

Uncertainty over Tigers' coaching positions

SPORTS REPORTER

With Bangladesh's home series against Sri Lanka set to begin on March 4, there is a big question mark over the positions of the team's batting and bowling coaches.

The BCB formed a committee, headed by BCB's head of programmes, David Moore, along with a number of directors to appoint the next coaches. The committee had begun interviews on February 6, and although many high-profile names had filtered through to the media, most of those names have fallen by the wayside.

Ross Taylor of New Zealand was one of the applicants but his availability had been an issue for the board. Former Australia pace star Shaun Tait did not sit for the interview as prospective bowling coach after he was drafted in by the West Indies Cricket Board. High-profile batting coach prospects had met with refusals too.

Sri Lanka's Thilan Samaraweera, who had previously worked as the Tigers' batting consultant in 2016, was rumoured to be a front-runner but a top BCB official yesterday clarified that Samaraweera is out of the picture.

Stuart Law was also interviewed but there is more certainty of him not being appointed. Law's contract with the under-19 team has also ended, the BCB source informed.

"The terms and conditions were not agreed upon and there are more chances of Stuart Law not being appointed [as batting coach]. Although he has not refused yet," a top BCB official said.

It is expected that in a week's time, the committee would appoint coaches but for now, there is a limbo with former assistant coach Nic Pothas rumoured to be interested in taking up a role as fielding coach.



PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

Rangpur Riders all-rounder Shakib Al Hasan drew first blood when he took out Fortune Barishal skipper Tamim Iqbal on his very first delivery of the innings in a much-awaited Bangladesh Premier League contest in Chattogram yesterday. Tamim got off to a brisk start as he smashed three fours and two sixes for a 19-ball 33 before his premeditation got the better of him against Shakib.

Liton 'upset' despite best T20 score



If I were able to win the game by scoring a fifty, I would have been satisfied. But I scored close to ninety runs yet at the end of the day we lost, so from that point of view I am upset. I think the wicket was difficult to chase a target of 180 (178-run target) as it was a two-paced surface. Still, we batted well but if we could hit a couple of more sixes between 16 to 20 overs (things might have been different). And that's cricket, we need to accept that. You can not win every day.

Comilla Victorians skipper Liton Das (85 off 58) after a 12-run defeat against Sylhet Strikers.

***Read full story on The Daily Star website*

Ingenuity behind Shoriful blooming

Shoriful Islam has been the sole shining light in Durdanto Dhaka's abysmal campaign in the ongoing Bangladesh Premier League (BPL). With 22 wickets in 12 matches, the 22-year-old left-arm pacer, whose team suffered an unwanted record of losing 11 matches in a row, is still in contention to end as the leading wicket-taker this edition. Shoriful spoke about his game among other things with Mazhar Uddin of The Daily Star during an interview, the excerpts of which are as follows:



The Daily Star (DS): Any regret about not making the playoffs?

Shoriful Islam (SI): It's always disappointing to be on the losing side, even if I performed well.

DS: Your reaction after scalping your maiden hattrick in the BPL opener?

SI: To be honest, picking up a hattrick requires luck too... To make things more special, my family was there at the ground that day for the very first time.

DS: You've showcased the ability to swing the ball both ways, with accuracy and pace.

SI: I trained really hard, which is one of the reasons behind my improved control. It's not easy for a pacer especially in the T20 format, where you need to adapt to the game's situation... I'm trying to work on those aspects, and work on different variations.

DS: Have you tried any new variation in this BPL?

SI: Yes, I've tried a new slower delivery, and I was successful. Although I didn't have to use it much since the wicket was not favourable, I executed well. I tried one which came off the palm of my hands.

DS: Any recent changes in your diet or in lifestyle?

SI: I'd like to keep it a secret.

***Read the full interview on The Daily Star website.*

Red-hot Inter welcome Atletico

AGENCIES

Champions League holders Manchester City resumed their defence of the trophy last week with a 3-1 win over FC Copenhagen, and this week, it's the turn of last season's runners-up, Inter Milan.

Inter are flying in Serie A and are being taken seriously as a potential challenger in Europe, but they face a difficult test at home in the last 16 against Diego Simeone's battle-hardened Atletico Madrid.

Having started 2024 with eight wins on the spin, Inter can consider themselves in peak form ahead of their return to the Champions League.

The Nerazzurri have lost just one of their last 13 games in UEFA's top club competition -- that lone defeat coming against Manchester City in the 2023 final.

Simone Inzaghi's Inter's red-hot form could also be understood from their exploits this year -- they have eight wins from eight in 2024 giving them the Italian Super Cup and a nine-point lead over Juventus in Serie A, that too with a game in hand.

However, Inzaghi remained humble.

"We're playing really well," Inzaghi said after Friday's 4-0 thrashing of Salernitana. "It's difficult, you have to wait until the end of the season to make any conclusions."

Just how good Inzaghi's latest Inter team are compared to previous years will be revealed over two clashes with Atletico, a tough team with an even tougher manager in Diego Simeone.

Meanwhile, it will be a return to happy hunting grounds for Atletico Madrid coach Diego Simeon, who played for Inter between 1996-1999

Inter Milan have only lost one of their last 13 Champions League games (seven wins, five draws), keeping a clean sheet in eight of those matches.

Antoine Griezmann has scored 31 of Atletico's total of 169 goals in the Champions League (18%).

Under Diego Simeone, Atletico Madrid have won five of six previous knockout matches against Italian clubs in the continental competition.

and has fond memories from his time at San Siro.

Victory in Europe has become Atletico's key goal as they lie a long way off the pace in the Spanish title race.

Simeone rested Antoine Griezmann for the 5-0 win over Las Palmas on Saturday in La Liga, indicating where his priorities lie.

"We need a great Griezmann, and we need him fresh," Simeone said.

Atletico's coach reserved special praise for Inzaghi, whom he played with at Lazio between 1999-2003.

"A team doesn't win the Super Cup or (lead) the league without being a very well-drilled side," said the Argentine.

However, despite his relationship with Inter and Inzaghi, Simeone, known for his manic touchline displays, sharp all-black suits, and combative spirit, will not be as generous once the ball is rolling.

Hockey returns sans six clubs

SPORTS REPORTER

Financial constraints of clubs have taken some sheen out of the return of domestic hockey in Bangladesh after a two-and-a-half-year sabbatical as six out of 12 clubs have pulled out of the curtain-raiser competition Club Cup Hockey Tournament beginning today in Dhaka owing to a budgetary issue.

Teams like Bangladesh Sporting Club, Azad SC, Sadharan Bima, Dilkusha SC, Victoria SC and Sonali Bank are skipping the tournament citing lack of preparation and budget constraint as main reasons.

"We are skipping it to save money so that we can play in the Dhaka Premier Division Hockey League," Bangladesh SC general secretary Mustaque Hossain told The Daily Star yesterday.

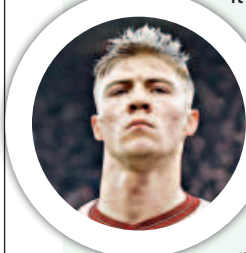
However, Bangladesh Hockey Federation's (BHF) secretary Khawaja Taher Latif claimed the number of teams was not unusual.

Last edition of the ournament was held in 2021, where eight clubs took part.

Abahani will face Ajax in a Group B match while Dhaka Mariner Youngs Club will face Bangladesh Police in Group A at the Maulana Bhasani Hockey Stadium. Mohammedan SC and Usha KC are the two other teams.

SHORT CORNER

Hojlund no longer a poor man's Haaland



It was not long ago that Manchester United's signing of Rasmus Hojlund was a rich source of humour for fans of rivals Manchester City as the young Dane laboured to make an impression in the Premier League. However, the 21-year-old Hojlund has now scored in six successive Premier League games, the youngest player ever to do so.

FIFPRO says AFC Champions League 'unsustainable'

The current Asian Champions League is "unsustainable", the global footballers' union FIFPRO said in a report Monday, accusing the regional governing body of failing to listen to players and clubs. FIFPRO said this remodelled version, which will see the winner take home an increased cheque of \$12 million, was also unsustainable.

Sad Pacquiao accepts his Olympic dream is over

A "saddened and disappointed" Manny Pacquiao conceded Monday his Olympic boxing dream was over after the ring great was denied a berth at this year's Paris games. The International Olympic Committee rejected a special request for Pacquiao to take part, the Philippine Olympic Committee announced Sunday.

Israeli swimmer booed at world swimming championships

Israeli Anastasia Gorbenko shrugged off boos from the crowd at the world swimming championships in Doha on Sunday. Gorbenko took silver in the 400m freestyle but the crowd in Qatar whistled when she went up to collect her medal, and before in the post-race poolside interview.

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