

Will BCB’s World Cup ‘discussions’ make any difference?

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Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) is set to sit down for a board meeting today to discuss the just concluded T20 World Cup performances. Such meetings, however, have barely contributed to an improved show in global events.

Apart from World Cup performances, which are routine discussions following ICC or other major events, BCB will also discuss the appointment of an international contractor for a new stadium alongside other matters.

“There is also a standard procedure that after the Bangladesh team returns from playing any major ICC or ACC event, the performances are discussed,” BCB CEO Nizamuddin Chowdhury told reporters yesterday regarding the meeting.

“It’s a routine matter and there are also financial matters to discuss regarding the structure of Game Development and Ground and Facilities. Mainly those are the areas that are to be prioritized,” he added.

The board remains content that the Tigers were able to make it to the second round of the tournament, the Super Eight stage, beating Sri Lanka, Nepal, and the Netherlands to secure their berth from a tough group. However, the Super Eights revealed the gap in quality the team has with the big sides in mega events.

Bangladesh did not show the approach

required to take the attack to the stronger teams at the tournament, failing miserably against Australia and India before falling to Afghanistan in their final game, with the fragile batting sticking out like a sore thumb.

Such performances may be scrutinized and discussed internally. BCB, however, has not been able to ensure those investigations bore fruit. In 2021, after the debacle in the T20 World Cup in Oman and UAE, the BCB formed a fact-finding committee to interview players and officials. Just like that tournament, the 2024 T20 World Cup has also brought into question the state of cricket in the country.

Back then, BCB president Nazmul Hassan had said that the committee found nothing significant. He, in fact, had remarked, “What can you do if the players say there’s nothing wrong with the coach?”

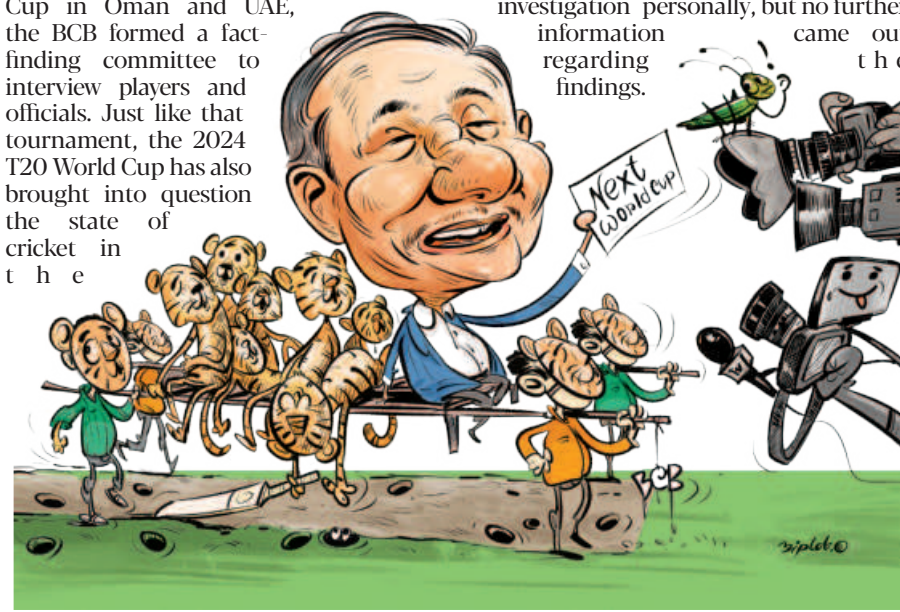
It showed that there is a need to find scapegoats because perhaps the then coach Russell Domingo was not to their liking. Nazmul had then curiously suggested that he would conduct an investigation personally, but no further information regarding findings.

There is a general notion that BCB may not get to the bottom of the batting debacle, or what caused the charges of coach Chandika Hathurusingha to prematurely give up on semifinals dream during the Afghanistan match for it might ruffle a few feathers of its own.

First and foremost, BCB must initiate some soul-searching to reflect and accept its own wrongdoings in forming a necessary pipeline, as evidence by the dearth of options in the Tigers’ squad – carrying an off-form batter in Afif Hossain as a travelling reserve – in USA and West Indies around the past month.

As another discussion follows on performances, will BCB this time be relieved with having made the second stage, or will they form another probe committee just for the sake of it?

If the matters at hand related to performance are not discussed freely by the directors, ultimately, the seeds of success for the next world event will not be sown.



Ecuador braced for ‘another final’ against Argentina

REUTERS

Ecuador are preparing for “another final” at the Copa America after advancing to a quarterfinal match-up against defending champions Argentina, head coach Felix Sanchez said on Sunday.

Ecuador finished level with Mexico on four points after the teams drew 0-0 in Group B but Sanchez’s side secured a place in the knockout stages thanks to their superior goal difference.

Venezuela advanced as group winners while Mexico and Jamaica were eliminated.

Argentina had a solid start to their title defence, with their forwards Lautaro Martinez and Julian Alvarez scoring all five of their goals in the group stage. With skipper Lionel Messi out injured in their final group game against Peru, Argentina faced no problem as Martinez’s brace paved way for smooth sailing and showed the reigning world champions are productive even without their magician Messi.

“We know it is an unmatched opponent, and we know how tough it’s going to be,” Ecuador coach Sanchez was under illusions about the scale of the take they face in the last eight against Group A winners Argentina at the NRG Stadium in Houston, Texas on Friday.

“It is yet another final for us, and we will try to compete against the world’s champion and the world’s best team ... I believe that our team is going to be extremely motivated to play a good match.”

REUTERS

Five-time World Cup champions Brazil and in-form Colombia meet in North California on Tuesday in a highly-anticipated Copa America clash with more than just the Group D lead on the line.

Colombia are arguably the hottest team in the Americas with an impressive streak of 10 consecutive wins and undefeated in their last 25 matches.

Their last defeat was over two years ago, a 1-0 loss to Argentina which effectively ended their 2022 World Cup qualification hopes.

Colombia fired manager Reinaldo Rueda and brought back Nestor Lorenzo, a former Argentine player who worked for several years as Jose Pekerman’s assistant when he was in charge.

Lorenzo injected a new energy to a talented but ageing group, managing to bring out the best version of experienced players like James Rodriguez, Jhon Cordoba, and Johan Mojica who most thought were passed their prime.

The rise of Richard Rios, Jhon Arias, and Jefferson Lerma gave

Brazil await ‘great test’ in Colombia clash



Colombia the balance they needed, their run including wins over Spain, and Germany and a dramatic fightback against Brazil when winger Luis Diaz scored a late brace to secure a shock win days after Colombian guerrillas freed his kidnapped father.

Playing an attractive style of attacking football with a relentless pace and physicality, Colombia started the Copa America by beating Paraguay and Costa Rica and topped the group with a draw against Brazil.

Beating the five-time world champions would send a statement that South America has a new force to be reckoned with.

“I know our fans are excited and

who am I to give advices to people’s emotions. We are also excited, so let’s enjoy it,” Lorenzo said after his team beat Costa Rica 3-0 on Friday.

Brazil are struggling after a heartbreaking penalty defeat by Croatia in the 2022 World Cup quarterfinals.

Under the guidance of new manager Dorival Junior, Brazil’s Copa America debut was disappointing – a goalless draw against Costa Rica that was their fifth straight competitive game without a win, their worst run in 23 years.

They bounced back with a 4-1 win over Paraguay thanks to a stellar performance by forward Vinicius Jr., who showed why he is a strong contender to win the Ballon d’Or after guiding Real Madrid to a LaLiga-Champions League double.

“Colombia are a stone in our shoe which we’re going to try to get it out of our way in the next game,” Brazil midfielder Bruno Guimaraes told a press conference on Sunday.

“They have a lot of players who can decide things individually, they’re a very physical team, good to play against. This is the Brazilian national team shirt we are talking about.

“It’s going to be a great test for us, a great game that we want to win to finish first (in the group). That’s what is required when you wear Brazil’s shirt.”

U19 coach Naveed looks beyond World Cup success

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) reappointed Naveed Nawaz – the ICC Under-19 World Cup winning coach with Bangladesh – last month for a second stint, hoping to develop new talents and form another successful batch.

In his first stint, Naveed nurtured a team that won the world title in South Africa in 2020 and youngsters like Towhid Hridoy and Shoriful Islam from that side have already made their mark in international cricket.

Given Bangladesh national team’s current difficulty in producing results in ICC events, perhaps following the template that served the U19 team so well could be an option.

Naveed’s U19 team played several matches in foreign conditions leading up to the World Cup and their preparation served them well in the tournament.

Thus, when Naveed, who arrived in Mirpur yesterday to officially take over, was asked whether the U19 template can be followed in the national team, he felt there was a case for it.

“I am sure [template can serve BCB]. All the planning that’s going on, there is room for that,” the Sri Lankan told The Daily Star following his press conference.

However, Naveed sees difficulty in devising a programme just like the U19s due to the ICC FTP calendar and sees value in the team touring abroad and allowing players to play franchise cricket in other countries.

“That’s something [playing abroad or taking part in franchise cricket] that people have improvised with and thought about on what they want to do and which areas they want to develop,” said Naveed, who rejoined the Bangladesh U19 team following his stint as Sri Lanka national team’s assistant coach.

The U19 team’s success in South Africa is arguably Bangladesh’s greatest achievement in cricket. However, Naveed did not want to get buried under expectation.

“Me coming back after having won a World Cup in 2020, of course there is expectation. I think I have to focus on other things rather than something that passed four years ago. Tournaments are not won just because you have won it in the past,” said Naveed at yesterday’s press conference.

But above all, he spoke about the need to nurture talent, using leg-spinner Rishad Hossain as an example who couldn’t make the cut in the U19 World Cup winning squad in 2020 but made a great impression in the recent ICC T20 World Cup.

“You got to work on technical and mental issues, you can’t hold onto them [problems] for long. That’s something BCB will be looking to do at in their HP and age-group programmes.

“Look at him [Rishad] now. It’s important that U19 is running well but it’s also important that we look after the bigger group of our players as well.”



Wary Dutch look to recalibrate

REUTERS, Hamburg

The Netherlands might have emerged from a disappointing performance in the group phase of the European Championship with a favourable pairing but they will be wary of Romania when they meet on Tuesday in Munich in the round of 16.

The Dutch finished third in their group after losing to Austria in Berlin, but it could have turned out a lot worse after they avoided a potential meeting with England and got Romania in the first knockout round.

Romania are 40 spots below seventh-placed Netherlands in the FIFA rankings and have won only two of 19 games played in six Euros finals appearances.

Romania have also only won once in 14 past meetings against the Dutch, losing 10. Their sole success was a Euro 2008 qualifier, won 1-0 in Constanta.

There will be no inferiority complex, however, from Romania, who have little to lose and face a struggling Dutch side trying to find some sort of rhythm after tepid showings in Germany.

There has been much soul-searching from the Netherlands after their three games, with



captain Virgil van Dijk making an astonishing admission that perhaps they had over-estimated their own ability.

Romania, who topped Group E with four points, made an impressive start with a 3-0 win over Ukraine but lost 2-0 to Belgium and topped the group despite drawing against Slovakia.

Defensive discipline is the cornerstone of coach Edward Iordanescu’s on-field approach, and he has worked hard off-field, too, in order to create a positive team spirit and instil self-belief among his players.

The Dutch, whose defence were

sloppy against Austria, will be wary of the quick counter-attack, with Denis Dragus the lone target man.

Romania are without left back Nicusor Bancu who is suspended after collecting two yellow cards.

Dutch coach Ronald Koeman’s own concerns will be about his midfield where Joey Veerman was unceremoniously replaced after 35 minutes in the last game.

A return to the line-up for the speedy Jeremie Frimpong is likely but calls for a switch to a back five, as employed under Louis van Gaal at the World Cup in Qatar where they got to the last eight, were rejected by Van Dijk.

Forward Cody Gakpo has scored twice and Memphis Depay once in the tournament and substitute attacker Wout Weghorst has often proved to be the man for the big occasion when needed.

Playing in the back of Dutch minds, however, will be what happened three years ago at the last Euros when they were similarly fancied to beat the Czech Republic in the last 16 in Budapest but suffered an ignominious exit.

Winner of this tie will be facing either of Turkey or Austria, who will face off in the other round of 16 game today.

Imranur to sprint in Paris

SPORTS REPORTER

Sprinter Imranur Rahman has become the country’s third athlete to participate in the upcoming Paris Olympic Games, slated to run from July 26 to August 11.

World Athletics, the international governing body, confirmed Rahman’s participation through a wild card entry to the Bangladesh Olympic Association (BOA) on Monday.

England-born Imranur, the country’s record-holder fastest sprinter, will be embracing the world’s highest competition – the Olympics – for the first time.

The International Olympic Committee (IOC) first provided a wild card to rifle shooter Robiul Islam while recurve archer Sagor Islam secured a direct entry by reaching the semifinals during the Final Olympic Qualification tournament in Turkey.

Bangladesh Swimming Federation has requested a wild card for swimmer Samiul Islam Rafi.

If the IOC confirms the participation of Rafi, Bangladesh will have a four-member athlete team for the Paris Olympic.



Third seed Carlos Alcaraz endured an early test in his Wimbledon title defence yesterday but the Spaniard quelled the challenge of Estonian qualifier Mark Lajal in straight sets, 7-6 (7/3), 7-5, 6-2, moving into the second round.

PHOTO: AFP