

SPORT



NCL: Indeed a serious business!

NABID YEASIN

At the start of yesterday, all the fuss was about the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) taking action against premier all-rounder Shakib Al Hasan for allegedly breaching his contract to sign a sponsorship deal with a top mobile phone operator.

By the end of the day, however, it was BCB president Nazmul Hassan who grabbed the attention when he instructed that nine players -- engaged in the third round of the National Cricket League (NCL) -- were being called up for today's practice match ahead of the tour of India.

That sudden decision was yet another example of a lack of foresight from the board. The BCB has long been criticised for making impulsive decisions and forming stopgap solutions. Yesterday was no different, with Nazmul strolling into the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur and the realisation dawning that newly-appointed spin consultant Daniel Vettori needed more spinners to work with.

"We have two practice matches, scheduled for Sunday and Monday. A spin coach like Vettori is here and there are no spinners here. The team will play T20Is and Test matches against a strong Indian side but the coach is not being able to see the spinners. He can only observe two players -- Arafat Sunny and [Aminul Islam] Biplab. He does not have options," Hassan, whose prime task is to make managerial decisions but who seemed to be relieving the selectors' stress by deciding which players needed to be observed, said.

Was it only when Hassan saw leg-spinner Aminul being mentored that he realised what the other spinners were missing out on? Or is it that the BCB, who have emphasised long-term planning, only came to know Vettori's itinerary now? Should the BCB not be aware of all the schedules of national cricketers and make plans accordingly?

Answers would show that what happened yesterday only proved how careless the board has been when sketching out tour plans. Add to that the fact that only three of the nine summoned players were spinners and that indicates that the board has made sudden plans to gauge others.

The ongoing 21st edition of the NCL created a lot of buzz with the BCB increasing the fitness bar and emphasising on participation of national cricketers. But is summoning nine players out of the blue and disrupting the regular procedure a way of considering the NCL as a serious business?

SUMMONED PLAYERS: Sabbir Rahman, Md Mithun, Nazmul Hossain, Ebadot Hossain, Nayeem Hasan, Yasir Ali, Abu Hider, Rishad Hossain and Mehedi Hasan Miraz.



OH! TOO MANY ISSUES: Bangladesh Test and T20 captain Shakib Al Hasan was supposed to concentrate only on the upcoming challenges against India but the premier all-rounder, who returned to practice yesterday in Mirpur, faced all the off-the-field issues -- the latest one over his signing a sponsorship deal with a top mobile phone operator.

BCB sparks another fire

MAZHAR UDDIN

While teams around the world begin preparing months in advance of touring India, who have emerged as the undisputed powerhouses of Test cricket on their home soil, Bangladesh will be playing their first full-fledged series with less than a week of preparations due to off-field issues.

Following a commanding whitewash in the Test series against South Africa which gave them a record 11th consecutive series win at home, Virat Kohli's side will play Bangladesh in a three-match T20I series, starting November 3, and a two-match Test series.

India may be flying high, but Bangladesh cricket is still recovering from being rocked by the players' strike, led by senior members of the national team, on Monday.

Despite the issues being resolved after a dramatic 72 hours, another issue came to the fore as skipper Shakib Al Hasan signed a deal with a mobile operator without informing the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB).

While the board's job at such a time would be to douse fires and ensure an atmosphere of calm

prevails, board president Nazmul Hassan has, naturally, done exactly the opposite, airing all of the board's dirty laundry out in public by going to the media and telling them that "there is no scope to spare anyone".

"According to our laws, he was not in any way supposed to do that [sign a deal with Telenor]. The telecom company and the player, both parties

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are aware of it. So, at first, we need to give him a chance to clarify why he did it and that's why we are serving him with an official letter. But one thing we know is that in no way could he do that -- it is completely illegal," the BCB boss told reporters in Mirpur yesterday.

Even if Shakib did breach his contract, the question on everyone's mind is why the BCB president did not deal with the matter internally instead of informing the media of their course of action and creating yet another sensation.

Considering the current situation in the cricket fraternity, with even Hassan himself landing in hot water, the board president perhaps should have tried to calm things down after the restless past week.

Being the guardian of the country's cricket, it was expected that Hassan would deal with the situation more maturely, especially given that Shakib was a pivotal proponent of the players' strike and going after the champion all-rounder now would raise questions about the move being personally-motivated.

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With pressure mounting on Shakib ahead of the coveted tour of India, where good performances from any visiting side are praised worldwide, the BCB's handling of this situation ensures that off-the-field incidents continue to be highlighted more than the actual cricket.

Rishad fifer leads Rangpur

SPORTS REPORTER



Rangpur Division leg-spinner Rishad Hossain and Khulna Division opener Anamul Haque shone on the first day of the third round of the ongoing National Cricket League (NCL) yesterday. The third round of the NCL, originally scheduled to begin from October 24, commenced yesterday after the players and Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) came to an agreement to end the players' strike which began on Monday and lasted three days.

Rishad bagged a fifer, helping Rangpur bundle out Rajshahi for a modest 201-run total in 71.4 overs. After the exchange, Rajshahi finished the day with 32 for two on the board after 16 overs.

Electing to bat, Rajshahi lost two of their top order batsmen inside 10 overs with just 29 runs on the board. Rishad then got in on the act, picking up the first of his five wickets on the day by removing opener Mizanur Rahman in the 25th over. Rishad returned impressive figures of five for 50 in 20 overs, which included the vital wicket of Rajshahi skipper Farhad Hossain, who scored 60 off 113 balls.

Rishad however was one of two leg-spinners for whom BCB president Nazmul Hassan replaced local coach Masud Parvez with Jafrul Ehsan for Rajshahi after the former did



ANAMUL HAQUE...112

not field the 17-year old in the first NCL round.

Meanwhile, Anamul's 205-ball 112 helped Khulna Division score 290 for six in 91 overs against Dhaka Division before stumps in Cox's Bazar yesterday.

Anamul had laced his innings with nine boundaries and five maximums before retiring hurt after Tea.

The other two matches -- Barishal Division's game against Dhaka Metropolis in Bogura and Chittagang Division's match against Sylhet in Rajshahi -- were called off due to rain.



RISHAD HOSSAIN... 5 for 50

JUNIOR ATHLETICS CHAMPIONSHIPS

Jannatul notches second record

SPORTS REPORTER



Having registered a high-jump record on the opening day of the 35th National Junior Athletics Championships, Bangladesh Krira Shikkha Prothisthan's (BKSP) Jannatul broke yet another record in long-jump on the concluding day of the tournament at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

The eleventh grader cleared 5.42 metres in the under-18 to 19 Age Group event, eclipsing the eight-year-old record registered by former BKSP student, Papia Rani Sarker, who cleared 5.28 metres in 2011. On Friday, Jannatul broke the previous high-jump record, which she herself set, by clearing 1.65 metres.

The girl from Tangail achieved a rare feat indeed by creating national record in two separate events in the same championship. The only other athlete to do so was former BKSP student Ashrafuzzaman, who made records in both the 200 metre and 400 metre sprints at the junior level in 2015.

At 5'7", the lanky teenager also participates in the 400 metre run, 100X4 and 400X4 relays but her pet event is the high-jump. Jannatul, who wants to concentrate solely on high-jump events at the senior level, produced high-jump national records in three successive junior championships by clearing 1.25 metres, 1.61 metres and 1.65 metres in 2017, 2018 and 2019 respectively.

"I have little knowledge that a single

athlete made two separate records in a single meet here but winning a gold medal is always something good and it's even better when it comes with a national record. I really feel good to have made two national records," said Jannatul.

"I practice the high-jump year round and have little preparation for long-jump, which I started last year but I had confidence to make a record in both events because I produced good results in training," she explained.

"Actually I want to focus on high-jump and want to progress gradually. I want to win high-jump gold at senior level in a bid to get a place in the senior national team and then want to do something in the SA Games," continued Jannatul, who is confident about crossing the 1.68 metre mark, which was good enough to a gold medal at a senior competition earlier this year.

BKSP coach and former national high-jumper Foujia Huda Jui also believes that Jannatul has a good chance to produce good results at the international level.

"It is now tough to win a gold medal in sprint events at the international level, rather it is comparatively easy to win a gold medal in events like high-jump, long-jump and throws. I think we should concentrate on these events instead of sprint and Jannatul has good prospects in high jump as she has explosive power with good muscle form, something learned through tests. Her gradual improvement every year is evidence of how good she is," said Jui, who won two silver medals in high-jump from the SA Games.



HIGHLIGHTS

- The two-day 35th National Junior Athletics Championships came to an end yesterday with seven national records having been produced, five of which were set on the concluding day.
- Bangladesh Krira Shikkha Prothisthan (BKSP) retained the title with 20 gold, eight silver and five bronze medals while Noakhali DSA came in second with three gold, four silver and five bronzes. Narail DSA became third with two gold, eight silver and seven bronze medals.
- Three national records were set in a single event, the under-18 to 19 discus throw, with Anamul Haque (35.60 metres), Rasel Islam (34.71 metres) and Limon Hossain (34.05 metres) clearing the previous record of 33.55 metres, which was registered by Limon in 2018.
- In the same age-group of the girls' discus throw event, Sharmin Akter broke a 12-year-old record by clearing 28.95 metres. The previous record belonged to Ayesha Akter, who cleared 28.34 metres in 2007.
- Jannatul achieved a rare feat at the junior level by creating national records in two separate events -- the high-jump and long-jump -- in a single championship.
- Sumaiya Dewan clocked in at 12.22 seconds (hand) to break the 100 metre sprint national record of the under-16 to 17 age group, eclipsing Irin Akter's previous best of 12.44 seconds.
- Some 363 athletes from 40 organisations vied for 41 gold medals.

Women slump to defeat in first T20I vs Pakistan

SPORTS REPORTER



Although they managed to restrict Pakistan to a modest 126-run total, the visiting Bangladesh national women's team succumbed to a 14-run defeat in the first of a three-match T20I series at the Gaddafi Stadium in Lahore yesterday.

Apart from Rumana Ahmed (50) only two other batters were able to reach double figures as Bangladesh's batting concerns continued. Salma Khatun and her troops ended on 112 for seven after 20 overs in chase of the 127-run target posted by Pakistan.

The Tigresses kept losing wickets at

regular intervals with Rumana fighting a lone battle in the middle order, striking six fours and two sixes to score 50 off just thirty balls. However, reaching the target seemed ever elusive without any significant partnership.

Earlier, Jahanara Alam bowled brilliantly to bag four wickets and restrict Pakistan to 126 for seven in 20 overs. The medium pacer ended with figures of four for 17 from her four overs while Panna Ghosh, Lata Mondal and Rumana scalped a wicket each for Bangladesh. Pakistan captain Bismah Maroof top scored for her side with 34 runs while Umaima Sohail added 33.

Bangladesh will face the hosts again in the second match of the series tomorrow.

Gold Cup reduced to four-team tourney

SPORTS REPORTER



The Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) yesterday decided to hold the sixth edition of Bangabandhu Gold Cup international football tournament from November 21 to 29 in Dhaka with only four nations participating.

The decision was made at an executive committee meeting which was chaired by BFF president Kazi Salahuddin.

The last edition tournament was held with six nations in participation but this time they have reduced the number of participants, citing the unavailability of national teams.

"About 40 national sides are busy with

the ongoing Joint Qualifiers for the World Cup and Asian Cup, so we reduced the number of participating teams to four," said BFF general secretary Abu Nayeem Shohag after the meeting.

Shohag informed that Sri Lanka, Mongolia and hosts Bangladesh have confirmed their participation and the last spot will go to either Laos, Cambodia or Timor-Leste.

It could be mentioned here that Sri Lanka, Cambodia and Bangladesh have been playing in the ongoing World Cup and Asian Cup qualifiers. Cambodia are 172nd in FIFA rankings, 12 places ahead of the 184-ranked Bangladesh while Mongolia and Sri Lanka are ranked 186 and 203 respectively. Laos and Timor-Leste are ranked 188 and 198 respectively.