



'FELT GOOD THAT THE AUSSIES WEREN'T ABLE TO CHARGE ME'

MAZHAR UDDIN

Many compared Mustafizur Rahman's performances in the just-concluded five-match T20I series against Australia to his outstanding entry to international cricket in 2015, when the left-arm seamer burst onto the scene with magical cutters and slingers that fooled world-class batsmen from around the globe.

The 25-year-old has been phenomenal with the ball in the Tigers' historic 4-1 series win against the Aussies, utilising the home conditions and the pitch to great effect.

He ended with seven wickets from five games with an outstanding economy of just 3.52. Following those extraordinary performances, the Fizz is enjoying a well-deserved break, spending time fishing in his hometown of Satkhira.

"I am enjoying this break a lot. I can't explain how much to

be honest. I think every other player would tell you the same," Mustafizur told The Daily Star over the phone.

He had picked up an ankle injury ahead of a Test in the preceding series in Zimbabwe, and Mustafizur believed it was crucial for him to get into rhythm. "When you deal with small niggles, there is a gap. Once you are out of the field, you tend to lose that rhythm. I was also a bit worried because I injured my ankle ahead of the Test match in Zimbabwe, but thankfully I am back in good rhythm," he said.

Mustafizur felt satisfied that see none of the Australians were able to go after him, saying that keeping the process right was key to his success. "It felt really good to see that none of the Australian batsmen were able to charge me. I kept my processes right in regards to my bowling. It was also important to bowl in the right spots because I felt that if I could bowl in a given area, it would help both me and

my team. I tried to focus on that. Getting wickets is also a matter of luck and my tendency has always been to try and bowl dot balls, especially in the white-ball format. Bowling dot balls will help improve my economy and it will also benefit my team," Mustafizur said.

However, there have been questions regarding Mustafizur's performances away from home and according to the left-arm seamer, he is still learning and looking forward to improving his stats away from home as well.

"It's totally different playing at home compared to abroad. There is a huge difference in terms of the pitches. There will normally be a lot of runs when you play abroad. If you concede somewhere between 40-50 in Bangladesh, it's good on a relatively sporting track, but it won't be the same if you play on a true wicket abroad and expect the bowlers to concede around 40 runs. It's very difficult to contain runs abroad. I do have the tendency to bowl dot balls and it's not that I

know everything, I am still learning every day and looking forward to improving my stats away from home as well," he added.

Another young left-arm seamer, Shoriful Islam, is also taking big strides and has shown a lot of promise. The youngster has also been getting valuable tips from Mustafizur whenever he is around the 'Cutter Master'. "He [Shoriful Islam] comes to me and asks for suggestions and I try to help him whether it's with cutters or slingers or various other aspects of bowling. It's not like what I do will work for him, but I try to help him and Shoriful has the desire to learn, which is a good sign from a youngster," Mustafizur added.

Mustafizur, who was part of Rajasthan Royals in the Indian Premier League before the tournament was stopped midway, informed that he was looking forward to joining the side if the Bangladesh Cricket Board gave him a No Objection Certificate (NOC).

Tigers set to get back to grind

SPORTS REPORTER

Following a short break after their historic 4-1 T20I series win over Australia last week, the Tigers are all set to return to a busy schedule within the next few days.

The cricketers are scheduled to start optional individual training at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur from today, but Mushfiqur Rahim started training a few days back.

Selectors are expected to announce the squad for the upcoming five-match T20I series against New Zealand within the next few days with the visitors are scheduled to arrive on August 24.

The board has also planned to arrange a camp involving the Bangladesh A team, mainly red-ball cricketers and those not part of the T20I series against New Zealand, and a BCB High-Performance team. They will play three one-day matches and two

four-day games among the group.

Following the 15-day camp, the series will begin with the three one-dayers, and two four-dayers, and the entire camp will be held in a bio-secure environment.

Meanwhile, Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) president Nazmul Hassan yesterday contradicted BCB cricket operation chairman Akram Khan, who had said that head coach Russell Domingo's contract was going to be extended till the 2023 ICC Cricket World Cup.

"We are yet to take a final decision on the extension of contracts for the national coaching staff. All of them are signed till this [T20] World Cup. We are thinking of having one-year extensions. We have two World Cups to play, so we are focusing on these for now," Nazmul said during a programme organised for National Mourning Day.



BOMBER DER NATION no more

REUTERS

Germany great Gerd Mueller, widely regarded as one of the game's greatest goalscorers and nicknamed "Bomber der Nation", has died at the age of 75, his former club Bayern Munich said on Sunday.

Mueller scored 68 goals in 62 international games for West Germany, including the winner in the 1974 World Cup final, and is third in the all-time list of most goals in the competition with 14 goals behind Ronaldo (15) and Miroslav Klose (16).

He also won the European championship in 1972 with them.

Having joined Bayern in 1964, Mueller - an instinctive striker who was good in the air and quick on his feet - pumped in 566 goals in 607 competitive matches for the club during a 15-year spell.

Mueller scored a record 365 goals in the Bundesliga in a trophy-laden career that included four league titles, four DFB Cup titles and three European Cups with Bayern.

He won the Golden Boot scoring 10 goals at the 1970 World Cup before collecting the Ballon d'Or that year.

Bayern said in 2015 that Mueller had been "seriously ill" for some time with Alzheimer's disease.

Lionel Messi beat Mueller's 40-year-old record of 85 goals in a calendar year in 2012.

In May, Bayern's Robert Lewandowski netted his 41st goal of the 2020-21 season to eclipse Mueller's Bundesliga goal-scoring mark for a single campaign which stood for nearly five decades.

"Today is a sad, black day for Bayern and all of its fans," Bayern president Herbert Hainer said in a statement.

From childhood tragedy to Paralympic hope

AFP, Nairobi

When she was just two years old, Asiya Mohammed was hit by a train as she crossed railway tracks near her Kenyan home, an accident that claimed both her legs and several fingers.

Seven years later she was orphaned. Rather than crumpling in the face of such adversity, Mohammed has gone on to become a highly decorated para-athlete and is the first Kenyan female rower to qualify for the Paralympic Games opening in Tokyo later this month.

Yet the bubbly 29-year-old, who was brought up by a cousin and first trained as a teacher, says she did not value sports until weight gain changed her outlook on life about five years ago. "As a disabled person I was weighing 70 kgs which caused a lot of concern to my immediate family. They advised me to join sports to help me cut the weight and remain in shape," she says.

The sports available at the time in her home city of Mombasa on Kenya's east coast were wheelchair tennis, badminton and rowing.

Mohammed went on to win medals in competitions in all three sports as well as wheelchair marathons. But eventually the double amputee decided to focus on rowing and now will be competing in the PR1 single sculls in Tokyo. "I realised I was getting more captivated by rowing because of the friendly atmosphere, and I made up my mind that I was going to do this sport until I qualified for the Olympics," she says. "I made an immediate decision to abandon teaching completely and

go full bodied into sport full time, especially in the rowing."

She qualified to compete in her first ever international event -- the season-opening para-rowing Gavirate Regatta in Italy in May 2019. "She finished second last in her competition, but her passion and keen interest for rowing impressed the international team of coaches attending the regatta who remarked that it wouldn't take long before Asiya qualified for the World Championships and the Paralympics," says Joshua Kendagor, a Kenya Navy officer who acts as Asiya's coach and will accompany her to the Paralympics.

She eventually booked her berth for Tokyo at the African pre-Paralympic championships in Tunis in October 2019, where she beat out seven other contenders to win the PR1 women's single sculls, for competitors using their arms only.

But it has not been smooth sailing

for Mohammed, who has had to overcome many frustrations as a physically-disabled woman in sport -- including a lack of funding and support from Kenyan federations.

She had to borrow proper rowing gear from her able-bodied male compatriots to compete in Tunis after her request to the Kenya Rowing Federation to provide her with the competition kit failed to materialise.

Her family and friends were also forced to raise the money for her airfare to Tunisia -- but she repaid them by being the only Kenyan rower at the event to qualify for the Para games. But the Kenyan says she is determined to put the problems behind her. "I don't want to finish last. I am very realistic," says Mohammed, adding that she wants to get to the final six in the PR1 women's single sculls to be in medal contention. "I am in rowing until I win an Olympic medal."



Eleta's wait is far from over

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh's football fans, especially those who are concerned with the national team's lacklustre strike-force, have been thrilled with the inclusion of Nigerian-born Eleta Kingsley after he received the citizenship of Bangladesh earlier in mid-March this year, and thus became the first naturalised footballer of the country.

And the 31-year-old forward has already had a dream debut on June 21, when he scored for Kings in their Bangladesh Premier League encounter.



However, his international debut is being made to wait due to the lengthy process of acquiring clearances from the Asian Football Confederation (AFC). Hence, Eleta, despite being on board with Bashundhara Kings to play the AFC Cup in Maldives, has to sit out of the squad for their first match against Maziya SR&C.

"Eleta Kingsley hasn't yet been cleared by AFC, as of now, following a lack of immigration related documents, so he is still ineligible to play," said Zaber Bin Taher Ansari, Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) competition manager, who is handling Eleta's case with the AFC. "Some eight to 10 days before, the AFC has sought Eleta's immigration documents. After the submission of his documents, Eleta will only get the approval once his immigration documents are in line with FIFA laws," he said.

His debut for Bangladesh will solely depend on head coach Jamie Day. "We may call him but if we do and he doesn't get clearance then he will have stopped someone else from travelling and playing [in three friendlies under the FIFA window].

"The whole procedure isn't simple. Yes, he will improve the squad but at the moment he isn't fully fit," said the British coach.

England pacer Mark Wood celebrates after taking the wicket of India's KL Rahul on day four of the second Test at Lords's yesterday. Wood struck twice in two overs and Sam Curran claimed the prized wicket of India captain Virat Kohli to put England in commanding position but Cheteshwar Pujara and Ajinkya Rahane dug in to frustrate the hosts with their obdurate batting and guided India to 105-3 at Tea. They showed tremendous character in their 50-run partnership spread over nearly 30 overs, batting through the entire second session to put on a defensive masterclass.



PHOTO: REUTERS

'Benzema is a very complete player'

REUTERS

Karim Benzema picked up where he left off last season by scoring twice to fire Real Madrid to a 4-1 win away to Alaves in their opening game of the LaLiga campaign on Saturday.

French striker Benzema was Real's standout player last season with 23 league strikes, more than a third of the team's goal haul, and his form earned him a recall to the France squad for the first time in six years. Coach Carlo Ancelotti said Benzema was a better player than when he coached him at Real between 2013 and 2015, when the Frenchman was more of a support striker for Cristiano Ronaldo.

"To call Benzema just a striker does not do him justice. He is a very

complete player, far more complete than five years ago," the Italian coach said. "He is the one who finishes our moves off but he also reads the game so well."



PHOTO: TWITTER