

An uneasy traveller

MAZHAR UDDIN

The beginning of Mominul Haque's Test career was nothing short of a fairytale as the left-hander scored seven fifties and four centuries in his first 12 Tests for Bangladesh.

His role as a batsman since making his international debut in 2012 has changed quite a bit so much so that Mominul is now regarded only as a Test specialist.

And Mominul has done justice to that tag as his Test record is still among the best in the Bangladesh team and recently he became the first Bangladeshi batsman to score a 10th Test century, during the first Test against West Indies earlier this year.

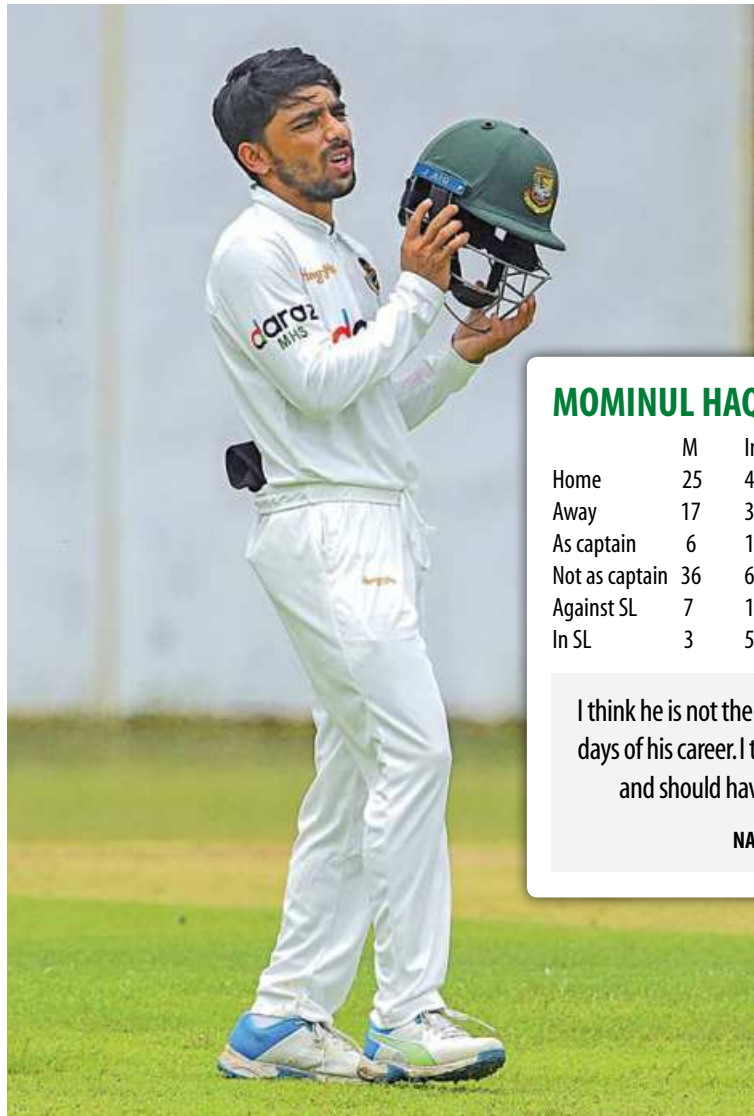
However, that 10th century could not help his side avoid an embarrassing 2-0 whitewash against a relatively inexperienced West Indies side at home and it was the leadership of Mominul that came under immense criticism.

Since his appointment as Test skipper in 2019, Bangladesh have managed to win just one Test while losing the other five games.

With the upcoming two-match Test series in Sri Lanka set to begin from April 21 in Kandy, Mominul will be under heavy scrutiny for both his batting as well as his leadership.

Compared to his records at home, Mominul's Test records abroad are pretty dismal as he averages only 22.30 in 33 innings. The 29-year-old still struggles at foreign conditions and is yet to score a century.

Many people raised questions over Mominul's ability to face quality fast bowling in bouncy



got advice from people around him but I think he has come away from where his mindset was in the past," Fahim told The Daily Star while analysing Mominul's batting issues.

"I did work with him regarding the body-line deliveries which he was having trouble with in the past. This mainly occurs when he plays abroad. Apart from that, I don't see any other issues with his

MOMINUL HAQUE IN TESTS

	M	Inns	R	HS	Ave	100s	50s
Home	25	45	2312	181	56.39	10	7
Away	17	33	736	77	22.30	0	6
As captain	6	11	435	132	39.54	2	0
Not as captain	36	67	2613	181	41.47	8	13
Against SL	7	13	653	176	54.41	3	3
In SL	3	5	168	64	33.60	0	2

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NAZMUL ABEDEEN FAHIM

batting. As a batsman, he needs to fight it out and spend time in the middle and defend balls as much as he can. At times as a batsman you try to play shots to release the pressure and I think he needs to take more time while batting," Fahim added.

According to the prominent cricket coach who has mentored the likes of Shakib Al Hasan, a positive result in the upcoming Sri Lanka series can change the whole dimension of Mominul's thought process in the coming days.

pitches as he often gets dismissed once the ball comes into his body. However, the left-hander did work on that aspect and according to prominent coach Nazmul Abedeen Fahim, it is the approach from Mominul which can make a lot of

difference in his batting. "I think he is not the same batsman that I saw in the early days of his career. I think he needs to realise his problems and should have a better idea of his own game. I can understand that he may have

Tigers land in Kandy

SPORTS REPORTER



The Bangladesh team, led by Mominul Haque, yesterday reached Kandy where the visitors will play both Tests of the two-match series against Sri Lanka. The first Test is scheduled to start tomorrow while the second and final Test will begin from April 29, both at the Pallekele International Cricket Stadium.

Bangladesh went to the island nation with a 21-member preliminary squad as the Sri Lankan board had earlier announced it would not provide with any local players for the visitors' warm-up match ahead of the Tests. Bangladesh played a two-day intra-squad warm-up match at Chilaw Marians Cricket Club ground in Katunayake on April 17 and 18 before going to Kandy yesterday.

And though the team management was supposed to announce the final squad yesterday, however, by the time of filing of this report, no such announcements came from the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB).

But it was learnt that a meeting was held following their arrival in Kandy and a final squad of 17 has been finalised with the team management unofficially informing the selected players.

The selectors had raised eyebrows when they included 34-year-old Shuvagata Hom in the preliminary squad, mentioning him as a batting all-rounder and a replacement for all-rounder Shakib Al Hasan, who has opted out of the tour to fulfil his IPL commitments for Kolkata Knight Riders. It, however, remains to be seen if Hom, who played his last Test back in 2016, makes it to the final squad.

Bangladesh went to the tour of Sri Lanka on the back of some bleak performances that drew heavy criticism from fans and media. The Tigers resumed after the coronavirus-induced break with a 3-0 win in ODIs against a depleted West Indies side, but then series whitewashes in all formats. Bangladesh lost 2-0 in Tests against West Indies at home earlier this year before being whitewashed in both ODIs and T20Is away to New Zealand last month.



Sri Lanka captain Dimuth Karunaratne inspects the pitch while head coach Mickey Arthur looks on during a practice session yesterday ahead of tomorrow's first Test of the two-match series against Bangladesh at the Pallekele International Cricket Stadium in Kandy.



What next for 'Special One' Mourinho?

AGENCIES

Jose Mourinho, who was sacked by Tottenham on Monday, has been fired before winning a trophy for the first time as a manager, in the latest setback to a career veering increasingly off course.

The Portuguese coach, a serial winner across Europe, arrived at Spurs 18 months ago with a point to prove after his reputation was tarnished by his more than two-year spell in charge of Manchester United.

Despite a highly acrimonious reign at Old Trafford, the self-declared "Special One" still claimed three trophies, including the 2017 Europa League, although another was the Community Shield.

Mourinho's failed Tottenham project is evidence his coaching methods are not as effective as they once were as he leaves a club without a trophy for the first time since the early days of his coaching career in Portugal.

Despite a wealth of attacking talent at both Spurs and United, Mourinho's negative tactics drew much criticism.

Former Spurs midfielder Jamie Redknapp said in December Mourinho was "asking for trouble" with such a reserved approach, while ex-striker Darren Bent labelled Mourinho's tactics "outdated".

While Juergen Klopp's high intensity approach has revolutionised the way Liverpool play, and Pep Guardiola's ever-evolving Johan Cruyff-inspired system has steered Manchester City to much success, Mourinho's style has remained unmoved.

Chairman Daniel Levy wanted a blockbuster name when he went for Mourinho, with an Amazon documentary to sell, but on the morning after Spurs joined the prospective 12-team European Super League, Mourinho was surplus to requirements.

There is much uncertainty in the game after the announcement of the much-maligned Super League, with it unclear what the footballing landscape will look like across the continent.

Mourinho's future looks equally up in the air.

BREAKAWAY SUPER LEAGUE hits European football hard

AGENCIES



A planned breakaway Super League announced by twelve of European

football's most powerful clubs and backed by US investment bank JPMorgan was roundly condemned by fans and federations across the continent on Monday.

European soccer's governing body UEFA on Monday said clubs and players joining the proposed breakaway Super League could be banned from all of its competitions and the World Cup as it condemned a "disgraceful and self-serving proposal".

The reaction from fans and pundits was also furious.

Addressing an emergency meeting the day after 12 of Europe's top clubs announced the breakaway, UEFA president Aleksander Ceferin launched a scathing attack on the plan, which has been widely condemned across the game and beyond.

"We're still assessing with our legal team but we will take all the sanctions that we can and we will inform you as soon we can," he said. "My opinion is that as soon as possible they have to be banned from all our competitions and the players from all our competitions."

The meeting was initially scheduled to confirm plans for

an expanded UEFA Champions League but has been overshadowed by the breakaway Super League.

"UEFA and the football world stand united against the disgraceful and self-serving proposal we have seen in the last 24 hours for a select few clubs in Europe motivated by greed. We are all united against this nonsense of a project," Ceferin said.

Six Premier League teams joined forces with three

Spanish and giants to launch the planned competition. A joint statement said three more clubs would be invited to join the founding members before the start of the competition "as soon as possible".

Organisers have also filed a motion "before the relevant courts" to "ensure the seamless establishment and operation" of the Super League, according to a letter seen by AFP and addressed to UEFA president Aleksander Ceferin as well as

FIFA chief Gianni Infantino.

The competition threatens to completely shake up the world's biggest sport and leaves UEFA's flagship Champions League facing an uncertain future. The clubs, most of them saddled with debt and large wage bills, and hit hard by the pandemic, stand to benefit financially. JPMorgan confirmed it is financing the breakaway league. The absence of French and German teams from the founding members is notable.

WHO'S SAYING WHAT

"The clubs concerned will be banned from playing in any other competition at domestic, European or world level, and their players could be denied the opportunity to represent their national teams."—UEFA.

"Against this background, FIFA can only express its disapproval to a 'closed European breakaway league' outside of the international football structures and not respecting the aforementioned principles."—FIFA

"Fans of any club in England and across Europe can currently dream that their team may climb to the top and play against the best. We believe that the concept of a European Super League would destroy this dream."—EPL statement read.

"Football is the only global sport in the world with more than four billion fans and our responsibility as big clubs is to respond to their desires."— Real Madrid president and new Super League president Florentino Perez.

"The newly proposed top European competition is nothing more than a selfish, egotistical proposal designed to further enrich the already super rich," a La Liga statement read.

"I'm disgusted. It's an absolute disgrace. We have to wrestle back power from the clubs at the top of this league and that includes my club."— Former Manchester United captain Gary Neville.

"We, the coaches, are ready to coach the clubs. I have no doubt that the club will make the best decision for what is best for the future of the club."— Atletico Madrid coach Diego Simeone.

"Plans for a European Super League would be very damaging for football and we support football authorities in taking action. They would strike at the heart of the domestic game, and will concern fans across the country. The clubs involved must answer to their fans and the wider footballing community before taking any further steps."— UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson.

"#Embarrassing as fan representatives we are appalled & completely oppose this decision. (Liverpool's owners) FSG have ignored fans in their relentless & greedy pursuit of money. Football is ours not theirs. Our football club is ours not theirs."— Liverpool supporters' union Spirit of Shankly.

"The president of the Republic welcomes the position of French clubs to refuse to participate to a European football Super League project that threatens the principle of solidarity and sporting merit."— French president Emmanuel Macron



PHOTO: REUTERS

KEY FACTS ABOUT THE SUPER LEAGUE

1. Twelve heavyweights from England (Arsenal, Chelsea, Liverpool, Manchester City, Manchester United and Tottenham Hotspur), Spain (Atletico Madrid, Barcelona and Real Madrid) and Italy (AC Milan, Inter Milan and Juventus) have agreed to establish a new competition, the Super League, governed by its founding clubs. This challenges the supremacy of Europe's top club competition, the UEFA-run Champions League.

2. Three more teams are expected to join as founding clubs, which are guaranteed

participation each year, with another five qualifying annually, making it a 20-team competition. Games will be mid-week, ruling teams out of the Champions League but leaving them free for domestic fixtures.

3. The inaugural edition will take place "as soon as practicable", the announcement says. With an August start, it will feature two groups of 10 playing home and away, and the top three qualifying for the quarter-finals. The fourth and fifth-placed teams will play off for the remaining quarter-final spots. The quarter and semi-finals will be played

over two legs and the final is a single game at a neutral venue. There are also plans for a women's version.

4. Europe's top clubs have long agitated for the income that guaranteed, annual competition against their fellow powers would bring. Currently, they have to qualify for the Champions League by placing high in their domestic competitions, and then make it through the season-long tournament to reach the high-profile latter stages. The clubs, saddled with big debts and huge wages

for their star players, say the pandemic has "accelerated the instability in the existing European football economic model". The Super League will bring them far more than the Champions League. The founding clubs are expected to receive more than 10 billion euros in uncapped "solidarity payments" during their initial commitment period. They will also receive 3.5 billion euros for infrastructure investment and to offset their losses from the pandemic. By comparison, UEFA competitions generated 3.2 billion euros in TV earnings in the pre-pandemic 2018-2019 season