



India pacer Jasprit Bumrah celebrates with Virat Kohli after taking the wicket of South Africa's Keegan Petersen, who led the resistance with a 72-run knock as the hosts were bundled out for 210 runs in reply to India's first innings total of 223 on the second day of the decisive third and final Test at Newlands yesterday.

PGOTO; REUTERS

Liton attains career-best Test ranking

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh batter Liton Das has been rewarded for his impressive batting performance in the just concluded two-match Test series against New Zealand as the stylish right-hander attained career-best rankings in Tests.

Liton, who hit his second Test ton in the final match with a brilliant display of strokeplay, moved up 17 places to 15 in the rankings with 683 rating points.

The elegant right-hander also scored 86 in the only innings that he batted in the first Test against the Kiwis. He scored a total of 196 runs in the series.



BPL fixtures announced

SPORTS REPORTER

Chattogram Challengers are set to take on Fortune Barishal in the opening match of the Bangabandhu Bangladesh Premier League (BPL) at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur on January 21 after the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) issued the itinerary for the eighth edition of the BPL yesterday.

Later on the same day, Khulna Tigers will face Minister Group Dhaka at the same venue.

As per the fixtures, the day game on Fridays will begin at 1:30pm while the night game will get underway from 6:30pm.

On weekdays, both the day match and night match will begin an hour early. Qualifiers, final and the majority of the league matches will be played in Dhaka with Chattogram and Sylhet hosting matches during the second and fourth phases of the league matches respectively.

'Sky is the limit'

Under skipper Mominul Haque, Bangladesh drew a Test series in New Zealand for the first time following a historic eight-wicket win in the first Test at Mount Maunganui. It was the perfect remedy after a disastrous 2021 and showed promise of Bangladesh cricket moving in the right direction. From that perspective, Bangladesh's Test captain spoke to The Daily Star's Mazhar Uddin, opening up and sharing various aspects during an exclusive interview. The excerpts are below:

The Daily Star (DS): What was the expectation when you traveled to New Zealand?

Mominul Haque (MH): To be honest, we got more than we expected. Our backs were against the wall following defeats one after another and the failure in the T20 World Cup. We were hoping to play better cricket, but speaking frankly we never thought of something like this.

DS: It looked like a different Bangladesh team in the first Test. What was the recipe behind the change in mentality?

MH: I am not a good motivational speaker. The credit must go to Khaled Mahmud Sujon and Mushfiqur Rahim. They encouraged the boys and worked really hard to motivate players. We never thought of the result. We instead focused on the process. Credit to the boys that they were able to execute. The win gave us belief.

DS: How can the Bangladesh team take this belief forward?

MH: I think it will give us confidence in the coming days because the players have started to believe that they can beat any team abroad. In international cricket, the difference in skills is mostly negligible but it's the mentality that is important. At



times players and even supporters do not believe that we can win and I want that to change. If you have the belief that you can win, it actually keeps you 50 percent ahead even before you enter the field.

DS: As a captain, you were under tremendous pressure prior to the New Zealand series. Did that result come as a big relief to you?

MH: I won't say it's a relief but we needed that win as a team. As captain, I still don't feel we have done a tremendous job. However, the reaction to the win makes it seem it was a big achievement. As captain,

I want more. I want to win matches abroad against bigger opponents consistently. The sky is the limit.

DS: What are the things you want to retain from this tour in the coming days?

MH: We want to keep the process right and not focus on the outcome. The youngsters are now interacting a lot in the dressing room and we are focusing on developing a good culture.

DS: Do you think things will stay the same or may get better when seniors like Shakib Al Hasan and Tamim Iqbal return?

MH: It will obviously boost the team because they have performed well over the years and contributed. Their experience will definitely help us in the coming days.

DS: How fascinating was it to see Ebadot Hossain stepping up and taking center stage? And what's your take on Liton's batting?

MH: Ebadot didn't perform exceptionally ever since starting his career and he finally delivered after two years. If you notice, it's the belief towards him which paid off eventually. It shows that it is important to give time to players instead of wanting instant results. On the other hand, Liton is always a special case. It's good to see that he has taken the next step and become more consistent.



PGOTO; REUTERS

World Number 1 Novak Djokovic rests at Melbourne Park during a training session but he could still have his visa cancelled again if Immigration minister exercises discretionary power. Meanwhile, Djokovic blamed "human error" on Wednesday for a mistake in his Australian immigration paperwork and apologised for breaking isolation for a photoshoot when he had Covid-19 last month.

U-19s confident despite challenges

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Under-19s are gearing up to defend their title in West Indies, starting with their fixture against England at Basseterre, St Kitts on January 16 in the upcoming ICC Under-19 World Cup.

Captain Rakibul Hasan, who was instrumental in Bangladesh's triumph in the previous edition of the tournament, was hopeful that the newly-built side can do something special.

"The goal would be to at least make the semifinals," the skipper urged.

Pakistan are the only country to successfully defend their title when they followed up their triumph in 2004 by winning the trophy again in 2006. Rakibul was confident they can repeat the feat while also reiterating that the loss to India in the recently-concluded Under-19 Asia Cup will not dent the young Tigers' confidence.

"I don't think there will be any problems. We have been working on our batting and hope things will go smoothly in the tournament. Of course we want to win it again. Every team came here to win," he added.

However, things were a bit challenging in terms of preparation this time around.

"This year we could not prepare adequately due to the Covid situation. We're hoping the upcoming matches will see us play our best cricket if we can execute our plans," he said. Rakibul has the experience of playing this tournament and he was hoping to use that to his advantage in leading a young side.

"Last time we had a good squad and this time around the challenges will be quite similar but we have the kind of players to once again prove our mettle," he said.



Salahuddin ponders appointing foreign refs for BPL

SPORTS REPORTER

Following the controversy over the referees' decisions in the recently concluded Federation Cup, Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) president Kazi Salahuddin is thinking of appointing foreign referees to conduct a few important fixtures of the upcoming Bangladesh Premier League (BPL) starting from February 3.

BFF professional league management committee chairman and senior vice president Abdus Salam Murshedy, however, ruled out the possibility of foreign referees' appointment on Monday after Saif SC had urged on the matter citing referee bias during their Federation Cup semifinal against Abahani.

The statement from Salahuddin came yesterday following a meeting with a group of Mohammedan officials, who also raised questions over referees' decisions in their Federation Cup semifinal against Rahmatganj MFS.

"There are so many questions coming up [regarding the referees' decisions] and it is a very good idea to have foreign coaches officiate in about 10 to 12 important league matches. If the cancellation of the penalty in the match between Saif SC and Abahani was made by the foreign referees, there would not have been any confusion," Salahuddin told The Daily Star yesterday.

"If I can afford the financial aspect, a bunch of foreign referees will be hired. The local referees can also learn from them. But I don't want to have foreign coaches officiate in all the league matches as that would prove detrimental for the local coaches," Salahuddin added.

Uncertainty looms over Indonesia friendlies

SPORTS REPORTER

A bit of uncertainty looms over Bangladesh's two FIFA friendlies against Indonesia this month after the hosts insisted on players and coaching staff being fully vaccinated in order to enter the country.

Under the guidance of the new Spanish coach Javier Cabrera, who is scheduled to arrive in Dhaka on Saturday, Bangladesh national football team are scheduled to play two friendly matches against Indonesia on January 24 and 27.

"On Tuesday, the Football Association of Indonesia informed that Bangladesh contingent needs to have received two dosages of coronavirus vaccine in order to enter their country," Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) general secretary Abu Nayeem Shohag told The Daily Star yesterday.

"They [Indonesia] will let us know about their decision tomorrow [Thursday] whether we can enter Indonesia having received a single dose of Covid-19 vaccine," Shohag added.

Replying to a query, Shohag said, "We can arrange vaccines for the players by tomorrow [Thursday] but the problem is that some seven to eight players took the first dosage of vaccine a few days ago and they are not eligible to take the second dosage of vaccine anytime soon."