

Mash's success in absence of governing philosophy

ABDULLAH AL MEHDI

That Bangladesh cricket is resigned to talking about individuals over team building and governing ideas of their cricket speaks to the greater culture now omnipresent over the course of a decade or so but is more prominent across the last few years. A cricket culture, a culture that develops thinking about Test cricket in particular and an understanding of the game is a far cry from what is relevant in the present climate. Ironically, the Tigers were at their peak when an individual brought them together to bring out a collective high that was far more than the sum of the parts. That individual was Bangladesh's most successful captain Mashrafe Bin Mortaza.

Even though Mashrafe did not hold Test captaincy, his ideas from T20Is and ODIs propagated a belief and ambition that translated to Test success at home against England and Australia and away to Sri Lanka between 2015 and 2017. However, looking at the Bangladesh's current outfit across formats, it is evident that they are lacking that unique kind of leadership Mashrafe provided.

A cricket culture ensures that the perpetual process of team building does not stop with one individual. That there is a lack of process related to all aspects from selection, meritocracy to national team's pipeline, has been evident before as was the evidence that there is no underlying philosophy which Bangladesh cricket abides by. In Mashrafe's absence, others have to take up the mantle.

Head coach Russell Domingo said after the tour of Sri Lanka that he made inroads with the players, but whether that would be precursor to success or lead to a change in coach's hot seat remains to be seen. Another change in individual, this time in the coach's role would not rectify the lack of leadership that was evidenced in Sri Lanka, particularly the body language waning with every defeat. Even



players with years of experience in international cricket need guidance which was not present.

"Generally in the dressing room, everyone together creates an environment that motivates and acts as a driving factor. As an individual and as a team, there is responsibility to take that challenge, going out of your comfort zone and fighting it out. This kind of strength is built internally and we are lacking that," Nazmul Abedeen Fahim told The Daily Star, analysing the recent Test series against Sri Lanka.

"Motivation is not about giving speeches; the leader has to show clear path by which a goal can be achieved. The individual who can do that clearly sees the steps and the sequences he needs to achieve goals. It's about knowledge and how to show the clear path to goals," Fahim said.

He reminded that even though discourse should not be around individuals, there is no overlooking them in team's context. "Each player needs to be shown individually.

I will show Mushfiq, who has 15 years of international experience in one way and Shanto in another way. This is about being an architect, using your resources, and one who understands such things can do that meeting and that meeting becomes strength," he said.

Where does team management come into this?

"We didn't have a particular culture having continuity in Bangladesh as can be seen in Australia where you can't change the cricket culture. When an Australian coach comes here he will try to do things according to his culture but I can't do the same if I go to Australia. Everything that comes is not good since our mental state, cultural beliefs and economic climate is different and it's important to understand what inspires our players. We have to go forward with our culture but what we see is someone new arrives with a whole new set of values and starts anew and lots of adjustments are needed. We don't have our own

philosophy and that's why we enter a new philosophy every time with personnel change," Fahim opined.

As a Bangladesh captain, Mashrafe had to often do more off the field than perhaps other international captains, dealing with not just players but forces that dictates process. We see that teams like Pakistan perform when someone charismatic comes out to invigorate them but India, who also were in the same vein, were able to establish a process, a philosophy. That is why they could overhaul Australia without Virat Kohli.

What Mashrafe was able to achieve was reach the individuals with well-designed messages.

With no basis for a clear philosophy or culture developing anytime soon, Bangladesh will have to rely on the three captains -- Tamim Iqbal, Mahmudullah and Mominul Haque -- to fill the big shoes left by Mashrafe and collectively, even if not individually, bridge the gaps to a clear modus operandi.

Mahmud emphasises on tactical preparation

SPORTS REPORTER



Speculations over the future of Bangladesh head coach Russell Domingo have surfaced since Tigers' dismal performances in their recent outings.

According to a close source of the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB), some are still in favor of giving the South African the benefit of doubt and thus further time to Domingo, who took up the coaching role in 2019. However, it was also known that the overall board is not satisfied with his lacklustre performance.

The upcoming three-match ODI series at home against Sri Lanka will certainly be a pivotal acid test for Domingo as there will be judgmental eyes on the 47-year-old over his imminent future as the Tigers head coach in the coming days.

However, former Bangladesh captain and board director Khaled Mahmud did back Domingo after the recent Test series defeat in Sri Lanka but did not forget to point out the fact that there has been quite a few mistakes in terms of strategic preparation and general communication of tactics, which needs to be sorted out as soon as possible.

"Obviously, any coach always wants to win and bring out the best possible outcome for his side. He [Russell Domingo] is trying but unfortunately, things are not going our way at present. But I won't say there are any lapses in training. However, I won't deny the fact that there may be some mistakes in the strategic planning and I think

communication left a lot to be desired."

"I actually don't know how long he may remain at the helm here as it's the matter of the board and I don't want to comment regarding this. But as far as I have seen, Domingo works really hard and tries to motivate the boys. At times the plans get executed while sometimes it goes the other way and so, I don't want to play the blame game and it is important to look forward to the upcoming series along with the Zimbabwe tour that follows, instead of dwelling on the past. Our main objective is to win the series against Sri Lanka and we want to work to achieve that as a unit," Mahmud told the media yesterday.

Meanwhile, the former Bangladesh captain also pressed the issue of the Tigers' fielding department which remained below par in the recent past with drop catches being a regular feature of their game.

"Fielding definitely plays a huge part and if you are a bowler you have to field the rest of 40 overs other than the ten overs quota of your bowling. The team management also expected the bowlers to grab those catches as well. It certainly depends on the mental aspect as well as how much you would apply yourself in the field that becomes decisive. Despite everything, everyone is looking forward to doing well in the upcoming series," he said.

Although the Tigers have lost the two-match Test series in Sri Lanka and are supposed to be on the back foot, Khaled Mahmud did end up mentioning that Bangladesh will look to utilise the home advantage against a relatively young side.



Alexander Zverev underlined his credentials as a French Open title contender with a battling 6-7(8), 6-4, 6-3 victory over Italian Matteo Berrettini on Sunday to claim his fourth Masters 1000 crown and second Madrid Open title. "I feel awesome," Zverev said at a courtside interview.

PHOTO: TWITTER

BAMBOO BATS a batsman's dream?

REUTERS

If a group of Cambridge University scientists have their way, cricket fans might soon have to become accustomed to the sound of leather on bamboo.

A study conducted by Darshil Shah and Ben Tinkler-Davies of Cambridge University said that bats made of laminated bamboo were stronger than those fashioned from the traditional willow.

Apart from being stiffer and more sustainable, bamboo bats were found to have a bigger middle or 'sweet spot'.

"This is a batsman's dream," Shah was quoted as saying in The Times.

"The sweet spot on a bamboo bat makes it much easier to hit a four off a Yorker for starters, but it's exciting for all kinds of strokes."

The prototype was 40% heavier than traditional bats because bamboo is denser but the research added that lighter blades could be developed



to generate speed and transfer more energy to the ball.

According to the sport's governing body Marylebone Cricket Club, which regulates the material used to make cricket bats, the blade should "consist solely of wood". Bamboo is categorised as grass.

"Bamboo is a grass not a wood so there would need to be discussions with the MCC," Shah added.

"But we think playing with a bamboo bat would be within the spirit of the game because it's a plant-based material and cane, a type of grass, is already used in the handle."

MCC was not immediately available to respond to the innovation.

Booters start reporting for camp

SPORTS REPORTER

The footballers are set to shift focus to national engagement from domestic completions as they have started checking in at Inter-Continental Hotel in Dhaka for next month's World Cup Qualifiers in Qatar.

"I had to give up affection of my small daughter and had to forego spending Eid with the family members. So you can understand how serious we are to do well in Qatar," Habibur Rahman Shohag told The Daily Star yesterday.

The Mohammedan defender was one of four footballers who reported to team management yesterday while the rest of the 28-member squad will check in by Wednesday.

Though Bashundhara Kings have not decided yet when to release their 10 players, seven players from Uttar Baridhara Club, Sheikh Jamal DC, Sheikh Russel KC and Chattogram Abahani are scheduled to join the camp today. The remaining players from Saif SC and Muktijoddha Sangsard are scheduled to join on Wednesday.

"We had training this (Monday) afternoon but no decision of releasing the players for the national team has been made," said Kings' technical director BA Jubair Nipu.

The players will undergo Covid-19 tests on Wednesday and training will start the day after Eid. Fitness coach Ivan Razlog is supposed to conduct gym and swimming sessions today.

EUROPEAN FOOTBALL ROUND-UP

Even Zidane got angry

AGENCIES



Real Madrid coach Zinedine Zidane was left baffled after two handball calls went against his side in Sunday's enthralling 2-2 draw at home to Sevilla which left Los Blancos still trailing La Liga leaders Atletico Madrid in the title race.

Real's Eder Militao was penalized in the second half after a VAR review which meant that a penalty that had been awarded to the hosts moments earlier for a foul on Karim Benzema by Sevilla goalkeeper Bono was overruled.

"I never speak about the referee but today I'm angry. In the end, it is what it is and what I say won't change anything. I'm happy with how my team played, we deserved more as we were spectacular in the second half," Zidane told Spanish media.

PIRLO WON'T RESIGN
Juventus coach Andrea Pirlo said he will not resign after seeing his side slip out

of the Champions League qualification places in Serie A following a 3-0 home defeat by AC Milan on Sunday, insisting he can do better.

"Step aside? No," Pirlo told Sky Sport Italia. "I have undertaken this job with a lot of enthusiasm, there are difficulties but my work goes on and I am available."

"I think I can do better and be able to get out of it, together with the team. We have to look forward, I will continue to do my job as long as I am allowed," he added.

PSG STILL BELIEVING
Neymar was on target the day after signing his contract extension but Paris Saint-Germain were held to a 1-1 draw at Rennes on Sunday, leaving Lille holding a three-point advantage at the top with two games remaining.

"When you are PSG, you have to do much better than that," PSG captain Marquinhos told broadcaster Canal Plus.

"Lille are a really good side and are winning every match. We have two games left and we need to believe, focus on ourselves and perform better," he added.



PHOTO: REUTERS

Real Madrid coach Zinedine Zidane and Toni Kroos talk to referee Jose Luis Munuera Montero after the match to express their frustration after two handball calls went against their side in Sunday's enthralling 2-2 draw against Sevilla.

Baridhara outplay Brothers

SPORTS REPORTER

A brace from Egyptian forward Mostafa Khalek Hammad gave Uttar Baridhara Club an important 3-0 win over struggling giants Brothers Union in a Bangladesh Premier League encounter at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

The second win in 15 matches took newcomers Baridhara to 10th position with 12 points while Brothers remained second from bottom with five points from 16 matches.

The tie between the two lightweights was equally important for both sides in a bid to avoid relegation threat and Baridhara succeeded in widening the gap with 12th-placed Brothers and bottom-placed Arambagh KS, who have five and three points respectively.

Baridhara, who played out a 3-3 draw against Brothers in the first meeting of the league, broke the deadlock in the 14th minute when Mostafa, availing a square-pass outside the danger zone, darted into the box to drive a grounder past goalkeeper Jafor Sarder.

Baridhara kept pressing after the break and doubled the lead when Mostafa advanced into the box to dance past Khalekurazzaman before placing at the near post in the 61st minute.

Sujan Biswas wrapped up the victory in the 78th minute by heading a Suman Reza cross home from a close range.