

## Will WC probe report see light of day?

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The 2023 ODI World Cup ended three months ago, with Bangladesh suffering their worst outing in the event since 2003. It led to Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) forming a three-member committee to assess the performances of the Tigers, but will the report see the light of day?

The report was due in the latest board meeting, and it was said that it was submitted to the board. However, BCB directors have not seen it.

"The report was supposed to be handed in but it didn't happen in the meeting. Perhaps it was handed in later by them [committee]," one director told The Daily Star on Tuesday.

The contents of the report had not been discussed, in fact not much altogether had been discussed regarding it as major decisions such as stadiums, captaincy, central contracts and selection panel was discussed on February 12th in the meeting.

"It was said [during meeting] that it [the report] will be discussed," the source added.

The report had, in fact, been submitted to the BCB president Nazmul Hassan, who had also claimed that it was his responsibility.

"No there was no discussion. A report on the World Cup performance was submitted today and had been submitted to the board. But since the meeting was long, the whole report has been given to me to see it first. After I watched it, they have given some recommendations," Hassan had said after the board meeting.

"It won't take time and things will happen within the coming few days," he had added.

During that press conference, when asked whether the World Cup performance report was lowest amongst the priorities in the country's cricket, Nazmul denied the notion.

"No, the matter is not like that. After the report was handed over, everyone said that it will have to be read. There are also recommendations that will have to be seen," the BCB boss, also the new Youth and Sports minister, had further informed.

"Since the report's responsibility was given to me and it was done today, it's difficult to make decisions while sitting here. So, it has to be read, understood and then discussed with everybody. Then we take the decision, whatever it is, according to recommendations."

Nine days have passed since the BCB meeting, and BCB directors know nothing of the report bar those in the special committee. It thus raises questions about what priority the report has, and if the contents are of any importance. Of course, whether it will see the light of day is something that can be argued as it slowly recedes from memory.



PHOTO: BANGLADESH ATHLETICS FEDERATION

Sprinter Zahir Rayhan and high-jumper Mahfuzur Rahman show off their medals as they pose for a selfie at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday following their success in the recent 11th Asian Indoor Athletics Championships in Tehran. Zahir bagged a silver medal in 400m run while Mahfuzur won a bronze medal in the high-jump event.

## Stokes could bowl in fourth India Test

AFP, Ranchi

There is "definitely a chance" that England captain Ben Stokes will bowl in the fourth Test against India, his deputy Ollie Pope said Wednesday, in a badly needed boost for the tourists.

England need a win in the Test starting Friday in Ranchi after successive losses put them 2-1 down in the five-match series.

The 32-year-old all-rounder Stokes previously said he would play purely as a batter in the series because of his knee, but bowled in the nets on Wednesday.

He has struggled with his left knee for some time, stopping him bowling in the last three Ashes Tests in 2023 and the ODI World Cup.

"There's definitely a chance," Pope said of the probability that Stokes will bowl in the fourth Test.

"He's not confirmed it but he bowled at the batters today," he added. "See how he pulls up, and if that's good, hopefully we will see him with the ball in hand in the game." Stokes underwent a knee surgery in November.

## A thirst for thrillers as BPL nears climax

SPORTS REPORTER

After 40 matches played in the Bangladesh Premier League's (BPL) 10th instalment, with the last day of the group stage fixtures scheduled for tomorrow at Mirpur's Sher-e-Bangla National stadium, the intensity of the tournament in terms of the number of competitive matches materialised is an aspect worth scrutinising.

Team	Matches	Win	Loss	Points
Rangpur (Q)	12	9	3	18
Comilla (Q)	11	8	3	16
Chattogram (Q)	12	7	5	14
Barishal	11	6	5	12
Khulna	11	5	6	10

BPL TOP 5

- This BPL edition is yet to witness a fixture decided on the last ball.
- Only three 200-plus totals were posted in 40 matches, with Rangpur Riders reaching the total twice and Comilla Victorians once.

As the BPL began with low-scoring games in the first Dhaka leg, teams began to score challenging totals as the tournament moved to Sylhet, but fans had to wait until the 27th match to see a side post a 200-plus total as Rangpur amassed 211 for three against Chattogram before winning by 53 runs.

There have been three 200-plus scores so far, with Rangpur posting twice and Comilla scaling the joint-highest total in BPL history in Chattogram: 239 for three, courtesy of an unbeaten century

from Will Jacks.

However, none of the matches in this edition of the BPL saw a last-ball finish, with teams winning comfortably, indicating a lack of competitiveness throughout the group stages.

In terms of individual performances by local players, there are a few positives as two of the three hundreds struck in this edition came from the willows of Tanzid Hasan Tamim and Towhid Hridoy. The duo are also the top two leading run-scorers in the BPL till date.

On the bowling front, Shoriful Islam is the leading wicket-taker with 22 scalps in 12 matches. Shakib Al Hasan, with 17 wickets to his name, could surpass Shoriful though. The leading all-rounder in ICC T20I rankings has also justified his reputation in the tournament, having tallied 249 runs so far and his strike-rate of 168.24 is the best among batters who scored more

than 79 runs this edition.

While the tournament approaches the climax, perhaps the fans would expect every game to be no less than a nail-biter apart from seeing their favourite team or players achieve success.

As it stands, the lineup for the playoff stage is nearly finalised. Rangpur Riders lead the points table with 18 points in 12 games, while defending champion Comilla Victorians are second with 16 points in 11 games, with a possibility to complete the group stage in the top position if they beat Fortune Barishal.

Chattogram Challengers have also confirmed their playoff spot with 14 points in 12 games, and while Barishal leads Khulna Tigers by two points, a big win for Khulna over Sylhet Strikers and a comprehensive defeat for Barishal over Comilla could make things interesting as the net run-rate will come into the equation.



PHOTO: INTER MILAN

A late goal from substitute Marko Arnautovic gave Inter Milan a 1-0 home victory after a tough battle with Atletico Madrid in the first leg of their Champions League last-16 tie on Tuesday. The Austria striker, who had replaced the injured Marcus Thuram at halftime, redeemed himself following several missed chances by squeezing the ball home after Lautaro Martinez's shot was saved by goalkeeper Jan Oblak in the 79th minute.

## 'Best in the world' Haaland completes full house

AGENCIES

Goals and Erling Haaland go hand in hand and the prolific scorer can now pride himself on another record he reached during a nervy 1-0 win for Manchester City over Brentford on Tuesday.

Making amends for a frustrating night in front of goal when City were held 1-1 at home by Chelsea on Saturday, Haaland replied the critics in the best way as he scored the only goal of the game at Etihad Stadium.

The goal means Haaland has faced 21 different Premier League opponents during his time with Manchester City -- and scored against them all.

His second-half winner in the match against Brentford completed the full house for the Norway striker, who has 53 goals in his 55 league appearances since joining City in the summer of 2022.

The 23-year-old forward reached the feat when he raced onto Julian Alvarez's pass to slot in his 22nd goal of the season 19 minutes from time.

"Top strikers score a lot of goals. Don't criticise, he will shut your mouth. Sooner or later he is there," said City coach Pep Guardiola, answering the criticisms Haaland had received for an underwhelming showing against Chelsea last week.

"He was out for two months, he lost his grandmother, it is not easy for a human being."

Norwegian Oscar Bobb, who started the game against Brentford, also had high praise for his compatriot.

"He's the best in the world. He's only three years older than me but it's crazy to play with one of the greats," he said.

Chelsea, Liverpool, and Brentford were the only teams not to concede to Haaland in his astonishing debut season in England, when he won the Premier League Golden Boot with 36 goals in 33 games. But that has been put right this term, while he has also found the net against promoted clubs Burnley and Sheffield United.

Haaland's best Premier League scoring record is against derby rivals Manchester United as well as Fulham, with five goals in three games against each.

Only England captain Harry Kane (32) has a better record of scoring against every other team he has faced in the Premier League, while ex-Chelsea midfielder Frank Lampard (39) has found the net against the most different clubs.

Haaland has yet to play against Luton, having missed December's fixture while injured, so April's game at the Etihad Stadium will bring the chance to add a 22nd name to his perfect record.



Coach Mahbub Haroon (R) keeps a close watch as Abahani players go through a training session at the Maulana Bhasani Hockey Stadium yesterday ahead of today's opening fixture of the Club Cup against Ajax SC. Defending champions Mariner Youngs will later take on Bangladesh Police in the day's other match as country's top-flight hockey returns to the turf after nearly two-and-a-half years.

PHOTO: STAR