

What do you think when you see us? Do we look like we expect anything else other than to win? I'm already thinking about the time when I would be able to meet you on the field on the day of the final with the trophy in hand.

Nalisa Kamal,
Comilla Victorians owner



Tone set for STAR-STUDED BPL

SPORTS REPORTER

The players' draft of the 10th Bangladesh Premier League (BPL) was held with a lot of vigour and excitement at a city hotel yesterday even though many of the seven franchises had already formed their squads ahead of the draft.

The main attraction of the event was the signing of Mushfiqur Rahim, who was the only Category A local player with a base price of Tk 80 lac. The wicketkeeper-batter was picked by Fortune Barishal, who had roped in Tamim Iqbal as a direct local signing before the draft.

Alongside Mushfiqur, Barishal also picked Soumya Sarkar, Mohammad Saifuddin, Taijul Islam, and Dinesh Chandimal from the draft. Barishal had also retained Mahmudullah Riyad and Mehedi Miraz, thus, making their squad full of national team stars. Their overseas direct signings – Dunith Wellalage, Paul Sterling, Fakhar Zaman, Shoaib Malik, and Mohammad Amir – make them a formidable team.

"Captaincy is not important to me. I feel that the experience we will get with [Mahmudullah] Riyad bhai, Mushfiqur, and Miraz in the side is

important. We have a good mix of youth and experience. The balance is good," Tamim, who was present at the players' draft, told reporters.

Meanwhile, in Mashrafe Bin Mortaza's absence, direct local signing Najmul Hossain Shanto was present at the event for Sylhet Strikers. The franchise picked Yasir Ali and national team pacer Shoriful Islam from the draft.

There were no major international star signings from the draft with most of the franchises going for direct signings ahead of the event. Defending champions Comilla Victorians had boosted their side with the likes of Moeen Ali, Andre Russell, and Rashid Khan as overseas direct signings before the draft. The franchise also picked national team star Tawhid Hridoy, one of the standout performers of the previous BPL, as a direct local signing.

Comilla, who have progressed well in terms of setting up a brand value through retaining the core of the side, were smooth once again, roping in Mrittunjoy Chowdhury, Imrul Kayes, and off-spinner Rahkeem Cornwall from the players' draft. Comilla coach Mohammad Salahuddin said that Windies' Cornwall was a very good

addition for them, lending good balance to the side. They had already retained Liton Das and Mustafizur Rahman.

Khulna Tigers also made important calls, picking Afif Hossain, Kasun Rajitha, and Dashun Shanaka from the draft.

Imrul Kayes is the face of Comilla Victorians but the franchise waited out a few turns before picking the player from the draft.

Mominul Haque, who remained unpicked in last season's players' draft, was once again unpicked in the 10th BPL's players' draft. The likes of Sabbir Rahman, Mohammad Ashraful, and Munim Shahriar also remained unpicked.

Interestingly, after getting the chance to call first, Rangpur Riders went for Rony Talukdar despite having Mushfiqur available. The franchise would be hoping to flourish under the captaincy of their direct local signing Shakib Al Hasan, who was also present at the draft. They also picked Shamim Hossain from the draft.

A number of international stars are set to feature in the upcoming BPL with Rangpur picking up Babar Azam, Matheesha Pathirana, and Wanindu Hasaranga as direct overseas signing.



Bangladesh stalwarts Shakib Al Hasan and Tamim Iqbal were present with their respective teams Rangpur Riders and Fortune Barishal at the player's draft of the 10th edition of the Bangladesh Premier League at a city hotel yesterday.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

Japan match 'a big learning experience'

SPORTS REPORTER from Hangzhou

Bangladesh women's football team captain Sabina Khatun thinks comparing them with Japan after their 8-0 defeat against the former world champions in their debut Asian Games appearance will be wrong.

"Japan are one of the best sides in the world and today [Saturday] their No. 1 side thrashed Argentina 8-0 too.

"If people start comparing us with Japan, it will be foolish. Those who understand football accept the difference between the two sides," said the captain on Saturday.

Sabina felt the margin of defeat could have been less had they not made some silly mistakes.

"If you compare the facilities to world's top teams, we don't have anything to mention. Even though the round-the-year training camp is a good thing, there is no alternative to playing matches," Sabina said. "Even if you train round the year, there will be no development unless you play matches."

"If we got the opportunity to play two to three matches against big teams before the Asian Games, our experience against Japan could have been a bit better and we might have conceded less goals.

"We needed this match against Japan. If we can play against such top teams, we can understand our level and our standard will improve," said the footballer from Satkhira.

The Bashundhara Kings forward also felt that the Japan match was the biggest experience of her 13-year career while her teammates have big things to take from this match.

"There is everything to take from this match because every second and every minute was a learning experience for us. We learned that the passes, crosses and other aspects of their game are unique and that is why they are former world champions," Sabina said, adding that the experience against Japan would help them in future as well as on Monday against Vietnam.



We deserved to be in Last 16: Cabrera

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh coach Javier Cabrera said he was proud of his charges but felt disappointed they could not qualify for the Round of 16 of the Asian Games following their last group match where they held hosts China to a goalless draw yesterday.

Having lost their first two matches 1-0 against Myanmar and India, conceding unfortunate late goals in both matches, the charges of Cabrera put on a brave display against the table-toppers at the Huanglong Sports Centre Stadium.

The performance against China stoked frustration for the Spaniard, who felt his side deserved more based on their performances throughout the three matches.

"Obviously it's a very good performance and I'm happy. I'm happy for the team and the players but I think we could have still stayed in this tournament. We deserved to be in the Last 16," Cabrera said after the match, where Bangladesh fought toe-to-toe against the former World Cup participating nation possession-wise as well as in terms of attacks and shots, in front of a 36,000-plus home crowd.

The Bangladesh team came into the Asian Games on the back of a historic first second-round appearance from the previous edition. Hence there was much expectation on Cabrera's charges even though they were handed a tough draw with China, India and Myanmar in the group. To make matters worse for the Spaniard, he had to come to China with

a very young squad after a number of experienced players from the initial squad dropped out – captain Jamal Bhuiyan declining for his club commitment in Argentina and Bashundhara Kings not releasing their players due to AFC Cup commitment.

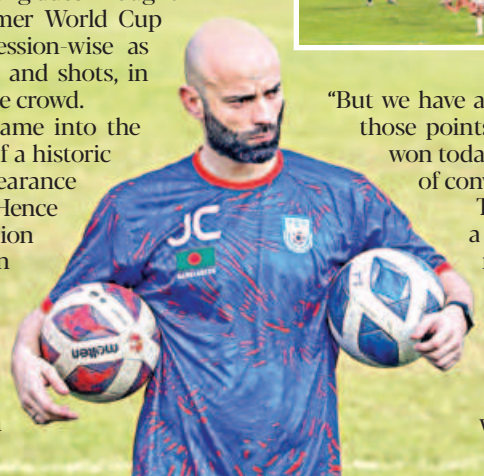
Despite playing with only two regular starters of the senior national team and a few fringe players, the men in red and green put on brave displays in all three games, even if the results didn't go their way. Cabrera was left to rue the scoring chances they missed in the competition.

"We leave this competition with one point and having conceded two goals, one of which from a penalty and the other an own goal," Cabrera said.



"But we have also missed 20 chances to get those points and qualify. We could have won today. But sometimes we lack a bit of conviction."

The Spaniard, who has overseen a vivid improvement in the national team's performances in recent times, said the main objective of the campaign, which was to get a group of young players who could be as good as the senior players, was achieved.



Tottenham Hotspur captain Son Heung-min's brace earned his side a 2-2 draw at Arsenal in the Premier League as the visitors twice came from behind in an absorbing derby on Sunday. Cristian Romero's own goal after 26 minutes handed Arsenal the lead but Son equalised shortly before halftime as the visitors grew into the game. Romero then conceded a penalty that was converted by Bukayo Saka in the 54th minute but Tottenham hit back almost immediately as Son punished a terrible mistake by Arsenal substitute Jorginho.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Aston Villa beat 10-man Chelsea

REUTERS, London

A 73rd-minute strike by Ollie Watkins earned Aston Villa all three points at 10-man Chelsea in the Premier League on Sunday. Watkins tore apart the home defence on the counter and angled his shot deftly through Chelsea keeper Robert Sanchez's legs and in off the far post. Chelsea had been in charge for most of the match, with Raheem Sterling and Nicolas Jackson finding space behind the defenders. But as so often in recent months, they failed to find the telling shot with Villa's Argentina goalkeeper Emiliano Martinez stopping a string of chances. Villa found more ambition after Malo Gusto was sent off in the 58th minute following a VAR check for a late tackle on Lucas Digne.

Will the wait for WC squad end today?

SPORTS REPORTER

With September 28 being the cut-off date to submit the final squad for the upcoming ICC ODI World Cup in India, the national selectors are expected to announce the Bangladesh squad for the mega event soon.

Bangladesh are scheduled to travel to Guwahati and kick off their World Cup campaign on September 27, a day after playing the third and final ODI against New Zealand in Mirpur tomorrow.

According to sources, the selectors have already chalked out the squad and are only awaiting the final approval from the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) president Nazmul Hassan Papon.

It was also learned that the BCB boss is willing to have a discussion with the Tigers' head coach Chandika Hathurusingha before finalising the Tigers' squad for the mega event.

Deciding on a possible last-minute inclusion of Mahmudullah Riyad in the World Cup squad is apparently the biggest reason behind the delay of the Tigers' squad announcement.

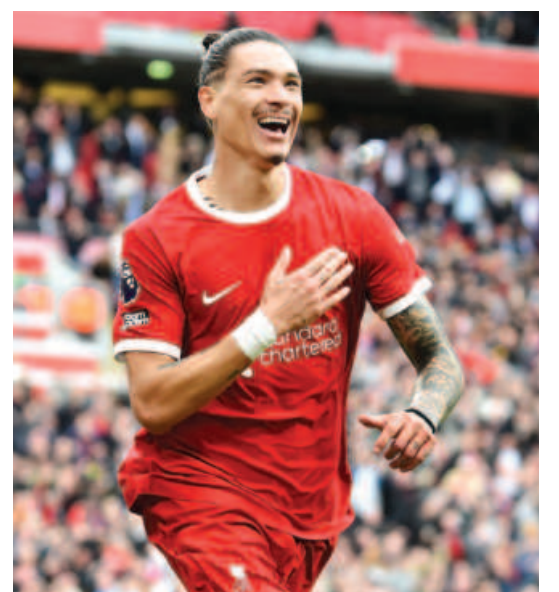
Riyad, making a comeback to the side after nearly six months, made a statement with a 49-run knock after the Tigers suffered a batting collapse in their second ODI against New Zealand on Saturday. Chasing a 255-run target, Bangladesh suffered an 86-run thumping as they were bundled out for 168.

It will be interesting to see whether Riyad eventually makes it to the squad.

Meanwhile, there are some changes in Bangladesh's squad for the third and series-deciding encounter against the Kiwis tomorrow. Stand-in captain Liton Das and Tamim Iqbal have been rested for the game.

Najmul Hossain Shanto, making a return to the side since recovering from a hamstring injury, will lead the Tigers in the game. Experienced Mushfiqur Rahim, Mehedi Hasan Miraz, and pacer Shoriful Islam have also been included in the squad.

Bangladesh have not lost a bilateral series against New Zealand since October, 2008 and the Tigers will be desperate to keep the record intact.



Liverpool striker Darwin Nunez celebrates after netting a brilliant goal as his side romped to a 3-1 Premier League win over a dogged West Ham United at Anfield yesterday. The win leaves Liverpool in second spot in the table on 16 points, two behind leaders Manchester City, while West Ham are seventh on 10 points.

PHOTO: REUTERS