

DPL's no foreigner policy a cloudy scenario

ABDULLAH AL MEHDI

The Dhaka Premier League (DPL), the country's premier one-day competition, would be played without any foreign stars as the majority of the 12 clubs had asked for it, Cricket Committee of Dhaka Metropolis (CCDM) had announced in a press conference on Tuesday.

While the decision was somewhat communicated "internally" at least a year back, the reasons cited were still a bit unconvincing. Dollar crisis and exposure for local players were held up as reasons but, talking to club officials, it appears there could be other reasons behind such a decision.

Some club officials claim their opinions were not asked for as the decision has come from higher-ups in the board's power hierarchy.

"We haven't asked for anything like that [regarding not having foreign players]," a Mohammedan official said on conditions of anonymity.

"Not sure about its benefit. We needed a leftie in the middle-order after Shakib [Al Hasan] left and wanted to bring a left hander from outside, and even then, we were not sure if foreigners would be allowed but in the last four months we have been hearing 'no foreigners, no foreigners'."

However, an Abahani official claimed that they did not need foreigners. "We agreed [with decision] because do we need foreign players? We have 16 players from the national team," Abahani manager Abdullah Al Mamun told The Daily Star.

There used to be minutes of meetings that were communicated in written form after the CCDM meeting but no such processes are followed now, according to sources, which brings confusion regarding last year's meeting when the directive of not including foreigners first came to fore.

Chirag Jani and Parvez Rasool have been absolute performers in the last two seasons for Legends of Rupganj



Chirag Jani

and Sheikh Jamal Dhanmondi Club, respectively, turning in highest run-getters and wicket-takers' list even last season.

A Legend of Rupganj official said that when the bigger clubs could not sign these kind of players, the decision to not include foreigners was finalised.

"We have this player who was confirmed to play in our team and an agreement, too, was signed and even during the morning of the meeting he had messaged me. The thing is when we asked which clubs approached him after last season to play this season, he named a few clubs. If the clubs were aware since last season that foreigners were not allowed, why did they approach him since the decision had been given last year?"

"I know of two players, Chirag Jani and Parvez Rasool, who two big teams had offered, I won't say their names. When these teams did not get the two players, they took initiative that foreign players won't be there," a Legends of Rupganj official said on conditions of anonymity.

Teams also had to face the difficulty of making plans since they had already signed some foreign stars. Many of the club sources believe that CCDM chairman Mohammed Salahuddin is not to blame as some decisions are taken from high up in BCB's power hierarchy.

Dollar crisis, if it affected everyone, should also be a reason to not have so many foreigners in the ongoing BPL. But not having representatives in the BCB hierarchy and influencing decisions could also be a big reason why some clubs would now be feeling the consequences of this decision.



PHOTO: INSTAGRAM

Cristiano Ronaldo marked his 1,000th club appearance with a goal for Al Nassr in their 1-0 win over Al Fayha in the AFC Champions League last 16 tie on Wednesday. Having returned to competitive football after a round of friendly and mid-season games, Ronaldo took his season's tally to 21 as he opened his account for the year with his first goal. Nicknamed 'Mr. Champions League' during his time in Europe, Ronaldo now has four goals in five matches in the competition.

BPL playoffs race heating up



Rangpur Riders all-rounder Shakib Al Hasan has rediscovered his batting form at the right time in the Bangladesh Premier League. After struggling in three of his first five outings, Shakib came out all guns blazing in the next three -- his latest display saw him notch a 20-ball fifty, the edition's fastest. On the bowling front, however, he has been in his elements, as evident by his 13 scalps that see him third in the wicket-takers list. As Rangpur have already guaranteed a spot in the knockout phase of the tournament, head coach Sohel Islam is perhaps picking the ace all-rounder's brain to plot for the business end of the competition.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

SPORTS REPORTER

The knockout stage of the Bangladesh Premier League (BPL) is beginning to take shape, with all teams except Durdanto Dhaka have three league matches left to play.

Dhaka, who have played 10, are the first team and only team to be officially out of the tournament as they had lost a total of nine matches on the trot -- a record highest in BPL -- after winning their opening fixture against defending champions Comilla Victorians.

At the other end of the standings, table-toppers Rangpur Riders, who sit top by virtue of a better net run-rate, are equal on 14 points with Comilla after nine matches.

Next in line are Fortune Barishal and Chattogram Challengers, who sit at three and four, respectively -- both with 10 points -- but the former edge the latter on net run-rate.

TEAM	M	W	L	Pts
RANGPUR	9	7	2	14
COMILLA	9	7	2	14
FORTUNE	9	5	4	10
CHATTOGRAM	9	5	4	10
KHULNA	9	4	5	8
SYLHET	9	3	6	6
DHAKA	9	1	9	2

At five are Khulna Tigers, who have failed to register any points on the table after winning their first four fixtures. Having lost five matches in succession after accumulating eight points, they would need at least a win to make a final push for an Eliminator spot.

Fate of BFF Center of Excellence depends on ESIA report

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) last week appointed the Department of Disaster Science and Climate Resilience of Dhaka University in a bid to get the clearance from FIFA to build a long-awaited BFF Center of Excellence in Cox's Bazar's Ramu upazila.

The department has been asked to make a report including the Environmental and Social Impact Assessment (ESIA) and Environmental Management Plan (EMP) within two months and submit it in April following the instructions from FIFA.

"We have already issued the work order to the Department of Disaster Science and Climate Resilience of Dhaka University earlier this month (on February 7). The department has been asked to submit a report within two months," BFF general secretary Emran Hossain Tushar told The Daily Star on Tuesday.

"After receiving the assessment report, we will send it to FIFA, who will then analyse it and will take the final decision whether to release their fund for BFF Center of Excellence project worth US\$ 3.6 million or will advise us otherwise," Tushar added, mentioning that if the BFF fails to start the works of the excellence centre by next December, the fund might have to be returned to FIFA.

Meanwhile, two other projects -- reinstallments of two artificial turfs at Kamalapur Stadium and BFF artificial ground, respectively -- have also been approved under the FIFA Forward Programme. If BFF can save funds from these two projects then the board can shift and use it in the Centre of Excellence project in Cox's Bazar.

The excellence centre will feature two football fields -- one artificial turf and one natural grass ground -- a



medical centre, and a four-storey dormitory among other facilities.

It took BFF nearly nine months to award the project to a neutral entity after circulating an advertisement in this regard on May 14, 2023.

On July 4, 2022, the Bangladesh government handed over 20-acre land to BFF, with The Daily Star running an article on this particular issue on July 16, 2022, mentioning that the government gave away a part of Jungle Khuniya Palong reserved forest in Cox's Bazar to the BFF, increasing a fresh blow to the fast-depleting forests in the region which is home to critically endangered Asian elephants along with other flora and fauna.

A number of organisations working to improve environmental protection in Bangladesh continued to protest for the cancellation of the project in order to preserve biodiversity, and that prompted FIFA to ask BFF to submit the ESIA report even though there was no such requirement initially.

SHORT CORNER



Nadal says Djokovic 'best player in history'

Rafael Nadal on Wednesday hailed longtime rival Novak Djokovic as the best player in the history of the sport. "The numbers say yes, for me yes (he is the best in history)," Nadal said in an interview with El Objective de La Sexta when asked "who is the best?"

PCB parts ways with Hafeez

Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) announced that Mohammad Hafeez's time as the director of Pakistan men's cricket team was over after the national team had an underwhelming tour of Australia and New Zealand.

O'Rourke claims long-standing NZ record

Fast bowler Will O'Rourke broke a long-standing New Zealand record yesterday in Hamilton that has lasted for almost 10 years. O'Rourke collected five wickets during the Proteas' second innings of the second test to seal match figures of 9-93 and in the process broke the previous record held by Mark Craig (8-188) from June 2014 for the best bowling figures on Test debut by a New Zealand player.

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'Slapstick' Bayern's woes mountain

AFP, Rome

Ciro Immobile fired Lazio towards a first Champions League quarter-final in nearly a quarter of a century in Wednesday's 1-0 win over Bayern Munich which plunged their troubled opponents even deeper into crisis.

Italy forward Immobile slotted home the last 16, first leg's decisive goal from the penalty spot in the 69th minute in Rome to pile pressure on Bundesliga champions Bayern, who risk having a disastrous season by their own exalted standards.

Immobile's strike came days after he netted his 200th Serie A goal and allowed a raucous Lazio home crowd to dream of a first quarter-final in Europe's top competition in 24 years.

Lazio won the Italian title the last time they reached the quarter-finals in 2000, when they fell to Valencia in the last eight.



And in order to emulate that star-studded team which featured the likes of Juan Sebastian Veron, Marcelo Salas and Sinisa Mihajlovic, Maurizio Sarri's side still need to hold out in Bavaria next month.

However, Bayern are a club in a slump and a toothless display in the Italian capital in which they didn't have a single shot on target will do nothing to help embattled coach Thomas Tuchel.

Tuchel, who described his side's performance as "a little bit slapstick", denied that he is concerned for his future even though Wednesday's defeat came after a 3-0 thumping at Bayer Leverkusen on Saturday which left Bayern five points off the pace in the German title race.

The Champions League looked like Bayern's last chance at a trophy this season but Immobile put those hopes in serious doubt.



Centuries from captain Rohit Sharma (131) and Ravindra Jadeja (110 not out) helped India recover and then dominate Thursday after early blows on day one of the third Test against England. India reached 326-5 at stumps after Sarfaraz Khan smashed 62 on his debut to turn the opposition attack on its head in Rajkot.

PHOTO: AFP