

Liton focuses on IPL experience

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh batter Liton Das is eyeing to gain experience on his maiden Indian Premier League campaign as the opener left the country for India yesterday to join his side Kolkata Knight Riders.

While he was enroute to India, KKR had already won a thrilling contest against reigning champions Gujarat Titans at the Narendra Modi Stadium in Ahmedabad. KKR have won two out of the three matches they've played so far and Liton is set to join an upbeat side led by Nitish Rana.

Liton, who will be available for selection in KKR's next game on April 14 against the Sunrisers Hyderabad, will however face competition for a place in the eleven, with Afghanistan's wicket-keeper batter Rahmanullah Gurbaz and Jason Roy already in the squad.

"I don't know whether I'd play or not. It's a learning process. I never went to such an event like this before; this is my first time and obviously, it's a good feeling," Liton told the media before catching his flight yesterday.



Kolkata Knight Riders batter Rinku Singh was embraced by teammates as he turned the match on its head, striking five maximums in a row in the final over to clinch a last-ball win against the reigning IPL champions Gujarat Titans in Ahmedabad yesterday. His bludgeoning blows helped KKR to chase down 29 runs in the final over.

PHOTO: TWITTER

Russel lambasts BFF for depriving SAFF champions

SPORTS REPORTER

The Kazi Salahuddin-led Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) continues to receive backlash from different quarters for their failure in sending the national women's team to the Paris Olympics women's qualifiers, and the latest attack came from Zahid Ahsan Russel, the state minister for Youth and Sports.

"I think they [BFF] intentionally didn't send the women's team to the [Olympics] qualifiers ... and [as a result] had tarnished the country's image," Russel told the reporters after the National Sports Council (NSC) executive meeting at the NSC conference room yesterday.

"We need to look into the matter ... and the Prime Minister will be made aware of it. The fact that a small amount of money prevented the women from taking part in the event, there is something behind it for sure," added Russel, who recently returned home after having undergone treatment abroad.

Earlier on March 29, BFF general secretary Abu Nayeem Shohag informed that the women's team were pulled out of the Olympics qualifiers in Myanmar due to financial constraints, especially after failing to get the necessary response in time from the Youth and Sports ministry.



"I think they [BFF] intentionally didn't send the women's team to the [Olympics] qualifiers ... and [as a result] had tarnished the country's image," Russel told the reporters after the National Sports Council (NSC) executive meeting at the NSC conference room yesterday.
 Zahid Ahsan Russel
 State minister for Youth and Sports

Russel termed the BFF general secretary's blame on the ministry as "audacious."

"Neither the BFF president nor the vice-president could say anything, and instead an employee of the federation had blamed the government ... it's audacious ... and not acceptable at all."

The state minister for Youth and Sports continued, "We received their letter [asking for financial assistance] on the 27th [March] and instantly we had forwarded it to the finance ministry. However, the BFF announced their decision on the 29th."

"As a result, we were not able to do anything for our women footballers who had brought laurels for the nation. This does not get any more painful for us."

Bangladesh Squad

Tamim Iqbal (Captain), Liton Das, Rony Talukdar, Najmul Hossain Shanto, Towhid Hridoy, Shakib Al Hasan, Mushfiqur Rahim, Yasir Ali Chowdhury, Mehedi Hasan Miraz, Taijul Islam, Ebadot Hossain, Shoriful Islam, Mustafizur Rahman, Hasan Mahmud, Mrirtunjoy Chowdhury

Schedule

May 9
1st ODI
 May 12
2nd ODI
 May 14
3rd ODI

**All the matches will be played at the Cloude County Ground, Chelmsford

**South Africa are currently at number eighth in the ICC World Cup Super League standings from where they can now automatically qualify for the World Cup in October. South Africa can now only be knocked out of the top eight by Ireland, who must win all three games in their home series against Bangladesh next month to do so.

No Mahmudullah as plans progress

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh announced a 15-member squad for the upcoming ODI series against Ireland, part of ICC ODI Super League, and the biggest change coming in was uncapped pacer Mrirtunjoy Chowdhury, in for Taskin Ahmed who is recuperating from an injury.

The 21-year-old has been in the vicinity of the national team, having played for the A side in the West Indies last year. Mrirtunjoy's Bangladesh Premier League (BPL) performances over the years helped him get the nod.

The Tigers are enjoying a great vein of form, looking to notch up their aggressive instincts in the ODI format and the team management had said that several players were set to be tried and tested during the home and away series against Ireland.

The likes of Towhid Hridoy, Rony Talukdar and Yasir Ali were able to hold



Mrirtunjoy Chowdhury

their place for the upcoming series and it brings to question whether veteran Mahmudullah Riyad will get a chance to make a return to the line-up while Afif Hossain still needs to prove his mettle with domestic performances.

Along with Shoriful Islam, Taijul Islam also returned after sitting out the Ireland ODIs at home while Nasum Ahmed was left out.

The BCB president Nazmul Hassan had informed previously that the squad for the Asia Cup will be the one for the World Cup. Ahead of the World Cup in India, the Tigers have assignments against Ireland

in England, Afghanistan at home and the Asia Cup. Thus, the Ireland series will be another key setting to gauge strength.

"Our side is more experienced than before and I feel they are capable enough to adjust to conditions there. Since we will be playing a practice game, I'm hopeful that no matter how challenging, we will be able to do well there," chief selector Minhajul Abedin told members of the media yesterday.

"We have kept quite a few players in our plans and everyone is being monitored. We have also rested a few players. We will be readying the World Cup squad before the Asia Cup so before that the performances will be considered," he added.

Mahmudullah was left out of the squad after the England series. Whether his domestic performances will make a mark with the World Cup approaching fast, remains to be seen.

He produced scores of 58, 48 and then 71 for Mohammedan Sporting in the ongoing Dhaka Premier League but most of Mahmudullah's knocks have failed to make the required impact needed in the current climate.

Yasir Ali recently came back to the squad and has been carried and he will be competing with Mehedi Miraz for a seventh spot in the batting order. With a few players such as Rony and Towhid performing, Mahmudullah's return at the moment looks difficult.

"Everyone is being looked at in equal measure. We will prepare the best possible side for the Asia Cup," Minhajul said as Tigers look to ready a pool of players.

"We have kept quite a few players in our plans and everyone is being monitored. We have also rested a few players. We will be readying the World Cup squad before the Asia Cup so before that the performances will be considered."

Minhajul Abedin
 BCB Chief selector

First Division 'a different experience' for Usha

SPORTS REPORTER

Usha Krira Chakra emerged as the unbeaten champions in the Green Delta Insurance First Division Hockey League with an 11-0 mauling of Dhaka Wanderers Club in their last fixture at the Maulana Bhashani Hockey Stadium yesterday. Champions-elect Usha, who had already won the league with a match in hand after a 7-1 win against Hockey Dhaka United in the penultimate round, completed the formalities as they made a comeback to the Premier Division Hockey League from where they were relegated in the 2017-18 season for failure to turn up in the players' transfers window due to a disagreement with the federation.

The 2023 season of the First Division Hockey League was the first since 2018, and four-time champions Usha finally got their chance after a gap of four years to get back to the top flight.

"It was a different experience for Usha KC, who usually played the Premier Division Hockey League because our target was to become champions to move to the Premier Division. Besides, there were not many quality players in the lower league



to form a strong team. So, we emphasised first on forming a good team with the combination of a few experienced players, who once played in the Premier Division, and foreign players," coach Mamunur Rashid told The Daily Star after the match.

"To be honest, we are ahead of others in terms of tactical aspects as well as the fitness of the players, and we achieved the target," added Mamun whose side struck 77 goals and conceded only eleven in 10 matches.



Manchester City striker Erling Haaland became the fastest player to score 30 goals in a Premier League season (in 27 games) after he scored a brace, including one that featured an outrageous overhead kick, in City's 4-1 win at Southampton on Saturday. City coach Pep Guardiola said the Norwegian goal-machine belongs on "that level" with Cristiano Ronaldo and Lionel Messi, who edged past Ronaldo to take his European goal tally to a record 702 following his strike for PSG in a 2-0 win at Nice on the same day.

PHOTO: AFP