

"All of those golfers that remain 'loyal' to the very disloyal PGA, in all of its different forms, will pay a big price when the inevitable MERGER with LIV comes, and you get nothing but a big 'thank you' from PGA officials who are making Millions of Dollars a year."

Former US President
Donald Trump



Mahmudullah captaincy brings the Shakib question

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh's upcoming tour of Zimbabwe for three T20Is and as many ODIs was expected to be a humdrum affair, but the importance of the series changed due to Bangladesh Cricket Board's (BCB) insistence that the team to go in a different direction in terms of performance and approach in the shortest format.

"It is high time for a change," a BCB source, wishing to be anonymous, told The Daily Star yesterday when asked about the leadership of the T20I side and the direction the board wanted to take. The impetus to change is not only coming from one or two of the BCB higher-ups, but some of the key decision-makers in the board.

It was learned that Mahmudullah Riyad is set to be rested for the tour as the BCB feels the need for change to the side that played in the West Indies. The Tigers lost the T20I series 2-0 in the Caribbean and the approach of the team did not gather any momentum following the T20 World Cup debacle in the UAE under Riyad's leadership.

Although BCB president Nazmul Hassan said that he would hold talks with Riyad after the team's return from the West Indies, sources close to the board are of the understanding that a change in captaincy in the T20 format is just a formality. The precedent was set after Mominul Haque stepped down from Test captaincy owing to a run of poor performances with the bat.

Riyad's form has also been under scrutiny as he has yet to have a major contribution with the bat since the World Cup in UAE.



England's Ben Stokes walks onto the pitch for the last time in one-day internationals ahead of the first match of the series against South Africa at the Riverside Ground in Chester-le-Street on Tuesday. PHOTO: REUTERS

Stokes hopes to prolong career

APP, CHESTER-LE-STREET

Ben Stokes said on Tuesday he was retiring from one day internationals earlier than planned as the England Test captain hopes it will prolong his career into his mid-30s.

The all-rounder made his 105th and final ODI appearance against South Africa on Tuesday -- a match that took place at his Durham home ground.

Before his farewell match, 32-year-old Stokes reiterated his warning about England's gruelling schedule.

"The schedule for me feels unsustainable," Stokes told Sky Sports News shortly before Tuesday's toss.

"I didn't like the feeling of not being able to contribute in the way I wanted to -- as an all-rounder I wanted to contribute with the bat and ball."

He added: "When I thought about it long and hard, I felt I don't feel I can do that in all three formats. I always knew that at some point I would have to choose one of the white-ball formats."



"It's not just that he has not scored runs. The manner in which he is applying himself with the bat is also impacting the team and is a major cause for concern," a BCB director told The Daily Star yesterday on condition of anonymity.

Riyad's absence in the T20I series in Zimbabwe is being disguised as rest out of respect towards the veteran player, but with the T20 World Cup on the horizon, who are the BCB looking at?

It was learned that all-rounder Shakib Al Hasan had been earmarked to take on captaincy. But as Shakib was slated to be rested for the Zimbabwe series, the BCB are now pondering whether the left-hander should be on the Zimbabwe tour to get his ideas across sooner rather than later.

Why Shakib? While the BCB passively admit that carrying on with Riyad might have been a mistake, why do they feel Shakib can make a difference?

"Only Shakib [among the seniors] has the tendency to make sure that youngsters keep growing and take on meaningful roles in the side," a source close to BCB decision-makers said.

It was learned that Nurul Hasan Sohan could be handed captaincy on an interim basis if Shakib remains unavailable for the Zimbabwe tour. In case Shakib is included, Sohan may get the nod as vice-captain of the T20I outfit.

BCB are also looking at all the upcoming major events with an eye on Shakib leading the side. Team director Khaled Mahmud said just a day prior to Shakib being handed Test captaincy this year that "if Shakib asked, he could lead in all three formats". There is much time before the ODI World Cup in India in 2023, but for now it appears that all roads may lead to Shakib.

AGM clears way for formation of RCAs

SPORTS REPORTER

The Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) made two major amendments to its constitution during its Annual General Meeting (AGM) at a city hotel yesterday, the first enabling the formation of Regional Cricket Associations (RCA) while the other cut down the councillorship from two to one for the Super League clubs.

Establishing Regional Cricket Associations (RCA) was one of Nazmul Hassan Papon's foremost goals before being elected president of the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) for the first time in 2013.

"The BCB will provide directions and delegate responsibility. A total of eight RCAs will be formed with councillors and directors in Rajshahi, Sylhet, Mymensingh, Barishal, Dhaka, Rangpur, Chattogram and Khulna. For bigger divisions, we will have 17 members and for smaller regions, we will have eleven members," Hassan told the media yesterday.

However, it will be important to see how the BCB will form the structure of the RCA in the coming days.

"We will sort everything out at the first board meeting and then we can inform in detail. So far, the BCB will nominate and provide guidelines. Once the guidelines are set and RCAs formed, you will get answers to everything," he said.



The changes to the councillorship come after lingering questions about why the six Super League clubs of the Dhaka Premier League held two councillorships.

"We wanted there to be stronger teams apart from Abahani and Mohammedan. Now almost all the clubs are strong. You don't see Abahani or Mohammedan winning the title. We see other clubs such as Sheikh Jamal, Legends of Rugganj and others."

"Our aim was to return to one councillorship. Bangladesh cricket has reached a point where there won't be any dissatisfaction from anyone even if we give every club one councillorship. In fact, they should be happy. Those who were present at the AGM all welcomed the decision. But the clubs which saw their numbers go down won't be satisfied," he said.

According to many, the reason behind cutting down the councillorship had to do with the fact that the current board had gained the trust of all the clubs so the decrease in councillorship would not harm the Hassan-led board in the next election.

"Our main intention was that an extra vote would be like an extra incentive to make clubs more competitive for the championships and in preparing teams. Since other clubs -- not only Abahani and Mohammedan -- are fighting for the championship, I think the main objective has been served," Hassan added.

Lord's relaxes dress code

REUTERS, LONDON

Lord's relaxed its strict Pavilion dress code on Tuesday with members not required to wear jackets as temperatures soared into the mid 30s Celsius for the start of the County Championship game between Middlesex and Sussex.

Much of Britain is gripped in a heatwave with temperatures expected to threaten all-time records later on Tuesday, with predictions of the mercury rising above 40 degrees. Read full story

"MCC (Marylebone Cricket Club) has advised us that the dress regulations in the Pavilion will be relaxed on Tuesday 19 July," a statement on the Middlesex County Cricket Club website said.

"Gentlemen in the Pavilion that day will not be required to wear a jacket, although MCC will still require Gentlemen to wear ties."

"Spectators should also adhere to the usual dress regulations on trousers and shoes."

It is not the first time hot weather has forced a relaxation of one of British sport's most traditional venues with the rules also being relaxed in 2018.

The stifling heat also led to two County Championship games between Gloucestershire and Hampshire and Northants and Lancashire having three reduced-length 90-minute sessions on Tuesday with play finishing at 1630 local time (1530GMT) in the "interest of spectator and player welfare".

Several horse racing events have also been cancelled in Britain because of the heatwave.

Abahani ensure runners-up spot

SPORTS REPORTER

After Bashundhara Kings clinched the Bangladesh Premier League title for the third time in a row on Monday, Abahani ensured a second-place finish in the league with a commanding 5-0 win over Sheikh Jamal DC at the Shaheed Dhirendranath Datta Stadium in Cumilla yesterday.

Abahani confirmed their runners-up position with two matches in hand. With 44 points from 20 matches, Abahani are now out of reach for Saif SC and Sheikh Jamal DC, both of whom have 34 points each and only two matches left to play.

Abahani started the season on a high note by winning the Independence Cup and the Federation Cup. The Sky Blues were heavily tipped to be only the second team after Sheikh Russel KC to win a treble in a season.

However, inconsistent performances in the league saw the Dhanmondi-based outfit fall behind the title race and eventually stay content with their third runners-up place finish in 13 seasons.

With the pressure of fighting for the title non-existent, Abahani were ruthless, putting five past three-time champions Sheikh Jamal.

Emon Mahmud gave Abahani the lead in the sixth minute before Raphael Augusto doubled the margin with a header in the 39th minute. Daniel Colindres then struck the third goal just before halftime while Nabib Newaj Jibon struck two goals in the 77th and 82nd minutes to complete the route.



Pakistan opener Abdullah Shafique (C) performs the sajdah after reaching a century during the fourth day of the first Test against Sri Lanka at the Galle International Cricket Stadium on Tuesday. PHOTO: AFP

Pakistan on course in Galle

REUTERS, COLOMBO

Pakistan's Abdullah Shafique smashed his second Test hundred to put the tourists on course to accomplish a mammoth chase on day four of the opening test against Sri Lanka in Galle on Tuesday.

Pakistan finished on 222-3 needing 120 runs to grab the lead in the two-Test series.

Sri Lanka had appeared to have the upper hand in the contest after they posted 337 in their second innings setting Pakistan a daunting target of 342.

Shafique combined with Imam-ul-Haq (35) in an opening stand of 87 and later raised 101 with skipper Babar Azam (55) in a vastly improved batting display by the tourists who were skittled out for 218 in the first innings.

Shafique's unbeaten 112 contained five fours and a six and he had Mohammad Rizwan at the other end.