



Cavalier attitude the biggest hindrance

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There are a lot of risks and fears as the coronavirus situation in the country is not improving much. Still, life is going on and people from different walks of life are trying to find ways to survive in the new normal. Especially when it comes to communication, decision-making and planning, they are not waiting for traditional arrangements. Instead, virtual meetings have become the popular choice during this pandemic.

Initially, sport was not a priority. It was imperative to save lives following the unprecedented impact of the virus on every aspect of our lives, but gradually the sports fraternity all over the world has come forward to find ways to resume.

Understandably, Bangladesh is still in a dilemma over how to resume sport. But there is no point in sitting idle with future plans and course of action.

Former Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) president Saber Hossain

Chowdhury recently pointed out that country's most affluent sporting body is lagging behind other countries when it comes to thinking outside the box and facing the new normal. He asked for proactive, creative and collective efforts in this crisis, where meeting virtually is the rule, not the exception.

The BCB, the custodian of the country's most popular sport, is apparently nowhere close to such initiatives, which has been reflected in their recent activities.

While the Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) has held a number of virtual meetings to take decisions, we only recently came to know from the BCB's Media Committee Chairman that they were waiting for board president Nazmul Hassan, who underwent surgery in London, to return to the country before holding such a meeting.

It is a huge opportunity for the BCB to engage all of their members in discussion about how to chart their course of action and a virtual platform can be especially useful in engaging sports organisers over the country to seek out solutions to redesign the decrepit domestic

cricket structure, which they need to prioritise in the post-pandemic world. What we got instead were dithering comments from board higher-ups.

Their own president is the chief of the Asian Cricket Council (ACC) but an important director had no idea about the impending cancellation of the Asia Cup just a few days before it was made official. He mentioned then that the BCB might target the Asia Cup as a way to bring players back to the field for preparation.

Another director stated that they were considering Cox's Bazar or BKSP as alternative venues for the Dhaka Premier League and also arranging accommodation to maintain isolation so they could start on short notice when the situation was conducive to resumption. The development committee only on Wednesday held a meeting to announce that they were looking to resume the Under-19 team's camp next month. But nobody actually knows what the board's decision is.

Players are complaining that they are not getting a clear picture

from their board regarding the resumption of training or cricket. They were confused when the board said that they discouraged individual outdoor practice but that players could now do so at their own risk.

Many believe there are tough times ahead for the BCB when it comes to international series, but the only thing the BCB has assured is that they are in good shape in terms of financial stability. On the other hand, the postponement of Asia Cup only a few hours after the Pakistan Cricket Board dismissed of BCCI president Sourav Ganguly's comments on an impending cancellation just shows that in the post-pandemic era, everything will not happen according to what was written on the previous sheet. However, there are hardly any signs that the BCB is collectively discussing the challenges in the coming days.

The BCB cannot simply think that everything will get going only when they do. That attitude puts them at risk of being left at sea while the rest of the world embarks on their voyage into the new normal.

Booters' camp from August 7 in Gazipur

SPORTS REPORTER



The Bangladesh football team will have a 14-day pre-preparation camp from August 7 before a six-week national camp for October's World Cup Qualifying match against Afghanistan at Sara Resorts in Gazipur.

"Having taken information about our groundwork regarding the resumption of the national camp, we have decided to start the training camp at Sara Resorts in Gazipur for the FIFA World Cup Qualifiers in October and November," National Teams Committee (NTC) chairman Kazi Nabil Ahmed said in an online press conference following the NTC's meeting with head coach Jamie Day, assistant coach Stuart Watkiss, technical director Paul Smalley and BFF Medical Committee deputy chairman Dr Ali Emran.

"Selected players will have to undergo Covid-19 test from the nearest points in their respective areas before joining the pre-preparation camp on August 7 because we want to keep infected players away from the camp. Afterwards, we will take another initiative to do Covid-19 tests of all players and supporting staff on August 7 at Sara Resorts and we are discussing with BSSMU and Prova Healthcare how to collect samples from Gazipur," Ahmed, also a BFF vice-president, added.

"According to FIFA and AFC guidelines, players will then be divided into small groups of four to five and those groups will train separately and have no contact with other groups. Team officials and doctors will observe them during that

period. After 14 days, if there is no risk among the players, then the main six-week training will start. In the meantime, foreign coaches will join the camp after going through Covid-19 tests both aboard and here."

Ahmed also informed that they would be able to get the Sara Resorts' ground into a good shape for practice and that players would not face problems availing the gym facilities there.

NTC vice-chairman Tabith M Awal informed that they had already sent a preliminary list national team players to FIFA and AFC, with Jamal Bhuiyan and Tariq Kazi the only foreign-based players.

Awal also informed that they had already confirmed four coaching staffs -- physio, fitness, goalkeeping coach and a match analyst -- aside from Jamie and Watkiss, but it has not been confirmed when all the coaching staff will arrive.

The national players have been in touch with Jamie and Stuart and are following training programmes prepared by them.

"I can't tell the exact condition of the players although all of them have been under the training programme and are posting training videos. We believe they are in good shape. I can only tell you the exact condition after seeing them face-to-face on the ground," Watkiss said.

"We played good football in the four matches, barring the second half against Oman, and we are looking forward to the next four matches, which includes three home matches. It will be tough but we are hoping to secure three to four points from those home games," said Jamie.



West Indies players go up in a successful leg-before appeal against England opener Rory Burns on the first day of the second Test at Old Trafford yesterday. Roston Chase took two quick wickets, one with his final ball before lunch and another with his first ball after, but could not get a hat-trick. The hosts were at 62-2 with 25 overs gone. PHOTO: REUTERS

'Extremely sorry'

AGENCIES



An "extremely sorry" Jofra Archer has been forced out of the second Test against the West Indies at Old Trafford after breaching bio-security protocols.

The nature of Archer's breach was initially unclear, but the England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) have since confirmed the fast bowler returned to his flat in Hove en route from Southampton - where the first Test was played - to Manchester.

Players undertook the journey in separate cars and were instructed not to stop en route anywhere other than pre-approved rest stops.

"Archer will now commence five days of isolation and will undergo two COVID-19 tests in this period, which have to test negative before his self-isolation period is lifted," the ECB said in a statement. "I am extremely sorry for what I have done," said Archer, who was part of the team that lost the series opener.

"I have put, not only myself, but the whole team and management in danger. I fully accept the consequences of my actions, and I want to sincerely apologise to everyone

in the bio-secure bubble.

"It deeply pains me to be missing the test match, especially with the series poised. I feel like I have let both teams down, and again I am sorry."

The Tests between England and West Indies are being played in tightly-controlled bio-secure 'hubs', with players and staff staying in hotels that are attached to the two venues in use for the series, the Rose Bowl in Southampton and Old Trafford in Manchester.

Former England captain Nasser Hussain is not impressed by Jofra Archer after the fast bowler was found in breach of novel coronavirus bio-secure protocols in the lead up to the 2nd Test against West Indies in Manchester.

"It is naive and silly to get it wrong because of the effort that's gone in, and the health risk - this is a serious illness and you cannot risk infecting anyone," Nasser Hussain told Sky Sports.

"We don't know if it was just a naivety from Jofra or if it was something more serious. He has apologised, it is a very unusual situation that we all find ourselves in and he's made a mistake."

Must not do calculations, says Sarri

AFP, Milan

Serie A leaders Juventus continued to stutter towards a ninth straight league title as they threw away a two-goal lead before settling for a thrilling 3-3 draw at Sassuolo on Wednesday.

Juventus are seven points ahead of Atalanta with five games left to play.

"Now we must not do calculations but only think game by game," said Juve coach Maurizio Sarri. "At times we give the impression of having very high potential and at other times the team leave me perplexed because they allow the opponents to get to our area easily."

"A coach demands continuity and at this moment we don't have it physically and mentally. We had very good moments that alternated with difficult moments."

Aussie squad for potential England tour named

AFP, Sydney

Australia named three uncapped players Thursday in a preliminary 26-man squad for a potential limited-overs tour of England, while recalling Glenn Maxwell and Usman Khawaja.

Australia originally scheduled three one-day and three Twenty20 internationals in England this month, but the trip was postponed because of the coronavirus pandemic.

September is seen as the potential alternative after international cricket in England resumed behind closed doors last week, although Cricket Australia (CA) said "several hurdles" have to be overcome before dates can be locked in.

'Public have the wrong idea of footballers'

REUTERS, Bern



The perception that footballers do not live up to their social responsibilities has been debunked by their "incredible initiatives" during the Covid-19 pandemic, the global players' union FIFPRO said in a report published Thursday.

The report, which highlights contributions made by professional footballers in fighting the effects of the pandemic, said that a large number of players have been "generous and creative" during the crisis.

Among other things, they have created dedicated funds, set up charities to donate to food banks and to fund medical equipment in hospitals, and taken part in campaigns to raise awareness and protect people from catching the virus, the report says.

"Professional football players and athletes across sports have developed incredible initiatives around the world to help their communities, their clubs and teams and often their team mates," said FIFPRO general secretary Jonas Baer-Hoffmann.

"The public perception of athletes not living up to their social responsibility could not be more wrong."

Examples listed include AS Monaco forward Keita Balde, who helped 200 Senegalese workers based in Spain after they lost their jobs, and Manchester United's Marcus Rashford who helped persuade the British government to extend a school meals scheme.



Two of Europe's top clubs continued to stutter in their respective leagues on Wednesday. Liverpool, who have already won the Premier League and ended a 30-year drought, squandered the opportunity to become the second-ever club to surpass the 100-point mark in the world's most competitive league as two careless mistakes saw them lose 2-1 to Arsenal at the Emirates Stadium. The Reds can attain a maximum of 99 points now this season. Meanwhile in Serie A, Juventus, who are still seven points clear at the top, threw away a two-goal lead for the second time in their last three matches, settling for a 3-3 draw at Sassuolo. PHOTO: REUTERS

