

SPORT

When on song, Chris Gayle can destroy the most potent of bowling attacks and as expected, the left-hander smashed three sixes in his first match for Chattogram Challengers in the ongoing Bangabandhu Bangladesh Premier League (BBPL). However, the 'Universe Boss' walked back to the pavilion with a forlorn face as his innings lasted only 10 balls but his 23-run innings gave his side a flying start in chase of Rajshahi Royals' 166. Chattogram rode on Lendl Simmons's 51 and Imrul Kayes's unbeaten 67 to win the match by seven wickets.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED



BCB seeks players' consent for Pakistan tour

SPORTS REPORTER



As uncertainty continues regarding Bangladesh's possible tour of Pakistan later this month, the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) has already started taking players' consent regarding the tour that includes three T20Is and two Tests later this month.

The BCB asked players to sign the Government Order (G.O) -- a standard procedure before any overseas series or tournaments -- and as per BCB sources it has emerged that a number of cricketers have already consented for the tour.

BCB President Nazmul Hassan met with three senior cricketers of the team on Tuesday evening to get their final overview on the matter. However, the final decision regarding the tour will be taken in a BCB meeting scheduled for January 12.

"We are just sharing the information with the players, explaining the situation, briefing about the security advice and government's position," BCB CEO Nizamuddin Chowdhury told reporters yesterday.

"Different opinions came from the players, but nothing is formal. There is no final decision about the tour yet," added Nizamuddin.

It was also learned that the BCB approached the players for their consent

to play at least one Test in Pakistan despite previously mentioning that the board would only consider playing the three T20Is and that too depended on whether the board could form a good team for the tour as a number of players and coaching staff were unwilling to travel to Pakistan.

And while a number of players already consented for the tour, it was learned that Bangladesh wicketkeeper-batsman Mushfiqur Rahim informed the board about his intentions of not touring with the side.

According to the sources, the board was under pressure to agree for a complete tour as a number of Bangladeshi players had already registered for the upcoming fifth edition of the Pakistan Super League (PSL) to be played from February 20 to March 22 and for which the players would have to stay in Pakistan for about a month.

However, a cricketer, requesting anonymity, clarified that the formalities regarding overseas and franchise-based tournaments are completed by their respective agents and sometimes without full knowledge of the players' availability.

"Firstly, the agreement is signed by our agent and they complete all the formalities on our behalf when it comes to making us available for any franchise-based tournament and then again we cannot play the PSL as we have home series against Zimbabwe at that time," said the player.

Gibbs's language comments make no sense: Fletcher

SPORTS REPORTER

Sylhet Thunder captain Andre Fletcher has brushed off claims of communication problems made by coach Herschelle Gibbs, who had said that it was difficult communicating in English with Bangladeshi cricketers.

Former South Africa batsman Gibbs said last Wednesday that local players do not understand English properly, which had been caused him problems while coaching a Sylhet team that ended the season with 11 losses out of 12 games.

"A lot of the local players don't understand English, so it is difficult for me to make points all the time. It is frustrating," Gibbs told reporters on January 1 in Sylhet.

After their season-ending loss to Cumilla Warriors in Mirpur yesterday, Fletcher was asked whether he faced similar communication issues.

"I am not the coach. I have had a very good rapport with the guys; they understand me very well. It's very surprising to hear that from him [Gibbs], being a coach. The players, as I said... we have to take responsibility for our game.

"We can't blame anyone. I believe the head coach of Bangladesh [South African Russell Domingo] speaks English, so I think all the Bangladeshi players understand English. So, to make a statement like that doesn't make any sense to me," Fletcher said.

Sylhet concluded the seven-team BBPL yesterday on a record low, managing to win just one game in 12 matches. Sylhet Royals in 2012, Chittagong Vikings in 2015 and Khulna Titans in 2018-19 had two wins each and they were the worst results in a BPL season till now.

Suspect Sylhet continue downturn

SPORTS REPORTER



While their on-field performance was not remarkable in the least, there was much else about Sylhet Thunder's ongoing Bangabandhu Bangladesh Premier League (BBPL) campaign that have set tongues wagging, and not in the good sense. Sylhet ended their campaign yesterday on a record low, becoming the only team in the tournament's history to win just one match in an entire season.

Instead of exploits on the field, discussions surrounding Sylhet were more about the chaos, suspicions of underhanded workings and differences between the core group of players and the management from the first day of the season.

At the end of a horrid season, Sylhet captain Andre Fletcher met Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) CEO Nizamuddin Chowdhury with the 'intention to report on happenings within the team' that the cricketer believed was not right.

It is understood that Fletcher, who took over as the captain following Mosaddek Hossain's injury, first contacted a few friends in the Bangladesh cricket fraternity and was looking for an opportunity to speak to BCB President Nazmul Hasan.

Nizamuddin confirmed meeting with the West Indian but claimed that it was for general reasons.

SCORES IN BRIEF

SYLHET THUNDER: 141 for 5 in 20 overs (Fletcher 22, Mazid 45, Charles 26, Mendis 23; Al-Amin 2-30, Wiese 2-31)
CUMILLA WARRIORS: 142 for 5 in 19.1 overs (Malan 58, Soumya 53 not out; Nayeem 3-21)
Result: Cumilla won by 5 wickets.
Player-of-the-match: Dawid Malan.



Sylhet Thunder skipper Andre Fletcher (L) cut a frustrated figure at the end of a wretched BBPL season, and particularly after losing their last match from a winning position against Cumilla Warriors in Mirpur yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

"Fletcher met me and shared his observations of the tournament [BBPL] regarding facilities, organisation and his experiences for the betterment of the tournament in the coming days," Nizamuddin told The Daily Star yesterday.

It all started right from the opening game of the BBPL when Sylhet's West Indies seamer

Krishmar Santokie bowled a gigantic wide and followed it with a huge no-ball against Chattogram Challengers, raising suspicions of untoward intentions.

Even Sylhet team director Tanjil Chowdhury, one of seven BCB directors appointed attached to each team, was quoted in the media raising questions over suspicious activities and also

Fletcher met me and shared his observations of the tournament [BBPL] regarding facilities, organisation and his experiences for the betterment of the tournament in the coming days

NIZAMUDDIN CHOWDHURY
BCB CEO

revealed that he had an argument with the team sponsors over irrelevant player selection during the players' draft. Tanjil however later clarified in a social media post that there were no such issues.

The BCB's Anti-Corruption Unit even interrogated Santokie over the no-ball, but the anti-corruption unit had not found evidence against the Windies seamer.

But things remained fishy for Sylhet throughout the tournament, whether their playing eleven selections or bowling changes that at times surprised the TV commentators.

One such instance took place yesterday as Sylhet went lost by five wickets against Cumilla as left-arm spinner Nazmul Islam bowled just one over -- his first over of the game in the 17th over of the innings -- while part-timer Johnson Charles bowled 3.1 overs. Cumilla won with five balls to spare after at one point needing 87 off 48 balls.

Sylhet fielded three foreigners in their playing eleven, leaving out one from the quota of four foreign players in the playing eleven yesterday, which also raised questions over the quality of the team and their intent.

SHORT CORNER

Under-19s' practice match postponed

The practice match between Bangladesh Under-19 and their Afghan counterparts ahead of the upcoming ICC Under-19 Cricket World Cup, scheduled to begin across South Africa from January 17, was postponed due to a wet outfield at Senwes Park, Potchefstroom yesterday.

Bangladesh team manager AEM Kawsar informed The Daily Star that both teams agreed to play the practice match today at the same venue. The Young Tigers, who arrived in Potchefstroom on January 4, are scheduled to play the last of their practice matches against the Potchefstroom Under-19 side tomorrow.

--SPORTS REPORTER

SA back ICC plan for four-day Tests

South Africa have come out in support of four-day Test matches, refuting reports that said they would oppose the plan.

The International Cricket Council is set to discuss the idea of making tests four-day games to ease a crammed international calendar and reduce player workload.

England have said they will support

the idea after 2023 while Australia are to give serious consideration to the plan.

Britain's Daily Mail newspaper reported that South Africa would oppose the idea, despite the country becoming the first to host a four-day Test when they played Zimbabwe in 2017.

"In view of an unsourced and misleading report in the media this morning, please be advised that it is Cricket South Africa's official policy to support four-day Test match cricket," Cricket South Africa said in a statement.

"We, in fact, hosted the first official four-day Test match between ourselves and Zimbabwe a couple of years ago." -- REUTERS

Burns to miss SL tour

England opener Rory Burns will be out of action for up to four months after ankle surgery and will miss the two-Test tour of Sri Lanka in March, the England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) said on Tuesday.

Burns was injured on Thursday while playing football to warm up for training ahead of the second Test against South Africa, and was ruled out of the rest of the tour.

"England opening batsman Rory Burns has undergone successful surgery on ruptured ligaments in his left ankle," the ECB said in a statement. -- REUTERS

Fahad misses out on GM norm

SPORTS REPORTER

IM Fahad Rahman narrowly missed out on a GM norm following a draw against Indonesian IM Taher Theolifus in the ninth and final round of 5th International Grandmaster Chess Tournament in Mumbai yesterday.

Fahad needed a victory over Theolifus in the final round to earn his first GM norm, but the draw meant he earned six points from nine matches, missing out on the norm by half a point. Fahad won five games.

Drawing two and losing two.

The youngster finished 12th in tiebreaking system as 12 players secured six points each. GM Ziaur Rahman finished 22nd with the same number of points.

A total of as 152 players including 25 GMs took part in the tournament.

A winning punt from beyond the grave

AFP, London



Dom Sibley made his maiden Test century for England in the second Test against South Africa but he had already scooped his family a record £21,600 (\$28,500) thanks to his late grandfather Kenneth MacKenzie's faith in his talent.

MacKenzie died in 2011 four months after placing two bets on his then-teenage grandson -- first at 150/1 then at 66/1 -- that he would one day play for his country.

That talent-spotting bore fruit when the 24-year-old opening batsman made his Test debut against New Zealand in November last year.

His family had no idea they could benefit from a posthumous payout until MacKenzie's daughter Christine Sibley, Dom's mother, went to a William Hill betting shop in Surrey, south East of England.

"He'd have been so proud of Dom's achievement, so watching him was tinged with sadness, but he'd also have been delighted at

pulling off the bet at massive odds," she told The Times.

Although MacKenzie spotted something special in his grandson when he was just five he bided his time till he was 16 before placing the first bet.

"It was unreal that Dom's



Christine Sibley, England batsman Dom Sibley's mother, proudly displays two slips from winning bets made by her father, who died in 2011, that Dom would play for England.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

grampi saw the potential and invested in the bet -- he was very, very keen and passionate about cricket," said Christine.

"Dom was five when he originally said he could play for England --

by the time he was seven or eight he was playing for the under-9s and that was when t h e

enquiries were made at William Hill about the odds.

"He went back a few years later and told them he thought the odds were a bit skinny, but they honoured the bet," added the 57-year-old.