



Problem of plenty in backline

ANISUR RAHMAN from Kolkata

When deciding upon a starting eleven for tomorrow's 2022 World Cup Qualifier match against India, Bangladesh coach Jamie Day will have the sweet headache of settling on a backline after non-regular defenders Raihan Hasan and Riyadul Hasan impressed during a spirited performance against Qatar last Thursday.

Raihan was included in the 23-member squad following a knee injury to midfielder Masuk Mia Jonny and started against Qatar in place of the suspended Bishwanath Ghosh. Riyadul started in place of fit-again centre-back Tutul Hossain Badsha against the reigning Asian Champions Qatar and impressed all despite a 2-0 defeat at home.

Bishwanath and Badsha are available for selection against India but British coach Day seemed to be in two minds about whether to pick the same eleven that played against Qatar or to revert to the four-man backline fielded against Afghanistan.

"We will have to see but it's nice to be in a position where we have problems like this," Day told The Daily Star yesterday.

With first-choice centre-back Tapu Barman being ruled out due to knee surgery before the start of the qualifiers, the backline had been a big concern for Day, who started against Afghanistan with a four-man defence manned by Yeasin Khan, Badsha, left-back Rahmat Mia and Bishwanath. They made hardly any mistakes in their opening match in Dushanbe, although the men in red and green lost 1-0.

Problems of scarcity arose once again before the Qatar match due to Bishwanath's suspension and Badsha's injury, but Raihan and Riyadul repaid the faith Day placed on them. Raihan played a dual role in the match with his signature long throw-ins causing havoc in Qatar's defence, while Riyadul also showed character to keep the Qatari strikers at bay for a majority of the match on a rain-soaked ground.

The head coach will decide who will star against India but Bishwanath has been playing under Jamie for a long time and I have just entered the squad and played against Bhutan and Qatar. If I am given a chance in the starting eleven, I will be try to give my utmost best," Raihan said, adding that such competition will definitely help the team get stronger.

Interestingly, both Raihan and Bishwanath hail from Tangail and Raihan inspired Bishwanath to emulate his long throw-ins.

After a long time, competition between players to secure a place in the starting eleven has emerged in Bangladesh football, and Day will certainly be hoping that it spreads to players in other positions.

Much will depend on coach Jamie Day's (L) tactical nous and the solidity of defenders like Yeasin Khan and Raihan Hasan, seen here practising some drills at the outer ground of the Salt Lake Stadium in Kolkata yesterday, when they take on favourites India in a World Cup and Asian Cup qualifying game tomorrow.

PHOTO: BFF

Booters ready for frenetic Kolkata

SPORTS REPORTER from Kolkata

"I can still remember wasting a chance to equalise about ten minutes before the final whistle. I watched the ball drift over the crossbar with the Indian goalkeeper [Atanu Bhattacharjee] out of position when I took the shot from the edge of the box."

Ashraf Uddin Ahmed Chunnunus recalled his memory of the Bangladesh-India qualifier for the Mexico World Cup in 1985 at the newly-built Salt Lake Stadium in Kolkata.

34 years later, Bangladesh are again up against the hosts at the same venue and in the same competition. The home side, on the back of 10 days of preparation in Guwahati, landed in Kolkata yesterday, two days after Bangladesh reached the city known as the 'Mecca of Indian football'.

Bangladesh have played in eight World Cup qualifying campaigns after the 1986 World Cup but their best result remains from 1985 when they got wins against Thailand and Indonesia in Dhaka. However, they could not conquer the

group's other opponent, India, who twice beat Bangladesh 2-1.

"The weather was hot and humid and the gallery was packed. Although we could not play our natural game, we played well against India's best team which comprised

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BANGLADESH MIDFIELDER
MAMUNUL ISLAM

players like Krishanu Dey, Bikash Panji, Atanu Bhattacharjee and many others," former Bangladesh international Chunnunus, who scored a goal in a 2-1 win over Indonesia in 1985, added.

In the game against India, Bangladesh went ahead through a strike from Ashish Bhadra in the 15th minute before Bikash Panji, who also struck against Bangladesh in Dhaka, equalised in the 36th minute. Substitute Camillo Gonsalves found the winner in the 40th to help India finish second behind Indonesia in the four-team group.

Chunnunus said that while Bangladesh felt the heat, they always got moral support from the crowd in Kolkata as many Bangladeshi played in the Kolkata League. Current national team midfielder Mamunul Islam believes that they will continue to receive similar support.

"We have come to Kolkata, which is just another Bengal. It actually feels like we came to play to our own country and I believe we will get support from the people of Kolkata," Mamunul said yesterday when asked whether they expected support from the gallery.

Whatever the Bangladesh former captain expects, the Salt Lake Stadium -- officially known as the Vivekananda Yuba Bharati Stadium -- is expected to be a full house as Kolkata will host the India national team after eight years.

Cricket-loving taxi driver Santosh, who drove this reporter from the Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose International Airport to a Marquis Street hotel, did not buy a ticket to the game. However, he mentioned that the football lovers were euphoric about the game. The ground staff at the Salt Lake Stadium and local journalists also mentioned that most of the seats at the 85,000-capacity venue were already sold.

Jamie Day's charges will have to hurdle two challenges, the fast-improving India and its huge Kolkata support, in order to get one over India, who are now 85 places ahead of Bangladesh in the FIFA Rankings.

In 1985, players like Mohsin, Nasir Ahmed Alok, Imtiaz Sultan Jony, Badal Das, Azmat Ali, Swapan Kumar Das, Wasim Iqbal, Elias Hossain, Ashish Bhadra, Chunnunus and Kaiser Hamid could not conquer India. Now the onus is on a new group of young footballers to make history.

"We are prepared. The team who will perform on the day will come out winners. We have remained in good shape after the Qatar match," said goalkeeper Ashraf Islam Rana following Bangladesh's nearly two-hour practice session yesterday.

Winning end to U-19s' dominant tour

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Under-19s signed off their New Zealand tour on a near perfect note as they wrapped up the five-match one-day series 4-1 with a comfortable 73-run win over their New Zealand counterparts in the final game at the Bert Sutcliffe Oval in Lincoln yesterday.

"I will not be surprised if the team win the series by a 5-0 margin," was junior team selector and former national cricketer Hannan Sarkar's words before embarking on the tour last month.

While the defeat in the fourth game dashed hopes of a blackwash as the home side chased down 295 runs with four wickets in hand, Hannan expressed satisfaction at the way the Young Tigers finished the job.

"It was definitely frustrating as the team failed to defend nearly 300 runs in the fourth game, but it was also a big lesson for the team, like they learned in the Asia Cup final in Sri Lanka when they failed to chase down 106 runs [in the final]. But in the final match, the boys not only crossed the 300-run mark for the first time in the series but also signed off with a big win," Hannan told The Daily Star over phone from Christchurch yesterday.

The visitors posted a mammoth 316 for eight in 50 overs after winning the toss and then bowled the hosts out for 243 in 43.4 overs in the final game yesterday. Tanzid Hasan and Parvez Hossain gave Bangladesh a perfect start, sharing 120 runs for the opening stand. Bangladesh's batting innings was a collective effort as Tanzid top-scored with 71 while three batsmen -- Parvez, Shahadat Hossain and Avishek Das scored 48 runs each.

Pacer Shoriful Islam then wreaked havoc on the New Zealand batting line-up, taking five wickets for 43 runs in 8.4 overs. Rakibul Hasan took two

HIGHLIGHTS

Bangladesh Under-19s will play their next series against Sri Lanka at home. Sri Lanka Under-19s are set to arrive on October 23 to play two four-day and five one-day matches.

Bangladesh Under-19s may then go to South Africa for a 10-day camp before the World Cup. ICC Under-19 World Cup will be held in South Africa from January 17 - February 9 next year.

wickets while Avishek, Tanzim Hasan Sakib and Shamim Hossain took one wicket each.

"Batsmen like Tanzid Hasan, Mahmudul Hasan Joy, Towhid Hridoy and Akbar Ali are good prospects while it was nice to see pacer Shoriful Islam get back his rhythm. This team has been playing good cricket for the last few months, especially since the last England tour. We are really hopeful with this team and the performance in New Zealand is a big boost because the conditions in South Africa in the next World Cup will be more or less the same," observed Hannan.

Hannan, however, recalled the performance of the Mehdi Hasan Miraz-led Under-19 team which achieved the best result for the country till date by finishing third in the 2016 Under-19 World Cup. "It would not be wise to be over-excited because the Miraz-led team also had good results against England and South Africa before the World Cup. We have to prove ourselves in the knockout stages. This team has got the ability to achieve something big in South Africa. Most importantly when we are talking about the next generation of cricketers after Shakib [Al Hasan] and Tamim [Iqbal], these boys can fill the void if we can give them enough opportunities," he added.

Under-19 cricketers pose for photographs after defeating their New Zealand counterparts by 73 runs in the fifth and final one-day at the Bert Sutcliffe Oval in Lincoln yesterday. The young Tigers clinched the series 4-1.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

Barishal see off the competition

SPORTS REPORTER

Among the four National Cricket League first round games, only Barishal managed to clinch a win while all the others ended in draws. Barishal beat Sylhet by an innings and 13 runs but the level of competition in the country's premier first-class competition was outstanding.

There was a double hundred from Imrul Kayes, an all-round performance from Mahmudullah Riyad and two five-wicket hauls from seamers in separate games. That reflects the competitiveness, something selectors were desperately seeking.

An anticipated fourth and final day at the Shaheed Kamruzzaman Stadium in Rajshahi started with Barishal eyeing a win as Sylhet were left with the daunting task of negotiating the day after being bundled out for just 86 in their first innings.

Resuming the day on 27 for two after



You have noticed there is a lot of competition as the youngsters are doing really well. I had to take the challenge if I want to make a place among them and I have to give my best. It is tough to survive if I am not able to score big and I wanted to score big, finally it happened.

IMRUL KAYES
KHULNA DIVISION CRICKETER

Barishal took a lead of 145, Sylhet again failed and were bowled out for 132. Jaker Ali's 45 was the top score for Sylhet while Tanvir Islam bagged four and Monir Hossain took three wickets for Barishal to clinch an easy win.

Perhaps the highlight of the opening round was the first double hundred of the season from Imrul. The left-hander smashed his second first-class ton against Rangpur at the Sheikh Abu Naser Stadium yesterday.

Khulna resumed on 192 for three and took a first-innings lead after Rangpur posted 227. Overnight batsman Imrul, who resumed on 29, reached his hundred off 183 balls and remained unbeaten for a 319-ball



Barishal Division players celebrate after taking Sylhet Division's last wicket (Ruyel Miah) and sealing a comprehensive win in their National Cricket League first-round match in Rajshahi yesterday.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

202 which featured 19 fours and six sixes.

Khulna declared on 454 for nine and Rangpur were on 33 for one before stumps were drawn. Imrul, who lost his place in the national team, will definitely get some confidence ahead of the selection for the Tigers' upcoming tour of India.

At the Khan Shaheb Osman Ali Stadium in Fatullah, Dhaka division and Rajshahi created some excitement.

Dhaka were bowled out after adding 48 to their overnight score of 206 for six, with man-of-the-match Taibur Rahman once again top-scoring with 88. In face of 298-run target, Rajshahi stumbled into a spot of bother and were 106 for five before the game ended in a draw.

After a maiden fifer in the first innings, Dhaka's right-arm seamer Sumon Khan was again the pick of the bowlers, bagging two wickets alongside Shuvagata Hom.

Mahmudullah shone with both bat and ball for Dhaka Metropolis in the star-studded encounter against Chattogram at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium.

Resuming the day on 349, Dhaka could add only five to their overnight score before being bundled out after a 151-run eighth-wicket stand between Zabid Hossain and Shahidul Islam was broken early on the final day.

Zabid was dismissed for 85 while Shahidul added 83.

Chattogram ended with on 227 for five, riding on fifties from Pinak Ghosh, Tasamul Haque and Masum Khan. After

scoring thirty in the first innings, Tamim Iqbal once again got a start before he was dismissed for the second time in the game by Mahmudullah after scoring 46.

Mahmudullah, who scored a fifty in the first innings and bagged three wickets with his off spin, again remained instrumental with the ball and scalped three wickets in the second innings.

SCORES IN BRIEF
CHATTOGAM V DHAKA METRO
CHATTOGAM: 290 and 227 for 5 (Masum 61 not out, Pinak 57; Mahmudullah 3-25)
DHAKA METRO: First innings 349 for 7 (Shahidul 83, Zabid 85; Afridi 3-103)
Result: Match drawn
DHAKA V RAJSHAH
DHAKA: 240 and 254 (Taibur 88, Raqibul 65; Tajjul 5-105)
RAJSHAH: 197 and 106 for 5 in 64 overs (Jahurul 40 not out; Sumon 2-21)
Result: Match drawn
RANGPUR V KHULNA
RANGPUR: 227 and 33 for 1 in 9 overs (Nasir 23 not out; Al Amin 1-10)
KHULNA: First innings 454 for 9 declared (Imrul 202 not out; Shuvo 3-74)
Result: Match drawn
SYLHET V BARISHAL
SYLHET: 86 and 132 (Jaker 45 not out; Tanvir 4-29)
BARISHAL: First innings 231 for 8 declared (Fazle 70, Shahriar 63; Rejaur 3-74)
Result: Barishal won by an innings and 13 runs

