

Minimalist Mustafizur only watches death overs

SPORTS REPORTER

Mustafizur Rahman is known as a man of few words in the Bangladeshi media circuit, always giving brief, to-the-point answers to elaborate questions from journalists.

His interactions with the media get even more limited when playing in overseas leagues owing to language barrier, evidenced by him not speaking in the post-match presentation ceremony after winning the player-of-the-match award in his Chennai Super Kings (CSK) debut on March 22.

However, in a rare instance, Mustafizur spoke uninterruptedly in a 5:14-minute clip released yesterday on CSK social media platforms.

In the video, the pacer gave insights on his cricketing journey, his ongoing stint with the CSK, and also revealed that similar to his media interactions, he adopts a minimalistic approach in his cricket viewing as well, only watching the death overs action while skipping the rest.

"I've always been less inclined to watch matches, I prefer playing," Mustafizur said in the video, which is part of CSK's video series 'Lions Up Close'.

"I think that it's better for me to watch at that period [death overs]. Even when I watch a Twenty20 match, I only watch the final four overs or so. I try to observe which areas the batsmen are hitting the ball at, how they are playing. Very rarely I watch the entire 40 overs of the match," he added.

Although Mustafizur failed to defend 17 runs in the last over against Lucknow Super Giants (LSG) in Chennai's previous match last Tuesday, he remains the team's most successful bowler thus far this season, with 12 wickets in seven games.

The 28-year-old pacer further revealed that playing for the five-time IPL champions had been his long-cherished dream.

"This is my first season with Chennai. Since I began playing in the IPL in 2016, it has been my dream to play for the Chennai team. After getting the call [from CSK management] that night, I couldn't sleep."

Mustafizur spoke highly of the relaxed atmosphere of the Chennai team and how former CSK captain MS Dhoni, who relinquished captaincy this season, and bowling coach Dwayne Bravo have been sharing their knowledge with him.

"Everyone here is friendly. The environment has been good from day one, I haven't felt uneasy at all. Mahi bhai [Dhoni] showed me some field setups, Bravo spoke to me about how to bowl in the death overs. These inputs have been invaluable."

"We mostly speak about bowling. I haven't really spoken about anything else. We speak sometimes on the field about what to do. Mahi bhai comes to me and tells me that it would be better if I did this."

Mustafizur's IPL stint this year is nearing its end. He will be available for two more matches against Sunrisers Hyderabad (SRH) and Punjab Kings (PBKS) on April 28 and May 1, respectively, after which he will return home for Bangladesh's five-match T20 series against Zimbabwe at home, starting on May 3.

There have been debates about whether the board should have extended Mustafizur's NOC, allowing him to play the entire season.

Mustafizur has remained quiet throughout the debate but yesterday he expressed his belief that playing at the IPL is the best possible preparation for any cricketer. "More star players from all countries take part in the IPL compared to other tournaments. I feel that if I can succeed here, it will be easier for me to succeed elsewhere."



Najmul Hossain Shanto smashed a 101 off 84 balls to lead Abahani from the front in their 171-run victory over Gazi Group Cricketers in a Super League fixture of the Dhaka Premier League in Fatullah yesterday. The southpaw, who scored his second century in three outings in the competition, will be pleased to get into a groove ahead of a home T20I series against Zimbabwe. Meanwhile, [inset] in Mirpur, Prime Bank batter Mushfiqur Rahim was left a frustrated figure after being dubiously given caught-out before his side succumbed to a 33-run defeat against Mohammedan Sporting Club.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED



All-woman ref team: a first in Serie A

REUTERS

An all-woman refereeing team will officiate a Serie A match for the first time this weekend, the Italian Referees' Association (AIA) said on Thursday.

League champions Inter Milan host Torino on Sunday, and the game will be refereed by Maria Sole Ferrieri Caputi who will be joined by Francesca Di Monte and Tiziana Trasciatti as assistants.

This milestone in the traditionally male-dominated world of Italian football comes as the sport grapples with issues of representation and inclusivity.

Ferrieri Caputi, 33, already made history as the first female referee in Serie A when she took charge of Sassuolo v Salernitana in 2022, and so far, she has refereed six games in the Italian top flight this season.

Sunday's game at the San Siro will also see Inter continue the celebrations for their 20th league title, which they secured in a 2-1 derby win over AC Milan on Monday.

Mohammedan prolong Abahani's wait

SPORTS REPORTER

Rony Talukdar and Abu Hider Rony prolonged Abahani Limited's wait to clinch the Dhaka Premier League (DPL) title by propelling Mohammedan Sporting Club to a 33-run win against Prime Bank Cricket Club at Sher-e-Bangla National Cricket Stadium in Dhaka yesterday.

The match ended on a sour note as the two teams did not shake hands at the end of the game following Prime Bank's dissatisfaction with the manner of Mushfiqur Rahim's dismissal.

The incident happened at the 33.4 over mark of the Prime Bank innings when Mushfiqur's lofted shot against off spinner Nayeem Hasan was brilliantly caught at deep mid-wicket by Hider.

However, replays on the Bangladesh Cricket Board's (BCB) live feed of the match showed that Hider's leg had touched the boundary ropes which clearly moved after the contact. The Prime Bank dug out contested the decision which saw Mushfiqur wait it out in the middle after being given out.

However, as there are no TV replays or third umpires available in DPL matches, the on-field umpires discussed the decision with the Mohammedan captain

and the fielders before Mushfiqur finally had to walk off after scoring 10.

"Firstly, this is not a televised game, the umpires have to depend on the fielders' honesty when they ask the fielders," DPL technical committee member and the match referee for the game Roquibul Hasan told The Daily Star yesterday.

There was also no provision for a case of benefit of the doubt going in the batter's favour. While taking the catch, Hider did not appear to be aware that his foot moved the rope.

"On what basis can you ask for benefit of the doubt? How can we know for sure since it's not a televised match and you can't go to the third-umpire?" Roquibul explained.

Earlier, Rony struck a career-best 141 off 131 deliveries while Mahidul Islam Ankon's 50 and Mehedi Hasan Miraz's brisk cameo, a 29-ball 53, helped Mohammedan to 317 for 6.

Prime Bank's chase started to fall away after Shahadat Hossain Dipu was dismissed for 51 in the 30th over. Following Mushfiqur's dismissal, Prime Bank slipped further before Mahedi Hasan's 64 and Suzamul Islam's 49 closed the gap.

Hider effected a brilliant run-

out off his own bowling to dismiss Sunzamul before he yorked Taijul Islam to win the game, which saw Mohammedan move to second position in the standings.

Meanwhile, Abahani romped to a 171-run win against Gazi Group Cricketers at Fatullah as skipper Najmul Hossain Shanto hit a 84-ball 101, his second DPL ton this season.

Anamul Haque Bijoy made a 51-ball 65 before Towhid Hridoy's 40-ball 58 and Mosaddek Hossain's 17-ball 33 helped Abahani to 343 for 5.

Despite Abahani resting both Taskin Ahmed and Shoriful Islam, Gazi were bowled out for 172 as left-arm spinner Rakibul Hasan picked up four for 44.

Despite the win, Abahani will need to wait a bit more to clinch the title as Mohammedan with 20 points still mathematically have a chance of topping Abahani if they win all their three remaining games including the one against Abahani.

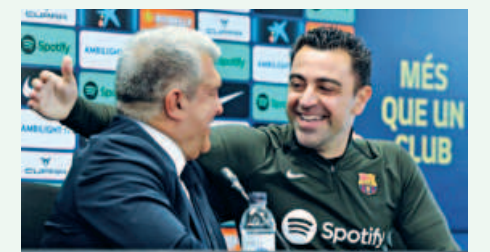
Abahani though need just one win or for Mohammedan to lose their next game to clinch the title with 26 points in the bag.

Meanwhile Shinepukur Cricket Club lost by seven wickets to Sheikh Jamal Dhanmondi at BKSP ground three and slid to third.

SHORT CORNER

Coach told me two matches would suffice: Shakib

Bangladesh star all-rounder Shakib Al Hasan put an end to speculations about his availability in the upcoming five-match T20I series against Zimbabwe at home, reassuring that he will indeed play the series. The 37-year-old said that he had discussed his involvement in the forthcoming series with the head coach, the captain, and the chief selector and then came to a decision which determined the all-rounder would play the last three matches of the series. "The coach [Chandika Hathurusingha] told me that playing two matches would suffice. I had discussions with the captain and the selector who told me that it would be better if I played three matches," Shakib said at an event in New York on Thursday.



Xavi to continue as Barcelona coach

Xavi Hernandez will stay on as Barcelona manager, the club's president Joan Laporta told a news conference on Thursday, after reversing a previous decision to resign at the end of this season. "We know that he made some statements in the middle of the season, but today we have the good news that he is staying and he has conveyed to me the enthusiasm and confidence he has in the project," Laporta said.

Not everyone happy with IPL's 'impact player' rule

The Indian Premier League's (IPL) "impact player" rule has led to skyrocketing totals and quenched fans' thirst for runs but not everyone is happy with the change, especially the all-rounders in the popular T20 tournament. Introduced last season, the rule allows teams to bring in a substitute at any time for a player in the starting 11. Teams have been using it to great effect in the current campaign, swapping out a bowler for a batter during a run chase and bringing up 200-plus totals frequently.



Bismah Maroof announces shock international retirement

Former Pakistan captain Bismah Maroof has called time on her 18-year-long international career. Having made her international debut in 2006, Maroof represented Pakistan in 276 international matches, aggregating 6,262 international runs, including 33 half-centuries to go with 80 wickets.

*Read full stories on The Daily Star website

Klopp's apology and Fernandes' mantra for Man Utd players

REUTERS

Liverpool manager Juergen Klopp apologised to fans after a 2-0 loss to Everton in the Merseyside derby on Wednesday that all but extinguished their faint hopes of winning the Premier League title.

It was the Toffees' first home derby win in more than 13 years and prevented Liverpool from climbing level with Arsenal at the top of the league table.

Everton faithful at Goodison Park, who serenaded the visitors with "You lost the league at Goodison Park" after the final whistle.

"I don't know. I can only apologise for today to the people. Everybody who's with us knows how hard this was for us as well. We should have done better but we didn't," Klopp, who looked completely shattered, said after the match.

Klopp's men are three points behind the Gunners (77) with four games remaining in the much-loved manager's tenure with the team. Holders



Manchester City remain in the driver's seat on 73 points but with two games in hand.

"Obviously it's not the greatest moment we are in. In the end it's not good enough. When you win you have 500



reasons. When you lose, it's just not good enough."

'United players can't be annoyed by criticism'

Players must accept criticism as readily as praise at Manchester

United, Bruno Fernandes said after the Portuguese midfielder rescued his side with two goals in a 4-2 home Premier League victory over Sheffield United on Wednesday.

Fernandes made it 2-2 from

the penalty spot in the 61st minute then put United ahead with a long-range strike 20 minutes later after the hosts had fallen behind twice against the Premier League's bottom team.

United had come in for heavy criticism following Sunday's FA Cup semi-final against Coventry City where they squandered a 3-0 lead before going through via a penalty shoot-out.

Fernandes told reporters that the intense demands of playing at a club like United meant winning was the only thing that mattered.

"Being at United demands winning every game, that's part of our job. If there is anyone in the dressing room still not used to that, they will get used to it."

"Being a Manchester United player demands being ready to receive as much criticism as praise. We receive praise when we do good things so we can't be annoyed by the criticism."

United, who had failed to win their last four league matches, moved up to sixth with Wednesday's win.