

Ebadot to miss another main event

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh will most likely miss the services of Ebadot Hossain in another flagship event.

As per chief selector Minhajul Abedin Nannu, the still-recovering pacer he will not be involved in the upcoming ICC T20 World Cup at the United States and West Indies in June next year and, before that, the Bangladesh Premier League in January.

"Ebadot probably has a chance to start from the next season. The next season means August-September when he might return through domestic cricket, according to our latest information," Nannu told the media yesterday.

"Since he is in a rehabilitation programme it is not possible to return before completing that," he added.

Ebadot has been rehabilitating since having sustained a ligament injury in August this year, during the series against Afghanistan, right before the Asia Cup.

Having undergone surgery in the United Kingdom soon after, following which he was expected to recover in three months, the 29-year-old went on to miss the much-awaited October-November ODI World Cup in India.

In recent years, the seamer from Sylhet has emerged as one of the brightest performers in the Tigers' new-look pace battery, both in Tests and ODIs. Although he has only played four T20Is so far, Bangladesh will undoubtedly miss the bowler in all formats, especially in the marquee tournament next year.

One eye on WC as Tigers begin NZ T20s

SPORTS REPORTER

Following their maiden ODI win over New Zealand in New Zealand, Bangladesh will now look to achieve the same or even more when they take on the hosts in the first of the three-match T20I series at McLean Park in Napier today.

Even though the Tigers conceded the preceding three-match ODI series 2-1, a thumping nine-wicket win in the final ODI saw the Tigers end an 18-ODI losing streak in New Zealand. Hence, it is no surprise that a positive ambiance prevails in the Bangladesh camp as they prepare for the T20I series.

"Certainly, it [the win in the final ODI] will help mentally as when you have a good win, it always feels good. You would want to repeat it, regardless of the format," Bangladesh head coach Chandika Hathurusingha mentioned yesterday that the Tigers would be looking to get their first win in the format against New Zealand in their backyard today.

Bangladesh have had a very successful year so far in T20s – winning seven of the eight T20Is played this year, barring the three matches played by a second-string side in the Asian Games.

The Tigers would be desperate to mark their toughest test yet in the format this year with some positive performances,



especially since the three-match series will also be looked at as the beginning of preparation for the upcoming ICC T20 World Cup in June next year.

"We have eleven matches from now till the [2024 T20] World Cup and that's what we got in terms of matches. Whether the practice is ideal or not that's all we got and we have to get our plans and roles right within this period," Hathurusingha added.

The new-look Bangladesh team, missing a few seniors, will also need to get into a settled rhythm in T20Is – a format that has always proved challenging for the Tigers.

According to Hathurusingha, the team management now wants to test players by assigning specific roles as part of preparations for the upcoming flagship T20 event.

"We have not won a T20 here and it was the same for the ODI format. But we managed to win our last game. In terms of plans, the conditions [in New Zealand] dictate proceedings as we need to plan by keeping that in mind. At the same time, we also want to keep one eye on the T20 World Cup as we make our plans. We are trying to get our combinations right and give the players the kind of roles that they will play

during the World Cup," Hathurusingha said.

The 55-year-old coach also stated that the majority of the players from the current squad are expected to feature in the upcoming World Cup. However, he also mentioned that the Bangladesh Premier League (BPL) next year will also serve as a platform for players to break into the national side.

"The selectors will always have an eye on the performances in the BPL and any in-form player or an outstanding performance from someone will give them the edge to get selected. But at the same time, we know the style of play we want to follow which is according to our strengths. We cannot play the way other teams play and try to mimic them," added Hathurusingha.

The Sri Lankan also praised the leadership quality of Najmul Hossain Shanto, who has shone in the role since taking on their reins in absence of regular skipper Shakib Al Hasan.

"I see a lot of positives in his leadership and the tactical captaincy. I am very happy with the way he [Shanto] is conducting himself and getting the best out of the players while making clear communications as well. The last game was really world-class – given the way he handled the bowling resources in such a situation and condition."

MEN'S FOOTBALL IN BANGLADESH IN 2023

Scandals take sheen off on-field progress

ATIQUÉ ANAM

Year 2023 could have easily been termed as the best year for men's football in Bangladesh in recent years as the national team, for a change, performed decently. However, a couple of off-field scandals marred the on-field performances and turned 2023 into more of an above average year, which is still a pleasant change from the downward trajectory of the preceding years.

The first blow came on the first day of the calendar, the Bengali calendar that is.

On April 14, 2023, when all of Bangladesh was celebrating the arrival of the new year, the folks in charge of running the country's football were reeling from a colossal blow.



Abahani and Mohammedan in Cumilla drew the biggest crowd for a domestic football game in recent history, and credit to the teams as the final lived up to expectations and became one of the finest ever in Bangladesh's football history.

At front and centre of the positive strides taken by Bangladesh football this year were a few youngsters, who played key roles in a memorable SAFF Championship campaign and then guided the team to the World Cup Qualifiers.

Young forward Sheikh Morsalin turned from a prodigy into the nation's favourite in the matter of a few games as his outstanding goals salvaged Bangladesh from the brink of another group stage exit in the SAFF Championship and catapulted them to the semifinals.

Faisal Ahmed Fahim, another young forward of the national team, matured leaps and bounds and played a crucial role in the team's victory over the Maldives.

However, the best player this year was arguably Rakib Hossain – whose speed and dribbling caught many opposition defenders by surprise and finishing skill became better and better as the year progressed.

Captain Jamal Bhuiyan's pilgrimage from Dhaka to Buenos Aires, meanwhile, created buzz in social and mainstream media, and so did the short stopovers in Dhaka by Argentina's World Cup winning goalkeeper Emiliano Martinez and retired Brazilian World Cup winner Ronaldinho, although the extreme private nature of the events left the football fraternity and the general football fans with a bitter taste.

The lapses and transgressions this year are an opportunity for the Bangladesh football administration and footballers to learn and improve upon. If they can do so, the next year could prove to be an even more memorable one for Bangladesh football.



Prohibited from pointing out the humanitarian crisis in Gaza, Palestine, Australia's Usman Khawaja displayed the names of his two daughters, Aisha and Ayla, taped to the side of his footwear while batting against Pakistan on the first day of the second Test in Melbourne yesterday. PHOTO: AFP



Zico's return helps Kings edge Fortis

SPORTS REPORTER

In a bid to reclaim the Federation Cup title, Bashundhara Kings began campaign with a hard-earned 1-0 win over Fortis FC yesterday.

At Sheikh Fazlul Haque Moni Stadium in Gopalganj, Brazilian forward Dorielton Gomes' 11th-minute strike decided the Group C encounter. Spanish coach Oscar Bruzon made five changes to the side that defeated Brothers Union 2-0 in their first Bangladesh Premier League encounter, allowing first-choice goalie Anisur Rahman Zico to play this season's first domestic match following suspension removal.

Kings fielded only three foreign players in a match in which both teams produced a few decent chances on either side of the interval. Eventually, Zico's show was pivotal in Kings leaving the field unscathed.

Meanwhile, Rahmatganj MFS came from behind twice to tie 2-2 with Bangladesh Police FC in Munshiganj, after losing 2-1 to the same opponents in the quarterfinals of the recently concluded Independence Cup.

Police FC took a 19-minute lead thanks to forward Shahed Mia, but Ghanaian Samuel Mensah Konney equalised in the 41st minute with a close-range header at Birshreshtha Shaheed Flight Lt Matiur Rahman Stadium.

The second half saw Edis Garcia convert a penalty in the 68th minute after Mohammad Tarek fouled Mateo Palacios, but the lead lasted only nine minutes as Ghanaian Ernest Boateng converted from the spot in the 77th minute after substitute Rasel Hossain brought down Konney inside the box.

On April 14, 2023, when all of Bangladesh was celebrating the arrival of the new year, the folks in charge of running the country's football were reeling from a colossal blow. On that day, the world football's governing body, FIFA, imposed a two-year ban on Bangladesh Football Federation's long-serving general secretary Abu Nayeem Shohag and implicated a few others in its findings, revealing systematic irregularities in use of FIFA funds by the BFF.

On that day, the world football's governing body, FIFA, imposed a two-year ban on Bangladesh Football Federation's long-serving general secretary Abu Nayeem Shohag and implicated a few others in its findings, revealing systematic irregularities in use of FIFA funds by the BFF.

The findings and suggestions of the report were far-reaching as they unearthed long-standing financial irregularities in a number of areas, giving evidence to something which had been only whispers till then.

The BFF followed it up with a long and winding investigation of its own. But not much came out of that probe as those implicated in the report either resigned or were relieved of their duties, while the ones in higher positions walked scot-free.

Another episode that rocked Bangladesh football was when a number of leading players of the national team, while on duty with Bashundhara Kings in the Maldives, were caught with excessive amounts of liquor without permit while returning home.

The investigation conducted by the Kings, unlike the one headed by the federation, was a swift one and the punishment heavy.

Four of the five players implicated by the club were key figures in the Bangladesh team and their suspension led the national team to tread a tricky path ahead of crucial World Cup Qualifying matches.

Credit must be given to the national team management, and especially the coaching staff led by Javier Cabrera, for cautiously navigating the situation and shepherding the team to success in the playoff for the World Cup Qualifying group stage, which was built on impressive showings in the SAFF Championship and friendly matches against strong oppositions earlier in the year.

The positive performances on the field also drew crowds to the galleries. The Bashundhara Kings Arena was full to the brim as Bangladesh beat the Maldives in the second leg of the playoff and then as Cabrera's charges held Lebanon to a 1-1 draw.

The Federation Cup final between



South Africa pacer Kagiso Rabada celebrates with teammates after taking the wicket of Virat Kohli during the opening day of the first Test against India in Centurion yesterday. Rabada's pace proved too hot to handle as he returned figures of 5-44 off 17 overs and debutant Nandre Burger took two wickets with his first 13 balls as India were at 208-8 before bad light and a thunderstorm brought play to a premature close. PHOTO: REUTERS

Joy ton guides East to first win

SPORTS REPORTER

A Mahmudul Hasan Joy ton guided East Zone to their first win in the Bangladesh Cricket League (BCL) one-day format as they beat North Zone by 62 runs at ground 2 of the Sheikh Kamal International Cricket Stadium (SKICS) in Cox's Bazar yesterday.

Joy was eventually dismissed after scoring 112 off 128 deliveries, featuring eleven fours and a six. Opener Parvez Hossain Emon scored 30 as East Zone posted 279 for 10 in 49.2 overs.

In reply, North Zone struggled from the start and kept losing wickets at regular intervals, getting bundled out for 217 in 40.5 overs. Pritom Kumar's 45 remained the top-score for North.

Meanwhile, Central Zone registered their second consecutive win in the tournament after defeating South Zone by four wickets in a low-scoring encounter at ground 1 of SKICS.

Spinners Nazmul Islam Apu and Shuvagata Hom picked up three wickets each, bundling out South Zone for just 163. Maidul Islam Ankon's unbeaten 74-run knock helped Central assail the target with four balls to spare.