



'Fizz becoming too predictable'

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh ace paceman Mustafizur Rahman has been struggling with the ball in recent series and his death bowling skills not is not as potent as it used to be when he stormed onto the scene back in 2015. National selector Habibul Bashar was of the opinion that Fizz is becoming predictable.

During the second match of the BPL's opening day fixture between Cumilla Warriors and Rangpur Rangers, Fizz conceded just 12 in his first three overs for Rangpur. When Dasun Shanaka raised a storm in the last three overs of the innings, Fizz was blown away, taken for 26 in his final over. Bashar noted that the yorker was missing from his armoury and thus he suffered.

"Mustafizur has been missing for a year and does not have that yorker. He used to have a great yorker. The slower ball is still there and his pace is increasing, but the yorker is missing. He is becoming too predictable. That's my concern since batsmen are reading him and know what he might try," Bashar said.

"He has to think," Bashar reflected. "It is high time he starts thinking of backup plans when batsmen read him."

Shanaka hit four consecutive sixes off Mustafizur in that fateful 19th over. "If you see his last two overs, he was predictable as he bowled the same length. It was bound to happen as it's a T20. Mustafizur wasn't trying anything different."



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HABIBUL BASHAR
BCB SELECTOR

For the national selector, wickets weren't the problem, it was the release of pressure in tight situations that was concerning for the left-arm pacer.

"He is getting wickets. In the last year he is Bangladesh's highest wicket-taker but he is becoming too expensive. He is our death-overs bowler and if he is expensive, it's a concern for the whole team," Bashar, who is a mentor for Rangpur Rangers, said.

Bashar believed that performing again is a positive aspect but more consistency is needed. "Yorkers are missing. I talked to a Zimbabwe batsman and asked him to bat against Fizz. The understanding was that the majority will be cutters but Fizz bowled a yorker at 140kmph. Whoever used to stand in front of him, he could bowl fast yorkers but that is not there anymore," Bashar concluded.



Khulna Tigers players -- Aminul Islam (L), Mushfiqur Rahim and Mehedi Hasan Miraz (R) -- are ecstatic in their celebration after the dismissal of Chattogram Challengers batsman Imrul Kayes, who fell victim to a run out, in yesterday's second BBPL match in Mirpur. Young leg-spinner Aminul then took a return catch to dismiss Nasir Hossain.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

Gurbaz, Rossouw power Khulna

SPORTS REPORTER

Fifties from opener Rahmanullah Gurbaz and Rilee Rossouw helped Khulna Tigers romp to an eight-wicket victory over Chattogram Challengers during their Bangabandhu Bangladesh Premier League (BBPL) encounter under the lights at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.

It was Afghan opener Gurbaz who had set the tone for such a dominating win. The 18-year-old gave Khulna a blistering start as he smashed five maximums and four boundaries on his way to scoring 50 off just 19 balls before being dismissed in the sixth over.

Gurbaz had unsettled the Chattogram bowling line-up, forcing them to use seven different bowlers. After Gurbaz's dismissal, Rossouw and skipper Mushfiqur Rahim carried on the boundary feast as they smashed

SCORES IN BRIEF

CHATTOTGRAM CHALLENGERS: 144 for 6 in 20 overs (Simmons 26, Nasir 24, Nurul 19, Muktar 29 not out; Frylinck 1-21)
KHULNA TIGERS: 146 for 2 in 13.5 overs (Gurbaz 50, Rossouw 64 not out, Mushfiqur 28 not out; Nasum 1-18)
Result: Khulna Tigers won by 8 wickets.
Player-of-the-match: Rilee Rossouw.

Chattogram's bowlers all around the park during an unbeaten 72-run third-wicket stand off just 47 balls. Rossouw and Mushfiqur took the team home with 6.1 overs to spare, scoring 64 off 38 balls and 28 off 22 balls respectively.

Earlier, Chattogram Challengers managed to score a modest 144 for six after being asked to bat. However, Chattogram's decent start was dented by Khulna's Shafiu Islam when

the right-arm pacer removed the dangerous-looking West Indian Lendl Simmons in the seventh over. The right-handed opener, who had just struck Shafiu for a six over long on, tried to take on the bowler in the following delivery by going down the track but only saw his stumps being rattled after he had dragged the ball onto his stumps and had to depart after a promising 23-ball 26, featuring two fours and as many sixes.

However, it was two run-outs that changed the momentum. Imrul Kayes, who played a match-winning knock in Chattogram's opening fixture against Sylhet Thunder the previous day, fell short after he tried to sneak a double in the 11th over. Chattogram's wicketkeeper-batsman Nurul Hasan fell in the same manner, leaving the team reeling at 101 for four in 16 overs. A late cameo of 14-ball 29 from Muktar Ali helped Chattogram get past the 140 mark.

Bleak returns for Mash & Tamim

SPORTS REPORTER

All eyes were trained on Dhaka Platoon's first Bangabandhu Bangladesh Premier League (BBPL) match against Rajshahi Royals yesterday as two of the biggest national stars in Mashrafe Bin Mortaza and Tamim Iqbal were returning to action after lengthy breaks.

Bangladesh ODI skipper Mashrafe last played in a competitive fixture during Bangladesh's last World Cup game at Lord's against Pakistan on July 5. Bangladesh have been going through upheaval since the World Cup and as there are no ODIs between the tour of Sri Lanka that followed the World Cup and May next year, Mashrafe has been absent.

The inspirational captain, who has won the BPL a record number of times, returned to action after exactly 159 days. Tamim had led Bangladesh in his absence during that ODI tour of Sri Lanka but the left-hander had then opted out of

the tri-nation T20I series at home, the lone Test against Afghanistan and the tour of India. Although he had played in the National Cricket League (NCL) in October, the return of the BPL is a bigger stage, and there was heightened expectation as the star opener hit a brilliant ton in last edition's final to hand Comilla Victorians the title.

Tamim's form had been an issue during the World Cup and the indifferent run continued in the Sri Lanka series and, despite the downtime, there was no

SCORES IN BRIEF

DHAKA PLATOON: 134 for 9 in 20 overs (Anamul 38, Jaker 21, Riaz 19, Mashrafe 18 not out; Jayed 2-43)
RAJSHAHI ROYALS: 136 for 1 in 18.2 overs (Zazai 56 not out, Liton 39, Malik 36 not out; Mahedi 1-23)
Result: Rajshahi Royals won by 9 wickets.
Player-of-the-match: Ravi Bopara.

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Even last time he went through the tournament somewhat like this but the winning knock for the trophy came from him.

MASHRAFE BIN MORTAZA
DHAKA PLATOON CAPTAIN

improvement. Having been sent in to bat by Rajshahi Royals, Tamim was the first Platoon wicket to fall, going for a full-blooded drive but hitting it straight to the man at cover off the bowling of Abu Jayed. While Anamul Haque held one end up with his 33-ball 38, wickets fell at regular intervals from the other end, with two run-outs also adding to Dhaka's misery. Mashrafe contributed with a 10-ball 18 as

Dhaka managed a below-par score of 134 for nine.

Mashrafe, who admitted post-match that he carried a few 'niggles here and there', often caused the batsman to be careful but remained wicketless. Liton Das and Hazratullah Zazai provided a solid start and although Liton fell after a 27-ball 39, Zazai's unbeaten 56 and Shoaib Malik's steady 34-ball 32 handed Andre Russell's Rajshahi an easy nine-wicket win.

"We have players coming in from different places. But it can't be an excuse. It's a long tournament; there is a lot of time. We made a few mistakes today, quite a few run-outs happened. We need to fix these problems," Mashrafe said.

Regarding Tamim's slump, he said: "I don't think there is any real concern regarding Tamim. Even last time he went through the tournament somewhat like this but the winning knock for the trophy came from him."

Both him and Tamim now have something to improve upon following their bleak return.



PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

Rajshahi Royals players congratulate leg-spinner Alok Kapali on taking the wicket of Anamul Haque, Dhaka Platoon's highest scorer, during their comprehensive win in a BBPL match at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.

SHORT CORNER

Rohit joins hands with La Liga

Star India opener Rohit Sharma on Thursday joined hands with La Liga -- Spain's top division football league -- as its brand ambassador in India.

He is the first non-footballer in the history of the league to have signed on the dotted line with them. Rohit comes on-board following a series of major initiatives by La Liga in India since 2017, a statement said.

"Football in India is in its global growth trajectory and it is heartening to see that it is no more considered as the 'sleeping giant'. Over the course of the past five years, we have witnessed a significant growth in the interest for football in India. Credit must be given to everyone associated with it, including the fans," Rohit said. "I am truly delighted to be associated with La Liga." ---AGENCIES

Anand sees promising future of Indian chess

Five-time world champion Viswanathan

Anand on Thursday said that the future of Indian chess "looks promising" and some players will soon break into the top 10 of the FIDE ratings.

Anand, currently at the 15th spot at the FIDE rankings, picked the likes of Pentala Harikrishna and Vidit Gujrathi as the players expected to be among the top-10 in the coming years. -- Pri

'Will publicly name & shame every single one'

Former skipper Gulbadin Naib has alleged that corruption is rampant in Afghanistan cricket team and he has threatened to 'name and shame' every single one for 'betraying' the people of the country. Naib, who captained Afghanistan at the 2019 World Cup earlier this year, also alleged that some cricketers deliberately underperformed at the showpiece tournament just because he was named as the skipper. Naib made these startling revelations in a series of Tweets. --AGENCIES

A TON OF DUCKS

Shahid Afridi's aggressive batting can bring disaster for any side in world cricket but his hit-and-miss style often sees him get out cheaply. It also led to him completing a century of ducks in competitive cricket yesterday when, playing for Dhaka Platoons against Rajshahi Royals in the Bangabandhu Bangladesh Premier League, the Pakistani was dismissed for a first-ball duck by Ravi Bopara. Afridi has scored 44 ducks (six in Tests, eight in T20Is) in international cricket, with 30 coming in ODIs, a number bettered only by Sanath Jayasuriya with 34 to his name. The rest of his 56 zeroes came in domestic first-class, List A and T20 cricket. The BBPL has not started on a positive note for the former Pakistan all-rounder, but if anything is to be expected from him, it is the unexpected.

PHOTO: STAR



Mushy included in IPL auction

SPORTS REPORTER



Bangladesh wicketkeeper-batsman Mushfiqur Rahim's name was part of a late inclusion in the final list of 332 players shortlisted by the Indian Premier League (IPL) governing council and will go under the hammer in the auction scheduled for December 19 in Kolkata.

Mushfiqur was not initially part of the 971 players who registered for the IPL auction, but he was part of 24 additional players who were added to the list after their names were requested by the franchises. Other newly added players in the list sent to franchises on Wednesday include the likes of West Indies pacer Kesrick Williams, Australia's Dan Christian and leg-spinner Adam Zampa.

However, it is not yet certain how many of the six Bangladesh players -- Tamim Iqbal, Mahmudullah Riyad, Mustafizur Rahman, Soumya Sarkar, Mehedi Hasan Miraz and Taskin Ahmed -- who had put their names in the initial list made it to the final list of players for the auction.