



Fortune Barishal all-rounder Kyle Mayers took no time to settle into the Bangladesh Premier League (BPL) as he smacked three sixes and as many fours for a 31-ball 48 on his BPL debut against Sylhet Strikers in Chattogram yesterday. With the ball, the right-handed seamer swung it viciously in the air and got the better of three Sylhet batters. The all-round performance earned him the Player of the Match award and helped Barishal to an 18-run win.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

Mayers cherishes his Ctg link on BPL debut

SPORTS REPORTER

Kyle Mayers began his Bangladesh Premier League (BPL) journey on the best possible note, and in a venue close to his heart, as the West Indies all-rounder was instrumental in Fortune Barishal defeating Sylhet Strikers by 18 runs in Chattogram yesterday.

At Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium, Mayers first quickfired a 31-ball 48, striking three sixes and three fours, to help his team post a fighting total of 183 for six. He followed it up to break the backbone of Sylhet batting line-up, picking up three wickets while conceding just 12 runs from his four overs, as Barishal registered their sixth win in 10 games.

Mayers' heroics against Bangladesh in 2021 – where his unbeaten 210 in the second innings scripted one of the most incredible comebacks in the history of the game as the visitors chased down a record 395 on the final day of the first Test in Chattogram – is still fresh in the minds of ardent cricket fans.

"Yeah of course, great memories coming here. Last time I played here, I scored a double hundred. So happy to come back. I was excited to hear that I was coming here to play in the BPL. There are a few reasons and one of them being able to play," he said after the match.

The 31-year-old, who arrived in Bangladesh just a couple of days back, cherished his connection with the port city.

"I've been on the road for the past two months, but wasn't playing regularly. I only played two games in six weeks prior to this, so I was very happy to showcase my skills.

"I just felt different when I got up today and in training. Obviously, there are some good memories here. When I went to the nets, I felt I had my best net session yesterday (Friday). I had been practicing for a while and I felt I wasn't hitting the mark but yesterday everything just clicked, so that helped."

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KYLE MAYERS

Mayers gave his perspective on the Chattogram surface. "I think it's a good batting surface. Kind of slow but the outfield is really fast. You need to take your time, just time the balls here, and you'll get good value for your shots, so I really enjoy batting here. On other grounds, you might have to use a bit more power," he added.

Mayers even got to make his BPL debut while wearing 210 as his jersey number.

"I didn't choose the jersey number [210]. It was just given to me, and I think it was a nice gesture by whoever the team decided to do so," Mayers added.

Salahuddin among Moeen's 'top 5' coaches

SPORTS REPORTER

Comilla Victorians all-rounder Moeen Ali rated his side's head coach Mohammad Salahuddin as the best in Bangladesh and revealed that the coach was also "one of the best" he has ever worked with.

Moeen had played vital roles while tasting back-to-back Bangladesh Premier League (BPL) triumphs with Comilla Victorians in 2022 and 2023. On both occasions, he had Salahuddin at the helm.

"I am surprised he is not the head coach for Bangladesh. I am not sure if he's ever done it but he is one of the best I have worked with. He is definitely in my top five," Moeen told the media yesterday.

"He is very good with young players. He is definitely the best in Bangladesh, that's my own opinion."

A key member of England's 2022 T20 World Cup winning side, Moeen showed his class as he hit the ground running instantly in the ongoing edition of the BPL. He has made a habit of coming in late and delivering powering performances to help Comilla across the line.

'I have no complaints, nor am I disappointed in myself'

Jaker Ali Anik came to the fore when he smashed three consecutive hundreds in the 2022-23 Bangladesh Cricket League, ending up as the leading run-getter of the tournament. The 25-year-old is one of the handful of local cricketers who have been able to show glimpses in the ongoing and the previous Bangladesh Premier League season for Comilla Victorians. Anik, whose exclusion from the Bangladesh T20 squad for the upcoming Sri Lanka series led to Comilla head coach Mohammad Salahuddin criticising the selection process, spoke about how playing for Bangladesh 'A' team and High-Performance team had helped his game and the way Pakistan's star wicketkeeper-batter Mohammad Rizwan had an influence on him along with a few other topics during an interview with Mazhar Uddin of The Daily Star. The excerpts of the interview are as follows:

The Daily Star (DS): Did you prepare yourself specifically for the T20 format recently?

Jaker Ali Anik (JAA): I like all the formats. It's not that I target a specific format as I am always eager to give my best whether it's the longer version or T20s. But yes, I did take extra preparation for the BPL to improve my game.

DS: What is your mindset as a middle-order batter in the shortest format?

JAA: Basically, I am a coach oriented player. Suppose, if we lost five wickets and my coach tells me to attack then I will attack from the very first ball. So, I always talk to my coach before I go out to bat. Even in the last game [against Khulna Tigers in which Anik scored an unbeaten 40], I got the feeling that I might be promoted up the order. And when the call was eventually made, the coach asked me whether I knew my plan and I said yes, 'It is to bat deep' and he said, 'Right'. Coaches like me because I think I know the game and what the situation demands.

DS: Many of your 2016 ICC Under-19 World Cup teammates have already established themselves in the national team. Where do you think you lagged?

JAA: I think I was not good enough during the Under-19 days and probably that is the reason I played just one game in the World Cup. They were better and that is the reason they were able to represent the

national team. I have no complaints, nor am I disappointed in myself. I was not prepared back then and I feel I did not have the ability. But by the grace of almighty, I knew what areas I needed to work on and I have been following that step-by-step every year since then. And fortunately, things are going well for me now.

DS: You had a good run of form in the domestic circuit in the last few years. How did you prepare yourself before the start of this season?

JAA: The most important thing that season (2022-23) was that I played a lot of matches. Most probably, I have played around 26 matches, including matches for the Bangladesh 'A' team against the West Indies and India. That helped me gain courage and then I found first-class cricket very easy. Facing bowlers like Umesh Yadav and a few others from the West Indies national team helped me a lot when I went back to playing first-class cricket. Cricket is not an easy game but I was feeling comfortable in the domestic circuit as we were playing with the Duke ball or the Kookaburra ball. I was also able to play well on the grassy wickets.

DS: Do you believe playing more matches abroad – be it for the 'A' team or the High Performance team

– can act as a bridge for newcomers and help them adapt to international cricket?

JAA: I think the matches I played with the 'A' team helped me a lot. Playing matches for the 'A' team and the experience I gained has given me an idea about my game. It also gave me an idea of how tough international cricket is and what areas I should improve to adapt.

DS: Recently, your coach Mohammad Salahuddin expressed his disappointment over you not getting a national team call-up for the upcoming T20I series against Sri Lanka. Were you disappointed as well?

JAA: To be honest, no. I don't even think about these things as I always have faith in Allah and I believe when my time comes I will be in the right place.

DS: As a wicketkeeper-batter, do you look up to any other cricketer?

JAA: I have always followed Mushfiqur Rahim bhai and he is my childhood idol and my jersey number is the biggest example of that. Recently, in the last two years, the way [Mohammad] Rizwan [of Pakistan] helped me is something I feel very lucky to have gotten. He has influenced me a lot and he taught me a few tricks that a cricketer hardly shares with anyone.



Impressed with the way [Yashasvi] Jaiswal has stepped up today. Not just with the bat, but his performance on the field too. I think going forward, he could be one of Rohit's [Rohit Sharma] go-to part-time options. The ball would be in his hands – whether it's leg-spin, off-spin or medium-pace. Jaiswal reminds me of a young [Sachin] Tendulkar.

Former India coach Ravi Shastri said in commentary shortly after Jaiswal completed his hundred.



India opener Yashasvi Jaiswal celebrates his third Test ton and second of the series on Day Three of the third Test against England in Rajkot yesterday. He leapt in celebration after reaching the milestone in 122 balls but that proved to be damaging as he felt his back and was forced to retire hurt soon after. PHOTO: AFP

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