

Mahmud urges ‘365 days’ of patience

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh players were not the only ones to receive sticks from fans and the media following the debacle in the Asia Cup as the Tigers’ team director Khaled Mahmud Sujon also came under scrutiny, triggered by his aggressive responses made during the continental championship.

On Sunday’s episode of The Daily Star’s multimedia show, Non Striker’s End powered by Daraz, Mahmud opened up and discussed various topics, among which the Asia Cup was a prominent one.

Mahmud, one of the most influential members of the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB), urged for a year of patience and positivity from the fans and media in order to restore order and structure in the Tigers’ T20 outfit.

“We are not being patient enough. We often lose our cool following each failure. I admit the fact that Bangladesh’s back is against the wall at the moment in the T 2 0 format and there is no other way than to improve from this situation. So, you need to give us some time. I am not saying that Bangladesh will achieve big in the upcoming World Cup but at the same time there is a possibility of doing well,” Mahmud told The Daily Star during the interview.

“I didn’t want many days. I just want 365 days. Just promise that you [media] won’t ask any negative questions to anyone, not even the board directors, coach, and selectors. I want everyone to have confidence in the team and the confidence to spread everywhere through the media, just like the negative news gets spread. So, I urge you to give us a year” Mahmud added.

The 51-year-old also blamed social media and mainstream media for twisting facts. He said that even someone like Shakib Al Hasan remains afraid of taking decisions for the same reason.

“Things get twisted in such a manner that even our players are afraid to give interviews to the media. They think that the news will be twisted which will eventually harm their career. It’s like the media is controlling their career and it’s wrong.

“They are unable to play with freedom because of Facebook, YouTube, and the media and even a person like Shakib is afraid of taking decisions. Shakib is the biggest name in Bangladesh cricket and even he thinks twice and asks me will it be right to make a tough call,” he said.

The readers can watch the full interview on The Daily Star’s Facebook page and YouTube Channel.



Pakistan young pacer Naseem Shah uprooted the stumps of Sri Lanka opener Kusal Mendis with an absolute belter of a delivery in the third ball of the innings to give Asia Cup final an enthralling start at the Dubai International Cricket Stadium in Dubai yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

Asia Cup saw rivalries renewed

ABDULLAH AL MEHDI from Dubai

The sight of Bangladesh skipper Shakib Al Hasan talking to his Pakistani counterpart Babar Azam during a practice session at the ICC Academy in Dubai, when the Tigers were still in the tournament, would have caught the imagination of most travelling journalists from both nations who came to cover the 2022 Asia Cup. Neither Shakib nor Babar can ill afford to come together in such a way even during bilateral series, but the atmosphere at this Asia Cup has seen plenty of smiles and congeniality between opposite camps.

Throughout the Asia Cup, such interactions between star players give the vibe that there is eagerness to build friendships and learn on developing their game, surpassing the rivalry that exists at a cricketing level.

How Virat Kohli, Rohit Sharma or Rishabh Pant were asking Shaheen Shah Afridi regarding his injury, or Rashid Khan and Mohammad Nabi sharing jokes with the Pakistan squad, all induced good spirits when the tournament began. Afridi even asked this reporter ‘Kemon Achhen’ in Bangla, showing the cultural mixing has been on point and afforded by all the teams sharing the ICC Academy for their practice sessions.

Rivalries were, however, renewed when the fireworks began. India beat Pakistan in a nervy game during the group stage, where the players did not even let the political situation between the countries disturb the personal relations between them. Bangladesh umpire Masudur Rahman Mukul, who had the honour of officiating both the intensely competitive India-Pakistan games this tournament, later told The Daily Star how the respect flowed between the sides but the body language remained aggressive.



The rivalry that saw the biggest boost during the tournament was, of course, the one between Bangladesh-Sri Lanka. Dasun Shanaka had said that Bangladesh did not have any world-class bowlers apart from Shakib and Mustafizur Rahman.

A war of words ensued in the media with Bangladesh team director Khaled Mahmud then coming to a press conference ahead of the crucial group stage match against Sri Lanka and saying that at least Bangladesh had two while Sri Lanka had none. That resulted in Sri Lanka’s legendary former star Mahela Jayawardena coming to social media to tell the Lankans to put in a world-class performance.

Following a tightly fought contest between the sides, the passion and rivalry, which had seen its peak during the Nidahas Trophy in 2018, was reignited. There were jibes on social media from Sri Lanka stars while Bangladesh felt the heat of not doing

the job in the death overs with the ball. Even as the two sides played things down after the game, the incidents left plenty of ammunition for the rivalry to gear on.

Afghanistan and Pakistan fans have a history of being both friendly and rowdy together. At Sharjah, during the tight-rope match that was decided by the two sixes from Pakistan’s Naseem Shah in the end, tempers flared on the pitch with Pakistan’s Asif Ali reacting badly to a send-off from Fareed Ahmad. Meanwhile, videos circulated on social media had shown fans engaging in violence. However, the Stadium authorities did not confirm the development.

With so much congeniality around during the tournament, the heat of the battle getting to players further showed the real flavour of a tournament such as the Asia Cup and the current one saw more catalysts for excitement in the future editions.

Tigers’ three-day training camp from today

SPORTS REPORTER

After Bangladesh’s dismal Asia Cup campaign in the UAE, where they exited from the group stage without a single victory, the Tigers are now gearing up for their next challenge – the T20 World Cup in Australia next month.

Bangladesh are also scheduled to play a tri-nation series involving hosts New Zealand and Pakistan, a tour that will act as a prelude to the T20 World Cup.

With the deadline for naming the squad for the World Cup set for September 15, the national team players and some selected cricketers from the BCB HP team and Bangladesh Tigers programme will partake in a three-day training camp

-- from September 12 to 14 -- at the Sher-e-Bangla National Cricket Stadium in Mirpur.

The Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) selectors are expected to name the squad for the marquee event by September 14 and whispers from within the team management suggest that Mahmudullah Riyad, who led Bangladesh in the T20 World Cup in the previous edition last year, is no longer an automatic pick in the Tigers’ T20I squad.

Meanwhile, Soumya Sarkar, who was dropped from the side due to a sombre campaign at the last T20 World Cup, is a strong candidate to make a return to the squad. It was learned that Soumya is being considered, given the left-hander’s free-flowing stroke-making prowess, while keeping the fast and bouncy Australian conditions in mind.

Bangladesh’s newly appointed technical consultant Sridharan Sriram will be keeping a close eye on the three-day training camp, which begins today.

‘Final’ before final for U-17s

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh are looking forward to edge past their cross-border rivals to book their place in the final of the SAFF U-17 Championship as the boys in red and green take on India in the first semifinal of the event at the Racecourse International Stadium in Colombo, Sri Lanka today.

The match will get underway at 3:45pm BST before hosts Sri Lanka encounter Nepal in the second semifinal at the same venue.

India have been a side who often had broken the hearts of Bangladesh, regardless of the competitions’ age level, and their latest setback was suffered in the SAFF U-20 Championship final earlier in August this year.

Nine players of that Bangladesh U-20 team are featuring and playing important roles in the ongoing event for the charges of British coach Paul Smalley who, before the tournament began, vowed to bring the SAFF U-17 Championship trophy by beating India in the final.

However, Bangladesh are set to face India in the semifinal instead and captain Imran Khan and Co are apparently finding it hard to wait for their upcoming fixture.

“I said before that we want India in the final but we are getting them in the semifinal instead. We all are ready to play the match and remain hopeful to reach the final by beating them,” said Imran, who was also part of the U-20 team.

Swiatek’s fulfilment on and off court

AGENCIES

Iga Swiatek believes “the sky is the limit” after she crowned her rise to the pinnacle of women’s tennis with a third Grand Slam title at the US Open on Saturday.

The 21-year-old Polish world number one claimed her second Grand Slam title of 2022 at Flushing Meadows, defeating Tunisia’s Ons Jabeur 6-2, 7-6 (7/5).

It was the latest staging post on a dazzling season which has provided ample evidence Swiatek is the front-runner to dominate the sport as it heads into the post-Serena Williams era.

Swiatek, whose favourite surface is clay, says the fact that she was able to triumph in New York could prove to be a psychological watershed for her game.

“It’s something that I wasn’t expecting for sure. It’s also like a confirmation for me that sky is the limit.”

On Saturday, Swiatek shrugged off the uniquely raucous New York crowd – chair umpire Louise Azemar Engzell made repeated calls for quiet amongst spectators which were routinely ignored – to close out her 10th straight victory in a final since 2019.

Swiatek believes her ability to block out distractions, and mould her gameplan to suit matches as they are evolving is a sign that she has become a mentally tougher player.

“I’m mostly proud of the fact that mentally I’m not kind of breaking up in those important moments,” Swiatek said.

World number one Iga Swiatek was able to have her cake and eat it at the U.S. Open after the Pole capped her campaign at a star-studded Flushing Meadows by collecting her third Grand Slam title.

She has enjoyed her brushes with New York’s celebrity scene during the tournament, beat Tunisian Ons Jabeur 6-2, 7-6(5) on Saturday to claim a massive \$2.6 million winner’s check.

However, tournament organisers had another reward for her, hiding a piece of tiramisu – one of her favourite treats – inside the trophy.

“I really appreciate it. Especially since I didn’t have anything to eat,” she said.

The two weeks of competition could scarcely have been sweeter for the Pole, who balanced her usual on-court seriousness with off-court fun.

She grabbed a photo with her idol Serena Williams, rubbed shoulders with Olympic gold medallist Lindsey Vonn and swooned at the sight of singer Seal.

“Actually after I met Seal, I was like, ‘Even if I’m going to lose right now I already won this tournament, because I got photo with him,’” said Swiatek.

“It’s something that it’s only going to happen probably in New York - yeah, because it’s New York.”

Swiatek, who has also won two French Open titles, fit right in with the city’s boisterous fans and was greeted on the Flushing Meadows Plaza for an ESPN interview with a roaring crowd of her compatriots after becoming the first Polish woman to win the tournament.

“The energy that they give me, it’s surreal,” she said.



I really tried but Iga didn’t make it easy for me. She deserved to win today. I don’t like her very much right now but it’s okay. I’m not someone that going to give up. I am sure I’m going to be in the final again.

Tunisia’s “Minister of Happiness”
Ons Jabeur