

‘Don’t see anything coming to an end’

Bangladesh ace all-rounder **Shakib Al Hasan** is entering a new chapter in his life as he is contesting in the national polls from Magura-1. For Shakib, cricket will have to take a backseat for a while. Still new to his political career, he was not keen on some of the hard questions on both politics and cricket. However, during an interview with **Abdullah Al Mehdi of The Daily Star**, Shakib did say things that somewhat contradicted his original stance about not featuring in the next ODI World Cup and the national team captaincy issue, which gained steam as of late with many suggesting a change in leadership, especially since Najmul Hossain Shanto did bring promising results in his short stint as an interim skipper.



The Daily Star (DS): Since you are still playing cricket, do you feel you rushed into politics?
Shakib Al Hasan (SAH): No, I feel that this is the right time.

DS: Is that because you feel that you are in the last few years of your career?
SAH: No, actually it's not like I am seeing the end of something. I don't see anything coming to an end.

DS: You are a fan of Lionel Messi. He's an introvert and maybe he often did not talk all that much. Maybe there's an introverted side to you as well. But how does it affect your politics?
SAH: I have never felt that I am an introvert.

DS: You have stirred controversies and headlines for those. But more often than not a reaction does not come from you. Do you actually laugh out when you hear some of the controversies?
SAH: I don't really think about these controversies a lot.

DS: Do you feel that you have already played your last ODI World Cup?
SAH: I don't know it myself. Time will tell.

DS: What impact did you see in the side due to Tamim Iqbal not playing in the World Cup?
SAH: It's difficult to say with it never really happening. If he had played well then it would have been good for the team and it would have affected positively. And, had he played badly, it would have been better if he was not there. You can only understand something like that after the game has ended. So that's not something I can say.

DS: Is there a possibility for you to mend your relationship with Tamim?
SAH: Actually, the focus is elsewhere, and the question you asked is not something I am interested in.

DS: How do you manage the workload of such heavy campaigning for the election and the pressure that comes with it?
SAH: I have the energy and that's what I am using.

DS: How do you feel about continuing Test cricket?
SAH: The thing that I want to say is that I do not want to ponder about anything else [other than the national polls] before January 7 [the election day]. After that, I will prepare for the Bangladesh Premier League (BPL) and when I am playing that, I will be able to think this matter over after discussing with the board about what I can do.

DS: What do you feel about the batting order shuffle in the World Cup?
SAH: Maybe it would have been good to not shuffle or maybe it would not have. Who knows what would have happened? Maybe if the shuffling was not done, it could have been worse. You can not guarantee that not shuffling the batting order would have been good for the side.
DS: What do you think is the major reason behind the World Cup debacle?
SAH: I do not see any reason. What you are asking is something I need to discuss with the Bangladesh Cricket Board.



North Zone players and officials pose with the trophy after retaining the Bangladesh Cricket League (BCL) one-day version title at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday. [Inset] North Zone fast bowler Nahid Rana returned career-best figures of 5-50 and was adjudged player-of-the-match.

PHOTO: STAR



New belief can foster new beginning

SPORTS REPORTER

A new-look Bangladesh, under the leadership of Najmul Hossain Shanto, have managed to break barriers by clinching their first-ever ODI and T20I wins on New Zealand soil against the hosts.

With the opportunity to seal their maiden T20I series in New Zealand in the third and final game at Mount Maunganui today, Bangladesh are now dreaming of setting a new benchmark.

The ability to play as a unit by utilising the strengths and the available resources has now lent the cricketers self belief to perform their roles with clarity, which is also being reflected through their performances and positive body language.

Bangladesh cricket has mostly relied on sporadic individual heroics in the past with overdependence on senior



cricketers often keeping the probable prospects in the periphery, limiting their chances of emerging as new heroes.

Towhid Hridoy, one of the members of this new generation of fearless cricketers, believes that the time has come for the youngsters to take the baton from the seniors.

“I believe that it is just the start for us as we will do a lot better with more dominance in the coming days,” Hridoy said yesterday ahead of the third and final T20I today.

Hridoy also mentioned that they would like to move forward without bothering to look behind.

“Our seniors, who played in the past, have given this country a lot, and if everything was okay, perhaps some of them might even be with us here and play. I will not say anything about them, but now it is such a time that not everyone will stay. Everyone wants to take responsibility when we play for the national team and we do not want to focus on who is present or not,” Hridoy added.

The longing for a regular leg spinner in the Bangladesh team has been a persistent one for decades, and the inclusion of Rishad Hossain in the white ball formats for the New Zealand tour portrayed the support and backing the Tigers’ think tank is willing to provide the young leggie.

Even though it is too soon to reflect on this, Rishad did come through for the side, at least during the second T20I that was washed out.

“Even if Rishad doesn’t do well in the next game, I will not be disappointed. If we all can have that patience towards him, I think he can do better,” former Bangladesh captain and selector Habibul Bashar said, reflecting the confidence that the board is ready to put on the 21-year-old.

Not only exclusive to leg-spinners, but the team management also needs to show confidence and patience toward the entire team and that will only go a long way in boosting the current lots’ self-belief even further, perhaps resulting in many more accolades in the coming days.

Djokovic relishing being back in his ‘happy place’

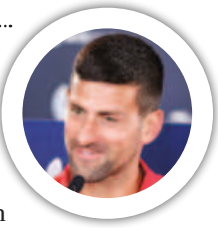
AFP, Perth

No v a k Djokovic c a l l e d Australia h i s “h a p p y place” on Saturday

as he prepared to kick off his season at the United Cup with a tricky clash against China's fast-improving Zhang Zhizhen.

The world number one holds no grudges heading into the mixed team event nearly two years after being refused entry to the country over his stance on Covid-19 vaccinations.

“Always felt like... (Australia) was my happy place where I felt great, other than that situation two years ago where obviously it wasn't really enjoyable,” he said. “But other than that, I have always enjoyed myself, played the best tennis, and so my feelings coming into Australia this year are really positive.”



Kings on top as Abahani falter again

SPORTS REPORTER

Abahani’s poor start to the season continued as they were beaten 1-0 by Fortis FC in the second round of the Bangladesh Premier League at the Muktijuddho Smriti Stadium in Rajshahi yesterday.

The six-time professional league champions, who were eliminated from the semifinals of the season-opening Independence Cup and drew 1-1 against Rahmatganj MFS in their first match of the league last week, conceded the only goal of yesterday’s game in the 37th minute when Fortis FC’s Ukrainian midfielder Valery Gryshyn found the net with a diagonal shot from inside the box after being teed up by Gambian forward Pa Omar Babou.

Although early days, the defeat left the Sky Blues in eighth position on the 10-team table with one point while Fortis moved up to fifth position with three points from two games.

There were no such disasters for defending champions Bashundhara Kings and three-time champions Sheikh Jamal DC, both winning comfortably.

Sheikh Jamal bounced back from a defeat to Sheikh Russel with a 1-0 win over Police FC at the Rafiq Uddin Bhuiyan Stadium in Mymensingh.

The only goal of the game came in the 55th minute when Police captain Isa Faysal put the ball into his own net while trying to take the ball off from Sheikh Jamal forward Stanley



Augustine inside the box. Both Sheikh Jamal and Police have three points each from two games.

Bashundhara Kings, though, took their dominant form to the last day of the year as the champions took only two minutes to break the deadlock against Chittagong Abahani at their home venue. Dorielton Gomes’s looping header on a cross from Tutul Hossain Badsha sailed over Chittagong Abahani goalkeeper Monirul Islam and nestled into the back of the net.

The port city side hit back eight minutes later, with Abu Abolaji smashing home from

close range following a goalmouth scramble. In-form forward Rakib Hossain restored Kings’ lead on the half-hour mark with a powerful left-footed strike which slipped through Monirul’s hands.

Dorielton scored his second of the match in the 40th minute with a flick following a cutback from Rafiqul Islam before Robson Robinho wrapped up the victory with a spot-kick three minutes from the end of regulation time.

The win kept Kings firmly on top with six points while Chittagong Abahani remained at the bottom without a single point.

North clinch second BCL title

SPORTS REPORTER

Shahadat Hossain Dipu’s unbeaten century went in vain as North Zone retained the Bangladesh Cricket League (BCL) one-day version title beating East Zone by four wickets in the final at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.

Pritom Kumar top-scored with 76 off 86 balls featuring six fours and a six and skipper Akbar Ali remained unbeaten on 50 as North chased down a target of 276 runs with four wickets and 38 balls to spare.

Despite a flying start, North at one point were 88 for four inside 13 overs. Pritom, along with Akbar, then added crucial 90 runs stand for the fifth wicket, laying the platform for victory.

Earlier, East posted 275 for six after being sent in to bat. Dipu, who recently made his Test debut for Bangladesh, remained unbeaten on 113 off 122 balls – his innings featuring nine fours and two sixes. Opener Parvez Hossain Emon scored 73 off 89.

Nahid Rana was the chief destroyer with the ball for North as the right-arm pacer registered his maiden five-wicket haul in List A competition.

Uncapped Brand to lead Proteas in NZ Tests

ICC

South Africa named uncapped Neil Brand as captain to lead their 14-member squad for the upcoming two-match Test series against New Zealand in January.

The 27-year-old played 51 first-class matches, scoring 2906 runs at an average of 39.27 and has 72 wickets with his slow left-arm orthodox spin and will lead a rookie squad with only three players from the squad currently playing India travelling with the team.

The changes come owing to a clash with the SA20, the T20 franchise tournament conducted by South Africa in January, where most of the contracted Test players will play.

There are six uncapped players in the squad with Duanne Olivier, capped 15 times in Tests, being the most experienced.

Venomous snake stops tennis

AFP, Brisbane

Dominic Thiem’s Brisbane International qualifying match against Australian James McCabe was suspended for 40 minutes on Saturday after a poisonous snake slithered courtside.

McCabe had just wrapped up the first set 6-2 against the Austrian 2020 US Open champion when the reptile – reportedly an eastern brown snake – was spotted among electrical wires on the side of the court in front of spectators.

Play was halted until a snake catcher arrived and managed to tease it into a bag.

Eastern browns are capable of delivering a potent bite and their venom can result in progressive paralysis and uncontrollable bleeding.

Thiem eventually won the match to move within one victory of the main draw.