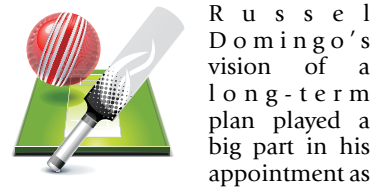




Long-term vision still impaired

MAZHAR UDDIN



Russel Domingo's vision of a long-term plan played a big part in his appointment as

Bangladesh's head coach after the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) parted ways with Steve Rhodes following an eighth-placed finish at the 2019 ICC World Cup.

During the early days, the South African heightened expectations from fans and the BCB when he would speak about a willingness to develop a good cricketing culture by putting more emphasis on Test cricket.

Although a halt in activities for the majority of 2020 may make it premature to judge the Tigers' dismal performances under Domingo, questions have started bubbling up about how the South African is approaching the task of improving Bangladesh in the long run.

Just before Domingo took up his role, Bangladesh suffered a humiliating 224-run defeat to the newest Test-playing nation, Afghanistan, on home soil in September 2019.

That huge shock was followed by crushing defeats in the two-match Test series in India and the three-match T20I series, although the visitors won the first of the T20Is.

The Tigers then travelled to Pakistan in January, 2020 and their inability to perform away from home against tougher opponents continued. They lost the first Test comprehensively by an innings and 44 runs.

Bangladesh also lost both T20Is against Pakistan before returning home and getting back to winning ways in all three formats against relatively weak opponents Zimbabwe in March just before the pandemic forced sport to shut down in.

Although Domingo had enough time during the lockdown



to chalk out his long-term plans before Bangladesh returned to international cricket, it was not reflected on the field.

On many occasions, the team management's decisions regarding the selection of the playing eleven, exploiting home conditions or the pitch and even approach while playing abroad has been questionable.

Bangladesh did win a three-match ODI series against the West Indies on their return to international cricket in January this year but the whitewash against a relatively inexperienced Caribbean side in the two-match

Test series once again bought Domingo's long-term planning under the microscope.

Interestingly, the South African stated that he is willing to give pacers more exposure but performed a U-turn, with the Tigers fielding just one specialist seamer in both Tests against the West Indies, raising many eyebrows, including those of board president Nazmul Hassan.

Bangladesh went to New Zealand with the aim to rewrite history and win a first-ever international against the hosts. But after the disappointing show, will Domingo hold the

players accountable for their poor performances? Or will he still be able to justify backing the players in the media?

The 46-year-old's long-term plan has still not seemingly accounted for moulding replacements for the likes of Shakib Al Hasan, Tamim Iqbal, Mushfiqur Rahim and Mahmudullah Riyad in the future.

Is there actually a long-term plan to prepare a new lot of cricketers for the future? The South African will be accountable for that question by the BCB if things continue in the same manner for the Tigers.

'We should have won the second game'

SPORTS REPORTER



While Khaled Mahmud, former Bangladesh captain and chairman of the Bangladesh Cricket Board's game development committee, was

concerned about the poor showing in all three departments in New Zealand, newly appointed national selector Abdur Razzak was still trying to find positives from the ODI whitewash.

There was a lot of criticism regarding the Tigers' approach on the tour with the bat, ball and in the field. Barring the second ODI in Christchurch, where the visitors posted a fighting target of 272 and had a chance to win the game, Bangladesh were below-par.

"Obviously I am disappointed. But you have to look at the positives as well, such as the batting in the second ODI and the bowling, which was also relatively good. There were some areas where they were unable to execute the plan. It's always difficult for subcontinental teams to go and win matches in New Zealand but there was a chance to win the second ODI," Razzak said.

But while the former veteran left-arm spinner was positive, Mahmud pointed to areas that the Tigers needed to improve in the coming days.

"It's always difficult to play in New Zealand but it's not an unknown for sub-continental teams. We should have won the second ODI after posting 271. We couldn't field properly and dropped a few catches. The bowling was also below par in a few areas but still, we should have won the game," Mahmud said.

"We were totally outplayed in the other two games. Our batting was very poor and the bowling was also bad. Many are saying the bowling was relatively good but for me, the bowling was also not up to the mark. Overall, we didn't play well at all in the ODI series except the second game."

Bangladesh's fielding department is a major area of concern after the series, which saw experienced



Obviously, it [Shakib Al Hasan and Mahsrafe Bin Mortaza speaking against the BCB in the media] is embarrassing. Both are iconic players and maybe they said such things out of anger, frustration or disappointment. I am not sure, but obviously those words are certainly embarrassing for us. I don't think it is a major issue. It can be solved through discussion. And I don't think it's right to gossip about it as both have spoken from the heart. I think Papon bhai (BCB president Nazmul Hassan) is the only person who can handle this situation.

KHALED MAHMUD
BCB GAME DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN

Goalless draw sets up BD-Nepal final

SPORTS REPORTER



Bangladesh played out a goalless draw against Nepal in the last round-robin match of the Three Nations Cup at the Dasharath Rangasala

yesterday to set up a final clash against the same team on Monday.

It was a largely uninspiring performance from both sides and a draw suited both, but Nepal apparently exerted more effort for a goal than their counterparts. The result reflected the balance of power between the two sides, with their last friendly match in Dhaka in November last year ending with the same scoreline.

Bangladesh's 1-0 win against Kyrgyzstan U-23 team in the first match of the tournament, coupled with Nepal's goalless draw against the Central Asian side meant Bangladesh were through to the final ahead of the clash with the hosts. So, it was an ideal opportunity for Jamie Day to further experiment with the squad and he did just that by introducing a completely different XI from the one that started against Kyrgyzstan on Tuesday.

The Bangladesh coach handed debuts to defenders Mohammad Emon and Mehedi



PHOTO: BFF

Hasan while veteran goalkeeper Shahidul Alam Sohel replaced Anisur Rahman Zico between the sticks.

Nepal, though, needed a draw to ensure their final berth, so they did not take any chances and started with an unchanged XI.

The men in red and green started the game brightly and controlled possession

for the first quarter of an hour but failed to make any incisive move before the hosts exerting pressure. Anjan Bista found himself in space inside the box on a cross from Tridev Gurung on 21 minutes, but the veteran forward's header was wayward.

Bangladesh, too, had their chances in the first half, notably when Mohammad

Abdullah broke free inside the box in the 32nd minute, but Rohit Chand's sliding tackle on Abdullah was deemed legitimate despite protestations from the Bangladesh winger.

Skipper Jamal Bhuiyan's freekick five minutes later found Manik Molla in front of goal, but the midfielder's two attempts were blocked by Dinesh Rajbangshi.

Day made two substitutions in the 56th minute, including Habibur Rahman Sohag replacing Jamal as the Bangladesh coach looked to bolster his defence in face of heightened pressure from the hosts.

The second half mostly belonged to Nepal, who looked desperate for a winning goal. However, the men in red and green found an excellent opportunity to score in the 78th minute, much against the run of play, when a nice one-two between Yeasin Arafat and Biplo Ahmed released the former down the left. The left-back delivered a superb cross for Abdullah but the resulting header at far post was blocked by the Mehadi Hasan Royal.

Both teams made all five substitutions in the second half, but there were hardly any goalscoring opportunities for the hosts as Bangladesh defended Nepal's flurry of attacks manfully.



Officials and players of the two teams pose for a photograph ahead of the opening match of the men's football event of Bangabandhu 9th Bangladesh Games at the Shaheed Dharendra Nath Dutta Stadium in Cumilla yesterday. Hosts Cumilla lost 3-0 against Satkhira in the opening match. The second match of the day saw Rangpur beat BKSP 2-1. A total of 10 teams, split into two groups, are taking part in the tournament, the final of which will be held on April 9.

PHOTO: BFF

India, England lock horns for series win

PTI, Pune



Indian cricket team may like to revisit its 50-over template while picking up pieces from the Friday carnage with an aim to complete a hat-trick of series wins against England in the third and final ODI here today.

England would be bolstered by their Friday's performance and the biggest positive would be the return of form of Ben Stokes, who otherwise struggled on many occasions on the entire tour.

Jonny Bairstow and Ben Stokes displayed audacious strokeplay during a 175-run stand against India in the second one-day international to help England chase down a steep 337-run target with ease for a series-levelling six-wicket victory on Friday.

Come Sunday, it remains to be seen, if India win the game, it couldn't be better gift on eve of festival of colours Holi.

On batting belters that's been on offer at the Gahunje Stadium, England hit an



astounding 20 sixes in a 337-run chase which became a cakewalk, thanks to inept bowling from spinners Kuldeep Yadav and Krunal Pandya.

Never before has captain Virat Kohli missed Ravindra Jadeja as much as he would have on Friday when Jonny Bairstow and Ben Stokes took the mickey out of India's left-arm wrist and orthodox spinners.

Kohli, who hit two successive 50 plus scores, would be keen to carry his form and convert the start into a really big total and end the century drought.

Pakistan U-19s fly to Dhaka on April 12

AGENCIES

Pakistan's under-19 cricket team will tour Bangladesh to play a four-day match and four 50-over matches from April 19 to May 5, the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) confirmed yesterday.

In a press release, the PCB said that the tour will help them prepare for next year's World Cup (CWC) in the West Indies.

Pakistan U-19 coach Ijaz Ahmed said that playing against Bangladesh, who won the ICC U-19 CWC last year, will be a "wonderful grooming opportunity" for the players against "one of the most formidable U19 sides at present." The squad will be vaccinated for Covid-19 before departing for Dhaka on April 12.