

Unprecedented bans in hockey

Abahani, Mariners named joint champions

SPORTS REPORTER

In an unprecedented decision, Bangladesh Hockey Federation (BHF) yesterday slapped suspensions of various tenures on 14 players and 10 officials, including veteran Mohammedan player Rasel Mahmud Jimmy and Mohammedan manager Ariful Haque Prince, following a meeting of the governing body yesterday.

The BHF also slapped monetary fines on a number of clubs after disciplinary committee's decisions on the recently-concluded Dhaka Premier Division League were forwarded to the governing body by the league committee.

The suspensions on players ranged from two matches to 12 matches while the suspensions on officials ranged from a couple of matches to lifetime bans. Some of the suspended players and officials were also foreigners who came here to play or coach the sides in the 11-team league.

Meanwhile, Abahani and Mariner Youngs Club were declared joint champions of the league, which saw chaos on April 19 after Mohammedan had refused to complete the last match against Abahani following brawl between the two teams over a decision by a foreign referee.

Both Abahani and Mariners had ended on top with 37 points each, and even though the federation had repeatedly asked the clubs to engage in a playoff, neither were willing, citing shortage of time.

BHF's general secretary Mominul Haque and vice-president Abdur Rashid Shikdar read out the decisions to reporters following the meeting, which was attended by 27 out of 29 members.

"Both clubs had asked for two months' time because they had visa/ NOC issues to sort out for foreign players," Sayeed told reporters. "However, we couldn't allow that much time since we had to start the first division and the second division leagues."

The suspensions on players and officials, meanwhile, were based mostly on referees' match reports of disciplinary issues on individual matches of the league, with Mohammedan's Jimmy receiving the toughest suspension of 12 matches.

"Jimmy had stopped play 173 times for a duration of 216 minutes in 14 matches, which does not bode well for a player of 19 year international career," Mominul said.

Among the officials, Mohammedan manager Ariful Haque Prince was suspended from club activities for four years while Mohammedan's adviser coach Gobinathan Krishnamurthy – a former coach of the Bangladesh national team – was handed a lifetime ban from Bangladesh hockey.

Mominul said that every club or individual who have been handed punishment will have the right to appeal.



WILL HATHURUSINGHA continue receiving free pass?

SHABAB CHOWDHURY

"We win as a team, we lose as a team," is a cliché that members of the Bangladesh team often resort to while reading out from their age-old scripts, explaining disappointing losses.

If that is indeed the case then the team management spearheaded by head coach Chandika Hathurusingha should be taking a share of the blame for Bangladesh's plight. The Tigers hit a new low when they lost a T20 World Cup build-up series against the USA – an associate nation ranked 10 places below the Tigers.

While the fact remains that the kind of cricket the current Bangladesh side has been playing in the lead-up to the T20 World Cup can be deemed abhorrent and at times inexplicable, Hathurusingha's role in the mess could also be brought into question.

When so much credit is given to the coaches when the Tigers are on a good run, why should they evade criticism when the same side fails to show signs of life?

Renowned coach Mohammad Salahuddin, in an interview with The Daily Star, pointed out that the coach has little to do when the team does well but when things go south, the coach has to take responsibility and work his expertise to nurture the players, solve the puzzle to pull them out of a slump.

More than a year into his contract, Hathurusingha got to see both sides of the coin. In 2023, Bangladesh whitewashed defending champions England, and Afghanistan won a series against Ireland at home and claimed their maiden T20I win over New Zealand in the BlackCaps' backyard. But less than a year since enjoying their best ever run in the shortest format, the Tigers spiralled down to their lowest point, displaying a severe lack of continuity.

Shouldn't the coach be held accountable for a lack of foresight that saw Bangladesh back to square one?

When Hathurusingha was re-appointed to the head coach role last year, it was expected that the Sri Lankan, who has been known for his authoritative style of management, would be able to restore stability.

Instead, it is during his reign that the frosty relationship between Shakib Al Hasan and Tamim Iqbal came to the fore like never before, disrupting the

opted for far more drastic steps while changing the management – including the sacking of coaches at times. But when it comes to Hathurusingha, the board seems reluctant to demand accountability.

Is it that the BCB is deliberately not pointing fingers at Hathurusingha as it would eventually bring the board in the firing line?

It can be argued that the 54-year-old Sri Lankan has struggled to impact improvements in players and often to bring out the best in them. Sure, it is a player's fundamental duty to be concerned about upgrading himself but that aspect also has to be complemented with the guidance of the coaches.

In Hathurusingha's second stint, he has backed the likes of Liton Das and Soumya Sarkar almost unconditionally, but only to see the duo disappoint time and again.

Particularly, in Liton's case, could it not be said that his continuation in underperforming was aggravated only because the Hathurusingha-led team management failed to realise when to drop the classy right-hander and when to have him return to the national side?

The argument from the team management has always been that Liton is "just one innings away from regaining his form" as if he would be able to just go out there and magically get his head sorted enough and not throw his wicket away by playing three successive scoops like he did against Zimbabwe.

When defining a coach's role or considering his impact, Hathurusingha's shortcomings in extracting the best out of his players are in stark contrast to what former fast-bowling coach Otis Gibson and Allan Donald did to produce Bangladesh's best-ever pace unit.

Unfortunately, in this regard, Hathurusingha's efforts are yet to be reflected through his team.

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harmony of the side in all formats. The fallout between Tamim and Shakib is nothing new in the Bangladesh cricketing fraternity and was bound to be laid bare in public at some point – preferably after they had ended their careers – shouldn't Hathurusingha take some blame for not being able to manage two of the greatest egos in the country's cricket?

Heading into another major event, this time the T20 World Cup in the USA and the West Indies, things look a lot bleaker for the men in red and green.

A pivotal figure of the team, mainly responsible for designing game plans and 'man managing', Hathurusingha could also be blamed for failing to set the tone of the type of cricket the Tigers played in successive series against feeble Zimbabwe and USA.

Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) has

Brothers Union relegated again

SPORTS REPORTER

After spending one season in the top-tier of Bangladesh's professional football structure, Brothers Union were relegated to the Bangladesh Championship League on Saturday.

The Gopibagh outfit, who had earned promotion back to the Bangladesh Premier League after winning the BCL in the 2022-23 season, moved back to the second tier after losing 3-2 against Sheikh Russel KC in their penultimate league fixture at the Muktijoddha Smriti Stadium in Rajshahi on Saturday.

The Oranges have seven points with a game still to play, but with Rahmataganj MFS – the next-worst team in the 10-team table – a fair six points ahead, there is no way for Brothers to move out of the bottom of the table even if the Old Dhaka outfit lose their last match.

Eleta Kingsley had given Brothers a sixth-minute lead but goals from Sumon Reza and Ahror Umarjonov within the next five minutes had Sheikh Russel in the drivers' seat. Kingsley scored again in the 18th minute – his sixth goal of the campaign after joining the Gopibagh outfit midseason – but Chandon Roy's 31st minute strike sealed Brothers' fate.



Bangladesh Kabaddi Federation's general secretary and DMP Commissioner Habibur Rahman, flanked by captains of 12 participating countries, unveils the trophy of the Bangabandhu Cup International Kabaddi tournament at the Shaheed Suhrawardy Indoor Stadium in Mirpur yesterday. The 12-nation tournament will get underway today, with hosts and three-time defending champions Bangladesh taking on South Korea.

PHOTO: STAR

SHORT CORNER

Nadal 'not 100% certain' 2024 French Open will be his last

"There is a good chance that it will be my last French Open, but I cannot say that I am 100% certain that it will be the last," said Rafael Nadal, who has won the French Open 14 times and will celebrate his 38th birthday on June 3.

The World Cup mission is yet to start: Lipu

Chief selector Gazi Ashraf Hossain Lipu expressed his frustration over Bangladesh's performance against hosts USA, but he is looking forward to how the Tigers perform in the all-important mega event: ICC T20 World Cup 2024.

Copa America to feature its first female referees

Next month's Copa America will be the first edition of the continental men's football tournament to have female referees, South America's soccer governing body (CONMEBOL) said on Friday.

Read the full stories on The Daily Star website

Cummins and Co plot to spoil Kolkata's party

AFP, Chennai

Australia's World Cup-winning captain Pat Cummins will need a spectacular turnaround to secure another major title tonight, when his Sunrisers Hyderabad face Kolkata Knight Riders in the Indian Premier League final only five days after a heavy loss.

Fast bowler Cummins, for whom Hyderabad paid \$2.5 million in the

IPL auction, led Australia to both the world Test championship title and an ODI World Cup triumph last year.

"Very practical guy, very humble, very empathetic with his fellow team-mates and coaching staff," Hyderabad assistant coach Simon Helmot said of Cummins.

"He is into the statistics, gets the information he needs against a particular opposition in certain conditions. Doesn't waste time in team meetings, our team meeting today went for 35 seconds," he told reporters.

Hyderabad have racked up record IPL totals of 277 and 287 in a high-scoring tournament, with Cummins' astute leadership and rotation of bowlers also an advantage when defending totals.

Standing in Cummins' way will be fellow Australian and Kolkata quick Mitchell Starc, who rattled Hyderabad's top order in the first qualifier.

Left-arm quick Starc became the most expensive player in IPL history when Kolkata paid \$2.98 million for his services, overtaking Cummins in the same auction in December.

Starc justified the outlay when he returned figures of 3-34 at the world's biggest cricket stadium on Tuesday, including bowling fellow Australian and Hyderabad opener Travis Head for a duck.

Kolkata, led by India's Shreyas Iyer, have been the side to beat in the competition and topped the 10-team table with 20 points in the league phase.



● Kolkata and Hyderabad have faced off 27 times in the tournament's history, with Kolkata winning on 17 occasions and Hyderabad clinching just nine victories and one game ended in a tie.

● Considering appearances in the final, Kolkata have won two titles (2012 and 2014) in three attempts while Hyderabad won once (2016) in two outings.

● Kolkata are still the only team to chase down a 200-run target in an IPL final, a feat achieved in 2014.

● Kolkata's Rinku Singh, who is among the four travelling reserves for India, is the sole representative in the IPL final among the extended 19 members of the India squad for the T20 World Cup 2024.



Manchester United forward Alejandro Garnacho and captain Bruno Fernandes celebrate scoring the opening goal in yesterday's English FA Cup final at Wembley stadium in London, after the former took advantage of a mix-up on the edge of the Manchester City penalty area in the 30th minute, paving the way for an unlikely 2-1 victory and their 13th FA Cup title.

PHOTO: AFP