the most painful one to me. To lose against India in the T20 World Cup (in 2016), when we needed just two runs to win and fell short, was more painful. The Nidahas Trophy loss [to India in 2018] from a winning position, even losing to India in the last ball in the Asia Cup [2018] was very painful. But this Test did not reflect Bangladesh's true colours," concluded Hassan.



Bangladesh wicketkeeper-batsman Mushfiqur Rahim walks off the field after scoring a run-a-ball 26 for BCB XI against the Zimbabweans during their only warm-up match in Fatullah yesterday ahead of the triangular T20 series.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

Australia aim to win series

5th Ashes Test against England starts today

AFP, London

Australia head to The Oval hungry to win their first Ashes series in England since 2001 as the peerless Steve Smith seeks to inflict further pain on the hosts.

Tim Paine's men finally saw off stubborn England at Old Trafford on Sunday to take a 2-1 lead in the five-Test series with just one match to go, meaning they will retain the urn.

To stand any chance of levelling the series, the World Cup winners will have to find a way to solve the riddle of the immovable Smith, who has scored 671 runs in just five innings at an astonishing average of more than 134.

SLC reassessing Pak tour after security threat

REUTERS, Undated

The Sri Lankan cricket association (SLC) said on Wednesday it was reassessing the security situation in Pakistan after receiving a warning "of a possible terrorist threat" to its team.

Sri Lanka is scheduled to play three ODIs and three T20Is in Pakistan between Sept. 27 and Oct. 9.

SLC said in a statement that it had received the warning from the Prime Minister's Office.

SLC named Lahiru Thirimanne and Dasun Shanaka its ODI and T20I captains for the tour after 10 players incumbents Dimuth Karunaratne and Lasith Malinga decided not to travel.

Confusion over Tk 4 crore electronic timer!

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The Saif Powertec 33rd National Age-Group Swimming Championships produced 19 records over the past two days at the Syed Nazrul Islam Swimming Complex in Mirpur, but all the events are being timed using hand-timing, rendering the newly-installed electronic timer useless.

The National Sports Council (NSC) recently gave the Swimming Complex in Mirpur a Tk 8.5 crore renovation and installed a new electronic timer worth approximately Tk 4 crore.

However, the electronic timer is not being used to record timings of the swimmers as officials claim the device is not working properly and is already out of date.

"I think the electronic timer is not a modern one because it is not working properly. Although we are yet to take control of this device, we will form a committee consisting of members from BUET and DU and then take control of it," said Bangladesh Swimming Federation (BSF) general secretary BM Saif yesterday.

BSF joint secretary Hamidul Islam said: "A couple of lanes are not working altogether, so we can't use it. Besides, the touchpad and announcement speaker are also not working well. So we left it."

However, the engineer of the service provider Computer World BD, Epil Shikdar, denied all the allegations and claimed US-based Daktronics's electronic timer was working fine.

"If there is any trouble with the electronic timer, it will show in the control panel. But we did not get any faults till now. Swimmers need to touch the pad properly to show the timing but fresh swimmers can't push the touchpads properly," Shikdar said, adding that they also provided electronic timers for cricket in Dhaka and Khulna.

"Besides, the electronic timer has a back-up timer like a hand watch but the federation is using hand timing instead."



PHOTO: COLLECTED

BKSP swimmer Mobarak Hossain created three national records on way to winning six gold medals in the 11-12 age group of the ongoing championships at the Syed Nazrul Islam Swimming Complex in Mirpur yesterday.

Zimbabwe warm up with easy win

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BCB XI faltered to a seven-wicket defeat against the Zimbabweans during their only warm-up match at Fatullah today ahead of the triangular T20I series, starting from tomorrow at the Sher-e-Bangla National stadium in Mirpur.

The Zimbabweans romped to a comfortable victory, chasing down Bangladesh's 142 for seven with 16 balls to spare.

Bangladesh wicketkeeper-batsman Mushfiqur Rahim, who was not originally included in the squad for the match but had expressed his desire to get some batting practice after the 'Tigers' disappointing Chattogram Test against Afghanistan, turned out for BCB XI. It was also learned from a source close to the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) that Mushfiqur had reached the ground well ahead of time. The 32-year-old was already seen practising when the team management arrived at the ground at around 10:00 am for the match that was scheduled to start at 12:00 pm.

In contrast, Sabbir Rahman, who was named in the BCB XI squad on Tuesday, had missed the team bus. The right-handed batsman did however manage to feature for BCB XI. However, Sabbir's tardiness has stirred some comments from a BCB official.

"At this time in Bangladesh cricket, when the team is facing some tough times, the expectation from this batch of cricketers is very high and they should act more professionally," the official told The Daily Star under condition of anonymity yesterday.

Going back to the game, it was Sabbir (30 off 31) and Mushfiqur (26 off 26) who strung together a 53-run third-wicket stand after BCB XI had lost both openers within the first seven overs following their decision to bat first. But no other batsmen got going as BCB XI managed 142 for seven.

After the exchange, Brendan Taylor's unbeaten 44-ball 57 and Timycen Maruma's unbeaten 28-ball 46 helped the visitors get an easy victory.

Ticket prices for tri-nation series

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Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) announced the ticket prices for the first three days of the upcoming tri-nation series between Bangladesh, Zimbabwe and Afghanistan slated to begin from September 13 when the Tigers play Zimbabwe in the series opener.

The lowest prices that tickets will be available at is Tk 100 for the Eastern stand while the ceiling for prices is Tk 2000 for BCB's hospitality lounge. All the matches will take part in Sher-e-Bangla National Cricket Stadium in Mirpur.

- TICKET PRICES**
(matches from Sept 13-15)
1. BCB Hospitality Lounge - Taka 2000.00
 2. Grand Stand - Taka 1000.00
 3. VIP Stand - Taka 500.00
 4. Shahid Jewel Stand - Taka 300.00
 5. Shahid Mushtaque Stand - Taka 300.00
 6. Southern Stand - Taka 150.00
 7. Northern Stand - Taka 150.00
 8. Eastern Stand - Taka 100.00

U-19s look to turn the tide against Afghanistan

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Recently it seems that Bangladesh are not having a good time against Afghanistan in any sport or at any level. The cricket team were handed a

224-run thumping by Afghanistan, who were playing only their third Test, last Monday in Chattogram. On Tuesday, the Bangladesh football team also started their 2022 World Cup and 2023 Asian Cup Qualifiers campaign bleakly as they suffered a 1-0 loss to Afghanistan at in Dushanbe, Tajikistan.

Today, when the Bangladesh Under-19 cricket team take on their Afghan counterparts in the semifinal of the ongoing Asian Cricket Council Under-19s Asia Cup at the Tyrone Fernando Stadium in Moratuwa today, all eyes will be on the young Tigers to see if they can turn the tide and help the country avoid a third defeat in four days to Afghanistan.

The Under-19s have had a pretty smooth sailing up until now in the tournament. The young

Hockey women take on HK today

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Buoyed by their maiden win in international hockey, Bangladesh under-21 women's hockey team will take on Hong Kong in their third match of the AirAsian Women's Junior AHF Cup in Singapore today.

Bangladesh women starter their maiden campaign in international hockey with a 3-0 defeat against Singapore on Monday, despite keeping the hosts at bay in the first two quarters. However, the women in red and green bounced back strongly in their next match, beating South Asian rivals 2-0 on Tuesday, with more than a hundred expatriate Bangladeshis cheering them on.

Tarin Akter Khushi opened the scoring from a penalty corner in the 27th minute before Farida Akter Ratri confirmed the victory from another penalty corner in the 58th minute to ensure Bangladesh's first victory in only their second international match. The team will today take on Hong Kong, who are yet to open their account following two defeats.

Bangladesh, currently in fourth position on the six-team table, will play against Uzbekistan and Chinese Taipei in their last two matches.

Tigers have emerged as the Group B champions by beating the likes of United Arab Emirates, Nepal and hosts Sri Lanka comfortably.

Bangladesh's strength has been their batting while for Afghanistan it was mostly their bowling that helped them secure a semifinal spot. Bangladesh top-order batsman Mahmudul Hasan Joy is in second place in the tournament run-scorers' list with 193 runs at an average of 96.50 and a high score of 126. Meanwhile, middle order batsman Towhid Hridoy has also been amongst the runs, amassing 128 runs in three matches, including two fifties.

The top wicket-takers' list, meanwhile, is dominated by Afghanistan spinners. Leg-spinner Shafiqullah Ghafari and chinaman bowler Noor Ahmad are in joint-first position, having taken eight wickets each in three matches. It is a positive sign for Bangladesh that the bowling unit has been disciplined, but the decisive factor may still be which strength shines brightest today - Bangladesh's batting or Afghanistan's spin.