

CHAMPIONS' MENTALITY resurrected in Australia camp

REUTERS, Kolkata

Australia head into Thursday's World Cup semi-final against South Africa with the same excitement in the dressing room that propelled them to their maiden triumph in the T20 World Cup in 2021, Glenn Maxwell said.

Maxwell was part of Aaron Finch's groundbreaking squad in the United Arab Emirates in 2021 and scored an unbeaten 28 in the final against New Zealand.

Coming off an incredible match-winning double-century against Afghanistan last week, the mercurial all-rounder said his team had a huge boost from the victory over the South Asian side and were well-placed to carry on and claim a record-extending sixth ODI World Cup title.

"The excitement of that match has given us a whole new belief going forward," Maxwell said in an interview with Australian broadcaster Fox Sports.

"It reminded me of the T20 World Cup in 2021. The same sort of feeling.

"The feeling around the group was energetic, electric, exciting and everyone felt they were heading towards the same end goal.

"And who knows, it could be the same thing here."

Having battled a full body cramp when batting against Afghanistan, Maxwell guided Australia to victory with an unbeaten 201 off 128 balls, relying mostly on his hands and reflexes to smash the bowlers around the ground.

The knock was quickly branded the greatest ODI innings of all time by a slew of former players and pundits.

With five runs left to win and to bring up Australia's first double-century in ODIs, Maxwell said he was absolutely certain that he would score a six off spinner Mujeeb Ur Rahman to achieve both targets.

He duly clobbered Mujeeb over the deep midwicket fence, his third six of the over.

"It may sound arrogant and over-confident but (it was) because I knew I had the short boundary, because I knew Mujeeb," he said.

"We've played against and with each other. I've spent a whole IPL training with him, having little contests and spending a lot of time with him.

"And I'd faced most of his overs he'd bowled at that stage. I just felt like, 'I've got this ... I know I don't have to hit it out of the middle to get a six.'"



Tigresses' squad named for SA tour

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) announced a 16-member squad for the women's team's next month's tour to South Africa, where they will play three ODIs and the same number of Twenty20s against the hosts.

The selectors made a couple of changes in the squad from their recent home ODI series against Pakistan, which they won 2-1.

Lata Mondol and Shorifa Khatun, who is uncapped in Women's ODIs, have been brought in to replace Sanjida Akter and Nishita Akter, who have been named in the reserves list for the tour, alongside Sharmin Akter and Fariha Islam.

The series will begin with the T20s, which will take place on December 3, 6 and 8 respectively.

The ODI series will start on December 16 in East London. The last two ODIs will take place on December 20 and 23.

The series is part of the ICC Women's Championship.


This will be the Bangladesh team's third tour to South Africa. They earlier toured the country back in 2013 and 2018 where they returned home winless.

In their first tour, they lost three ODIs and the same number of T20s. In 2018, they got clean-swept in the five-match ODI series and also lost all three T20s.

SQUAD: Nigar Sultana (c), Nahida Akter (vc), Shamima Sultana, Murshida Khatun, Sobhana Mostary, Fargana Hoque, Lata Mondol, Shorna Akter, Ritu Moni, Shorifa Khatun, Sumaiya Akter, Rabeya, Sultana Khatun, Fahima Khatun, Marufa Akter, Disha Biswas

Umpiring scandal fuels the fire

ABDULLAH AL MEHDI



The rotten core of domestic cricket in Bangladesh is often discussed but ebbs away when the national team results are good. This time amidst the ongoing ICC ODI World Cup, an umpiring controversy is once again in the centre of debate.

The recent issue evolved from the very core of the country's first-class cricket, the National Cricket League (NCL), when Sylhet Division coach Rajin Saleh alleged in a social media post that players are being lost to poor quality umpiring.

That in itself was a serious commentary on the state of things, which would put a glitch mark on the NCL and its standards which have been improving over the last two seasons.

The BCB opened a 'investigation committee' which puts umpiring in the country to further disrepute. Several personnel involved with Bangladesh cricket have pondered how a committee like that can be formed given that the International Cricket Council (ICC) have not at least publicly 'investigated' their umpires since the processes are handled internally.

More acute problem that should be

discussed is whether involving people that are part of the decision-making processes can lead to fair investigation itself. However, those who know how things work here will not be surprised by such administrative methods.

Match referee Debabrata Paul also remarked on the process in a social media post. When The Daily Star reached out, he relayed his concern.

"This is first-class cricket; this isn't a plaything. We have to realise the magnitude of such an allegation and whether such an investigation committee can be formed.

"So, my question is whether you can investigate weak umpiring in such a way, that's my number one question. Number two, if it can be done, will this investigation be thorough since the current committee are involved with the whole process?" Debabrata said.

There are also suggestions that cases of favouritism and syndicate exist in umpire allocation in the umpires' committee.

Debabrata, who resigned as match referee coordinator this year, still remains a match-referee and he alleged that he was unable to get a game in the NCL this time despite confirming his availability on his return to the country.

Debabrata alleges that his query to umpire committee manager Ovi Abdullah in the WhatsApp group '25th NCL' has not been met. He had inquired

why he continued to be involved in the group since he has not gotten a game this NCL even as he had confirmed of his availability.

It was learned that as many as five umpires are making their on-field debut in this edition of the NCL across the six rounds, which is where the 'poor quality umpiring' argument finds strength.

NCL's umpiring quality has been poor this time around, some alleged, and the situation has not been similar before. Two umpires Showkat Ali Didar and Humayun Kabir had been named initially as reserve umpire umpires but later replaced which also adds to favouritism dialogue.

When BCB's umpiring committee chairman Iftexhar Ahmed Mithu was asked to make his comments on the investigation committee, he felt that it was more like a fact-finding committee rather than an investigation committee.

"It's not an investigation committee but rather a fact-finding one and after their report we will put together a different committee," he said regarding the committee in question.

"I am happy with what Rajin Saleh said since it empowers me to take action," Mithu added.

The BCB will meet with the likes of Debabrata following the busy schedule of the World Cup but overall, the whole administrative process once again is put to question.

Media recipient of BCB's latest deflection!

SHABAB CHOWDHURY

The Bangladesh Cricket Board's (BCB) media committee chairman Tanvir Islam Tito yesterday seemed to have fortified the board's apparent confusion in identifying elements causing the national team's World Cup fiasco with a baffling statement pointing at the media.

Tito's assertions said that the media should also shoulder blame for the ruckus that Bangladesh skipper Shakib Al Hasan and former captain Tamim Iqbal created through interviews that stormed Bangladesh's build-up to the World Cup.

"The media also have to take responsibility for their role in this. I always believe that we and the media are on the same side. Just as we are responsible for working to develop cricket, you [media] also have a responsibility to provide support," Tito told the reporters at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium yesterday.

As a plan of action in an effort to paper the cracks after the catastrophic campaign, BCB's disciplinary committee has been assigned to submit a report, supposed to determine the plan of action, if any, against Shakib and Tamim's interviews.

BCB has always highlighted that centrally contracted players must abide by the board's code of conduct manual which has guidelines on how players will interact with the media.

When asked if Shakib and Tamim had given such interviews in line with the code of conduct, Tito alleged that perhaps the interviews left adverse effects on the team. He also struggled to ascertain the deadline for the disciplinary committee to submit their report.

"Shakib, Tamim, Mushfiquir [Rahim], [M a h m u d u l l a h] Riyad are all senior cricketers. They are well aware of their contracts. If they [Shakib and Tamim] hadn't given such interviews right before the World Cup, we wouldn't have been in such an awkward position. It probably would've been better for the team," he said.

There have been calls for an autopsy of Bangladesh's World Cup debacle. The calm following the team's arrival, however, reflects the board's lack of urgency and perhaps unwillingness to actively pursue the identification of the potential reasons for the failure and then a plan for a course of action going forward.

Moreover, BCB's response has been nothing but ordinary despite such an appalling campaign. The board just decided to stick to the norm of getting reports from head coach Chandika Hathurusingha and team director Khaled Mahmud Sujon -- both of whom are parties in the disastrous tournament.

How much those reports would help in unearthing the real causes behind the failure remains a question, especially considering team director Mahmud had talked about his lack of involvement in the team's managerial decisions in India.

Expecting the BCB to act like a professional entity might be a bit stretching as it only recently learned that its women cricketers had not been receiving payments for five months due to a 'technical reason'

Events such as these manage to puncture through BCB's boastful show of its bureaucracies. Time and time again, its lack of administrative structure has been laid bare, and usually, the explanations given rarely cease to baffle.



'Inspired' booters all in to nullify Aussie threats

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh defender Bishwanath Ghosh said that everyone from goalkeeper to strikers have to combine in organising the defence when his team face a vastly superior Australia in a World Cup Qualifier fixture in Melbourne on Thursday.

The men in red and green, who typically adopt a defensive strategy when underdogs, are also expected to be at their most compact selves against the hosts who are 156 places ahead of Bangladesh in the FIFA Rankings.

"Defending against Australia is not only the responsibility of the defenders; the entire team must work here," said Bishwanath Ghosh in a video message provided by Bangladesh Football Federation following their second training session yesterday at the Yarraville Glory Football Club ground.

"Every player must give their all in their respective positions if we are to perform better against Australia," said the right-back, who has also been a key component on the offensive front.

The Bashundhara Kings defender informed that coach Javier Cabrera has been preparing his charges to function in the low and mid-blocks while staying alert to initiate counter-attacks.

In the absence of regular goalkeeper



Anisur Rahman Zico, Mitul Marma -- who made his debut against Maldives in pre-qualifiers -- arguably has the most vital role to play.

"As a goalkeeper, my target has always been not to concede goals. I always try to give my best," said the Sheikh Russel KC goalkeeper.

"Our defenders have been performing really well for the last few matches, and I think we have to do something extra on the ground if we want to do better against a strong Australia. That's why, we came here earlier to acclimatise with the weather."

Manager Amer Khan informed that the booters have been enjoying training in front of expatriate fans in Melbourne, anticipating the same support from the gallery during Thursday's match.

"The players are enjoying the practice here, with Bangladeshi fans coming to cheer on the boys. During the practice session, it appears that we are playing a competitive match in front of the local supporters.

"If the players can keep their inspiration intact, we can produce something good in the game," remarked the former national footballer.

Old-fashion sprinklers delay handover of BNS ground

SPORTS REPORTER

The handover of the renovated ground of the Bangabandhu National Stadium is set to be deferred by a few more weeks after the joint inspection team of National Sports Council (NSC) and Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) yesterday found some shortcomings around the newly-laid drainage system.

The NSC spent nearly Tk 4.5 crore to renovate the ground, with facilities such as auto sprinklers to make the ground wet before the start games.

However, the NSC has installed old-fashioned sprinkler cannons -- usually used on artificial hockey turfs -- instead of pop-up sprinklers which are used for football pitches around the world. The BFF raised objection about the six sprinkler cannons, which may cause injuries to footballers.

The game's local governing body also deemed the concrete structure of the athletics turf as a threat to the players while the reserve water tank for making the ground wet is also small, according to BFF.

"We have shortage of grounds and we are struggling to organise Independence Cup matches outside Dhaka due to the blockade. We have arranged a few matches at the Bashundhara Kings Arena and a few matches have been deferred," BFF vice-president Ataur Rahman Bhuiyan Manik said yesterday after the inspection with NSC director (planning and development) Shamsul Islam.

"We did not find any complex issues but what

we found is a threat to the players, who can suffer injuries with objects such as RCC concrete of athletics track and water sprinklers which are not FIFA or AFC standard. We have requested them to fix these issues with world standard or FIFA/AFC standard ones," Manik told reporters.



NSC director Shamsul Islam claimed that he had asked BFF to place its requirements two to three months ago, but the BFF did not respond.

"I am very much involved with the renovation and I visit the ground two to three days every week. We could have rectified this issues earlier had they raised questions that they are raising today. These things have not been completed today or two months ago," said Shamsul, adding that they would need one more month to fix these issues.

The renovation work started in September 2021 and the ground was supposed be handed over in December this year, but the NSC is trying to handover early to the football federation following instruction from the sports ministry.