

BFF's muddled logic courts controversy

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There has always been controversy surrounding refereeing decisions in football grounds across the world and Bangladesh has proven no exception, with a couple of clubs recently raising questions about decisions that went against them in the just-concluded Federation Cup.

Such controversies have been a long-standing problem in Bangladesh football, which has led to national players, who become used to poor refereeing standards in the domestic circuit, being punished heavily during international assignments.

But despite clubs spending crores to form squads, they are time and again left to rue the standards of refereeing, which have hardly improved.

The Bangladesh Football Federation on Monday ruled out the appointment of foreign referees from the sub-continent to oversee crucial Bangladesh Premier League matches.

However, the reasoning behind their hesitation to appoint foreign referees really came as the biggest surprise.

"We are not thinking of the foreign referees [in Bangladesh Premier League] because foreign referees don't have an idea about which is a big team and which is a small team," BFF senior vice-president Abdus Salam Murshedy said.

Former FIFA referee Mansur Azad, who conducted top-flight football matches for in Bangladesh 17 years, disputed that notion. "I don't accept this opinion. During my refereeing career, I made mistakes but I never intended to make Abahani or Mohammedan winners." "It is right that the comments from the BFF official means the current batch of referees is conducting the matches with the notion of big and small teams in mind. The duty of the referee is to complete a match smoothly within the rules and regulations," Azad said, adding that the federation should empower referees to blow the whistle without any kind of fear.



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Following a disastrous 2021, a historic win in the first Test in New Zealand to begin the new year surely breathed new life into Bangladesh cricket and despite a comprehensive defeat in the second Test which saw the series shared at one apiece, Mominul Haque and Co will definitely return armed with belief.

Whether it was Ebadot Hossain's heroics with the ball in the first Test or the collective approach from the bowlers and batters, the Tigers showed that they have the ability to win Tests abroad.

Barring Liton Das's magnificent hundred in the second Test, the performance stood in stark contrast to the first Test as the Tigers got an idea of the areas that still require work if they are to become consistent in the longest format.

"I think the win in the first Test will surely help Bangladesh cricket look forward as a Test team. It is undoubtedly a huge achievement for Bangladesh and it provides confidence for the coming days," former captain and selector Habibul Bashar told The Daily Star.

With the Tigers are scheduled to play series against Sri Lanka and West Indies alongside a tour of South Africa in the



coming weeks, Mominul believes they will face further challenges.

"I think it was crucial for us to win the first Test because now everyone believes that we have the ability to win a Test match abroad. Now that we have won a Test, we may gradually go on to win a series. It was crucial to instil that belief in everyone. I think that the belief came after the win in the first Test but we still have a lot of challenges waiting as a team.

"When we used to play abroad, people assumed that we wouldn't play well and that goes for any opponent. We have series

against South Africa, Sri Lanka and West Indies which won't be easy at all. We have to take those challenges and continue the process," said Mominul.

Since suddenly finding himself with the Test captaincy after Shakib Al Hasan's ban in 2019, Mominul has often found himself in the firing line for the Tigers' below-par performances in the format.

There were questions over his leadership qualities after Bangladesh lost eight of eleven Tests under his captaincy, with the only two wins prior to the New Zealand series coming against Zimbabwe.

According to Bashar, Mominul has come out of his shell and matured as a captain.

"It takes some time for any captain. When Mominul was given captaincy, it was a really tough time. What I observed is that he is now bold enough to make decisions on his own. I am not saying he hadn't done that in the past, but now he has that air of authority.

"It's never easy to captain Bangladesh and I think the captain needs to have his own plans, which Mominul seems to be managing well. He has become bolder than in the past and such a win will help him become even more confident in terms of decision-making," Bashar added.

Liton's sparkle the only respite

NABID YEASIN

Aimed at the chest and rising high, Neil Wagner's brutal bouncer was intended to rattle Liton Das, who was yet to get going in his innings. But the right-hander was up for the task, doing brilliantly to drop his gloves and get his head away – the textbook way of evading a bouncer.

The next time Wagner tried something similar, Liton stood tall and pulled him through midwicket for a boundary. The message was clear: he would not let bowlers dictate terms.

It was exactly what Bangladesh needed, for someone to make a statement after the Tigers' frailty against pacy and bouncy deliveries directed at their bodies has often been exposed in recent outings.

Yesterday was never supposed to be Bangladesh's day, with the visitors fighting only to reduce the margin of defeat on the third day of the second Test against New Zealand in Christchurch.

Liton being his usual self not only provided Bangladesh with something to cheer but also treated cricket lovers to an exquisite array of cricketing shots that fans long to see in any format of the game.

"Liton is very sound technically. Looking at the way he bats, it seems as if Liton gets a lot of time for shot-making just like world-class players do," Bangladesh captain Mominul Haque remarked on Liton's batting.

"I think he did not try to force any shots other than putting away the bad ones. And if we can not make use of the deliveries that can be scored off, we can not make runs.

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I think he did not try to force any shots other than putting away the bad ones. He waited a long time and only pounced on the loose deliveries that he got afterward. His batting was eye-soothing. Everyone was delighted as he scored two centuries in back-to-back series. I was really enjoying his batting

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The 27-year-old is often regarded as someone with the kind of solid technique that could see him rank among the top batters in modern cricket. That claim certainly rang true when he drove Trent Boult for four boundaries off five deliveries, forcing the pacer to change his angle twice in between.

In fact, Liton has been amongst the runs in Tests for a while despite his struggles in white-ball cricket. Both his Test tons came in his last 10 innings, which yielded runs at an average of 54.

While his recent stats can be termed splendid, especially considering they are of a batter who features for a side that usually struggle in Tests, the numbers still fail to demonstrate the true potential that Liton possesses.

One aspect is that the longer Liton bats, the more he induces a craving from the fans for his class. For Liton, it is probably time to push his standards further and sate the fans' yearning, not only for the benefit of Bangladesh but also for the sake of enhancing the beauty of cricket.

East Zone suffer consecutive defeats

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On his return to competitive cricket after more than three months since suffering a finger injury, Tamim Iqbal failed to make an impact with the bat. His side East Zone suffered consecutive defeats as they lost to South Zone by three wickets in the Independence Cup in Sylhet yesterday.

After facing 27 deliveries, the dashing left-hander went for a big heave coming down the track to off-spinner Mahedi Hasan, only to be stumped following a nine-run knock.

After Tamim's departure, skipper Imrul Kayes smashed a 97-ball 69 while Irfan Shukkur added 33 runs to help East Zone post a small total of 192 for eight in 50 overs.

For South Zone, left-arm seamer Mustafizur Rahman bagged three wickets after remaining wicketless in the first game while player-of-the-match Nahidul Islam recorded economical figures of two for 17 in his 10 overs that included three maidens.

In reply, South Zone, despite losing wickets at regular intervals, eventually reached the target with 25 balls to spare as Mahedi Hasan remained unbeaten on 37 and Nahidul contributed 27 with the bat to seal their side's first win.

In the other match of the day, Shakib Al Hasan's Central Zone registered



their second consecutive win in the tournament as they beat North Zone by 28 runs.

After being asked to bat, a concerted effort from the likes of Abdul Mazid (53 off 96), skipper Mosaddek Hossain (54* off 55), Shakib (33 off 36) and Soumya Sarkar (40 off 60) saw Central Zone post a fighting total of 262 for five in 50 overs.

However, despite Naeem Islam's 72 and a 43-run knock by Mahmudullah Riyad were not enough as North Zone could only score 234 for nine.

Left-arm seamer Mrittunjy Chowdhury picked up three while Mosaddek and Soumya bagged two wickets each for Central Zone.



The MG Lady Captain Cup Golf Tournament was held between January 5-7 at the Kurmitola Golf Club in Dhaka Cantonment. More than 600 golfers participated in the tournament. The award ceremony was held on January 8 with General Shafiuddin Ahmed, Chief of Army Staff, presiding over the event. Also present at the ceremony were Mr. Romo Rouf Chowdhury, Group Managing Director, Rancon and Mrs. Farhana Karim, Managing Director, Rancon Holdings.

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