



‘We had freedom as selectors’

ABDULLAH AL MEHDI

GM Nausher Prince, the former Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) national selector had worked with some of the best talents in the country. As a former cricketer who has worked with the likes of Shakib Al Hasan, Tamim Iqbal, Mushfiqur Rahim and Mahmudullah Riyad during their stints in age-level teams through to the national team, Prince is aware of the processes needed to prepare an organic cricket culture. His knowledge also gives a glimpse of the history and the present of Bangladesh cricket.

He left his post in 2007 and is currently residing in Houston, Texas but the former cricketer, still in love with cricket, has continued his work with youth cricket.

“Me, together with Faruque [Ahmed] and Athar [Ali] worked tirelessly back then to develop the country’s cricket. There is satisfaction when Bangladesh does well since I used to work with age-level cricket most of the time. The likes of Shakib, Tamim, Mushfiqur or Riyad were small kids back then and I remember how we used to tell them stories about growing up and self-discipline. The nodes of network and communication between the players and the members of the staff were very strong and we used to enjoy ourselves a lot,” he said during a talk with The Daily Star.

“What a player does off the field is just as important as what they do on it. You get an idea of how far they can go.”

There is an assumption that cricketers like Tamim or Shakib set themselves apart from the rest during their early years and Prince remembered memories of the theme that built successful

cricketers.

“Once, when I entered Mushfiqur’s room, I noticed how his text books were all meticulously organised. I used to talk to people proudly about how he maintained everything. Discipline can take you a long way and it shows character.

“We harboured strong hopes of winning the 2006 U-19 World Cup in Sri Lanka. I remember how people used to come to the ground to watch Tamim bat because he once sent a ball to the second tier

and weaknesses,” Prince said.

The likes of Shakib or Tamim had the potential, the vision and the ambition -- traits we say are absent in others who do not make it -- but Prince reminded: “It wasn’t about natural ability, some make it through hard work and it’s not like Shakib was bestowed with god-gifted talent.

“They had to play so many matches against foreign opposition while at age-level and that is why it’s partly easier for them. So, mentally

creating the culture was that the selectors had the independence to trust their own instincts and knowledge.

“We never had to take permission from anyone. We had to have plan for what we want to do with the batch of players we had. My job was as a selector and manager. It was not my job to tell them how to play. It was about keeping morale up and the team management conveyed the same message; we knew what each of our task was.”

Prince said that the current scenario is not like that.

“A selector should be free and they have to be trusted. If someone says from high up or other position to field this or that player, then you are just bringing new faces and wasting your talent base. You exclude players but what are you doing about their rehabilitation?” he queried.

There had been talk about the role of national selectors and indeed who selects the eleven who take the field. Interference has led to a lack of values and ideas.

“We never had any bias. The current policies make me feel they [selectors] are not free. It appears to be some sort of king-and-subject dynamic in the current climate. During my time, no matter who the [BCB] president was, the atmosphere was friendly. I went to England to watch the World Cup (2019) and it seemed so different. Not only coaches or staff, everyone. And you can’t look down on players who had to prove themselves to get to this point [playing in a World Cup]. There is no satisfaction in that work,” he said.

With cricket being halted due to the worldwide coronavirus pandemic, the BCB has enough time on their hands to mull over the finer points of building a culture in order to resurrect the country’s cricket.



of the Premadasa Stadium at that age. People in Sri Lanka became crazed fans of Tamim and there were more people in our fifth-place playoff match against West Indies than the final of the tournament. These players worked really hard and that’s why they are continuing on for Bangladesh.

“We had a foresight about what to look for and worked on progress made. It wasn’t like we were bringing in players on a whim and then omitting them. There was a goal. Every tour we would report on players’ growth and their strengths

and physically they can adjust.”

Craftsmanship is needed to build synergy and the foundation was respect for each other, the coaching staff and professionalism.

“The thing was to make them understand that they were part of a team. They needed that confidence. It’s a bad attitude to exclude someone, and every member of the team must be treated equally. They were kids and learning about that respect was important. It can’t be that you ignore someone who is not doing well,” he said.

For Prince, a crucial facet in



India seal women’s World Cup berth

AFP, New Delhi

India have qualified for the 2021 women’s World Cup after the International Cricket Council declared that the points from a cancelled series against Pakistan would be shared.

The series, part of the ICC Women’s Championship, was unable to be played after India’s governing body, the BCCI, said it could not get government clearance to host Pakistan with tensions rising between the neighbours over the disputed Kashmir region.

The ICC declared the circumstances a “force majeure” event and awarded the teams three points each.

Two other final-round series cancelled because of the coronavirus pandemic -- South Africa v Australia and Sri Lanka v New Zealand -- also saw the six points on offer shared.

The decision means India sealed the final automatic qualifying spot on 23 points behind Australia (37), holders England (29) and South Africa (25) for the 50-over competition next year alongside hosts New Zealand.

Pakistan, who finished four points below India, will now seek one of the three remaining places in the World Cup at a 10-team qualifying tournament in Sri Lanka originally scheduled for July 3-19, but which could be postponed because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

BCCI officially suspends IPL

PALLAB BHATTACHARYA from New Delhi

The Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) yesterday suspended this year’s Indian Premier League “till further notice” in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic which has claimed more than 400 lives and affected over 12,000 in the country.

“Due to the evolving global health concerns regarding COVID-19 and lockdown measures implemented by the Government of India to contain the spread of the pandemic, the IPL Governing Council of the BCCI has decided that the IPL 2020 season will be suspended till further notice,” said BCCI secretary Jay Shah in a statement.

The IPL was set to start on March 29 and end on May 24 but it was first postponed till April 15 after a surge in COVID-19 positive cases in India.

“The health and safety of the nation and everyone involved in our great sport remains our top priority and as such, the BCCI along with the IPL franchise owners, broadcaster, sponsors and all the stakeholders acknowledge that the IPL 2020 season will only commence when it is safe and appropriate to do so,” Shah added.

“BCCI will continue to monitor and review the situation regarding a potential start date in close partnership with all of its stakeholders and will continue to take guidance from the Government of India, State Governments and other State Regulatory bodies,” Shah continued.

The only window left for the BCCI to host the tournament is September-November. For that to happen, India will have to skip the Asia Cup hosted by the Pakistan Cricket Board in Dubai or Cricket Australia and the International Cricket Council decide to forego the T20 World Cup to create an available window.



TIME TO STUDY

Cristiano Ronaldo is always looking for his next challenge, constantly pushing himself harder than before. This quarantine period is no exception for the five-time Ballon d’Or winner, as he is now seen using this time to better himself: “Always challenge yourself! For me it’s time to study!”

PHOTO: COLLECTED

Pollock reveals Sachin’s weakness

PTI

Former South African captain Shaun Pollock claimed that Sachin Tendulkar had once told him that he found it difficult to tackle the “short-pitched” bowling in Australia but effectively managed with shots over wicketkeeper and slip-cordon.

“He talked to me once about going to Australia and understanding he couldn’t take on the short-pitched deliveries anymore so he would ramp the ball over the wicketkeeper and slip,” Pollock said in a podcast with Sky Sports.

Pollock said there was a time when all their plans would fall apart against Tendulkar and they would wait for him to make a mistake.

“There were times, especially in the subcontinent, where you thought, ‘I’m not sure we can knock this guy over’. We were hoping he would make a mistake, rather than had a genuine plan,” said Pollock.

Considered one of the greatest batsman to have played the game, Tendulkar ended his illustrious career after amassing 34,357 international runs across all the three formats.

IT’S TIME TO FIGHT COVID-19



Sofia Kenin, the current women’s champion of the Australian Open, posted this old image of herself in Dubai on Instagram with the caption: “This picture reminds me how much I miss traveling the world! But in order to travel again soon, we must take all the measures to fight Covid-19! Take care of yourself and your family! Let’s do our part by following the advice of experts and healthcare professionals so we can beat this virus as soon as possible.”

Nadal expecting lengthy wait

AFP, Madrid

Rafael Nadal thinks the global nature of tennis means there is little chance tournaments will go ahead any time soon as sport continues to be paralysed by the coronavirus pandemic.

Novak Djokovic also anticipates a lengthy delay before tennis can be played even behind closed doors, with the world number one expecting players to have to wait a “few months”.

The French Open, which Nadal has won a record 12 times, has been postponed until September, shortly after the US Open, while Wimbledon was cancelled earlier this month for the first time since World War II.

“Tennis is a global sport,” Nadal told Spanish radio station Onda Cero on Wednesday night. “We go from country to country and a lot of people have to move around.

“It seems difficult to me for any big tournament to be played in the short or medium term.”

Austria plans to allow athletes to train

AFP, Vienna

Professional athletes in Austria will be able to resume training before the end of April as the country eases restrictions to combat the coronavirus pandemic, the government announced on Wednesday.

There will be restrictions as the government is recommending football teams train in groups of no more than six players.

Sports Minister Werner Kogler told a press conference the aim was to restart the Austrian Bundesliga, which last played on March 8, behind closed doors.