

Vaas, Tait in BCB's shortlist

SPORTS REPORTER

Former Sri Lankan pacer Chaminda Vaas and former Australian quick Shaun Tait are among the shortlisted candidates for the post of Bangladesh's pace bowling coach, informed Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) cricket operations committee chairman Jalal Yunus to the media yesterday.

The post for the Tigers' pace bowling coach has been vacant since former West Indies pacer Ottis Gibson opted not to renew his contract following the tour of New Zealand earlier this month.

According to Jalal, the board is confident of appointing a new pace bowling coach ahead of the upcoming home series against Afghanistan next month.

"We are looking for a bowling coach and we have three to four names on our shortlist. However,



nothing is confirmed yet. We are hopeful that we will be able to confirm the new bowling coach before the upcoming Afghanistan series," said Jalal.

Jalal also mentioned that it can be someone who is already working with a franchise in the ongoing Bangladesh Premier League (BPL).

"It may be from someone who is working in the ongoing BPL or someone from outside as we are trying to bring in the best possible person for the post. I have heard about them [Shaun Tait and Chaminda Vaas] and Tait has already expressed his interest to take up the job. Vaas is also amongst our shortlist," Jalal said.

He also added that the board is willing to go for a long-term contract with the new bowling coach and would consider someone interested for a full-time job with the Tigers.



Former Bangladesh captain Mashrafe Bin Mortaza took two wickets for Minister Group Dhaka against Sylhet Sunrisers in a BPL match in Mirpur yesterday, the match being his first competitive one in 13 months. (Bottom) Fortune Barishal's Chris Gayle watches on as Comilla Victorians' Mahmudul Hasan Joy smashes one during the second game of the day.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

Mashrafe returns in style

SPORTS REPORTER

Thirteen months since he played any kind of competitive cricket, Mashrafe Bin Mortaza finally made his first appearance in a Minister Group Dhaka jersey, having missed three games since the start of this year's BPL. Day before yesterday, he was able to bowl more consistently and thus took the field yesterday against Sylhet Sunrisers and showed why the wily old fox still can compete in the domestic tournaments. Mash got that hint of outswing to keep the batters guessing. Then with the older ball the cutters were employed to good effect. Having picked up the wicket of Lendl Simmons in his first spell, he returned to pick up the prized scalp of Anamul Haque, out for 45 but it was too little too late in defence of a paltry total of 100 all out as Sylhet picked up their first win of the tournament with a seven-wicket victory.

Nagin to Pushpa

Spinner Najmul Islam Apu, famed for his introducing the 'Nagin dance', had last featured for the national team in any format, back in November 2018. He had shown promise since his debut but since the pandemic, failed to remain in contention and perhaps as a remedy, he brought a pretty peculiar celebration yesterday at the BPL. He scalped four wickets, featuring for Sylhet Sunrisers in the match against Dhaka, including that of Dhaka skipper Mahmudul Hasan Joy. Each time, he celebrated with a dance



from an Indian movie called Pushpa. "Apu bhai has been with me from the BCL and we knew he was going to bring out a new celebration," Sylhet skipper Mosaddek Hossain said during a press conference following the match.

The transition from 'Nagin dance' to 'Pushpa' might lead one to believe that Apu was looking for a change in fortunes as the New Year gears on. The celebration was already catching on, as Fortune Barishal skipper Shakib Al Hasan then replicated the move during his side's match against Comilla Victorians after bagging the wicket of Faf du Plessis.

DRS being missed

With BPL taking place without any Decision Review System (DRS), there had been a few decisions from umpires that left players unhappy. The match between Dhaka saw spinner Apu dictate terms with the ball but he was lucky to have gotten two unlikely decisions in his favour against Dhaka. Mohammad Naim, after a particularly slow and cumbersome innings, tried a reverse sweep and was given out leg-before but the ball looked to be missing the stumps. Then Andre Russell got a thick inside edge in the same over before the ball rapped his pad, but was given out leg-before too. Opener Tamim Iqbal himself had not been happy with his dismissal earlier in the day, but did not want to blame other factors except a poor batting effort from his side. There was, however, frustration on the field with no DRS to turn to in the face of poor umpiring decisions.

Joy find feet in T20s

Twenty-one-year-old Mahmudul Hasan Joy, who played one of Bangladesh cricket's most important knocks ever on Kiwi soil during the recently-concluded Test series, opened for Comilla in the evening BPL match against Barishal yesterday. Not afraid to play his shots, the youngster played to the queue, showing his ability in the shortest format during a 35-ball 48 to set up a formidable score of 158 for 7. Nahidul Islam then bagged three for just five runs as Comilla assailed Barishal by 63 runs.

Cabrera to espouse possession-football?

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh football team skipper Jamal Bhuiyan mentioned that the new coach Javier Cabrera will mostly work on the team's ball possession and goal-scoring abilities.

"Everyone knows that the Spanish coaches are a bit different than English coaches," Jamal said after meeting with Cabrera at the Saif Sporting Club yesterday.

"They want to keep the ball, so he will be working on that. Alongside ball-possession, he will especially work on scoring goals because we don't score much," the skipper added.

After arriving in Bangladesh on January 15, Cabrera visited Abahani and Uttar Baridhara Club before visiting Saif SC to observe their training sessions.

Saif SC skipper Jamal informed that the national team coach has talked with the club's technical directors and shared his views.

"We had a meeting of over a couple of hours with him and listened to his vision and demands. He has already talked with the technical directors. He will discuss with all the clubs and guide them accordingly."

"He will work with the national team players and those who are in and around the national team," Jamal added.

"He saw our practice, and learned about the brand of football we played. I think he is somewhat similar to the other Spanish coaches like Oscar [Bruzon] and Lemos [Mario]."

"However, he will implement his own style. But for that we have to work with him before we do more," the 31-year-old midfielder said.

Comoros fans proud but disappointed

AFP, Moroni

Cameroon ended the Comoros' fairy-tale run at the Africa Cup of Nations on Monday, but their strong performance sparked fierce pride in the island nation.

Comoros lost 2-1, but held their own against powerhouses Cameroon after 12 players and staff members were sidelined with positive Covid tests and injuries,



including all three goalkeepers.

Many supporters gathered to watch the match on a giant screen set up in the centre of the capital, Moroni. Zainaba Chanfi stayed glued to the screen

until the final whistle.

"Even though we lost today, it's like we won because we gave it our all and we only lost 2-1," she said smiling.

Nearby, the national team fan club president Hachim Said Hassan said the team's fortunes could have been different had all their players been allowed on the field. "CAF pulls out their rule book at the last minute to take out our players, but we still held our heads high," he said. "We're proud of our players."

Nadal focused on enjoying his tennis

REUTERS, Melbourne

Rafa Nadal said there would be no regrets if he failed to claim another Grand Slam title after moving within two wins of a record 21st at the Australian Open.

The Spanish great survived a five-set scare against Canada's Denis Shapovalov at Rod Laver Arena on Tuesday to reach his seventh semi-finals at Melbourne Park.

With Novak Djokovic deported before the tournament and Roger Federer recovering from knee surgery, Nadal has a chance to grab the all-time record outright at Melbourne Park but he said it would not matter to him if he missed out.

"I don't hope (for) anything. I just keep going," he told reporters.

"In terms of what can happen in the future, honestly I really don't care that much.

"I'm not going to be frustrated if Novak or Roger finishes the career with more Grand Slams than me, no? "I mean, let's enjoy the situation that we did, every one of us, we did very special things in our sport."

Having the extra day's break will be a huge blessing for the 35-year-old after his four-hour slog in the heat against 14th seed Shapovalov.

With 22-year-old Shapovalov roaring back from two sets down to take the match into a fifth, Nadal said it was a "little bit of a miracle" that he managed to outlast the Canadian.

"I was destroyed, honestly, physically," said Nadal, who took a medical timeout off court after Shapovalov took the fourth set."



Spain's Rafael Nadal celebrates winning the men's singles quarterfinal match against Canada's Denis Shapovalov in the Australian Open in Melbourne on Tuesday.

PHOTO: AFP

'Au revoir Bafe'

REUTERS

Saudi Arabia's Al Hilal have announced the departure of former France international Bafetimbi Gomis, the star striker who led them to two Asian Champions League titles in three years.

Gomis, who joined from Galatasaray in 2018, helped the Riyadh-based side win the AFC Champions League in 2019 and again last year, making Al Hilal Asia's most successful club with four continental titles.

"Au revoir Bafe," Al Hilal said in a post on Twitter on Tuesday. "Thank you for everything we achieved together."

The former Swansea City and Lyon striker was the Asian Champions League's leading scorer with 11 goals in 14 games when Al Hilal ended a 19-year title drought in 2019 with victory over Japan's Urawa Reds in the final.

The 36-year-old has been linked with a move to Qatari club Al Rayyan as well as with a return to Galatasaray.