

SPORT



Your Healthy Secret!



Mahedi Hasan leaps into the air to celebrate the dismissal of Soumya Sarkar in yesterday's first BBPL match in Chattogram. [Inset] Dhaka Platoon captain Mashrafe Bin Mortaza puts his arm around Mahedi's shoulder as he guides Dhaka to a five-wicket victory against Cumilla Warriors with a brilliant all-round performance.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED/BCB



A fixed position would be better: Mahedi

SPORTS REPORTER from Chattogram



Despite having hit five hundreds and 11 fifties in first-class cricket, Dhaka Platoon all-rounder Mahedi Hasan does not rate his batting ability very highly in T20 franchise cricket.

The right-hander was promoted to number three against Cumilla Warriors during a chase of 161 and Mahedi utilised the opportunity by smashing a blistering 29-ball 59 to help Dhaka clinch a five-wicket win yesterday.

However, when asked about his promotion, the 25-year-old rated his wicket as a 'valueless' one given that his role in T20 leagues is more that of a bowler.

"They have Mujeeb Ur Rahman and it's difficult to face him. As my wicket is valueless, the team management sent me up the order to tackle him. I took the chance against the off-spinner and got success. If you've noticed my batting, I enjoy hitting the ball, whether it's in first-class cricket or any other domestic competition," Mahedi told reporters yesterday.

The off-spinner, who also picked up two wickets for just nine runs from his four overs, did however wish for more opportunity and wanted a fixed batting position to showcase his talent.

"I am ready to meet the demands of the situation, whether it's at number 10 or up the order. But it would have been better if I had a fixed batting position as I get morally down when I bat at number nine or 10. However, I take it as a challenge and it feels good to get the success," he added.

Mahedi stars with bat and ball

MAZHAR UDDIN from Chattogram

Despite a flying start courtesy of Mahedi Hasan's all-round effort, Dhaka Platoon turned a rather easy chase into a difficult one before registering a five-wicket win over Cumilla Warriors and returning to winning ways in the day's first game of the Bangabandhu Bangladesh Premier League (BBPL) at the Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium in Chattogram yesterday.

Chasing a 161-run target, Dhaka were at one stage were cruising on 84 for one inside nine overs after Mahedi's blistering fifty, but things went pear-shaped for Mashrafe Bin Mortaza's side with the loss of a few quick wickets.

But Mominul Haque and Shahid Afridi settled things down and remained unbeaten on twenties to reach the target with a ball in hand, registering their third win in five games and handing Cumilla their third defeat in five games.

Dhaka lost opener Anamul Haque for a duck in the first over but the situation was more than stabilised as Mahedi stepped on the gas with

opener Tamim Iqbal making a return to the team after recovering from high fever.

It was Mahedi who took on the Cumilla bowlers and registered his maiden T20 fifty off 22 deliveries while the experienced Tamim played the supporting role at the other end.

SCORES IN BRIEF

CUMILLA WARRIORS: 160-3 in 20 overs (Rajapaksa 96 not out, Yasir 30 not out; Mahedi 2-9)

DHAKA PLATOON: 161-5 in 19.5 overs (Tamim 34, Mahedi 59, Mominul 28 not out, Afridi 26 not out; Mujeeb 2-22)

Result: Dhaka Platoon won by five wickets.

Player-of-the-match: Mahedi Hasan.

The right-handed Mahedi, who survived a difficult return catch in the first ball of the fifth over from Robiul Islam, went on to smash one four and four consecutive sixes to take 28 runs off the over.

After Mahedi was dismissed for 59 off just 29

balls, which included seven sixes and two fours, bringing an end to an 84-run second-wicket stand with Tamim, Dhaka needed just 77 off 67 balls with eight wickets in hand.

Tamim played cautiously till the 16th over of the innings, but was unable to live up to his reputation and was dismissed for 34 off 40 balls.

The chase became harder when Cumilla's Afghan spinner Mujeeb Ur Rahman dismissed both Jaker Ali and Asif Ali for ducks.

But Mominul and Afridi added an unbeaten 39-run sixth wicket stand to reach the target in the fifth ball of the 20th over.

Earlier, it was Mahedi who picked up two wickets for just nine runs from four overs to help Dhaka restrict Cumilla to 160 for three in 20 overs.

Cumilla's innings was boosted by an unbeaten 65-ball 96 from opener Bhanuka Rajapaksa, who was initially given out off a no-ball from Wahab Riaz when he was on 20, but was later called back after television replays revealed the error.

The right-hander then utilised the opportunity to guide Cumilla to a fighting total.

'All home Tests will take place in Pakistan'

STAR SPORT DESK



With the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) saying that it wanted the Tests for next month's scheduled Test and T20I tour of Pakistan held in a neutral venue, Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) Chairman Ehsan Mani yesterday insisted that there was "absolutely no doubt" Pakistan would play all home series within the country going forward.

Mani was speaking at a press interaction hours after Sri Lanka had concluded a two-Test tour of the country, becoming the first team to play Tests in Pakistan since a Sri Lankan team bus was the target of a terrorist attack in Lahore.

"No one should be under any misapprehension as to where Pakistan's home Tests will take place," Mani was quoted by ESPNcricinfo as saying. "All of Pakistan's matches, against Bangladesh or anyone else, will take place in Pakistan. I still hope the BCB will reflect on the matter and accept there is no reason for them not to visit Pakistan."

"If Sri Lanka can come - and bringing them was very high-risk - then it is safe. If anything even minor had happened, people would have said it isn't safe to come. But they trusted the people here and came and they [the ones that opted out] said they wished they had come for the limited-overs series as well, because what they've been told and the ground realities are very different."

On Sunday BCB CEO Nizamuddin Chowdhury had said that there was a difference in security arrangements between a short T20I tour and a Test series.

But after Sri Lanka's successful tour, which was preceded by tours by the Bangladesh women's team and the under-16 side earlier this year, Mani said that the burden of proof had shifted. He also hinted that in case a team refused to tour, they would not be averse to taking



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EHSAN MANI
PCB CHAIRMAN

the matter to the International Cricket Council for resolution.

"We think it's safe, and we've shown the world it's safe. Look at what happened in Christchurch [with the Bangladesh team], and incidents can happen in Australia and England, and all around the world. India is at present in far greater turmoil from a security perspective than Pakistan is. I will not take a risk with any players' safety or security. We will listen to everyone who is worried about coming here, but ultimately they'll have to prove it isn't safe to come here."

"We would absolutely have the right to dispute such a decision with the ICC," Mani said. "I don't want to say too much, because our discussions with the BCB are ongoing. When they formally tell us what decision they've taken, we'll see what we need to do."

RAJSHAHI'S EASY WIN

Rajshahi Royals pacer Andre Russell flexes his muscles after dismissing Rahmanullah Gurbaz with the second ball of the innings. The West Indian sent Mahedi Hasan Miraz back to the pavilion in the same over before picking up two more wickets to restrict Khulna Tigers to 145 runs. Russell and Kamrul Islam's (2 for 23 runs) effort was ably supported by Liton Das's 58-run innings as Rajshahi reached the target with seven wickets and two overs to spare in yesterday's second BBPL match at Chattogram. Russell also contributed with the bat, hitting an unbeaten 28.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED



31 disciplines for BD Games

SPORTS REPORTER



The Bangladesh Olympic Association (BOA) has decided in principle that the upcoming Bangladesh Games will feature 31 disciplines this time around, just as it had seven years ago during the 8th edition of the country's largest multi-sports extravaganza in 2013.

The 9th Bangladesh Games is scheduled to take place on April 1-10 in Dhaka.

The BOA has already asked the concerned federations to send the names of participating teams of their respective national championships of the last three years by December 25, after sending them official letters on December 15.

"Some 15 federations such as handball, table tennis and karate have already sent the names of the participating teams of their respective national championships,"

said BOA joint secretary and member secretary of the Games' steering committee, Ashiqur Rahman Miku yesterday, adding that they have included Roller Skating in place of Squash.

"After getting the names of participating teams, we will sit to decide who will be eligible to take part because we are working on forming a policy for the participants," said Miku, adding that the respective federations will be given the responsibility to organise their respective events while the BOA will be directly involved with the colourful opening and closing ceremonies.

Miku is also expecting the number of participating athletes and officials to rise over 10,000, some 2500 thousand more than the number of participants of the last edition.

The BOA's executive committee will sit on January 20 to discuss the details of the tournament as well as to form the organizing committee and different sub-committees.

The Rajapaksa confusion

SPORTS REPORTER from Chattogram



Confusion was triggered over the dismissal of Cumilla Warriors batsman Bhanuka Rajapaksa off a no-ball during yesterday's day game of the Bangabandhu Bangladesh Premier League against Dhaka Platoon, which halted the game for around two minutes.

Rajapaksa was batting on 20 and tried to hit a six off Dhaka pacer Wahab Riaz in the fifth ball of the fifth over but was caught by Mahedi Hasan at deep square-leg.

The Sri Lankan opener immediately walked off the ground and new batsman Yasir Ali Chowdhury came to the middle. However, television replay later revealed that Wahab had overstepped. On-field umpires Gazi Sohel and Prageeth Rambukwella soon called Rajapaksa back to the middle, which irked Dhaka Platoon players and coaching staff in the dugout.

Dhaka's senior player Tamim Iqbal was seen asking the on-field umpires about the decision



while head coach Mohammad Salahuddin looked shocked at the dugout as the umpires called Rajapaksa back.

"It does not matter that the batsman left the field of play. The umpires can ask a batsman back to the middle until the next ball is bowled if they think it was not out. But the on-field umpires should have been careful and should

have stopped the batsman from leaving until they were certain," match referee Raquibul Hasan told the media after the incident.

The right-handed batsman went on to hit a 65-ball 96 as Cumilla posted a fighting 160 for three.

However, Rajapaksa's effort eventually went in vain as Dhaka won the game by five wickets.

The 28-year-old said that it was a god-gifted chance that he managed to utilise.

"It was given out initially and I was standing outside the boundary and the fourth umpire wanted me to go to the dressing room. It was a god-gifted chance and I wanted to utilise it to the maximum," Rajapaksa said at the post-match press conference.

At the time of the incident, commentators wondered what would have happened had Rajapaksa gone for a shower when he was called back. "No, I wait till the match is over to get a shower. I just took my pads off but fortunately, they called me back to the crease," he said.