



Dhaka Platoon opener Tamim Iqbal roared back to form with a 53-ball 74 in the BBPL match against Cumilla Warriors at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday. (Inset) Thisara Perera finished what Tamim started, hitting a 17-ball 42 to lift the score to 180 for 7 before taking five for 30 as Dhaka won the match by 20 runs.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

Sylhet's surrender

SPORTS REPORTER

In a dull contest, Sylhet Thunder were bundled out for a meagre 91 in just 15.3 overs before Rajshahi Royals stormed to an eight-wicket victory during their Bangabandhu Bangladesh Premier League (BBPL) encounter at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.

The Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) has long been slammed for not being able to prepare sporting wickets in domestic tournaments, which in turn hampered the competitiveness in the game. However, that charge could not be levelled this time around.

"I think today's [Friday's] wicket was a very good one. When we were fielding, the way they [Sylhet] started, it seemed like they would go on to score around 180. So I think it was a very good wicket today as it was the previous day too," said Rajshahi's Alok Kapali when asked if the wicket was on the slower side like previous seasons.

Sylhet did get to a good start as they scored 35 runs in just four overs before Rajshahi skipper Andre Russell deceived Sylhet opener Rony Talukdar with a slower yorker to get the right-hander trapped in front.

It was, however, Kapali who changed the momentum when he dispatched both Johnson Charles and Jeevan Mendis

off successive deliveries to have Sylhet struggling at 41 for three after five overs. After Kapali's double strike, Sylhet faltered as they threw their wickets away cheaply and with the pressure mounting, it was just a matter of time before the inevitable -- being bundled for a meagre total.

While the pitch has been sporting till now, it seems as if the teams, just like Sylhet yesterday, have been lacking in quality to match the expectations surrounding the BBPL. Out of the five matches, three have been low scoring contests. It was the second occasion where a team could not even cross the 100-run mark with the first being Rangpur Rangers' 68 all out against Cumilla Warriors on the opening day on Wednesday.

Rajshahi batsmen Liton Das scored a 26-ball 44 and Afif Hossain hit a stroke-filled 25-ball 30, indicating that the pitch was fine for batting.

SCORES IN BRIEF

SYLHET THUNDER: 91 all out in 15.3 overs (Mithun 20, Mosaddek 20; Kapali 3-17, Forhad 2-9, Bopara 2-10)

RAJSHAHI ROYALS: 95 for 2 in 10.5 overs (Liton 44, Afif 30; Nayeem 1-16)

Result: Rajshahi won by 8 wickets
Player-of-the-match: Alok Kapali

A welcome return to form

SPORTS REPORTER

It was a refreshing return to form for Tamim Iqbal as the dashing left-hander hit a composed fifty that helped his side post a fighting 180 and set up a 20-run win over Cumilla Warriors in their Bangabandhu Bangladesh Premier League game in Mirpur yesterday.

The 32-year-old had a poor run in the World Cup this summer, which continued on the tour of Sri Lanka in late July, after which Tamim decided to take a break from cricket, missing out on the home series against Afghanistan and Zimbabwe, as well as last month's tour of India. Tamim played just one competitive match in the last three months -- a National Cricket League game in October for Chattogram Division, during which he was dismissed for 30 and 46.

SCORES IN BRIEF

DHAKA PLATOON: 180 for 7 (Tamim 74, Perera 42 not out, Evans 23; Soumya 2-39, Shanaka 2-48)

CUMILLA WARRIORS: 160 for 9 (Malan 40, Mahidul 37, Soumya 35, Rajapaksa 29; Perera 5-30, Wahab 2-16)

Result: Dhaka won by 20 runs
Player-of-the-match: Thisara Perera

In the first match of the BBPL against Rajshahi Royals on Thursday, he scored just five and the pressure was mounting.

The left-hander started cautiously yesterday and looked shaky with his foot movement initially, focusing more on taking singles. At one point he had scored just 14 off 22 balls.

He survived on 23 when he smashed a pull towards the long leg region off Soumya Sarkar and Dawid Malan did complete the catch but his feet touched the boundary. Since then there was no looking back for the experienced campaigner.

The highest run getter in the BPL slowly and steadily started to gain confidence and his natural game started to appear. Suzamul Islam or the trademark pulled four off Dashun Shanaka, Tamim finally seemed to find what he has long been searching, soon reaching his 50 off 40 balls.

After striking a four and a six off Shanaka in the 17th over, Tamim finally departed when he was caught at deep point for a well-made 74 off 53 balls -- runs that will give the star player much succour.

Rajshahi Royals leg-spinner Alok Kapali castles Sylhet Thunder's West Indian opener Johnson Charles during a one-sided BBPL encounter in Mirpur yesterday.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED



Riyad to return to action today

SPORTS REPORTER

Chattogram Challengers skipper Mahmudullah Riyad, who suffered a hamstring injury during Bangladesh's pink ball Test against India in Kolkata last month, has been declared fit to play in the ongoing Bangabandhu Bangladesh Premier League (BBPL).

That means the star cricketer will be returning to competitive action in today's match against Rangpur Rangers tomorrow at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur.

"Mahmudullah Riyad has been declared fit and will be available to play in the next match for Chattogram Challengers. Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) physio Bayjedul Islam Bayezid has confirmed that Mahmudullah has met all the fitness requirements and is fully fit to play," read a media release from Chattogram Challengers yesterday.

In Mahmudullah's absence, Rayad Emrit captained Chattogram in their first two matches against Sylhet Thunder and Khulna Tigers.

Before the BBPL began, Chattogram Challengers team director and BCB media committee chairman Jalal Yunus had informed that the all-rounder could miss the first two matches.



Chattogram Challengers captain Mahmudullah Riyad bats in the nets of the BCB Academy ground in Mirpur yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

'Smith the ideal remedy'

REUTERS, Cape Town

Former South Africa captain Graeme Smith is the ideal candidate for the role of director of cricket for the home series against England that starts later this month, according to acting Cricket South Africa (CAS) chief executive Jacques Faul.

CSA announced the interim appointment of Smith on Wednesday and he will stay in the role for a three-month period up until the Indian Premier League. Faul has told Reuters in an exclusive interview that he believes the most successful captain in Test history is the perfect man to move them forward on the pitch after a turbulent few months.

Smith, who publicly expressed reservations about taking the position amid governance concerns at CSA, will not commit on paper beyond the IPL, but Faul, who has been tasked with steadying the organisation, is confident he will stay on once the recent chaos that has engulfed CSA dissipates.

"You can't blame him for feeling this way," Faul said.

"There is a lot of uncertainty at the moment, but the intention is definitely to go beyond the next few months. I think he wants to see the stability return (to CSA) first."

"He is someone who has a lot of credibility and an excellent reputation... but if he is happy then I think he will definitely be willing to give it a go longer-term."

CSA has been beset with accusations of poor governance that led to the suspension of chief executive Thabang Moreo, the resignation of four independent board members and criticism from sponsors.

Faul said Smith, who captained South Africa in 108 Tests, will drive the team's on-field performance and ticks every box.

"What we need with Graeme is a hardened international cricketer to guide us. He is also a natural leader, people look up to him, he is decisive in decision-making, a credible person and is assertive."

"If you were to profile the ideal candidate to get the team back on the right road, it would be Graeme."

Smith will seek in the new role to turn around the fortunes of an ailing side, who have lost their last five Tests in a row to Sri Lanka and India.

Rain mars Day 3 too

AFP, Rawalpindi

Pakistan's first home Test in a decade was affected by bad weather Friday, with rain and an already sodden pitch forcing officials to suspend play on the third day of the contest against Sri Lanka.

After day three's first session was washed out by wet weather, only 27 minutes of play was possible before the players walked off with just 5.2 overs bowled.

The umpires called off play at 15:35pm local time (10:35 GMT), after only 91 overs of play in three days.

Sri Lanka progressed to 282-6 from an overnight total of 263-6, with Dhananjaya de Silva on 87 -- 13 short of his fourth Test hundred.

Bravo eager to play T20Is again

ICC

Former West Indies all-rounder Dwayne Bravo, who had announced his international retirement in October 2018, is keeping himself open to an international comeback for the ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2020.

Bravo, 36, last featured for West Indies in a T20I in September 2016; injuries and differences with the board kept him out of contention after that. Now, with Ricky Skerritt the Cricket West Indies chief, Kieron Pollard the new T20I captain, and Phil Simmons the coach, Bravo said he is in talks for a T20I return. "Yeah, spoke with the coach, the captain, the new president. So definitely it's something on the table," he told Cricketnext. "For a while now, I have been contemplating my return to international cricket and my decision was solidified by these positive changes. Looking forward to playing international T20s only and represent West Indies again in the shortest format."

Bravo believes his experience will benefit West Indies in their attempt to defend the T20 World Cup title in Australia next year. The team has slipped to No. 10 on the MRF Tyres ICC T20I Team Rankings, losing series to Afghanistan and India in the last few weeks.

"I just think where we'll be more exposed is in the bowling," Bravo said. "That's where my experience will come in. To help the bowlers who are already there -- Sheldon Cottrell, Keemo Paul, Keshrick Williams, these guys are already doing a good job. It's just a matter of all of us coming together."

Bravo was also all praise for Pollard, saying: "What I know [of] Pollard as a leader -- he is passionate and someone who loves winning. He'll do anything in his power it takes to win."

Biggest cricket stadium taking shape in India

AFP, AHMEDABAD

The world's biggest cricket stadium, with space for 110,000 spectators, is taking shape in India and is likely to host its first international match early next year.

The new stadium in Ahmedabad, built at a cost of around \$100 million, will seat more fans than Australia's Melbourne Cricket Ground which can accommodate around 100,000 spectators.

According to reports, the Sardar Patel stadium is expected to host its first match in March with an exhibition game between an Asia XI and a World XI as the inaugural game.

The stadium will have more than 70 corporate boxes, four dressing rooms, a clubhouse and an Olympic-size swimming pool. Its construction began in January 2017.

It will overtake Kolkata's Eden Gardens, currently India's biggest stadium with a capacity of 66,000.

India has more than a dozen stadiums capable of holding international cricket matches. Test matches, however, often attract sparse crowds.

Santokie's no-ball under the scanner?

SPORTS REPORTER

On the cricketing side, the first three days of the Bangabandhu Bangladesh Premier League (BBPL) has been a little dull with one-sided matches and low totals being the norm. However, intrigue of an unsavoury kind already seems to have gripped the tournament as two media outlets reported on Friday that Sylhet Thunders had 'verbally requested' the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) to launch an investigation into bowler Krishmar Santokie's bizarre no-ball in Wednesday's BBPL opener against Chattogram Challengers.

In the second over of Chattogram's chase, Santokie's first, the left-arm pacer bowled a wide that landed on the edge of the strip and two balls later, overstepped the mark by more than a foot -- a margin that is highly unusual for professional cricketers. It raised eyebrows in Bangladesh and



abroad, with social media lighting up with comparisons to a similar no-ball from Pakistan pacer Mohammad Amir in 2010 against England at Lord's, which formed the basis for a spot-fixing charge and a five-year ban.

The media reports quoted a Sylhet official as saying that the no-ball was suspicious and that the official

had verbally requested BCB CEO Nizamuddin Chowdhury and anti-corruption head Abu Mohammed Humayun Morshed to investigate the matter.

The CEO, however, would neither confirm nor deny receipt of the request from Sylhet Thunder.

"We cannot make comments on such issues until and unless there is concrete evidence," Nizamuddin told The Daily Star yesterday.

As part of a heightened effort to stamp out corruption from the BBPL, the BCB had earlier said that each team will be tagged with an agent from the ICC's Anti-Corruption Unit.

Santokie played Sylhet's second match against Rajshahi Royals yesterday, getting out for a golden duck and conceding 15 runs from his solitary over.

The BPL was previously rocked by a spot-fixing scandal in 2013, which led to Mohammad Ashraful and others being banned.