



Soumya Sarkar is all smiles during a training session at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday. The preliminary squad will train till today, after which they will get a seven-day break for the Eid festival. Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) CEO Nizamuddin Chowdhury informed the reporters yesterday that the players, who were part of the last Sri Lanka tour and are also part of the upcoming ODI series against Sri Lanka, will be joining the practice soon after already having returned negative in their Covid test. Shakib Al Hasan and Mustafizur Rahman are quarantined at different city hotels after returning home from India but the quarantine period for the two cricketers has not been decided yet.

PHOTO: BCB

‘Results aren’t in my hands, but hard work is’

Whether it was due to an undisciplined lifestyle or injuries, Bangladesh pacer Taskin Ahmed had lost track and was getting frustrated despite entering the international arena with huge potential. At one point, the tall pacer started to lose self-belief, but he managed to make a comeback in the tour of New Zealand. The 26-year-old managed to hog the limelight despite the Tigers losing both of the Tests in Sri Lanka and he spoke about his downfall and comeback in an exclusive interview with The Daily Star’s Ekush Tapadar. The excerpts of the interview are given below:

The Daily Star (TDS): We have witnessed a huge change in you since the lockdown last year. How did you manage to do that? What are the areas you worked on?

Taskin Ahmed (TA): I was not in a good condition when the lockdown started. A lack of form and injury left me mentally disturbed. Then I made up my mind to make a comeback. During the pandemic, I spoke to Dr Debashish Chowdhury and told him that if I was unable to improve my fitness, then my condition would get even worse. I want to come back strong. Despite training being stopped at that time, Debashish Bhai gave me time and I started training with him. At the start, I had some doubts and I went through depression after feeling that I may not be able to do it. Then I took help from one of my elder brothers (Khalid), who is a psychologist, and I started working on both the body and mind.

TDS: Did the doubts arise due to your previous lifestyle?

TA: It was a combination of everything that dragged me down. Obviously, my lifestyle was related to some injuries as well but those are fine now by the grace of Almighty. Now I believe a lot on the process and feel that if my process is right then everything will be better. Performance may not be in my hands, but I should give my best to work honestly.



TDS: You bowled longer spells in Sri Lanka with good pace. Did you just work on your fitness or were there also some technical changes to your bowling?

TA: Actually, it is a mixture of both fitness and mindset. If both your body and mind are not at the top level, then it’s difficult to generate pace. Suppose I am trying to bowl faster with my willpower, but my body is not supporting. It won’t work. It is because of the two aspects I think things improved a lot from the past.

TDS: Ottis Gibson told me that you have worked with your run-up...

TA: Yes, I worked on it in New Zealand and I have been working a lot with him and I can see the

improvements. Ottis has helped me a lot and all the pacers of the national team are enjoying working with him.

TDS: You have also developed your swing...

TA: It is because of the improvement of my seam position and it will improve more. To be honest, I won’t say I have done exceptionally well in the Sri Lanka series. It’s not like that. Yes, there are some positives but I still believe my best is yet to come and I hope to become better.

TDS: Do you think the team should have more belief in pacers?

TA: It’s not that everything is done by looking at one series (Sri Lanka tour). I may have done well but I want the pitches in our

domestic circuit to be sporting. If the first-class pitches and condition are sporting, it helps fast bowlers to get better.

TDS: There have been so many dropped catches of your bowling. Do you feel bad?

TA: I never show my reaction as it’s a team game and I need to keep that in mind so that the morale of the team doesn’t go down. Sometimes it feels bad.

TDS: At times do you feel why always me?

TA: I don’t want to regret it as dropped catches are also part of cricket. One day you might see I am getting the most wickets in a game and the fielders have caught the most number off catches of my bowling.

TDS: You have already spent five years in international cricket. Have you set any goal on where you want to see yourself when you finish your career?

TA: I can’t say about any specific goal but I aim big. I want to become a world-class bowler. My dream is big and I want to win a lot of matches for Bangladesh but it’s not that I want to take 200 or 300 wickets.

TDS: Your plan for the upcoming Sri Lanka series?

TA: Obviously I want to do well. I want to do better than what I did in the previous Test series and don’t want to repeat the mistakes of the past.

Day pins hopes on old faces

PRELIMINARY SQUAD

Anisur Rahman, Shahidul Alam Sohel, Ashrafur Islam Rana, Saad Uddin, Rezaul Karim, Bishwanath Ghosh, Rahmat Mia, Riyadul Hasan, Yeasin Arafat, Habibur Rahman Sohag, Mehedi Hasan, Jamal Bhuiyan, Rimon Hossain, Masuk Mia Zoni, Biplu Ahmed, Mahbubur Rahman Sufil, Sohel Rana, Matin Miah, Tapu Barman, Mohammad Ibrahim, Tariq Raihan Kazi, Mehadi Hasan Royal, Mohammad Emon, Mohammad Abdullah, Manik Hossain Mollah, Rakib Hossain, Suman Reza and Mohammedan Jewel.

Standby: Mitul Marma, Mohammad Atiquzzaman, Abu Shaeid, Imran Hasan Rimon and Foyzal Ahmed Fahim.

FIXTURE

June 3: Bangladesh vs Afghanistan
June 7: Bangladesh vs India
June 15: Bangladesh vs Oman

SPORTS REPORTER



which played in the Three Nation Cup in Nepal last month when picking a 28-member preliminary squad next month’s World Cup Qualifiers in Qatar.

Defender Tutul Hossain Badsha was the only omission from the 24-member squad that played in Nepal. The English coach recalled fit-again centre-back Tapu Barman, in-form defender Rezaul Karim, Finland-born defender Tariq Raihan Kazi and midfielder Mohammedan Ibrahim.

The coach, however, did not have much scope in picking new players as the Bangladesh Premier League only resumed one week ago following the break after the first phase prior to the Nepal tournament.

There were five U-23 players kept as stand-by in the squad, which will fly for Qatar on May 21 or 22 after

following a brief camp, starting from Monday.

“The available selected players will undergo Covid-19 tests on the first day and stay at the Inter-Continental Hotel. Other selected players will check in at the hotel after the premier league matches on May 10 and 11,” national teams’ committee member Satyajit Das said Rupu after the meeting.

Following Covid-19 tests of all players, the training camp will start under supervision of fitness coach Ivan Razlog and head coach Day, who is scheduled to arrive in Dhaka tomorrow night.

National teams’ committee chairman and BFF vice-president Kazi Nabil Ahmed informed that they are trying to arrange two practice matches for the national team against Qatari clubs during the conditioning camp there.

Ahmed also informed that the players of Bashundhara Kings will join the other members of the squad in Qatar from Maldives after playing AFC Cup group stage matches, scheduled for May 14-20 in Male.

Abid slams double hundred

Agencies

Opener Abid Ali became the first opener from Pakistan to score a Test double hundred in Zimbabwe. The right-hander Abid Ali slammed a magnificent unbeaten 215 off 407 balls during second day of the second Test at the Harare Sports Club ground yesterday.

Zimbabwe were teetering on 52-4 at the close on the second day of the second test after Pakistan declared their first innings on 510 for eight with Abid Ali scoring a maiden double century.

Abid scored 215 not out as Pakistan picked up where they left off after being 268-4 overnight. But his knock was overshadowed by No. 9 Nauman Ali, who bludgeoned his way to the brink of a first century but was dramatically stumped three runs short of the milestone.



A tale of STRIKING CONTRAST

Anisur Rahman



Participating in Indian regional football league for Bangladeshi top footballers, especially in Kolkata, had once been a periodic and prestigious affair but unfortunately the scenario turned into a rarity, over the years.

However, Bangladesh national captain Jamal Bhuiyan has recently somewhat broken that jinx to play for Kolkata Mohammedan in I-League, one of two co-existing premier football leagues in Indian football system, before returning back to his local outfit Saif Sporting Club (SC) in order to resume playing in the second phase of Bangladesh Premier League, and that too, in a single season.

“It is really a new experience to play in two different leagues in a single season. I had to work really hard in India to adjust and subsequently gel with an unknown set of players. Currently, I have been with Saif SC under the new coach and so I am excitedly looking forward to work with the gaffer and some of the new players as well,” playmaker Jamal Bhuiyan told The Daily Star.

The star-midfielder also shared his observations regarding the current differences of infrastructure with respect to our neighborhood nation on having seen the both sides already and as well previously, having played for the Danish outfit Brøndby IF, at the age of fifteen.

“I will tell you that India is playing a comparatively a high-tempo brand of football than us, and they apparently have a wide range of facilities at their disposal. During the brief stint in India, I also played at different stadiums and observed

those venues possessing an applaudable state of ground surface quality, but in Bangladesh, we all happen to play in a single stadium (Bangabandhu National Stadium) where the pitch standard could be a lot better,” said Jamal, who started playing this season for Federation Cup runners-up Saif SC against Mohammedan SC, that ended in a 1-2 losing note for his side.” A

“Also, I had expectation that Saif would be able secure a place among the top three positions in the league table but it did not happen yet, and though there are still 10 matches left after the first leg, to improve on standings. Although so far, I have only played one match for Saif SC, the team which apparently has a major issue of not scoring the goals despite generating a high frequency of scoring opportunities,” said Jamal, the skipper of Saif SC, hoping that they still have the possibility of ending up among the top three though runaway league leaders Bashundhara Kings are most likely on their way to a successive league title. Jamal said that they have been facing tremendous challenges of the ongoing pandemic while trying to maintain adequate fitness and overall physical and mental health and expressed his concerns regarding the situation.” Having already had suffered from Covid-19, I can tell that it is an extremely challenging task for the players to be in a satisfactory shape. These days, obviously, I don’t go outside of home except for the training sessions and for playing on match days. Previously, where I was accustomed to taking photos with the fans but I am avoiding it this time around as I’m really afraid of being infected with Covid-19 again!”

Mohammedan banish Sheikh Russel woes

SPORTS REPORTER



Mohammedan tasted their first victory against Sheikh Russel in eight years as the struggling giants recorded a 1-0 win in a Bangladesh Premier League encounter at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

The eighth overall triumph from 15 outings helped the Black and Whites topple Sheikh Russel and grab fourth position in the 13-team table with 28 points, one more than Sheikh Russel and four less than second-placed Abahani.

Burkina Faso defender Mounzir Couldiati nodded home the decisive goal in the 37th minute to provide Mohammedan first win over Sheikh Russel since a 1-0 win in of the BPL in 2013.

Since their last triumph, Mohammedan faced Sheikh Russel 12 times in the Bangladesh Premier League and Federation Cup and recorded eight defeats and four draws before breaking the curse yesterday. However, Mohammedan did beat Sheikh Russel 2-1 in the cancelled Bangladesh Premier League in 2020.



PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

Mounzir Couldiati of Burkina Faso scored the lone goal in Mohammedan’s win over Sheikh Russel Krira Chakra in their Bangladesh Premier League match at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

On the back of their first league win over Saif SC in three years in the previous match, Mohammedan appeared rejuvenated and played comparatively better than Sheikh Russel, who lacked cutting edge after their two foreign strikers – Brazil’s Lopes Rodrigues and Nigeria’s Obi Moneke – left the field after picking

up injuries.

Mohammedan kept pressing to break the deadlock and succeeded in the 37th minute when Couldiati rose high at far post to nod home a curving corner kick from Habibur Rahman Shohag.

After resumption, Mohammedan got an easy chance to double the lead

when Nigerian Souleymane Diabate ran down the left flank to enter the box before squaring the ball to new signing, Cameroonian striker Yassan Ouatching. However, he left it for an unmarked Jafar Iqbal but the national discard unbelievably drove wide when faced with an open net one minute into the second half.

Five minutes later, Sheikh Russel came close to equalising when Obi Moneke availed a lob from Khalekurazzaman and raced to the box only for his shot to be denied by the woodwork. Moneke fell down injured, ending Sheikh Russel’s hopes of keeping their unbeaten record intact.

Under floodlights, Chattogram Abahani registered a massive 5-2 victory over Federation Cup runners-up Saif SC to jump to sixth position with 25 points from 15 matches. Saif SC slipped to the seventh place with two successive defeats and now have 23 points from 15 outings.

Rakib Hossain struck a brace while Mannaf Rabbi, Brazil’s Nixon Guylherme and Ivory Coast’s Charles Didier netted one goal apiece while John Okoli struck twice to reduce the margin for Saif SC.