

Mustakim's tribulations far from over

SPORTS REPORTER

Having fashioned a racket out of cocksheets from a fish container and collected discarded shuttlecocks, then third-grader Mustakim Hossain began his badminton journey in 2014 before his mother, who works as a domestic helper, gifted him a racket worth Tk 250 to provide a real taste of the game.

Just a few months ago, the now tenth-grader was forced to peddle rickshaws to afford treatment for his parents. This past Friday, he embraced glory in the South Asia (U-15 & U-17) Regional Junior Championships in Assam by winning Bangladesh a maiden gold medal at this level.

Mustakim paired with Sifat Ullah Galib to beat the Indian duo of Garg Abhinav and Koundilya Prateek in the boy's doubles final.

Mustakim has had numerous benefactors during this time. Yet, he still wants for food, equipment,



training and accommodation to realise his dreams of representing Bangladesh at senior level.

"In the beginning, my family could not support me because my father is a rickshaw-puller and my mother is a domestic helper. So, they could not provide much support although my mother managed to buy a racket worth Tk 250 for me when I was a class four-student," Mustakim told The Daily Star yesterday.

"After two years, I bought another racket worth Tk 300 by saving the money I got for tiffin. Neighbouring uncles who played badminton during the winter also helped me. The thana education officer, TNO of Birampur and Engineer Sarwar Alam also helped me come this far by providing money and facilities."

Mustakim became champion in the inter-school championship in February this year, thereby getting into the national age-group team.

"I could not participate in July's national badminton championship because I had returned home from the Sarwar Badminton Academy. I went to Dhaka and drove a rickshaw for two months to bear the cost of treatment for my father and mother. I got the good news that I was selected for the age-group national team one month after returning to the Sarwar Badminton Academy, where I get free facilities."

He concluded: "My dream is to represent the country well at the international level, but my family is not well-off. If I am given food, equipment and facilities, I believe I can deliver more for the nation in the coming days."



Bangladesh skipper Nigar Sultana Joty awkwardly negotiates a delivery during the Tigresses' nine-wicket defeat against Pakistan in a Women's Asia Cup fixture at the Sylhet International Cricket Stadium (Ground-2) yesterday. (Bottom) India batters bump fists during their match against Malaysia.

PHOTO: BCB/ACC

'Not an ideal wicket for T20s'

SPORTS REPORTER from Sylhet

Despite bundling Bangladesh out for just 70 runs before going on to win their game by nine wickets in the Women's Asia Cup, Pakistan opener Sidra Ameen stated that the slow and low Sylhet ground-2 pitch was far from ideal for T20 cricket.

Man of the match Sidra was unbeaten on 36 as her side chased down the target with ease after Bangladesh struggled right from the start after being asked to bat before crawling to 70 for eight in 20 overs.

"I don't think this is an ideal wicket for the T20 format, but as players, we have to adjust and play. I think 100, 80 or even 70 runs may be enough since there was plenty of turn on offer. Bowlers that were able to get flight also got turn and the ball kept low. It's difficult to improvise and tough to play too many strokes," Sidra told the media after the game yesterday.

The tournament's tight schedule, which will see the venue host 10 games across five days, means that the surfaces are not allowed enough time to rest. Coupled with the early start for morning games, which begin at 9:00am, the toss has become paramount.

Adding to that is persistent rain, which makes things even more difficult for the groundstaff, while the dampness of the early mornings makes things even more difficult for the batters.

"I think toss was very important since the wicket was very slow and low and it was also turning a lot. Our bowlers bowled well and they should get credit. Bangladesh didn't get enough runs on the board."

On the other hand, Bangladesh, who aimed to undo Pakistan with spin, fell



victim to the same trap that they were trying to set.

Salma Khatun finished as the top scorer with an unbeaten 24 in a game where Bangladesh were reduced on 48 for 6 inside 16 overs.

Salma also expressed her disappointment over the pitch and termed it a 'different surface' after the game.

"The wicket was different. There was a lot of turn. There was not much turn in the previous game, which is why batters were getting beaten. We were under pressure after losing a wicket in the first over of the innings," said Salma.

Interestingly, Bangladesh skipper Nigar

Sultana Joty was seemingly unable to read the pitch, stating that the hosts would have batted first had she won the toss. "I don't know what the captain's decision was. Decisions come from the team management, coach and captain," Salma added.

Regardless of the tough nature of the surface, it is imperative that Bangladesh improve their skills, especially in the batting department, which has been a huge concern in recent times.

The Tigresses will take on Malaysia in their next game on October 6 at the main ground of the Sylhet International Cricket Stadium.

NSC approves BCB's constitutional amendment

SPORTS REPORTER

Although the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) had held an AGM to pave the way for the formation of Regional Cricket Associations (RCAs), the board had to seek approval from the National Sports Council in order to finally amend its constitution.

BCB CEO Nizamuddin Chowdhury yesterday told reporters that the new constitution would be known as 'Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) constitution 2022', following NSC's approval.

"If we want to make any amendments to our constitution, we need to have an Annual General Meeting to place it [to seek approval from the stakeholders]. Later, we have to obtain approval for the amended constitution from the NSC," Nizamuddin told reporters yesterday.

The BCB held a meeting attended by board president Nazmul Hassan Papon on Sunday, when the implementation of RCAs had been discussed.

"We sent our amended constitution to the NSC and they approved it and it will now be considered the BCB's constitution. Apart from that, during yesterday's (Sunday's) board meeting, we approved the policies that we want to implement regarding RCAs.

"We will form the committee very soon and that committee will see the policy that we want to adopt for RCAs and, if required, the committee will recommend adding or subtracting anything from that. Later we will set up committees for different RCAs.

"The board will look after the structural policy of the RCAs from time to time and will make changes if necessary. With the draft policy, we don't have any obstacles in starting RCAs. We had planned it [the draft policy] for a long time and sent that policy for approval during our last AGM. Now we will form the committee as soon as possible," he added.

RCAs will pave the way for decentralisation of cricket in the country. Dhaka, Sylhet, Rajshahi, Chattogram, Khulna, Rangpur, and Barisal will form RCAs while Mymensingh will be under Dhaka Division.

'SA really confident ahead of World T20'

AFP, New Delhi

South Africa's David Miller says they are feeling "really confident" ahead of the Twenty20 World Cup this month despite their series loss to India.

Miller's unbeaten 106 off 47 balls was in vain on Sunday as India won by 16 runs in Guwahati to take an unbeatable 2-0 lead in the three-match series.

Middle-order batsman Miller said losing the series would not affect their morale for the World Cup. South Africa start their campaign on October 24.

"There are a lot of stories in the past, with one being Australia not doing too well before the World Cup (last year) and they end up winning the World Cup," the 33-year-old Miller told reporters.

"I don't think it's too much to worry about. Like I said, there is a few areas that we can work on and think that will always be the case.

"We are feeling really confident with a lot of areas."

"We have built up a really good squad over the last year and a half and we get on really well with each other," Miller added.

"We've got great partnerships, we have won a lot of series in the last year and to have lost the series was very disappointing, but at least we can walk away with our heads held high."

Inter and Inzaghi at crossroads ahead of Barca clash

AFP, Milan

Inter Milan are teetering on the brink of full-blown crisis as they prepare for the visit of Barcelona to the San Siro, which will likely have a huge bearing on their chances of making the knockout stages of the Champions League.

Saturday's home defeat at the hands of Roma, guided by Inter legend Jose Mourinho no less, left Simone Inzaghi's side eight points off the pace in the Serie A title race and wondering what shape their season will take.

It was their fourth loss of the league season and dreadful preparation for the Tuesday's showdown at the San Siro, where Inter and Barca will tussle for second place in Group C.

Both teams are three points behind leaders Bayern Munich and the upcoming double-header will decide whether their European adventure continues as



Bayern have the chance to make the last 16 with their two games with bottom side Viktoria Plzen.

Defeat would leave Inter and Inzaghi way off their objectives

for the season and increase the dissenting voices around the coach despite recent assurances from the club that his job is not at risk.

Inter have already lost the same number of league matches as in the whole of last season, when they conceded their Serie A crown on the final day of the campaign following a thrilling battle with

local rivals AC Milan.

As it stands Inter will have a battle on their hands to qualify for the Champions League next season as a host of teams have improved and made Italy's top flight more competitive than it has been in years.

"Us coaches are always at risk, every week," Inzaghi told reporters after a defeat which highlighted flaws that have begun to characterise their performances.

Inzaghi insisted that Saturday's was their best performance of the season, and in truth the half-time score of 1-1 was a scandalous reflection of the balance of play.

However Roma's leveller was similar to other goals conceded

by Inter this season in that it came from an individual error, Nicolo Barella failing to control a wild Hakan Calhanoglu pass before under-fire goalkeeper Samir Handanovic flapped at Dybala's volleyed finish.

Even more worrying is the what happened to their performance once Roma equalised, the away side clearly on top until star man Dybala -- who had been linked with Inter all summer -- had to leave the field with around half an hour remaining.

And Roma's winner came with Inter's backline sleeping at a set-piece just as for Udinese's first two goals in their 3-1 loss against the league's surprise package before the international break.

"Yes, of course I'm worried. I was more so after Udinese but we've still got the same number of points," said Inzaghi.

"We need to focus on the details. At the moment we're paying for every moment of carelessness, even in situations on which we have worked.

"But I'm not going to give up, we all need to do more, starting with me."



Bangladesh pacer Taskin Ahmed was out enjoying sunny Christchurch yesterday as the Tigers went out for a walk around the city. The Tigers are slated to have their first practice session today to gear up for the tri-nation T20I series involving New Zealand and Pakistan, scheduled to begin with the opening match between Bangladesh and Pakistan on October 7.

PHOTO: FACEBOOK