

BPL Mashup

Barbadian Forde finding Dhaka too cold

Not only a five-wicket defeat against Durdanto Dhaka in the Bangladesh Premier League (BPL) opener but Comilla Victorians' West Indian pacer Matthew Forde is having to cope with a few other issues in the country.

Forde is still learning to adjust to the current low temperatures in Dhaka as the cricketer from Barbados informed that he has been taken aback by the chilly weather ever since landing in the country to take part in the 10th edition of the BPL.

The 21-year-old, who conceded 25 runs from his four overs in their first game, is also having to contend with a disrupted sleep cycle as he is having to adjust to a different time zone.

"The first thing that I need to learn is how to get some sleep. I have not had any sleep in the last couple of days and it is quite tough considering the time zone. It is a different challenge and I am having to adapt here in Asia," Forde said yesterday.

"It is very much different to the Caribbean. You know, when I came down here I was wearing three jackets and I never expected that. But I am happy to be here. Experiencing the culture is one thing and I said it was not easy. I haven't adjusted to the [types of] food [in Bangladesh] yet but I am getting there," he added.

The right-arm seamer, who recently made his T20I debut for West Indies against England last month, is taking this BPL experience as a challenge and looking forward to utilise it in his next trip to Bangladesh for the national side.

"For me, it doesn't matter where I am and once I am playing cricket, I am happy and it's a new challenge since it's the first time I am here in Bangladesh. So, I am getting used to the condition as I could be back here again for the West Indies team sometime soon. So, I am looking forward to every challenge that is put on the table," he said.

'Beef chui jhal, 3 Idiots and dream of final'

Khulna Tigers skipper Anamul Haque Bijoy missed out with the bat in his team's opening game in the Bangladesh Premier League (BPL) against Chattogram Challengers on Saturday, but that didn't matter as his side went onto win the game by five wickets.

Despite making just nine runs in his first outing this year, Bijoy feels that 2024 will be his best year ever, revealing it in a promotional video recently.

"It's an outstanding feeling, one that I can't describe in words, to be a part of the BPL. I feel this year is going to be the best year of my career," said Bijoy.

The cricketer from Kushia spoke about his goal of reaching the final with Khulna this season and also revealed his love for beef chui jhal, a Khulna delicacy.

"In the breakfast I like to have oats while beef chui jhal is my favourite food from Khulna," he said.

Bijoy also said that his favourite movie is the famous Bollywood flick '3 Idiots'.



Comilla Victorians' Mustafizur Rahman and Durdanto Dhaka's Shoriful Islam, part of the national team's core pace unit, were seen exchanging ideas during the two franchises' practice session at the Academy Ground of the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday. Shoriful will be in action today when Dhaka take on Chattogram Challengers in the day game in Mirpur today. [Bottom] Meanwhile, it was a happy reunion for Sylhet Strikers' veteran skipper Mashrafe Bin Mortaza as he had a run-in with Dav Whatmore, former Bangladesh national team coach who is now working as a Technical Director for Fortune Barishal.

Does Mash's fitness reflect BPL's standard?

SPORTS REPORTER

Former Bangladesh ODI captain Mashrafe Bin Mortaza turned heads when he got a wicket with his very first delivery in this season's Bangladesh Premier League (BPL) on Friday.

The veteran, however, has been struggling with fitness issues following his return to cricket after a long break and his franchise's decision to give him the captaincy raised questions about BPL's inherent lack of quality.

It had been some eight months since he had last played competitive cricket in the Dhaka Premier League.

Mashrafe is leading Sylhet Strikers this BPL, having won the franchise tournament the most times as skipper for various franchises in a decorated career. He had played the match against Chattogram Challengers which his side lost by seven wickets. Although he got a wicket off his first delivery, the end was not sweet as Chattogram's Najibullah Zadran smashed him for 16 runs in three deliveries of the 19th over to finish off the game.

Mashrafe yesterday came for his first practice session this season and worked on his batting. It could be surmised that the BPL's grind could be a tough hurdle for the veteran. While his dedication for the game is still an example, playing him puts the team's plans regarding BPL into doubt.

When he arrived at the field, many were checking the state of his legs and after his batting session, which was of low-intensity against spinners, Mashrafe had difficulty taking off his pads.

"Actually, rather than Mashrafe bhai's performance, him just being in the field is the main motivation for us," Zakir Hasan, who scored an unbeaten 70 off 43 deliveries in the defeat to Chattogram, said at the press briefing when asked about the veteran's involvement.

"Him being there makes decision-making easy which is what I felt and that's important for us,"



Zakir added.

When asked whether Mashrafe would feature more as a batter than a bowler in their next game, Zakir said: "I think it would be better to ask bhaiya (Mashrafe) the question instead of me since he batted for the first time this season in a practice session. He came in previous sessions too but maybe he is trying to prepare himself well with the bat."

While there are players available for captaincy including Najmul Hossain Shanto, the stand-in skipper for Bangladesh across formats, Sylhet went for the tried and tested virtues of Mashrafe.

There were speculations prior to the start of the tournament on whether Mashrafe would captain the side but such speculations subsided once an official press release informed of the captaincy assignment. There are also whispers that he did not want to take the captaincy role but did so due to the franchise's request.

The BPL once injected rules such as making it mandatory to have a 140 km/h pacer in the attack for the sides. While BPL appeared to have standards falling over the years, last season brought some freshness in terms of competitiveness. Only time will tell time will tell if the resurgence of competitiveness would sustain given the fitness standard of one of its key players.

Haris leaves Chattogram camp as PCB denies NOC

SPORTS REPORTER

Pakistan batter Mohammad Haris left the Chattogram Challengers camp in Dhaka on Sunday after the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) denied him NOC (No Objection Certificate) to play in the 10th edition of the Bangladesh Premier League.

Haris did not receive a green signal from the PCB as he has already played two franchise leagues from 2023 July to 2024 July, which is the maximum permitted by the board.

The 22-year-old has represented Pakistan in six ODIs, scoring 30 runs, and nine T20Is in which he has amassed 126 runs.

In the 2023 edition of the Pakistan Super League, the right-handed batter, who played for Peshawar Zalmi, was amongst the highest run-getters as he scored 350 runs at a strike rate of 186.17 in 11 innings. He scored two fifties and smashed a best score of 92 not out in the tournament.

SHORT CORNER

Djokovic thumps Mannarino to reach quarters

Novak Djokovic marked a rare daytime appearance at the Australian Open with a dominant victory over Adrian Mannarino on Sunday as the 10-times champion flirted with a 'triple bagel' before sealing a 6-0, 6-0, 6-3 win to reach the quarterfinals. Djokovic was coughing and appeared to be breathing heavily at times during the match but the Serb did not let his health issues impact his play as he powered to a 32nd straight match victory at the tournament and a 58th Grand Slam quarterfinal, equalling the all-time record of Swiss maestro Roger Federer.

'Don't believe in Ballon d'Or and FIFA Best anymore'

Al Nassr superstar Cristiano Ronaldo said he 'no longer believed' in two of football's greatest individual accolades after he won three awards at the Globe Soccer Awards in Dubai on Friday. Ronaldo, who finished 2023 as the top goalscorer in the world for club and country with 54 strikes, beating Harry Kane (52), Kylian Mbappe (52), and Erling Haaland (50), was critical of the awards and stated that onus should be given to numbers.



Afridi relieved after avoiding whitewash

Pakistan captain Shaheen Shah Afridi said it was "very important" his team avoided a whitewash series loss to New Zealand after winning the fifth and final Twenty20 International by 42 runs on Sunday. The Black Caps capitulated for 92 in the face of some quality Pakistan spin bowling, having been favoured to chase down the tourists' 134-8. Pakistan lost the five-match series 4-1.

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AC Milan goalkeeper Mike Maignan gestures at the crowd after his side's 3-2 win over Udinese in a game that had to be halted temporarily due to the home fans hurling racial slurs at the France international on Saturday. A group of Udinese supporters aimed monkey chants at Maignan, leading to referee Fabio Maresca stopping play and a livid Maignan storming down the tunnel with his teammates.

PHOTO: REUTERS

'Morsalin needs to fight for his place'

SPORTS REPORTER

Sheikh Morsalin, one of the rising stars in Bangladesh football, has been struggling to find a place in the Bashundhara Kings playing XI this season, having not played a match for the club since December 11.

The 19-year-old forward came on as a substitute in their AFC Cup match against Odisha FC, which they lost 1-0, and since then has been cooling his heels.

Morsalin was not even part of the 23-man squad in Kings' last three matches in the Bangladesh Premier League, rousing questions about the club's outlook towards the promising forward.

To return to the Kings squad and the playing eleven, Bangladesh coach Javier Cabrera urged his star pupil to fight for his position.

"He [Morsalin] needs to fight," Cabrera told the reporters on Sunday at the BFF House after returning to office after a vacation.

"He is in a very competitive squad with a lot of high-level foreigners in his position. He is a young boy and



he needs to understand that he needs to fight and compete hard to get into the lineup," he added.

Morsalin and two of his Bangladesh teammates Tapu Barman and Anisur Rahman Zico were among the five players who were penalised by the Kings' on disciplinary grounds last year.

Tapu and Zico have returned to action after the club shortened their suspensions. Cabrera was

happy to see them comeback and said they will be considered for the Bangladesh squad for their upcoming World Cup Qualifier matches against Palestine and Lebanon in March.

"It is great to have them back. They have been key players for us for many years... Now that they are back, all of them have the same possibility to get the chance," said the Spaniard.

Bangladesh's three opponents in the qualifiers – Palestine, Lebanon and Australia – are competing in the ongoing AFC Asian Cup in Saudi Arabia.

Bangladesh's next two matches in the qualifiers are against Palestine, the first at home on March 21 and then the away match on March 26.

Cabrera wants a camp in Saudi Arabia, similar to the one they had last year, before the home match against Palestine.

"The last camp in Saudi Arabia had been great for us. We were able to create some base for the rest of the year. This year the plan is to do something like last year."