

Can Emon express himself?

SPORTS REPORTER

There are whispers in the cricketing arena that Mushfiqur Rahim is not happy about the fact that he was rested for the T20I series team on the upcoming tour of Zimbabwe, but the move came as the Bangladesh think-tank aim to empower youngsters, expecting them to come out of the shadows and instill their own identity in the shortest format of the game.

Intending to provide a platform where they could express themselves freely in a format in which Bangladesh have long been struggling, the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) took the bold step of forming a young T20I team led by 28-year-old Nurul Hasan Sohan for the upcoming Zimbabwe series.

The board opted to rest regular T20I skipper Mahmudullah Riyad and Mushfiqur for the T20Is, although both seniors will feature in the three-match ODI series against Zimbabwe. Replacing them in the T20Is will young left-handed opener Parvez Hossain Emon and pacer Hasan Mahmud.

Emon burst onto the scene as he became the youngest Bangladeshi to score a T20 hundred, doing so off just 42 balls for Fortune Barishal in the Bangabandhu T20 Cup in 2020. And although he was included in the Tigers T20I squad for the third and final match against Pakistan last year, the left-hander is yet to make his international debut.

The lack of opportunities afforded to youngsters has been regularly questioned, especially as a lack of consistency in the selection magnifies the pressure on players to perform during those sparing opportunities. Now, they want to give room for players like Emon to express themselves and play with their natural attacking approach.

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Habibul Bashar



Bangladesh have fielded five different opening pairs in eight matches since the last T20 World Cup. The likes of Liton Das, Naim Sheikh, Najmul Hossain Shanto, Saif Hasan, Anamul Haque and Munim Shahriar have been shuffled around, but no duo has shown promise.

There are also questions about the approach of the cricketers once they make it to the national team, where they appear to be shackled.

“We are looking for someone who can score runs at the top quickly and utilise the Powerplay. We want to come out of the conventional approach in the shortest format and try to play a fearless brand of cricket,” Bashar said.

Emon has been nursed in the High Performance squad and the attacking left-hander has been in fine touch, scoring a hundred in the recent practise game against the A team.

“I think it’s a great opportunity for me. If I get the chance to play, I will try to give a hundred per cent. Since I like to play my shots, I will try to continue doing that and apply myself in the middle. I am ready to play according to the demands of the team and willing to contribute to my team’s victory,” Emon said.



Sydney McLaughlin, American hurdler and reigning Olympic gold medalist, topples yet another world record -- the fourth time in two years -- to win the women’s 400m hurdles final by clocking 50.68 seconds in the World Athletics Championships on Friday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

The long wait is over for shuttlers

ASHEAQ UL MUSHFIQ

Sport was halted by the Covid-19 pandemic and although some have already come out of that slumber, other disciplines are still trying to find their feet. Finally, after a patient three-year wait, the 37th edition of the National Badminton Championship is set to take the stage at the Shaheed Tajuddin Ahmed Indoor Stadium in Dhaka today.

377 shuttlers, including 313 men and 64 women, from 71 teams will feature in the tournament, which will be the first on the recently-renovated wooden floor.

The last major badminton event came during the Bangabandhu 9th Bangladesh Games in April 2021, when 17-year-old Gourab Singha became champion in the singles event and climbed to the top of the national rankings.

The youngster will be tasked with defending his national title in this edition of the championship against the likes of two-time national champion Mohammad Salman Khan, who said he was keen to play on the refurbished surface.

“I’m glad that the tournament is being held again after almost three years of waiting. The renovation works finished 10-15 days ago. I look forward to playing,” Salman told The Daily Star.

When asked how his preparations for the tournament were given that



they gym was off limits due to the renovation, the Sylhet-born shuttler said that he and fellow local players had trained in the district’s local academy.

“Players from Sylhet trained at the Sylhet Badminton Academy, so we didn’t face many problems in terms of finding a place to train. But players from Dhaka faced problems. However, we now go ahead with all we have and look forward,” he added.

Inconsistency in staging events and tournaments has always been an issue for the Bangladesh Badminton Federation (BBF).

After dissolving the elected committee in 2020, the National Sports Council (NSC) disclosed a 27-member ad-hoc committee to run the federation. But that ad-hoc committee also dissolved and now, another interim committee is

running the show.

However, Salman was reluctant to speak about the environment in the federation or its duties, focusing instead only on conversations about the game.

Salman believes there are many talented shuttlers scattered across the country that need to be groomed properly.

However, the 26-year-old’s drive for the game is gradually fading as he comes to terms with the realities of the sport in the country.

“I play these tournaments as a hobby now. My goal was to become a national champion. I did that and saw the reality of the country’s badminton structure. To me it’s more of a hobby than a profession. I hope that future shuttlers will have a better experience with the game,” he concluded.

Mathews’ chance to make his 100th Test memorable

AGENCIES

Sri Lanka and Pakistan will lock horns in the second and final Test of the two-match series in Galle, starting from today.

Pakistan rode on opener Abdullah Shafique’s unbeaten 160 to chase down a record 342 at the Galle International Stadium on a tense fifth day to go one up.

Sri Lanka’s teenage spinner Dunith Wellalage has been included in the final 12 and the 19-year-old left-arm orthodox seems a likely replacement for injured spinner Maheesh Theekshana as the hosts look to bounce back in the two-match series.

Pakistan added left-arm spinner Nauman Ali to the team announced Saturday, in place of injury-hit pace spearhead Shaheen Shah Afridi.

The focus, however, will be on Angelo Mathews, who will be playing his 100th Test. It has been quite a career as he has been part of some of Sri Lanka’s greatest Test victories.

He has hit plenty of big innings in the company of the tail, most memorably his 160 at Headingley in 2014 that helped turn a dire situation into a victory.

Mathews, a middle-order batter and a medium-pace bowler -- although he now seldom bowls due to injuries -- has scored 6,876 runs in 99 Tests since his 2009 debut against Pakistan in Galle.

A big contribution would be the perfect way to celebrate the occasion.

‘Sky’s the limit’

AFP, EUGENE

World record breaker Sydney McLaughlin warned that “the sky’s the limit” after smashing her 400m hurdles record on Friday, but then hinted that she could well switch disciplines.

The American clocked an astonishing 50.68 seconds for gold at Hayward Field, obliterating her own world record by more than half a second.

But questions were immediately posed about a potential switch, with McLaughlin insisting all would come down to what plan her renowned coach Bobby Kersee might hatch.

“Bobby and I have talked about possibly looking at other events but I don’t know if that’s going to happen.”

Asked whether a switch might be to the 400m flat, McLaughlin said: “I think anything’s possible... but I leave it in the hands of my coach, Bobby.”

“My coach thinks there’s a lot more to be done,” she said. “The sky’s the limit for sure.”

The 22-year-old looked stunned as she hared through the line in front of a partisan, baying crowd. “I was just trying to process the lactic acid!” she said of the several moments she spent in quiet reflection in the mayhem all around her.

Galtier praises ‘very dynamic’ Mbappe

AGENCIES

Kylian Mbappe scored as Paris Saint-Germain made it two wins out of two on their Japanese tour with a 3-0 victory over J-League side Urawa Reds on Saturday.

Mbappe was the only PSG player retained in the starting line-up after Wednesday’s 2-1 win over Kawasaki Frontale in Tokyo, with manager Christophe Galtier dropping star forwards Lionel Messi and Neymar to the bench.

Mbappe alone was still too much for Urawa to handle, firing home a well-taken goal from a tight angle in the 35th minute.

Galtier brought on Messi and Neymar for the final half an hour, but neither were able to score in front of a crowd of 61,000 in Saitama.

“Kylian Mbappe seems very happy to me, very fulfilled,” said Galtier.

“He is very dynamic in his training sessions.”

Pablo Sarabia and Arnaud Kalimuendo got the other two goals for PSG, who play Gamba Osaka on Monday in Osaka in the final game of their tour.

Galtier handed a start to Warren Zaire-Emery -- just 16 years and four months old -- alongside Marco Verratti in midfield.

Ten Hag laments his side’s ‘drop of focus’

AFP, PERTH

New Manchester United coach Erik ten Hag demanded his team take heed of their “unacceptable” second half lapse after a 2-2 friendly draw against Aston Villa on Saturday.

United let slip a two-goal advantage to end Ten Hag’s winning run in the final game of their pre-season tour of Asia and Australia.

United, wearing their white away shirts, exhibited their newfound attacking flair in a dominant first half, but conceded a header to Villa’s Calum Chambers in the dying seconds amid inclement conditions at Perth’s Optus Stadium marked by a soggy pitch.

“The drop of focus is unacceptable. That cannot happen,” Ten Hag told reporters.

“We have to learn from the second half that it is not possible just to be comfortable being two goals up.”

United wrapped up their tour with England national player Jadon Sancho a standout to claim his third goal from four friendlies.

They had earlier notched convincing victories over Liverpool, Melbourne Victory and Crystal Palace ahead of their English Premier League opener against Brighton on August 7.

Even though the second half collapse ended their tour on a sour note, Ten Hag was still buoyed by the signs of improvement from United -- who had finished a disappointing sixth in last season’s Premier League.

“I have seen a lot of progress in the last two weeks,” he said. “In the first half, I saw really good football. The guys might have been tired, but it is never an excuse.”

