



## 'The main difference was energy'

SPORTS REPORTER from Male

Bangladesh coach Oscar Bruzon blamed fatigue for a 2-0 loss to hosts Maldives in their SAFF Championship match at the National Football Stadium in Male yesterday night.

"First of all, I want to congratulate Maldives. They were better tonight and nothing worked for us," the Spaniard said.

"Maldives were better throughout the 90 minutes and the main difference was energy. Maldives were much more energetic than us because they played their last

match five days ago while we were playing back-to-back matches in 72 hours. So we could not maintain our momentum despite having high expectations," said Bruzon, who will now likely have to get something from Bangladesh's last game against Nepal to qualify for the final.

"Next match we will be coming in fresh [after a five-day break]. I hope this energy will be on our side against Nepal. Plus, we still have a chance to qualify for the final," the 44-year-old added.

The Bashundhara Kings coach

also lamented the standard of refereeing.

"The referee was biased from the very first minute. We can't have such a referee. The reason for the defeat was not referee, it was because Maldives were better. They don't need assistance to win matches. It was a reason, but not the main reason for the defeat," said Bruzon, who was booked by the referee at half-time.

"In the second half, we changed the formation. We tried to launch more attacks and Maldives played 4-2-4 and they felt more comfortable. In the first half, our defence was up to the mark but although we had

some problems on the left, they could not create a single chance in the first half. In the second half, they were excellent and sped up and the game slowly went out of our hands," said Bruzon.

"The first half was 50-50. There were some tactical tweaks in the midfield and we contained all of their players well. The boys conceded the first goal and did not know how to react so I changed some players and tried to change the formation to attack more but Maldives were the better side tonight," Bruzon said, adding that there were no excuses and that it was simply not their day.

## NEW STADIUM Hassan's top priority

SPORTS REPORTER

Following the official declaration of the Bangladesh Cricket Board's board of directors' elections, Nazmul Hassan was elected BCB president for a fourth term yesterday.

The elections, through which 16 councilors were elected, went as expected. Hassan secured the most votes, clinching 53 of the 57 votes from category 2 of the Dhaka Metropolitan Club category.

The newly-elected board of directors sat for a meeting yesterday after the BCB election commission officially announced the results and Nazmul outlined three priorities for the upcoming term, including the establishment of regional cricket associations, a promise that was also made ahead of the previous term. Hosting ICC events was also on the agenda, thus the board's focus was on the completion of the Sheikh Hasina Cricket Stadium.

"We want to complete the Sheikh Hasina Cricket Stadium because we must have this stadium to organise

constitution for the new term.

"Also, we also want to amend the BCB constitution and have asked the directors for suggestions on what can be changed. My proposal is based on the fact that we see many clubs participate here (in the elections) but they don't have votes while there are many voters who are not involved with cricket at all. We want to fix this issue," Hassan added.

The formation of the regional cricket associations (RCAs) has been a long-unfulfilled demand and Hassan himself had stated in 2017 that the decentralisation of cricket was a top priority. He stated this time that forming regional cricket associations was the third priority.

"The formation of the regional cricket associations is a matter of structural development. A cricket academy has been enacted in one place and work on another is going on. We also have proposals for dedicated academies for age-level cricket. Although there are plans for academies, my proposal is to have three modern academies for batters, pacers and spinners. Those will be focused on development goals, not



World Cup and ICC events. We shared our wish to host such events with the ICC and we mentioned we would have the stadium ready for tournaments. Otherwise we will not be able to host those tournaments so it's top priority," Hassan said in a press conference yesterday.

The BCB president reiterated that there would be changes to the

national cricketers."

The BCB president also reiterated that results of the national team would be in focus. "We are doing well but we haven't become a really good side in ODIs yet. We are better than before and our next target is to come up to number five. If we can put in that effort to go up to number five, then there will be less chances of going down easily."

## Torres double ends Italy's record run

REUTERS, Milan

Spain ended European champions Italy's world record 37-match unbeaten run as Ferran Torres scored twice in a 2-1 win at the San Siro stadium in an entertaining Nations League semi-final on Wednesday.

Italy, trailing by two goals at the break, had to play the entire second half with 10 men after captain Leonardo Bonucci was sent off but showed real determination as they sought to avoid their first loss since a September, 2018 defeat by Portugal.

"This what matches are like, sometimes certain episodes can influence them," Italy coach Roberto Mancini said.

"This is a disappointment. We should have stayed with 11 men, we made a mistake that you can't make at this level," he added.

Spain will face the winners of Thursday's semi-final between France and Belgium in Sunday's decider.

Torres put Spain ahead in the 17th minute, steering a left-wing cross from Mikel Oyarzabal past Italy keeper Gianluigi Donnarumma into the far corner.

Donnarumma, booed by AC Milan fans angered at his recent move from the club to Paris St Germain, nearly gifted Spain a second when he fumbled a harmless Marcos Alonso effort against the post but Bonucci scrambled the ball clear.

Any lingering questions about the importance of the match had been blown away by the blistering start and it was by no means one-way traffic, as Italy started to open up the Spanish defence.

Federico Bernardeschi went close to an

### HIGHLIGHT

At 17 years and 62 days old, Pablo Gavi broke an 85-year-old record after becoming Spain's youngest ever player when he took the San Siro field in Wednesday's Nations League match against Italy. Spain coach Luis Enrique said that Gavi is Spain's "future and present" as the midfielder showed composure alongside Barca teammate Sergio Busquets.

"He's a player who can play between the lines, doesn't lose ball, has good technique, and is physical," Enrique told reporters. "We knew what he would bring; personality, willingness to play, courage. Nothing is too much for him. He is a very complete player. He can be the future of this team, but he can also be its present too because he has the personality to play at this level."



equaliser with a low drive from the right which Spain keeper Unai Simon pushed against the post and Lorenzo Insigne missed a great chance, firing wide when in space on the edge of the box.

The Azzurri, who beat Spain on penalties in the Euro 2020 semi-final in July, went a man down in the 42nd minute when Bonucci was sent off for a second yellow card after elbowing Sergio Busquets.

Torres sent Luis Enrique's side in with a two-goal lead at the break when he was left unmarked to head in another fine cross from Oyarzabal.

For Spain, the revenge for the Wembley loss was sweet. "We knew it was a special game, we went out in the semi-finals of the Euros and what better way to beat them at home in other semi-finals," Torres said.



Mohammedan players celebrate their 8-2 goals win over Ajax SC in the opening match of the SIBL Club Cup Hockey Tournament at the Maulana Bhashani Hockey Stadium yesterday. Defending champions Abahani also got off to a good start with a 5-0 victory against Police SC in the day's second match at the same venue. PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

## Psychologists available for players in T20 World Cup

AFP, Dubai

Psychologists will monitor players at the T20 World Cup to help cope with the growing number of mental health cases in coronavirus safety bubbles, cricket's governing body said Thursday.

Pandemic strain has become increasingly apparent in recent months with England's Ben Stokes on a prolonged mental health break, and other leading players complaining about the pressures of going from bubble to bubble in different tours and tournaments.

A number of players missed or left the conclusion of the Indian Premier League in the United Arab

Emirates because of bio-bubble stress.

And the 16 nations at the World Cup, starting in the UAE and Oman on October 17, will be confined to their hotels for the majority of the month-long tournament.

"Some people will be affected, their mental health will be affected by being in confined conditions again, particularly perhaps those who have done it for a prolonged period of time," Alex Marshall, International Cricket Council head of integrity and bio safety, told reporters.

"The ICC will have available 24 hours a day, a psychologist to speak to any individual who seeks

help. We are also providing (a) lot of resources, so people can decide what the best way of addressing the issue is for them."

Following comments by leading players, including India captain Virat Kohli, many teams have increased their psychological support for players ahead of the tournament.

Marshall said selfie-seeking fans will be kept away from players.

Marshall said the ICC has learned from the Tokyo Olympics, Formula One world championship, Euro 2020 and the IPL. He added players will be allowed to relax in their bio-secure space with a round of golf or a sightseeing trip.

## Nasum propagates dot-ball theory

Sports Reporter

Left-arm spinner Nasum Ahmed finished the last two series against New Zealand and Australia at home as the top wicket-taker amongst Bangladeshi bowlers. And while the 26-year-old expressed a willingness to maintain that momentum in the upcoming T20 World Cup in Oman and the UAE, he revealed that his focus would be on bowling as many dot balls as possible in the marquee event.

"I try not to overthink. My focus revolves around bowling as many dot balls as possible. My target is to bowl at least 7-8 dot. So I try to do whatever is needed to bowl dot balls," Nasum said after Bangladesh's final practice session at the Oman Cricket Academy yesterday in Muscat.

Bangladesh will play a practice game against Oman A at the same venue today before flying to the



UAE on Saturday to take part in two official practice games on October 12 and 14 against Sri Lanka and Ireland respectively.

"When you are performing [well], it gives you confidence for the next game. I was able to do well in the last two series and performed well. I was able to help my team in those games and that ought to give me confidence in the upcoming World Cup," hoped Nasum.

