

## 'I like this version of Mustafizur even more than before'

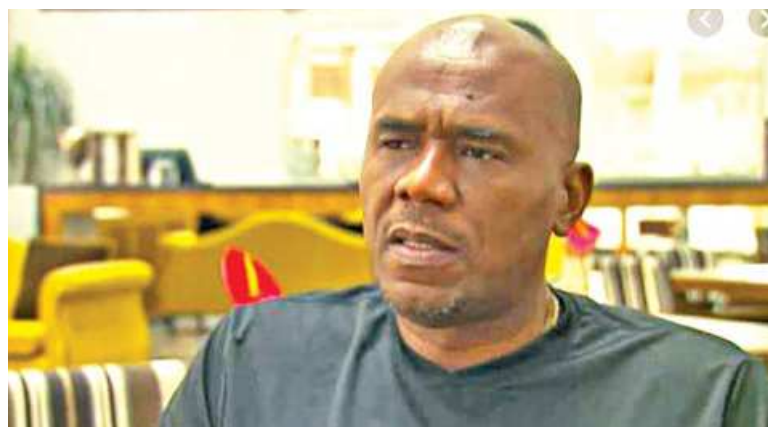
A torchbearer of the West Indies' legacy of fast bowling, Ian Bishop is currently one of the leading voices in world cricket, providing his expert opinion from the commentary box. The 53-year-old is busy commentating during the West Indies tour of Bangladesh and took the time to speak to The Daily Star's Mazhar Uddin, providing his views on Bangladesh cricket, including suggestions for the Tigers' pacers and a range of other topics. The excerpts are given below:

DS: What is a good cricket culture and how can Bangladesh improve its own?

IB: Team culture, by definition, could be viewed as "the set of values, attitudes, belief systems and behaviors shared by a specific group". I am not close enough to the Bangladesh set up to give them any advice. Bangladesh have been improving their game gradually in the white-ball formats for some time now so I am sure that their excellent and experienced management will have a firm grip on their needs. For any young club or school team though who may need it, some of those principles would be a culture of hard work, sharing in each other's success, each player always looking for ways to improve, holding each other accountable, what and how do the team want to play the game, honesty and integrity, etc. Much of that culture would and should be driven by the senior players and team leaders. Seniors do it then others follow easily.

DS: You have seen the Bangladesh U-19 team very closely during the 2020 Under-19 World Cup in South Africa. What are the areas Bangladesh cricket should focus on to prepare those cricketers?

IB: The Bangladesh U-19 team was very impressive in their World Cup win. It is yet another indication of Bangladesh's continued rise as a cricketing force. Shoriful Islam is already in the senior set-up, and I hope Akbar Ali will join soon



enough. Mahmudul Hassan Joy, Towhid Hridoy all have talent. The biggest thing that I found with that U-19 group was that they were fearless. I remember having a brief conversation with Khaled Mahmud after the win and he seems to have his fingers on the pulse of what is required of this talented group.

DS: Bangladesh is yet to produce an express fast bowler. Can you prescribe how a young pacer could develop?

IB: Once the BCB finds a bowler of the required pace -- Hasan Mahmud, Taskin Ahmed, Shoriful Islam, all have good skills and pace -- they must apply specific attention and management to those players. If it means taking the young player out of his domestic environment for periods of time to strengthen, nourish and procure then it must be so. Otis Gibson will be a great asset to them. Proper diet and

strength and conditioning are critical to these young bowlers. It will not be possible to compete away from the sub-continent if Bangladesh do not develop a cadre of bowlers who can bowl close to, or over 140kph. If quicker pitches come to fruition it will encourage fast bowling and even improve the batting standards. I have seen this work in the Caribbean in recent years and in India.

DS: You have seen Mustafizur Rahman in the past and in the three-match ODI series against the West Indies this time around. What's your observation on The Fizz?

IB: I like this version of Mustafizur even more than what I saw in previous years. His ability to swing the new ball into the right-handed batsman now is such an asset when it complements his cutter. His pace looks to be back up and his rhythm

looks good.

DS: Conditions are not always ideal for seamers in the sub-continent. How should a young pacer get the best out of it?

IB: Bowling in Asia demands great fitness. There have always been different types of pitches across the sub-continent. There have been times when some have assisted seamers, and somewhere the ball has swung. Generally, though, when you find the slower ones there must also be an ability to know when to bowl at the stumps as pitches dry up and get slower and lower. The art of normal swing and reverse swing is critical and also becomes an integral part of seam bowling on dry pitches, which by their abrasiveness aid reverse swing. Patience is also a good virtue to have as a bowler on some Asian pitches unless you have extreme pace and skill.

DS: You must be hoping for a better show from the West Indies team in the upcoming two-match Test series?

IB: I am hoping, just as any former player would do that the West Indies acquit themselves better in the Tests than the team did in the ODIs. It will be tough as they need to bat much better than they have done in recent times. The bowling, for all its ability and skill, needs to come to the fore again. In the last four Test matches, they have been going for a lot of runs without getting 20 wickets.



BCB XI batsmen Shadman Islam and Yasir Ali shake hands with West Indies players after the three-day match ended in a draw at the Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium in Chattogram yesterday.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

## WI keep ace in the pack as warm-up ends in draw

SPORTS REPORTER from Chattogram



The West Indies team management seemed to be hiding their main weapon, off-spinner Rahkeem Cornwall, who took five wickets in the first innings. The big man did not bowl a single over during BCB XI's second innings on the final day of the three-day warm-up match, which ended in a draw at the MA Aziz Stadium in Chattogram yesterday.

The visitors seemed to opt for the same play as the hosts, who did not include any left-arm spinner -- considered Bangladesh's main weapon against the West Indies -- in the BCB XI. The Caribbean side is well aware that the likes of Shadman Islam, Saif Hasan, and Yasir Ali are part of the 18-member Bangladesh squad and Cornwall is expected to play a big role for the West Indies in the first of the two Tests

starting from February 3.

Cornwall's performance aside, there are many positives to take for the West Indies. The likes of skipper Kraigg Brathwaite, John Campbell and Nkruma Bonner spent a significant amount of time at the crease and scored fifties.

For BCB XI, after being all out for just 160 in reply to 257 from West Indies in the first innings, the likes of Shadman and Yasir did manage to spend a decent amount of time with the bat in the second innings and remained unbeaten on 23 and 33 runs respectively.

The two skippers -- Brathwaite and Nurul Hasan -- decided to end proceedings an hour before stumps with BCB XI on 63 for two.

The home side had earlier bundled out the visitors for 297 in the second innings. Young pacer Mukidul Islam was the pick of the bowlers and bagged four while another pacer Khaled Ahmed bagged three to end with a match haul of six.

### AUSTRALIAN OPEN

## 'Time to start talking about tennis'

REUTERS, Melbourne

Rafa Nadal brushed aside questions about the Australian Open quarantine on Sunday and said it was time to get down to the business of playing tennis and entertaining fans around the world.

The 34-year-old, who secured his



20th Grand Slam title at last year's delayed French Open, completed his two weeks of isolation in Adelaide on Friday before playing an exhibition match and then heading to Melbourne.

"When we arrived here, we have this quarantine. But I think that's over. It's the moment to start talking about tennis," the world number two told reporters on Sunday.

"That's why we came here. To play tennis, to try to give to the fans around the world and to the fans here in Australia a good show. For some of the people who are suffering a lot at home, we try to have a good entertainment for them."

Nadal will get his first taste of competitive action for the season when he spearheads Spain's challenge for the ATP Cup, which makes a much-delayed start in Melbourne on Tuesday.

Spain lost the ATP Cup final to Novak Djokovic's Serbia last year and Nadal said he and his team mates would be doing their best to go one better this year, despite the proximity of the tournament to the Feb. 8 start of the Australian Open.

## 'It does feel like a home'

REUTERS, Melbourne

World number one Novak Djokovic found playing without crowds last season strange and he can't wait to wow the fans in the stands at his 17th Australian Open.

Some 25,000-30,000 fans will be admitted to Melbourne Park on each day of the Grand Slam and Djokovic got a taste of what was to come when he played an exhibition match in Adelaide after coming out of quarantine on Friday.

"I had goosebumps coming into the court playing in front of the fans again after 12 months of not experiencing that," the Serbian told reporters on Sunday.

"After playing professional tennis for more than 15 years, this is one of the biggest driving forces or motivations, inspirations that I have, playing in front of a crowd. "Feeding off that energy, exchanging that great passion and joy that I have for the sport and the fans have for the sport."

The 33-year-old has won eight of



his 17 Grand Slam titles at Melbourne Park and said it felt like a homecoming returning at the start of each year.

"It does feel like a home for me in Australia, in Melbourne, particularly in Rod Laver (Arena). That is by far my most successful tennis court in my career. "Each year that I come back to the court, it feels even better. The more you win on the court, the more confident you feel coming back to it."

## First for Rahmatganj, second for Police

SPORTS REPORTER



Rahmatganj MFS tasted their maiden victory in the Bangladesh Premier League with a 3-1 win against Uttar Baridhara Club at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

Rahmatganj, who started the campaign by holding title contenders Saif SC to a 1-1 draw before suffering three straight defeats, initially looked short of confidence and struggled to deal with the Baridhara forwards, who exposed the defence of last year's Federation Cup runners-up team a few times.

The Old Dhaka outfit conceded the lead before coming back strongly, scoring three goals within 22 minutes.

With Egyptian forward Abdul Khalek Hammad causing problems in the Rahmatganj defence with his

darting runs down the right, Sujan Biswas gave Baridhara a 38th-minute lead with a dipping shot from outside the box. But the lead lasted only 10 minutes as Tajik forward Dilshod Vasiev, denied twice earlier, levelled the margin with a header three minutes into the stoppage time.

Rahmatganj looked more energetic after the lemon break and took the lead in the first minute of the second half, with Christ Remi nodding home an Alaaeldin Nasr header following a corner while Enamul Islam wrapped up the victory in the 57th minute with a placing shot from inside the box.

In the day's second match, Bangladesh Police FC beat Brothers Union 3-1 to notch their second consecutive victory.

Police came into the match on the back of a 1-0 win against Uttar Baridhara while Brothers had drawn

3-3 against the Baridhara outfit. Police kept their momentum to leave the field with three points, thanks to goals from their Ivorian recruits.

Packeer Ali's charges went ahead in the 11th minute when Ballo Famoussa fired home a low cross from MS Bablu but Brothers hit back in the 23rd minute, with Congolese forward Siyo Zunapio heading home a long ball provided by Monday Osagie.

Police restored the lead in the stoppage time when Lancine Toure rose high to head home a corner from Murolimzhon Akhmedov before Famoussa sealed the victory in the 70 minute with another header off a corner from Akhmedov.

With their second win in four matches, Police moved up to sixth position with six points while Brothers remained second from bottom with a single point.



## 'Humanity at its worst'

REUTERS

Manchester United forward Marcus Rashford said the racial abuse he received online after Saturday's 0-0 draw at Arsenal was "humanity and social media at its worst".

"Humanity and social media at its worst. Yes, I'm a Black man and I live every day proud that I am. No one, or no one comment, is going to make me feel any different," Rashford wrote on Twitter late on Saturday.

## Messi's €555m contract biggest in sport?

AGENCIES

Lionel Messi's current contract with Barcelona is reportedly worth up to €555m (£492m) over four seasons -- thought to be the biggest pay deal ever for an athlete.

Spain's El Mundo newspaper said it had access to the document the footballing star signed with the Catalan club in 2017, which included fixed incomes and extras that could reach nearly €138m (£122m) each season.

Barcelona denied any responsibility for the publication of the contract and said they will take legal action against Spanish newspaper El Mundo for publishing Lionel Messi's contract with the club.

The report said the contract, which was previously described by French newspaper L'Equipe as the most lucrative in football, had contributed to the club's recent financial troubles, which have been exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic.

Barca's last accounts showed their net debt had doubled to 488 million euros (\$592.24 million), while the club's interim president Carles Tusquets said recently they had been forced to delay payments to players.



The 33-year-old Argentinian -- considered by many to be the best footballer ever -- would have to pay about half of that amount in taxes in Spain. The report said Messi had already secured more than €510m (£452m) of the total contract, which the newspaper said was the most expensive contract ever paid to an athlete.

Messi, who has spent his entire career at the club after joining in 2000 as a youth player, sees his

contract with the Catalans run out this year. He had asked to leave with immediate effect at the end of last season after expressing unhappiness with the direction being taken by the club.

It followed his side's humiliating 8-2 defeat to Bayern Munich in the Champions League quarter-finals, one of the worst in the player's career and in the club's history.

That loss capped a difficult season for Barcelona -- the first

without a title since 2007-08. Messi had his transfer request rejected by the club but will be able to leave for free when this season ends.

Don Balon are reporting that Messi is furious about the leak of a document by El Mundo. The report details that the Argentinian had recently warned the club that if any further leaks affected him or his family he would be off, and now it seems that he will announce exactly that over the course of the next few days.

