

MSC looking to reprise old glory under new board

SPORTS REPORTER

Mohammedan SC is about to start a new journey after moving past the three-decade era of Lokman Hossain Bhuiyan as a new board of directors headed by former Army Chief General Md Abdul Mubeen is all set to take over the popular club.

The election commission of the old Dhaka outfit yesterday revealed the names of the candidates with General Abdul Mubeen becoming the president of the club uncontested. Sixteen directors among 20 candidates will be elected through Saturday's polls, although there were efforts last night to form a consensus board.

Lokman had been one of the most influential persons behind every decision at the club since 1994 after becoming the general secretary. In 2011, he strengthened his position by becoming director-in-charge after turning Mohammedan into a public limited company. However, he was forced to leave the club when police detained him while busting the casino in the club premises in late 2019.

Lokman has since been out of the picture of Mohammedan's activities but it has been learnt that the veteran organiser, along with



others, has been working behind the scenes to form Mohammedan's new board of directors which is mostly composed of the club's proven organisers, businessmen and members of parliament.

There is much anticipation that the new board will help regain the image Mohammedan SC lost in more than two decades as Mohammedan could not win cricket and football league titles since 2009 and 2002 respectively, while there has been sporadic success in hockey.

"I don't want to blame anyone for the failure in the past because it takes a lot of money to run football

We have nothing to do with what we lost in the last 19 years. Instead, I want to look forward to the new committee [board of directors] for a fresh start," said former Mohammedan SC footballer Imtiaz Ahmed Nakib, also the manager of the football team, yesterday.

"Mohammedan had been in the title race 20 years ago but we are now out of all types of races. So, we want a strong committee [board] which can manage money as well as take care of all matters of the club."

Cricket organiser Tariquul Islam Titu is also optimistic that the new board will reprise the glorious past in a couple of years.

"There were hardly any donors in the previous committee despite having a lot of established businessmen. That is why Mohammedan had been in a poor state. Now, I am hopeful that Mohammedan will get back its previous glory in football, cricket and hockey through the new committee [board]," said Titu.

"It is not possible to take the country's football ahead with only Mohammedan or Abahani; we need both clubs to be strong in football. I believe football will get back its life a bit within the next two years," said Titu.

Interestingly, some 31 permanent members bought out some 54 nomination papers but only 21 members submitted their nominations with a view to making a consensus board as most former Mohammedan footballers kept away from the process despite buying nomination papers.

"Regaining the image of Mohammedan is the main matter for us, we have all kept ourselves out of the election process because it is also possible to work for the clubs outside the committee," said former footballer Imtiaz Sultan Jonny, who also believes the casino scandal gave Mohammedan SC a chance for a fresh start.

Ruman, Ity disappoint

SPORTS REPORTER

Ruman Sana produced another frustrating display as the world's 15th-ranked archer finished third in individual recurve event of the Bangabandhu National Archery Championships at the Sheikh Kamal International Cricket Stadium in Cox's Bazar yesterday.

Ruman, who finished sixth in the qualification round, could not overcome semifinals hurdle of the national championship another time since winning three gold medals in the 2019 South Asian Games in Nepal.

The 25-year-old archer from Khulna had to be content with a bronze medal as he beat Ashiqur Rahman by 6-4 sets points in the bronze-deciding match.

Ity Khatun, another triple gold medalist from the 2019 SA Games, failed too as the defending champion lost by 6-4 set points in the bronze-deciding match.

In compound events, Mohammad Ashikuzzaman beat Ashim Das by 144-142 points to win bronze medal while Ritu Akter bagged bronze medal beating Bonna Akter 136-135.



The visiting Bangladesh team started gym sessions yesterday after all the cricketers tested negative in their third round of coronavirus tests within seven days of landing in New Zealand. Pacer Mustafizur Rahman here takes a selfie with his pace bowling partner Taskin Ahmed as the cricketers, split into small groups, worked out at the gym for the very first time on the tour. PHOTO: BCB

Agar six-for keeps Australia in series

AFP, Wellington



Spinner Ashton Agar produced the best bowling performance in Australia's Twenty20 international history in a 64-run win over New Zealand in Wellington on Wednesday.

Agar's match-turning six for 30, including three in one over, derailed a New Zealand fightback as Australia avoided a series loss in the third Twenty20 international.

Under-fire skipper Aaron Finch hit 69, his best T20 international score for more than two years, and Glenn Maxwell smashed 70 from 31 balls.

The result leaves the five-match series at 2-1 in New Zealand's favour with two games to go.

Finch said the Australians, who have rested stars such as David Warner, Steve Smith and Mitchell Starc for the New Zealand tour, were still targeting a series win.

"To keep improving is all we can ask at the moment and we're still alive in the series," he said.

Australia finished their 20 overs at 208 for four after losing the toss and being asked to bat.

In reply, New Zealand were bundled out for 144 in 17.1 overs thanks to Agar's heroics.

Only four players have taken six wickets in a T20 international before, none of them from Australia.

In the face of the Australian onslaught, the Black Caps lacked the swagger of the opening two matches, with shellshocked all-rounder Jimmy Neesham conceding 28 runs in a single over as Maxwell ran riot.

The focus ahead of the match was Finch's poor form.

Critics including former great Mark Waugh had questioned Finch's place in the team but Australia selector George Bailey this week insisted Finch would remain captain for the T20 World Cup in India later this year.

The Australian captain was lucky to avoid an LBW dismissal on the first ball he faced.

But Finch responded to the close shave with controlled aggression, using his feet and attacking the ball to forge an 83-run partnership with Josh Philippe, who made a well-crafted 43.

Finch repaid Baily's faith with his highest score in T20 internationals since July 2018, including a 43-ball half century that was his first in more than a year.

Maxwell also shook off a lean spell bringing up a 25-ball half century.

Opener Martin Gupthill's 43 and a Devon Conway knock of 38 were highlights for New Zealand.

But Agar snuffed out hopes of a home victory with six consecutive wickets that took the New Zealanders from 109 for four to 144 for nine.



Australia spinner Ashton Agar celebrates one of his six scalps with Mathew Wade during their 64-run win over New Zealand yesterday. PHOTO: CA



Ronaldo keeps raising the bar

REUTERS, Turin



Cristiano Ronaldo became the first player to score at least 20 goals in the last 12 seasons in a top five European league on Tuesday to continue his charge towards sealing one of the few individual awards left for him to win: Serie A top scorer.

The Portuguese forward guided a composed finish past Spezia goalkeeper Ivan Provedel in a 3-0 Serie A win for the Italian champions to mark the

600th league appearance of his career in typical fashion.

He has now hit the 20-goal mark in every season since his debut campaign at Real Madrid in 2009-10, with his highest tally coming in 2014-15 when he scored 48 goals in 35 La Liga games for the Spanish club.

The 36-year-old is currently two goals clear of Inter Milan's Romelu Lukaku at the summit of the Serie A scoring charts as he targets his first 'capocannoniere' crown in Italy.

Ronaldo scored 21 goals in his debut season in Turin in 2018-19 to finish fourth in the league scoring charts, five behind top scorer Fabio Quagliarella of Sampdoria.

The following year he found the net 31 times, but was denied top spot

by the sensational form of Lazio's Ciro Immobile, who equalled the single-season scoring record in Serie A with 36 strikes.

Ronaldo has picked up back-to-back league titles and the 2018-19 Player of the Season award since arriving in Italy, but the Serie A top scorer prize remains unclaimed for now.

The five-time Ballon d'Or winner won the Premier League Golden Boot with Manchester United in 2007-08 and finished as La Liga top scorer on three separate occasions during his spell with Real Madrid.

He has been Champions League top scorer seven times to become the competition's all-time top scorer with 134 goals and won the European Golden Shoe four times.

Root wants England to be 'brave'

AFP, London



Joe Root has urged his England team to be "braver" and to free themselves from fear in the fourth and final Test against India starting on Thursday.

The tourists have sustained heavy defeats in the past two matches -- by 317 runs in Chennai and 10 wickets in a chastening two-day finish in Ahmedabad -- but can still draw the series 2-2.

Ever since Root's double century in the series opener paved the way for a score of 578 and a landmark win, England have struggled against spinners Ravichandran Ashwin and Axar Patel.

Root's side have been bowled out for 134, 164, 112 and 81 but he wants his team to stop being paralysed by worry and try to land a few more blows of their own.

"We've got all the ingredients, all the pieces and all the skills to exploit and succeed in these conditions," he said.

"It is important we harness that, have it in the front of our mind and be a bit braver actually, play with a little bit more freedom.

"That doesn't mean going out there and trying to slog it, or be ultra-aggressive -- we need to play our game a certain way but it is about not being scared of the conditions."

The skipper wants each player to trust their chosen methods in the Test, also being held in Ahmedabad.

"Everyone's idea of what fearless is slightly different. But being



England captain Joe Root inspects the pitch at the Narendra Modi Stadium in Ahmedabad on Wednesday, the eve of the fourth Test against India. PHOTO: REUTERS

fearless is not having that tentative mentality of being trapped on the crease or being caught in two minds," explained Root.

"They have to have the freedom to feel like they can go and play, trust their games to go and score runs."

Off-spinner Dom Bess looks likely to earn a recall after two games on the sidelines. The 23-year-old was initially dropped for Moeen Ali, only to be overlooked again when he flew back home.

Root admits the decision to invest heavily in seamers for the day/night Test in Ahmedabad was an error of judgement and appears ready to hand Bess another chance.

"I think if the pitch looks anything like the last one, he'll be licking his lips at the opportunity," said the captain.

"You look at the side for the last match and we got that wrong, we read the pitch wrong in terms of the way we selected the team."

Zimbabwe beat Afg inside two days

AFP, Abu Dhabi



A century from skipper Sean Williams coupled with destructive pace bowling from Blessing Muzarabani and Victor Nyauchi led Zimbabwe to a rapid 10-wicket win over Afghanistan in the first Test in Abu Dhabi on Wednesday.

Williams hit 105 to guide Zimbabwe to 250 all out before Afghanistan -- trailing by 119 -- were bowled out for 135 in their second innings.

That left Zimbabwe to score 17 runs which they got without any loss to end the match inside two days.

Afghanistan were bowled out for 131 in their first innings.

Lanky pacer Muzarabani finished with 2-14 -- six wickets in the match -- while his new ball partner Nyauchi took 3-30, also getting six in the match.

Afghanistan were facing an innings defeat at 81-7 but opener Ibrahim Zadran fought hard during his 76 -- his second half century -- and added 48 for the eighth wicket with Amir Hamza who remained 21 not out.

Zadran batted for three hours and hit ten boundaries.

This becomes Afghanistan's third defeat in five Tests since gaining status to play the five-day format in 2017.

The second Test starts on March 10, also in Abu Dhabi.



Zimbabwe players celebrate the dismissal of an Afghanistan batsman on the second day of the first Test in Abu Dhabi yesterday. PHOTO: ACP