

DHAKA PREMIER DIVISION CRICKET

Players' transfer loses more sheen

SPORTS REPORTER

The players' transfer of the Dhaka Premier Division Cricket League will begin today at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur. The two-day long transfers will be held from 10:00am to 6:00pm.

However, leading players will not turn up in person. Instead, they will complete their formalities online since the national cricketers are engaged in a two-match T20I series against Afghanistan, starting tomorrow and are consequently in a bio-secure bubble. Many other cricketers are in a residential camp in Bogura with the Bangladesh Tigers.

"The transfers will start tomorrow (Wednesday) but national players and a few other leading players will not be able to attend due to national duty. They will be able to complete their formalities online like many players did in the lower-tier league's transfers," Ali Hossain, member secretary of the CCDM (Cricket Committee of Dhaka Metropolitan), said yesterday.

The charm and excitement surrounding the transfers in the traditional and coveted 50-over competition has diminished greatly, with some opining that the draft system employed for the last few seasons killed its essence.

There was a time when the cricket arena was abuzz with the transfer gossip long ahead of the start of the transfers. Everyone would keep an eye on the stars to get confirmation of who was going where.

Club officials and cricketers making grand entrances on horse drawn carriages with bands performing were common scenes. But those days are gone. These days, it is simply a matter of putting pen to paper.

The season is slated to begin on March 15 and clubs are unlikely to get the services of national players for the most part due to international commitments.



Questions cloud MAHMUDULLAH

SPORTS REPORTER

There was a plenty of drama in Zimbabwe in July last year when Mahmudullah Riyad announced his retirement from Test cricket to teammates in the dressing room mid-Test just after hitting a hundred in Harare. He eventually made an official statement ahead of the two-match Test series against Pakistan in November 2021.

Since then, Mahmudullah's approach and body language, both as player and leader of Bangladesh's T20 side, has remained a mystery, especially after the Tigers' poor run in the T20 World Cup last year.

They crashed to a shock defeat to Scotland before losing two close games to Sri Lanka and West Indies. They were then bundled out for 84 and 73 in losses to South Africa and Australia respectively, resembling a ship without a radar in the event.

As the captain, Mahmudullah shouldered the failure and the board kept faith on the experienced cricketer, but things worsened as the Tigers lost a home series 3-0 to Pakistan.

In the just-concluded three-match ODI series against Afghanistan, the 'Silent Killer' was silent when it came to performances and a lack of focus on the field was evident. The 36-year-old's fitness also came under scrutiny as he dropped a straightforward catch off Rahmanullah

BANGLADESH V AFGHANISTAN T20I SERIES

March 3: First T20I at Mirpur, from 3pm.
March 5: Second and final T20I at Mirpur, from 3pm

The tickets will be available at the ticket booths of the Shaheed Suhrawardi Indoor Stadium in Mirpur from 9:00am to 6:00pm on match days and the days before the matches.

FIVE CATEGORIES OF TICKETS AVAILABLE
Grand Stand – Tk 1000, VIP Stand – Tk 500,
Club House – Tk 300, North/South Stand – Tk 150, Eastern Stand – Tk 100.

Gurbaz, who went on to score an unbeaten match-winning hundred in the third ODI.

"I think he is concerned and taking a lot of pressure mentally. He has no doubt served Bangladesh a lot in the past. But recently he looks a bit dull. When a player is under pressure, they often lose focus, which at times can cause you to drop simple catches," said prominent coach Nazmul Abedeen Fahim.

Mahmudullah scored eight, six not out and an unbeaten boundary-less 29 off 53 balls in the three-match ODI series against

Afghanistan. His approach in the third ODI raised eyebrows as the right-hander hardly showed any intent.

It came as surprise that he exposed tail-enders to quality Afghan spinners. He was also involved in three run outs as Bangladesh were bundled out for 192 in 46.5 overs as he remained unbeaten in the third game.

"I think he needs to play fearless cricket and adopt positive intent. It is also important to develop a good cricketing culture. It is difficult to perform consistently as a player and also as a unit in T20s but this is the challenge that Mahmudullah needs to accept. I have seen a lot of criticism against him on social media but it will be important not to overthink such things."

With the upcoming two-match T20I series against Afghanistan starting from tomorrow and with the next T20 World Cup later this year, there will be a lot of focus on Mahmudullah and how he deals with things, both as a leader and a performer.

"I always said that Mahmudullah has come this far because of his hard work and willpower. From an above-average player, it was hard work that saw him reach this position today. I think he needs to continue the struggle, which will help him regain confidence in the coming days," Fahim concluded.

Rides and tunes on Shakib's mind

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh all-rounder Shakib Al Hasan returned to Dhaka yesterday morning alongside the team following a three-match ODI series in Chattogram and refreshingly he was available to reporters and fielded questions after turning up in the afternoon to fulfil a commercial commitment.

All and sundry were curious to know about his availability for the upcoming Test series in South Africa after Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) president Nazmul Hassan confirmed on Monday that Shakib was going to play the Tests. "Since he isn't playing in the IPL, there is no other option," the BCB chief informed after the third ODI against Afghanistan in Chattogram.

However, Shakib was in no mood to talk shop. Instead, he appeared elated to share his passion towards music and riding bikes.

Shakib said that he loved to ride in his hometown of Magura and sometime attempts to do the same in Dhaka around midnight when the roads are free. He also underlines the importance of taking all necessary safety measures before driving a bike.

The premier all-rounder added that he loved music and tunes were a must when driving around. He also elaborated on his love affair with a classic instrument, the guitar.

Despite these unusually enthusiastic tangents, reporters remained keen on knowing his decision regarding the Tests series in South Africa.

Hassan had added during his earlier comments: "After the game today (Monday), I had a talk with Shakib from afar. I can't go near. I told him that when you return after playing the South Africa Tests, I will sit down with you. He told me with a smile 'whatever you say'."

Yesterday, Shakib responded only with a wry smile when queried about those comments.



NZ's Test crown teetering

AFP, CHRISTCHURCH

New Zealand's hopes of defending their World Test Championship suffered a major setback when South Africa crushed them by 198 runs in the second Test in Christchurch on Tuesday.

It was New Zealand's third defeat in six Tests over the past three months, and their second at home, where they have enjoyed being almost unassailable in recent years.

A defeat in India in December was followed by a shock first defeat to Bangladesh at Mount Maunganui in January before being outclassed by South Africa at Hagley Oval.

An emphatic victory in the first Test against the Proteas last week had given New Zealand hopes of a winning their first series against South Africa in 17 attempts dating back 90 years.

But the defeat leaves New Zealand sixth in the nine-team standings with 28 Test Championship points from six Tests while South Africa are fourth with 36 from five matches.

Abahani suffer first defeat

SPORTS REPORTER

Title aspirants Abahani suffered their first defeat of the Bangladesh Premier League season, going down 2-3 to visiting Chittagong Abahani at the Sylhet District Stadium yesterday.

The result led to Abahani losing their lead at the top to Bashundhara Kings, who are now two points clear with 15 points. Chittagong Abahani joined the title race, with 12 points from six matches.

Abahani got off to a fine start and took a lead in the 16th minute as Daniel Colindres availed a long ball from Abu Sayeed and darted into the box before finish with his left. But the lead lasted only three minutes as Chittagong Abahani levelled the margin with a header from Ebimobowe Thankgod, the man who struck a hat-trick in the previous match against Saif SC.

With Abahani enjoying more possession and pressing for lead, the visitors concentrated on counter attacks and it played to the visitors' advantage as William Twala and Omit Popalzay struck in the 37th and 64th minutes to get a 3-1 lead.

As Chittagong Abahani defended deep, Abahani continued to dominate the ball. Eventually, Brazilian Raphael Augusto

reduced the margin to 3-2 with an over-head kick in the 89th minute but Abahani could not avert their first defeat of season and a second overall defeat to Chittagong Abahani in 22 league meetings.

In the day's other matches, Saif SC returned to winning ways with a massive 5-1 triumph over newcomers Swadhinata KS, riding on a hat-trick from Emeka Ogbouh at the Muktiyoddha Smriti Stadium in Rajshahi.

Saif SC, who came into the match on the back of two successive defeats and a draw, dominated from the beginning before Emery Bayisenge released the floodgates in the 15 minute with a header. Emeka Ogbouh doubled the lead after dancing past three defenders in the 35th minute.

After resumption, Saif made it 3-0 with a strike from Asror Gafurov, two minutes into the second half before Swadhinata reduced the margin and Nodirbek Mavlonov then scored from a free-kick in the 49th minute.

Swadhinata created a couple of opportunities but failed to cash in before Saif extended the margin as Emeka ran down the middle and finished coolly in the 70th minute. He finally completed his league's third hat-trick after heading a Faisal Ahmed cross home in the 79th minute.



Saif Sporting Club's hat-trick man Emeka Ogbouh (L) celebrates one of his three goals with Asror Gafurov during their 5-1 win against Swadhinata KS at the Muktiyoddha Smriti Stadium in Rajshahi yesterday.

Smith looking to replicate Ashes heroics

AFP, Islamabad

Star Australian batsman Steve Smith said Tuesday he was "feeling good" after recovering from concussion and hopes to replicate his big scoring from the Ashes during Australia's tour of Pakistan, their first in 24 years.

The 32-year-old fell heavily and banged his head attempting a boundary catch in the second Twenty20 against Sri Lanka in Sydney last month, ruling him out of the rest of that series.

"I've progressed really nicely," Smith told a virtual press conference from the team's hotel in Islamabad.

"I love getting on a roll and being able to play a lot of cricket, and just finding my groove. The last away tour, I performed really well in the Ashes and hopefully I can replicate something similar in this series," said Smith, who scored a whopping 774 in England in 2019, with three hundreds.