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SPORT



'A lot of areas to improve upon'

SPORTS REPORTER



Although the 26-run win over hosts Oman kept the hopes of qualification for the Super 12 stage of the ICC T20 World Cup alive for Bangladesh, according to skipper Mahmudullah Riyad there are still a few areas that the Tigers need to improve upon in the coming days.

Bangladesh's opening spot remained a major area of concern as the Tigers added 29 for two wickets in the first Powerplay. According to Mahmudullah, the team needs to improve their performance in the first six overs both with the ball and bat.

"We'll take this win, but I think there are a lot of areas we need to improve [upon]. I hope everyone is happy. Thanks to the crowd that came in, they expect us to win. Delivering a win for them, for the country is the most important thing. Shakib and Naim batted brilliantly; they had a good partnership and that took us to 150-plus.

"But we should have done better with the



new ball; bowled a lot of wides. We need to see those areas and correct them. I think our death bowling was going well. In the middle part we brought the game back. But the first six overs -- batting and bowling -- we need to improve," Mahmudullah said during the post-match presentation yesterday.

Man-of-the-match Shakib Al Hasan once again stood tall when his team needed the most, with the champion cricketer first being involved in a crucial 80-run third wicket stand with Naim Sheikh.

The left-hander, however, was run out after a 27-ball 42, his innings featuring six fours. Shakib then bagged three wickets for 28 runs from his four overs.

According to the 34-year-old, it was the experience of the Tigers that proved vital in the end.

"Obviously it [loss to Scotland] hurt the whole team because we were not expecting it. It was pretty tough [the team talk]. Obviously the Scotland low was hurting us. Oman played really good cricket but we held our nerve. Experience played a role.

"Oman were in the game for 15 overs, so credit to them. They are playing with a lot of heart; I wish them best of luck for their future games. I think this win will settle our nerves. We have another game which we have to win and we have to see what happens in the game between Oman and Scotland," said Shakib.

BCB needs a reality check too

ABDULLAH AL MEHDI

When Bangladesh Cricket Board president Nazmul Hassan spoke to media on Monday following the Tigers' defeat against Scotland a day earlier, he cut a rather distraught figure, saying he could not quite grasp the reality of Bangladesh being defeated by an Associate nation in a prestigious tournament.

However, while talking about the emotional and mental state of the team, he said that message has been relayed to the players to not lose sleep over what has happened. In particular, while asked why Tamim Iqbal opted out of the World Cup due to differences with the coach, the president's message was firm, saying there was no place for 'emotions' when playing for one's country. The president did not, however, hide from communicating his own emotions regarding the defeat to Scotland.

The president did not, however, hide from communicating his own emotions regarding the defeat to Scotland, but does Bangladesh cricket's governing body have the same emotion or affection when dealing with the entirety of Bangladesh cricket? Or are emotions and affection only to be extended for the national team?

Talking about Tamim opting out of the T20 World Cup and his difference with some key personnel in the World Cup setup, the BCB president said: "What problem can there be with someone? There could be problems. A player could have problems with the coach but these are personal matters. When you are playing for your country, you have to forget such things. There is no place for emotions here. You have to forget everything else for the

country."

"The thing is, I knew about Tamim's decision beforehand. I even had information that someone else was going to exclude himself. But he's playing now. No reason to keep things within yourself, if someone does not want to play, he should say so," the president remarked.

Those are indeed wise words and could be prescribed in any team sports but when coming from the BCB president himself, it often appears the focus, not only now but over the years, has been mostly on the national team. A promise made in his previous term as president of the BCB was the establishment of regional cricket associations. No emotions, just attention to detail was the way to go. The regional cricket association remains a pipe dream.

Where are cricketers formed? School teams, age-level cricket such as U-13 up to U-18 and then divisional and regional cricket for clubs would be some of the preferable answers. The Dhaka Premier League and NCL or BCL are platforms where budding cricketers can then show their effort but not platforms for development per say. Where is the effort to improve the structure?

"Why did we lose? The basic thing is I am not bothered by just victories or defeats. Cricket can be like that, especially the T20 format. But I think what I found problematic is the team approach," Hassan further said.

In short, the president talked about the process regarding setting up structures. We, too, hope that some semblance of process will return to cricket because while the cricket board was not involved in forming the present-day cricket stars, it surely will have impact on the future stars.



Bangladesh opener Naim Sheikh smashes one through square during his half-century against Oman in their T20 World Cup Round 1 fixture at the Al Amerat Cricket Ground in Muscat yesterday.

PHOTO: BCB

TODAY'S MATCHES

Namibia Vs Netherlands: 4pm | Sri Lanka Vs Ireland: 8pm

Ireland and Sri Lanka look to move one step closer

AGENCIES

Sri Lanka and Ireland will be looking to brighten their Super 12s chances when they meet in their second group match at the Sheikh Zayed Stadium in Abu Dhabi today.

Both teams enjoyed seven wickets victory against their respective opponents on Monday. Sri Lanka defeated Namibia inside 14 overs with Ireland seeing off the Netherlands from 15.1 overs.

Sri Lanka were able to cruise over the line with over 6 overs to spare against Namibia. However, it was not the perfect performance and they will have to raise their game against a talented Ireland side.

Ireland's victory may not have been so easy against the Netherlands if it were not for Campher's incredible over. After that they were rarely tested and this game will be a major step up.

Meanwhile, Namibia and the Netherlands face-off in the day's first match with an aim to clinch their first win in the tournament.

Both Namibia and Netherlands are in a spot of bother at the moment, having lost their respective opening matches. Namibia had a terrible outing against Sri Lanka while the Netherlands couldn't live up to expectations against Ireland.



FROM DESOLATE DESERT TO A FESTIVAL OF CRICKET

MAZHAR UDDIN from Muscat

Just over three months ago, a desolate desert was all one could find in the space that the Al Amerat Cricket Stadium in Muscat currently occupies.

Following an upsurge in the rise of Covid-19 cases in India last year, the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) -- who were supposed to play hosts -- desperately searched for an alternate venue for the tournament.

And while they managed to confirm that the UAE would host the Super 12 stage of the event, confusion reigned over hosting the first round of the mega-event.

All of a sudden Pankaj Khimji, a celebrated figure belonging to Oman's illustrious Khimji Ramdas family, came forward and took up the challenge of hosting the qualifying round in Oman despite the lack of any existing infrastructure capable of hosting an international event.

Interestingly, Sheikh Kanaksi Khimji, the family's late patriarch and head of the Khimji Ramdas Group of Companies, was the only Hindu Sheikh in the world, being granted the title by the Sultan of Oman for contributions to the country's economy over the years.

144 years ago, when the Middle East was still oblivious to the riches beneath their feet,



Pankaj's grandfather, Ramdas Thackersey, came to the busy trading ports of Muscat to make a living. That business would boom so much that at one point the Khimji family was even lending money to the Sultan of Oman.

However, despite being a person with such a high-profile, Pankaj is often seen roaming around the Al Amerat Stadium like any other person, providing the opportunity for a conversation about his vision and the story of how he managed to ready an entire stadium from scratch in such a short time.

"Not more than three months ago, when the

BCCI were looking for an alternate venue to host the T20 World Cup in the gulf region, we were the first one to put our hands up. We knew it was going to be a huge challenge because there was nothing where we are standing right now. We set a target of preparing the entire stadium in ninety days and here we are hosting the event successfully," Pankaj told The Daily Star ahead of the Bangladesh-Oman game yesterday.

"From the pitch to the outfield to the stands, everything was built inside those 90 days. I must thank all the people involved in making this happen."

A keen follower of cricket, Khimji is a huge fan of Bangladesh pacer Mustafizur Rahman and he also expressed a willingness to host the Tigers in a bilateral series.

"Your cricket board president Nazmul Hassan is a very good friend of mine. It was pleasure meeting him here. I am very excited to see the Bangladesh team and hopefully they will have a great game against Oman. Although I will be supporting Oman, I also have few favourite players on your team.

"I like Mustafizur the pacer. He has got great skills as a bowler. And also Shakib Al Hasan the all-rounder. I really hope one day Bangladesh will come here to play a bilateral series with Oman. I even had a small conversation with Hassan regarding this," he said.



India's cricket team mentor MS Dhoni and West Indies opener Chris Gayle were seen sharing a light moment in Dubai after the warm-up matches against their respective opponents on Monday. India defeated England by seven wickets in their first warm-up match and the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) took to Twitter after the match to share a picture of Dhoni chatting with Gayle and captioned: "Two legends. One memorable moment." Defending champions West Indies, however, suffered a seven-wicket defeat to Pakistan in another warm-up match ahead of the Super 12s, starting from October 23.

PHOTO: BCCI

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SCORES IN BRIEF

BANGLADESH

153 all out in 20 overs (Naim 64, Shakib 42, Mahmudullah 17; Bilal 3-18, Fayyaz 3-30)

OMAN

127 for 9 in 20 overs (Jatinder 40, Prajapati 21; Mustafizur 4-36, Shakib 3-28)

RESULT

Bangladesh won by 26 runs

Player-of-the-match Shakib Al Hasan

SCOTLAND

165 for 9 in 20 overs (Cross 45, Berrington 70, extras 8; Morea 4-31, Soper 3-24)

PNG

148 all out in 19.3 overs (Bau 24, Vanua 47, extras 4; Davey 4-18)

RESULT

Scotland won by 17 runs.

Player-of-the-match: Richie Berrington.

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