

Youngsters in leadership roles a positive step

SPORTS REPORTER

The ninth edition of the Bangladesh Premier League (BPL) is seeing a positive revolution as far as leadership is concerned, with relatively younger players looking to take the charge ahead of proven seniors.

It was a near certainty that Test and T20I skipper Shakib Al Hasan would lead Fortune Barishal ahead of their opening game against Sylhet Strikers, so it came as a surprise when Mehedi Hasan Miraz was named captain and came out for the toss yesterday.

There was discussion about using the domestic circuit as a platform where relatively younger players could hone their leadership qualities and Miraz's promotion as the captain, that too ahead of Shakib, was a bold move.

Interestingly, the Barishal team management said that they would name their captain on 'match-by-



match' basis, which is something that rarely happens, especially when the team has an experienced campaigner like Shakib.

"We will announce the captain on match-by-match basis," Barishal manger Sazzad Ahmed Shipon said through a press release yesterday.

The decision could help players like Miraz gain experience and exposure, which will definitely polish the leadership skills that he showed when leading the Bangladesh U-19 team to the semifinal of the ICC Under-19 World Cup back in 2016.

More importantly, such roles can also help prepare the future leaders of Bangladesh cricket. Miraz can bank on the support from the likes of Shakib and Mahmudullah Riyad, who will be playing under him.

There was a huge controversy involving Miraz when Chattogram Challengers reprimed him of captaincy midway through the last edition of the BPL.

Meanwhile, the Khulna Tigers team management surprised many by opting to name Yasir Ali captain ahead of ODI skipper Tamim Iqbal. Although Khulna went on to lose their opening game against Dhaka Dominators yesterday, the cricketer will surely gain confidence as the tournament progresses.

It will be interesting to see whether the younger players will be able to utilise the opportunity and work on their leadership skills in the BPL and make a statement for the coming days.



Mashrafe Bin Mortaza-led Sylhet Strikers paid the price for dropping Shakib Al Hasan multiple times as the latter's boundary-laden 32-ball 67 propelled Fortune Barishal to a resounding 194-run total in the day's second Bangladesh Premier League fixture at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur on Saturday. [Inset] However, unlike Shakib, it was not a happy outing for another national stalwart, Tamim Iqbal, who failed to hit double digits for Khulna Tigers against Dhaka Dominators. Khulna lost the low-scoring affair by six wickets.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

'Not sure if you should have reviews without proper system'

SPORTS REPORTER

No Hawk eye ball tracking, no snickometer and no DRS in the ninth edition of the BPL pointed to a failure of the logistical nature. For two days, the first match of the day produced low scores but while that responsibility also lay with the batting sides, who has not heard of tired wickets at Mirpur over the past few years?

Although the BPL could not manage DRS, they attempted something called Alternate Decision Review System based on the third-umpire. However, Netherlands bowler Paul Van Meekeren, plying his trade for Khulna Tigers this season, was perplexed by the presence of a review system which was not the DRS.

In a dull game played in overcast conditions, Yasir Ali-led Khulna managed just 113 for eight as Dhaka Dominators' bowlers used the conditions to good effect. Dhaka began their chase of 114 looking solid but the most eye-catching phase of the match came when all the players converged around the umpires due to a leg-before decision given to Soumya Sarkar off spinner Nasum Ahmed.

Gazi Sohel was the on-field umpire who raised his finger and Soumya reviewed the decision immediately.

What transpired afterwards was dubious. The third-umpire David Millns did not see anything wrong with the on-field umpire's decision and stayed with the original decision. Soumya, left utterly disappointed by this series of events, stood his ground without leaving.

It also appeared from the replays that the ball had hit his gloves. The on-field umpire was in communication with the third-umpire again and the decision was overturned, leaving Tamim Iqbal in the



opposition utterly perplexed and players crowding the umpire.

After the six-wicket loss, Van Meekeren came to the press conference and had a few choice words for the alternate DRS.

"He [Soumya] was given out, then given out again after a review and then not out. Personally, I am not sure if you should have reviews if there is no proper system like Hawk-eye. But it is what it is," Meekeren began when asked about the most remarkable facet of the match.

"I think it will provide more confusion than clarity if we use it the way we are doing so at the moment. I think we should respect the umpire's decision. But I was at long on, so I don't know what was said or what was happening. But obviously, our guys were not happy because he (Soumya) is a dangerous player. But we had to move on," he said, trying to perhaps play down the effect of the decision.

"I wasn't really aware we had a review

system, and then when I watched the game last night there was a review for caught behind, but there was no snicko, it was just on the camera. So, especially for very thin edges, it's so hard if there is no technology. I am not in control of that," he added.

"It's very disappointing. It's why you get the DRS system to get rid of mistakes in the game. In the UK, we don't use DRS in the domestic leagues," he said.

Where does that leave the BCB in terms of having accountability in terms of decisions on the field? If a player has to stand his ground, it opens the door for confusion and further disappointment. The board had a time frame for when they could hold the BPL and that slot was determined at least six months before. Not organising adequate logistics was a negative. Putting on-field umpires prone to more controversy, puts the game in a difficult position. But it is BPL and it is what it is.

Abahani drop points again

SPORTS REPORTER

Six-time champions Abahani lost more ground in the title race of the Bangladesh Premier League with a goalless draw against Bangladesh Police at the Rafique Uddin Bhuiyan Stadium in Mymensingh yesterday.

The Sky Blues, who beat the same opposition 1-0 in a Federation Cup fixture four days ago, stuttered to their second draw in four matches, leaving them on eight points. They are level on points with second-placed Sheikh Jamal and four points behind league leaders Bashundhara Kings.

Police, on the other hand, moved to five points from four matches and were on sixth position of the 11-team table.

Rahmatganj, meanwhile, got their first win of the campaign with a 1-0 victory over newcomers Azampur FC at the Shaheed Bir Sreshtho Ft Lt Matiur Rahman Stadium in Munshiganj. Colombian striker Valencia Hinestroza scored the decisive goal in the 78th minute with a sliding volley on a cross from Saddam Hossain Anny.

The win took the Old Dhaka outfit to eighth position with four points from four matches while Azampur, after three matches, were yet to open their account.

Junior hockey team thrash SL 14-0

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh romped to a 14-0 victory over Sri Lanka in their second Pool B match of Men's Junior AHF Cup at the Sultan Qabos Complex in Muscat yesterday.

Buoyed by their opening-day 4-0 win over Hong Kong, the boys in red and green turned on the style against the Lankans, slotting home 14 goals without conceding a single one.

Amirul Islam scored five goals – three from penalty corners – while Mohammad Hasan and Mohammad Hossain slotted three goals each. Mohammad Joy bagged a brace while Mohammad Ali scored in other goal in the one-sided affair.

The second and third quarters were the most profitable ones for Bangladesh with six and five goals respectively. Bangladesh will take on Uzbekistan in the pool's last match tomorrow.

'Need to take our chances'

AFP, Barcelona

Barcelona coach Xavi Hernandez urged his team to improve their finishing against Atletico Madrid on Sunday in La Liga, where they will be without top goalscorer Robert Lewandowski.

The Polish forward has 13 goals in the top flight but will miss the first of three matches suspended following a red card against Osasuna in November before the World Cup break.

After Barcelona appealed against his ban he was allowed to feature in the 1-1 draw against Espanyol last weekend but his punishment was later upheld.

Barcelona lead the league on goal difference ahead of Real Madrid, but the reigning champions can move ahead with a win at Villarreal on Saturday. Atletico, fourth, have not been at their best this season but Xavi anticipated a tricky encounter.

"(Simone's) teams are defensively very well drilled. Atletico have virtually no defensive holes, we have to take advantage of our chances as we won't have many," said Xavi.

'Eye on the ball' unveiled

SPORTS REPORTER

Eye on the ball, a pictorial anthology of Bangladesh cricket, was unveiled at a hotel in the capital yesterday in presence of former national and international cricketers, cricket organisers, heads of foreign missions in Dhaka and close friends of former national cricketer Yousuf Rahman, the author of the book.

Rahman, who represented Bangladesh from 1976-84 as an all-rounder, designed the book so as to take the reader through the journey of Bangladesh cricket from the British era to the present day, putting words to pictures that captured that long and winding journey.

The all-rounder, who now lives in the US, had the distinction of scoring a team-high 77 runs in Bangladesh's first international match during the Bangladesh tour of MCC in 1976-77 season. A number of members of that team were present at the programme.

The biggest name in the programme, though, was that of Sir Gordon Greenidge, the West Indies legend who coached Bangladesh to their first successful ICC Trophy campaign in 1997.

In his speech, Greenidge hailed the one-of-a-kind initiative and



Former national cricketer Yousuf Rahman (L) looks on as the cover of his book, titled 'Eye on the ball', is unveiled by West Indies legend Sir Gordon Greenidge (C) and former Zimbabwe batter Hamilton Masakadza.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

hoped that Bangladesh cricket would get back on track soon.

Like Greenidge, another man who knows Bangladesh cricket inside out in retired Zimbabwe batter Hamilton Masakadza. The hard-hitting batter played a lot of games against Bangladesh and ended his career through a series against Bangladesh while playing

in local cricket for a few seasons too.

The former Zimbabwe batter said he hoped this book would help cricketers and fans understand the struggles of the cricketers of yesteryears, who paved the way for the current generation to take up the game as a profession.

The highlights of the event,

though, were the little anecdotes Rahman and his peers brought up during their speeches. Another former national cricketer, Shakil Kasem, delivered the introductory speech at the event where he elaborated on how the book came to be and what lengths Rahman had to go to bring it out.

Rahman, in his speech, said he picked January 7 as the launching date of the book as it was the same day that Bangladesh played their first match as a national team against a foreign opposition. He said that he divided the book in three chapters, resembling the three sessions of a typical Test match day.

The former all-rounder of the Bangladesh team also thanked foreign missions in Bangladesh for their continued support to get Bangladesh cricket to this stage.

"Throughout this journey, the book covers every aspect of cricket – from the beginning to the present day, from organisers to fans, from women's cricket to youth cricket. It also encapsulates the passion of the cricket fans of the country, who are the biggest strength of the team. You will get a clear message of passion for cricket in this country," Rahman said.



Novak Djokovic overcame an injury scare midway through his match against Daniil Medvedev on Saturday to mow down the Russian 6-3 6-4 and storm into the Adelaide International 1 final, where he will take on unseeded American Sebastian Korda on Sunday.

PHOTO: REUTERS