

What process behind Fazle's inclusion?

SPORTS REPORTER

The quality of cricket in Bangladesh's domestic circuit has long been a point of concern, specifically since it failed to supply sufficient players of adequate quality in the national team's pipeline. While previously the trend was such that players circled back into the side because others were not performing, with players neither guaranteed a call up just for domestic performances nor were the displays in domestic circuit a recipe for international success. However, with a few national team stars currently missing out through injuries or otherwise, the team management has resorted to calling up players, who had previously not been trusted to face the rigours of international cricket. Such a case could be the inclusion of Fazle Mahmud for the Test series in New Zealand. Fazle had last played for Bangladesh in the ODIs at home against Zimbabwe and following ducks in both matches of that series, he was subsequently dropped for the next three years before his inclusion for the New Zealand tour. While performances in domestic competitions should be the measuring stick for breaking into the national side, the lack of quality present in competitions give indications to lack of process behind national side's inclusions too.

On Saturday, the Bangladesh Cricket Board president Nazmul Hassan, while talking to the media at the BKSP, deemed the criticisms of the domestic circuit to be baseless. However, that a lack of process had existed and that focus often is solely on national team became

apparent.

"Maybe I will continue playing some players for, let's say, a period of two years. But what will happen? We have to see the future and make long-term plans. They [team management] asked for three months' time to experiment so as to make long-term plans. So there was no way to say no," the BCB president said.

It's natural to call upon fringe players but Fazle cannot realistically be classified among 'fringe' players who had been in the national side's periphery.

Fazle's domestic performance then makes a good case for inclusion, having scored 603 runs at an impressive average of over 60 in the recently concluded National Cricket League (NCL). However, if domestic competition was a measuring gauge, then how does Mohammad Naim, who played last domestic long-format competition 18 months ago, scoring a pair and averaging 16.63 in first-class cricket, get into the side? It appears that a dearth of players made selectors pick Naim, because he has been among the international grind, even if not in Tests. On spectrum's other end, Fazle was picked based on domestic performance. Process or far from it?

Tushar Imran, who has been the face of success in domestic cricket, was included haphazardly during a tour of South Africa in 2002, where he struggled to end up negatively affecting his career. NCL performances on poor wickets will also not help Fazle's case in New Zealand and it only remains to be seen whether any positive performance from him would be used as domestic cricket's laudatory song for the next year.

'Competing at top level requires top level training'

ATIQUE ANAM



Bangladesh's premier golfer Siddikur Rahman has returned to the country from his five-month stay in the USA with the realisation that playing in the top-level golf competitions requires top level training. Bangladeshi players, including Siddikur himself, have often casually expressed their desire for playing on the PGA Tour or the European Tour even though the reality is there is a yawning gap between the Asian Tour, the continent's premier golf circuit, and those of Europe or USA.

Siddikur is the only Asian Tour winner and a regular feature on the tour from Bangladesh while the rest of the professional golfers ply on the Indian tour and the domestic events.

"I have realised that with the golf we play and the training and facilities we get here, we can only play in the Asian Tour at best. Even if

we have to compete in AT or want to play on ET or PGA, there is no substitute for higher training," the 37-year-old golfer told The Daily Star yesterday.

Siddikur went to USA at the end of June for training as well as in hope of carving out a career there. However, having missed the qualification in the second stage of the Korn Ferry Tour -- the feeder tour to the qualification for PGA Tour -- Siddikur doesn't see it as a viable option, at least for the time being. "I was in Dallas mostly where I played two stages of the Korn Ferry Tour and also had training. I played one event in Alabama too. I had great training there, learnt a lot. But I'm back now in Dhaka and I hope to implement what I learnt," said Siddikur, who returned on Friday.

On his way back, Siddikur played two events in Phuket, Thailand as the Asian Tour returned after a year-and-a-half of sabbatical due to the pandemic. The golfer didn't fare

too well as he missed the cut by one stroke in the first event before finishing tied for 51st in the second. However, Siddikur is confident his training will eventually have an impact.

"I made some changes in my technique, including my swing and hitting the balls. I'm following up on those points now in Bangladesh and I'm sure it will help my game in the long run. But to be able to sustain at the top level and to compete at the top, you need top level training and facilities, which is not possible here," Siddikur opined.

Now that Asian Tour is back and about to be expanded too, the ace golfer is looking forward to an action-packed season, both domestically and internationally.

"I'm hopeful that we will have an Asian Tour event at home pretty soon. I will regularly play in the domestic events (BPGA) and the Asian Tour events and hope to do well there," said Siddikur.



Bangladesh Navy players celebrate their title triumph in the Victory Day Kabaddi competition at the Paltan Kabaddi Stadium yesterday. Navy won the final comfortably, beating Bangladesh Army by 50-28 points.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

Pakistan face West Indies in first T20I today

AFP, Karachi

High-flying Pakistan start as favourites against a Covid-hit West Indies team in the first of three Twenty20 internationals in Karachi today.

Already missing a number of top players including skipper Kieron Pollard, the West Indies were dealt an additional blow when left-arm pacer Sheldon Cottrell, and all-rounders Roston Chase and Kyle Mayers, tested positive for Covid-19 on Saturday.

The tourists will now have to pick replacements from their large touring squad against an in-form Pakistan playing in familiar conditions.

Babar Azam's team followed their semi-final showing at the Twenty20 World Cup with a 3-0 rout of Bangladesh in an away series last month. "We want to carry the momentum and the confidence that we have gained during the World Cup and the tour of Bangladesh," Babar said.

Pakistan have beaten the West Indies in 12 of their 18 T20I clashes, suffering three losses and as many no results. "We know what happened in the World Cup and we're not going to go back there," West Indies coach Phil Simmons said.

Bowlers dominate on opening day

SPORTS REPORTER



Bowlers dominated the opening day of the Bangladesh Cricket League as the first-class franchise-based competition began across two venues yesterday.

Despite the Shaheed Kamruzzaman Stadium in Rajshahi having the reputation of a seam-friendly pitch, spinners Mahedi Hasan and Nasum Ahmed bagged five wickets each for BCB South Zone as Islami Bank East Zone were skittled for 260. In reply, South Zone ended the day on three without loss with Anamul Haque and Pinak Ghosh at the crease.

Earlier, East Zone made a solid start after being asked to bat, riding on the experienced Mohammad Ashraful and Imrul Kayes, who added 101 for the opening wicket.

But just before the lunch break, left-arm spinner Nasum, who was

initially expensive, provided the breakthrough by dismissing East Zone skipper Imrul.

The left-hander was undone by a sharp turning delivery that had some extra bounce which surprised him. He was caught at short leg after scoring 46. Off-spinner Mahedi, who was more economical, then removed Rony Talukdar (19) and Ashraful in consecutive overs.

Ashraful looked compact and scored a team-high 61 off 120 balls, a knock that featured eight fours, but East Zone lost their way after his departure. They lost five wickets in the span of eight overs before Rejaur Rahman Raja and Enamul Haque added 47 for the ninth wicket. But Mahedi again stepping and removed both of them to wrap things up.

Mahedi and Nasum complimented each other and displayed a great bowling partnership, even getting the ball to turn and bounce despite the grass on the surface.

Mahedi, who ended with figures of 5 for 81, registered his fourth fiver while Nasum registered his fifth five-wicket haul in first-class cricket.

At the Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium in Chattogram, pacer Robiul Hoque bagged three and Shuvagata Hom picked up two wickets for Walton Central Zone as BCB North Zone were sent packing for 219.

Central Zone ended the day on 61 without loss. Mohammad Mithun opened an innings for the first time in a first-class competition, playing in an aggressive manner. He remained not out on 43 off 54 balls, striking six fours, while Mizanur Rahman was not out on 18.

Youngsters Tanzid Tamim and Parvez Hossain made a good start, adding 61 runs for the opening stand after North Zone were sent to bat. Left-hander Parvez top-scored with 46 while Tamim added 32 but none of the batters were able to convert their starts into big knocks.



'Root needs others around him'

REUTERS



Former England skipper Michael Atherton said their over-reliance on Test skipper Joe Root and a lack of preparation had hurt them in the opening clash of their five-match Ashes series against Australia, which the tourists lost by nine wickets.

England had clawed their way back into the contest riding a 162-run partnership between Root (89) and Dawid Malan (82) but they collapsed on Saturday, losing eight wickets to suffer a heavy defeat at the Gabba in Brisbane.

"If you look at England in the last dozen Tests... they've become so reliant on Root," Atherton, who captained England in 54 Tests, wrote in his column for Sky Sports.

"And if England are going to do well in Australia, you'd think he's going to have to have a productive series, but he needs others around him

endured similar issues but that's not quite true," Cook wrote in The Sunday Times.

"We had some figures on BT Sport which showed that since the end of the English summer, their batsmen had faced about 3,600 balls in competitive cricket, while England's top order had faced less than a quarter of that."

Meanwhile, England pace bowler Stuart Broad said he was disappointed not to play in the opening Test despite being fit, but understood the need to stay fresh for the matches ahead.

Broad and fellow pace stalwart James Anderson share 1,156 Test wickets between them but the duo were rested for the Gabba Test.

"Over the past 12 months, Anderson and I tried to ensure we were as fit as could be in the current COVID climate, ready to go and available for all five Tests in Australia. I think we ticked that box," Broad wrote in his Daily Mail column. "But



to support him as well.

"Malan batted well ... but England's batting in both innings, other than that one partnership, was poor and that's going to cost them. They were completely under-prepared, and I have a lot of sympathy for them in this regard.

"There is the COVID pandemic which has necessitated the kind of schedule they had but then the torrential rains in Queensland just knocked out the minimal preparation they had been given or had given themselves." Former England captain Alastair Cook agreed that wet weather during the build-up to the game had not helped.

"You could say that Australia have

England selection isn't in the hands of players. It's in those of people who have to make choices based on conditions and the balance of the team and our job now, with four matches to go, is to be ready for the next of the series in Adelaide.

"... I've been left out on numerous occasions and sometimes it comes as a real surprise. This was less of a surprise, maybe because I wasn't in the team for the previous series against India due to a calf injury."

Broad, 35, said he could have made a difference in bowler-friendly conditions in Brisbane. "Of course, I was disappointed not to play but I realise this series is a marathon and not a sprint," Broad said.