

Cricket's future trapped between IGNORANCE AND FALSE PROMISES

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Alleged corruption in domestic cricket has been a long-running plague that is at the root of the rot in Bangladesh's cricketing structure, with bias and favoritism a consistent feature of lower-tier cricket.

The issue came to the fore again when premier all-rounder Shakib Al Hasan committed a Level 3 offence according to the BCB Code of Conduct twice. First, when he kicked the stumps out of rage after the umpire denied an LBW appeal and again when he uprooted the stumps and slammed them on the ground in a fit of rage shortly after the first incident during a Bangabandhu Dhaka Premier Division T20 League (BDPL) match earlier this week.

Mohammedan skipper Shakib was rightly penalised, even though the magnitude of the punishment left something to be desired as it was not the top all-rounder's first instance of unfathomable behaviour on or off the cricket field. For his actions, he received a three-match ban and was fined Tk 5 lacs.

While Shakib's actions were inexplicable and unpardonable in every way, it was obvious that his reaction to an alleged intentional wrong call from the umpire would spread like wildfire and catch eyes given the premier all-rounder's global reach. But even before the unprecedented incident from Shakib, this tournament has been a far cry from what should be an ideal domestic cricket league.

Unfortunately, like lower-tier cricket tournaments, allegations of bias and a questionable approach from batsmen have persisted in the league from the beginning. Only Shakib's outrage,



however inexcusable, made the picture more vivid for general eyes.

Eyebrows were raised when Pritom Kumar of Old DOHS Sports Club decided to leave Sujon Howlader's wide yorker when his team needed three to win off the final delivery during a fourth-round fixture of the tournament. Umpire Ali Arman allowed it as a legal delivery but what felt odd was how Old DOHS were not animated after such a close-call. The questionable batting approach at such a crucial juncture also caused confusion as it was expected the batsman would at least have a go at any delivery that comes his way, especially when the target was reachable and the team had seven wickets in hand.

Before this, in one of the second round fixtures, Old DOHS batsmen displayed questionable approach against the influential Abahani Limited. Having restricted a star-studded Abahani to a mediocre 135-run total, a sluggish batting approach from the likes of Anisul Islam Emon, Rakin Ahmed and Mahmudul Hasan Joy saw Old DOHS fall 22 runs behind despite having seven wickets in hand.

Another instance of sluggish batting was noticed during Partex Sporting Club's game against Old DOHS in the third round. Partex, who were yet to register a win after the completion of ninth round of the tournament, scored only 77 in 15 overs in a curtailed game.

Interestingly, all the Partex players who batted, barring just one, batted well below a strike rate of 100, leaving them having six wickets to spare at the end.

All these incidents only suggest that the BDPL has been questionable even before Shakib's outburst. However, what was more hilarious than the suspect on-field incidents was how the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) reacted. First, they enacted a whole drama about sanctioning Shakib with a ban despite what should have been a straightforward decision. The board took almost a day to announce their verdict, whereas ICC-mandated rules for such offences are very clear.

Then again, BCB president Nazmul Hassan seemed to have been perplexed at the prospect of news of alleged corruption in the domestic circuit. He formed a committee to investigate and even threatened to shut down the league if the allegations proved true. Such a reaction and approach is hilarious at best considering how BCB has been ignorant of all these alleged corruptions as they let them continue under their nose despite repeated media reports in the past.

However, interestingly, the BCB said it found no evidence of alleged biasness or corruption in the league after their board meeting yesterday.

The sad and most unfortunate part is that the BCB promising to get to the bottom of the issue is nothing new, with alleged misdoings rampant in the domestic league over the years. In between the BCB's false promises and continuation of the same old alleged unfairness, it is the young prospects of Bangladesh cricket who are losing their way and falling victim to such a flawed cricketing process.

BCB to prepare 'shadow national team'

SPORTS REPORTER



Among a number of decisions during a board meeting yesterday, the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) decided to prepare a shadow national cricket team named 'Bangladesh Tigers' in their attempt to have players ready to spring into the national team action at any given moment.

The board also found no evidence surrounding any allegations of intentionally poor umpire in domestic cricket. An inquiry was made regarding the issue but none of the participating teams lodged any complaints.

BCB president Nazmul Hassan, speaking after the meeting, clarified the reason behind for forming the Bangladesh Tigers.

"It has come to our knowledge that the players who don't get called for the national team... or if someone is dropped then they don't even get to practice. It's a major problem. Addressing this issue, we came up with a solution. We will prepare a shadow national team where players who are dropped from the national squad or don't get a call up for the national side will be included. They will practice year-round under BCB-issued local coaches who will be guided by the national team head coach," Hassan explained.

"They can practice and will receive all the facilities that the national team get. Basically, we made this decision because it happens that we chop and change players in the national team on a trial and error basis. That won't be the case anymore as we will have selected players practice for a selected position and if anyone from the national team fails, then only a player of that position will replace him."

It was also decided at the meeting that the annual budget for the BCB for the year 2021-2022 will be 260 crores. The board is yet to finalise the list of the central contracts for the national side. The list will contain 18-20 players and will be announced in the next 2-3 days once the Cricket Operations Committee makes a few final tweaks and changes. The board's AGM will be held on July 7.

However, a 22-member list of central contract for the women's national team has already been approved.

The board also intends to bid for one of the two Champions Trophy tournaments that will be held in the cycle from 2024-2031.

The board also announced that the tenure of the current selection panel, whose date has expired, has been extended till the next T20 World Cup in October-November.



Chile's Pablo Galdames consoles Argentina superstar Lionel Messi after his side hit back to earn a 1-1 draw in the Copa America match on Monday. PHOTO: REUTERS

Messi blames poor pitch

AGENCIES

Argentina and Barcelona superstar Lionel Messi has often been criticised for failing to lead his country to a major trophy, but the Barcelona star was on top of his game against Chile.

The six-time Ballon d'Or winner was at his creative best and did all he could to inspire his team to a win. In the 33rd minute, he scored a wonderful free-kick to give Argentina the lead but that was not enough to earn La Albiceleste the win, as no other Argentina player rose to the fore.

Messi scored one of his trademark free kicks in the first half but Eduardo Vargas equalised for Chile in the second to leave honours even at 1-1 in their Copa America opener in Rio de Janeiro on Monday.

When the two sides met in a World Cup qualifier earlier this month, Chilean goalkeeper Claudio Bravo acrobatically saved one Messi free kick and another hit the woodwork but this time the Barcelona player went one better, curling a superb set piece into the corner of the net from 25 meters out after 33 minutes.

The game was played in a deserted Nilton Santos stadium, the site of the track and field events at the 2016 Olympic Games, with both sides getting bogged down on a poor pitch.

"When we were in advantage we could not sustain the result, the playing field did not help us and we lacked control of the ball and to play faster, which they did when they managed to draw level. I did not see the penalty, but clearly, it changed the game," said Messi during post-match briefing.

"I think the penalty kick and when they draw gave them peace of mind, they started to handle the ball, we couldn't have it and the game got complicated for us," he added.

"We wanted to start winning, it was important to get the victory," Messi said. "We played against a very difficult opponent and now we will do it against Uruguay, another very difficult and even game."

"They are two very tough games to start the cup, that's why we wanted to start winning today."

Chile will be happier with a point than Argentina, who have now drawn four of their last five games.

EURO 2020 HIGHLIGHTS

Italy look to make it 10

AGENCIES

Having impressed the watching continent in their opening win, Italy now take on local rivals Switzerland tonight at Rome's historic Stadio Olimpico.

The Azzurri were made to work for their opening win against Turkey, an own goal breaking the deadlock before Ciro Immobile and Lorenzo Insigne wrapped up an ultimately comfortable 3-0 victory.

That was Italy's ninth victory in a row, all with a clean sheet, and they will be looking to make it ten for only the second time in their history – the first having come in qualifying – against a Swiss side who were forced to settle for a 1-1 draw against Wales.

While the Azzurri effectively need only a point to progress, their less illustrious neighbours are seeking their first win of Euro 2020, following a frustrating draw with Group A counterparts Wales.

On opening night, Italy lived up to both their pre-tournament billing and a stirring opening ceremony, as Roberto Mancini's men swept past a much-fancied Turkey side on home soil.

"We had a good game against Turkey. It was important to start well in Rome, and I think it is a satisfaction for everyone who is with us: for the fans and all Italians. It was a beautiful evening, so I hope there are many others like it. There is still a long way to go; we have to play six more games like this [to win the title], starting with the one against Switzerland," said Mancini.



A message is seen on an Instagram account of Danish footballer Christian Eriksen next to a photograph of him giving a thumbs-up at Rigshospitalet, where he is treated after he collapsed during a UEFA Euro 2020 game on Saturday, in Copenhagen. PHOTO: REUTERS



POLAND 1-2 SLOVAKIA
Poland's Wojciech Szczęsny is the first goalkeeper to score an own-goal in European Championships history.



SPAIN-0 SWEDEN-0
Sweden completed 89 passes, becoming the first team to complete less than 100 passes in a match since Opta has been analysing the Euro (1980) whereas Spain's Aymeric Laporte, Jordi Alba, Pau Torres, Koke, Pedri and Marcos Llorente have all completed more. Spain had 85.1% of possession against Sweden, the highest figure in a single European Championship game ever (since 1980).



CZECH REPUBLIC 2-0 SCOTLAND
Patrik Schick's second goal (49.7 yards) is the furthest distance from which a goal has been scored on record at the Euro (since 1980).



Italy captain Giorgio Chiellini (R) passes the ball as Nicolò Barella and Ciro Immobile keep an eagle eye during a practice session ahead of the team's second Euro 2020 match against Switzerland tonight. PHOTO: TWITTER