



Jayed eager to be back in pack

ABDULLAH AL MEHDI



"It's only for the time being, right?" Abu Jayed asked this reporter when queried about how the saliva

ban, ratified by the ICC last week, was going to impact him as the chief proponent of swing bowling in the country.

There was an unmistakable note of concern in Jayed's voice when he asked whether the saliva ban was only temporary, and it was understandable as shining the ball with saliva has been an age-old fixture of cricket. For Jayed however, getting the game back on to the field of play took precedence over any initial difficulties he as a pacer would face.

"Safety comes first. ICC decided to do that keeping the players' safety in mind. Since the game also needs to return to the field, as football is already going on in various countries, I agree with this decision. It will be difficult for us pacers but it's something we have to abide by now," he said.

Pakistan's legendary paceman Wasim Akram had suggested that bowlers will become like 'robots' without swing and Jayed's concern was along those lines. "If the ball isn't shined properly, then it will be hit like [bowling] machine balls."

The balance between bat and ball has long been skewed in favour of the former, so a pace bowler's concern in the wake of the saliva ban is justified. Yet, not playing cricket for an extended period was a bigger concern and the urgency to get back to his occupation more acute.

"Until I face the situation [of bowling without using saliva] I can't really say much," he added, but was hopeful at the same time. "I was thinking of Vaseline or shoe polish in order to shine the ball. I heard Kookaburra is bringing some new balls which can be shined

without saliva. Well there is going to be some swing but maybe not as much as before. It's a matter of adjustment in the end.

"We have to get used to it and that requires practice. We have to survive and cricket needs to start," he remarked.

For Jayed, the enforced break could not have come at a worse time for Bangladesh cricket. The pacers have been looking to make an impact and with a crop of seamers now beginning to establish themselves, there was real potential



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before the Covid-19 pandemic brought cricket to a halt.

Mohammad Salahuddin, a mentor to many of Bangladesh's big stars, had prescribed a pace bowling unit of just national team

"Perceptions are changing. Even in camps, pacers are now working together and separately from the rest. We had a team meeting after the Pakistan series and discussed the idea of the pace unit.

"Shafiul [Islam] bhai and others like Taskin [Ahmed] called me during the break and the idea of working together is gaining momentum. It was not there before and now we are talking about what we can do to improve," he said.

As always, Test cricket paved the way for things to start changing in terms of pace bowling.

"In India, we saw how their four pacers work as a unit. They are very connected, something that is changing here now," Jayed, who talked to Mohammad Shami during that tour, reflected.

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Jayed's disappointment about the halt was quite evident. "In the Zimbabwe match [one-off



Real Madrid's Brazilian defender Marcelo takes a knee, showing his solidarity to the Black Lives Matter movement, after scoring during their 3-1 win against Eibar at the Alfredo di Stefano stadium on Sunday.

PHOTO: AFP

CWAB feels time not right to start DPL

SPORTS REPORTER



The Cricketers Welfare Association of Bangladesh (CWAB), in a press release on Monday, informed that it would want to observe the situation

further before taking any decision over resuming the Dhaka Premier League, which was postponed after the first round due to the coronavirus pandemic.

Former Bangladesh captains Naimur Rahman and Khaled Mahmud along with senior cricketers like Mushfiqur Rahim, Mahmudullah Riyad, Abdur Razzak, Tushar Imran and few juniors were present during a virtual meeting that took place on Sunday.

"We agreed that the current situation in the country is not suitable to resume the Dhaka Premier League as our main focus is to ensure safety of the players as well as of the match officials. In that regard,

we have decided to observe the situation further and will later inform the BCB about our decisions," CWAB general secretary Debabrata Paul told media.

There were talks that the resumption of DPL will depend on the Tigers' upcoming tour of Sri Lanka. However, the BCB CEO Nizamuddin Chowdhury had previously stated that the cricketer's decision will be given top priority. Test skipper Mominul Haque also said that they would follow whatever the board decides on this issue.

"Regarding the training of the national cricketers, we have already witnessed that many areas were marked as red zones in Dhaka, and Mirpur is among the red zones. So, it is not possible to continue training in those areas at the moment. Regarding the national team's Sri Lanka tour, we all know it requires mental and physical preparation for any series and the situation at the moment is not ideal in our country. The BCB will talk to the government officials and whatever the government decides, we will follow," Debabrata said.

'Don't compare Babar with Kohli'

AGENCIES

Pakistan batting coach Younis Khan believed young Babar Azam should not be compared to Indian captain Virat Kohli, saying the Lahore-born cricketer has his own class.

"It is unfair to compare Babar with Kohli because the latter has been playing international cricket for more than a decade, whereas Babar has only played just about 4-5 years at the top level," a website quoted the former Pakistan skipper as saying.

"Don't put this thing [comparison with Kohli] in his mind and let him do his wonders. He has his own class and I want him to become a legendary batsman and inspire Pakistan to many victories."

"I was put under pressure when I was compared with Inzamam who debuted in the 1990s and had the 1992 World Cup on his credit," he said.

Younis also called for the resumption of Pakistan-India cricket.

BAF backtracks over resumption of camp

ANISUR RAHMAN



With the coronavirus situation in the country deteriorating, the Bangladesh Archery Federation (BAF) decided to backtrack on their earlier decision of restarting preparation for Tokyo Olympics from July 1. The federation has instead decided to distribute bows among the national archers to help them practice at home.

As the government allowed different offices to reopen from May 31 in limited scales following a two-month shutdown to curb the spread of the coronavirus, the game's local governing body also decided in principle to resume their Olympics preparation with 28 archers and officials in Tongi, subject to the approval from the government, before eventually changing their decision.

"We changed our mind as we think it won't be wise to take the risk at the moment because the archers are like our children," BAF general secretary Kazi Razib Uddin Ahmed Chapal told The Daily Star.

"We have already lost a few months which are not recoverable. But we want to wait for another month to observe the situation. We, however, believe that we can get the approval from sports minister to resume the camp," said Chapal.

"Following advice from our coach [Martin Frederick], I have discussed with our president (BAF president M Moinul Islam) to send equipment without the arrows to the players, so that they can maintain their strength of hands by pulling out the strings of the bow. Such type of training is taking place aboard amidst the coronavirus pandemic. We will send the bows to the national players except for those who are in services teams," said the BAF general secretary.



"We are also thinking of sending target board and arrows to archers who have open space of about 10 metres at their own backyard. As there is risk in throwing arrows and practising in personal space, we will definitely look into the safety of other family members and take approval from the National Sports Council before sending the arrows and target boards to the archers," said Chapal.

Chapal, meanwhile, said that, subject to government's approval, the federation still plans to stage the World Archery-sanctioned joint training camp in Bangladesh in late November with archers from six to 10 countries participating.

The BAF also wants to hold the Bangabandhu ISSF Solidarity Archery Championships from February 22-28 but everything will depend on the improvement of the situation.



'If we were on the moon, we'd start cricket'

AFP, PRAGUE



Hit hard by the coronavirus pandemic, cricket resumed in Prague this weekend where players shrugged

off the summer rain by declaring: "If we were on the moon, we'd start cricket."

Featuring largely expats, the European Cricket Network's (ECN) Czech Super Series is one of the first cricket events worldwide played in the wake of the COVID-19 lockdowns.

"We've only been able to play here now because of the way the whole country responded" to the pandemic, said Terry O'Connor, Czech cricket league administrator.

He pointed out the recent easing of restrictions taken by the EU member country of 10.7 million people in March when the virus began to spread across Europe.

For the event pitting 16 Czech teams, and spread over five weekends until July 12, the Vinor grounds on Prague's outskirts are divided in three parts to separate the players, the crowd and officials.

"We're keeping everyone distanced -- but cricket is not a contact sport," said O'Connor. "There aren't really any adjustments to play other than following the International Cricket Council's (ICC) guidelines in regards to using saliva on the ball," he added.

For Javed Iqbal, a 39-year-old Pakistani-born bowler with the Bohemian Cricket Club, the virus restrictions pose no problem.

"Yesterday it was very hot so we didn't need saliva, it was enough to wet our fingers against the forehead," said the former athlete and basketball player, who came to Prague in 2014 to get a degree in forestry.

"It's not that difficult, especially here in these wet conditions," he told AFP as the organisers cancelled his team's match against the United Cricket Club amid steady rain. Iqbal let his face mask -- still mandatory in some places in the Czech Republic -- hang loosely down his neck.

"We keep a distance from one another. And we're like a family and in a family you don't need to be restricted," he chuckled.

While Iqbal's native Pakistan, and other cricket powerhouses are still taking a break from the sport, Bohemian Cricket Club -- relying largely on Asian students -- won their two opening matches on Saturday.

"Wherever there are Pakistanis, Indians and Sri Lankans, they will definitely play cricket because it's in their blood," Iqbal said. "Even if they were on the Moon they would start cricket there." Iqbal, who sees his future as the Bohemian Cricket Club manager, has played for the Czech national team in the past.

The Czech Republic team does not rely solely on expats. "It's more common than not that we actually

have Czechs on the team," said O'Connor.

"In the past we would be playing against other European countries and we'd have three, four, five Czechs and none of the other opposition would have native members," the Australian, living in Prague, told AFP.

Czech cricket is pinning hope on its academy which introduces school children to the sport, organises weekly games and runs three junior clubs.

"To me the long-term sustainability of the sport in this country and success at the national level is about getting some of those juniors to keep coming through," O'Connor said.

While in adult cricket Czechs make up only a dozen of 300 players, the proportion is the exact opposite in children's cricket with just over a dozen foreigners among 400 players.

"The best thing is the youngsters, we have really good youngsters who are still under 14," said Iqbal.

"Czech cricket will be on a high level within a few years -- if they show the same spirit, the way they play now."

O'Connor predicted the Czech national team could move to the 40th spot in five years, but Iqbal was even more optimistic.

"We have very close competition with most teams and maybe in the future, when we have the opportunity to play against them, 30 is very easy to achieve within a few years," he said.



Daniel Berger of USA poses with the Charles Schwab Challenge trophy at Colonial Country Club in Texas on Sunday as the US PGA Tour returned after a lengthy break due to Covid-19. Berger staged off challenges from the likes of Jordan Spieth and Justin Rose to win the event.

PHOTO: REUTERS

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BUNDESLIGA

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Werder Bremen v Bayern Munich
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Star Sports Select 1
Freiburg v Hertha Berlin
Live from 12:30am (Wednesday)