


All those who did not believe in the Games were wrong. Often, when you switch the TV on or read a newspaper, there is talk of decline. The French have rediscovered they can do great things together.

France president Emmanuel Macron regarding the impact of Paris Olympics



HP lose to Tasmania in Top End T20

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) High Performance Unit suffered their first defeat in the ongoing Top End Series 2024, losing to Tasmania Tigers by five wickets in a contest that went down to the final over at the TIO Stadium in Darwin on Monday.

Sent to bat, HP Unit posted 166-5 in their 20 overs with Parvez Hossain Emon making an unbeaten 39 off 29 balls while openers Jishan Alam and Tanzid Tamim made 38 and 28 runs respectively.

In reply, Jake Doran's blistering 71 not out off 37 balls powered Tasmania to 167-4 in 19.3 overs.

Rafael Macmillan (17 not out off nine) also played a crucial role in Tasmania's win, hitting a couple of fours off Abu Hider Rony in the penultimate over to reduce the pressure before Doran hit a six off Rakibul Hasan to seal the win with three balls to go.

The HP Unit had won their opening match against Melbourne Renegades by 77 runs on Sunday. They will next face Adelaide Strikers on Wednesday.



Head coach Chandika Hathurusingha checks his papers as Nahid Rana, Shadman Islam and Taskin Ahmed pose for a photograph before flying out for Pakistan yesterday. Bangladesh will play two Test matches against Pakistan, the first of which will be held in Rawalpindi from August 21 and the second one in Karachi from August 30. (Bottom) Chief selector Gazi Ashraf Hossain Lipu addresses the media regarding the selection of the 16-member team.

PHOTO: BCB/FIROZ AHMED

Bijoy expects 'highly competitive' Pakistan tie

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh A skipper Anamul Haque Bijoy on Monday expressed his optimism about having a competitive four-day opening match against their Pakistani counterparts as he felt that both sides have some highly experienced cricketers.

"We are very excited about facing the Pakistan Shaheens side in their backyard. The Shaheens squad looks strong, especially the fast bowling department. With the highly experienced players on either side, the first four-dayer will be highly competitive," Anamul was quoted as saying in a PCB press release ahead of the first of two four-day games, scheduled to start on Tuesday at the Islamabad Club.

Both teams have packed their sides with players who will feature in the ICC World Test Championship fixtures, to be played in Rawalpindi and Karachi on 21-25 August and 30 August-3 September, respectively.

The second match will be played at the same venue from 20-23 August but the abovementioned mentioned cricketers won't be available due to their national team engagement.

Anamul believes the series is a very crucial one for the Bangladeshi players for their Test series preparation while he feels that youngsters can rise to the occasion.

Shakib's selection sign of clarity from selectors

SPORTS REPORTER

Ace all-rounder Shakib Al Hasan's selection for the Test series against Pakistan was of particular interest for fans and media alike who were curious to know whether the current political developments had any bearing on the selectors decision to include him in the 16-member squad.

After Sheikh Hasina resigned as prime minister on August 5, the president dissolved the parliament on the 6th, of which Shakib was a member from the then ruling Awami League party.

Many members of parliament of the Awami League government have fled the country since while some have gone into hiding. Shakib, meanwhile, was far removed from all of it, busy taking part in the Global T20 League in Canada.

Shakib's involvement with the fallen government cast doubts over his availability for the Pakistan series.

However, the selection panel led by Gazi Ashraf Hossain Lipu named the 37-year-old for the two-Test series, beginning on August 21, on Sunday and the all-rounder is set to join his teammates in Lahore on the 14th and begin his preparations.

On Monday, Lipu clarified the reasoning behind selecting Shakib, saying they had prioritised his fitness and wanted reassurance from him that he would be available for the red-ball series against India, South Africa and the West Indies later this year before including him.

"I spoke with Shakib probably at the end of July and there were discussions regarding his fitness along with other



things," Lipu said at the press conference in Mirpur yesterday.

"During the Zimbabwe series [in May] we wanted to know his short-term plan since we have many Tests lined up till December, eight in total. He had assured us his availability [for those Tests] during the Zimbabwe series. Due to the recent scenario, I had to ask him again.

"Not just by phone, we have exchanged official emails regarding his availability. It was important to know whether he will be available for the practice sessions before every series, that was also a criterion for selection," Lipu told reporters yesterday.

Another contentious point was providing Shakib security during this turmoil. Bangladesh's foreign coaches too had expressed their unwillingness to attend practice sessions in Mirpur even though they were present in the capital.

Disruption in training owing to security concerns was one of the reasons

why the Bangladesh team left for Pakistan yesterday afternoon, five days earlier than scheduled. The team will train at Lahore for three to four days before moving to Islamabad. From Islamabad they will move to Rawalpindi to prepare for the first Test.

"There are security concerns regarding every player and foreign official during practice sessions. In the current circumstances, it definitely has to be ensured. In terms of selection, we had to consider many things because he [Shakib] is involved in politics. But he was selected on the basis of his merit," Lipu said.

The recent turmoil has shown that political situation can have a bearing on cricket too, especially if a player enters politics while still being a cricketer, like Shakib did. Lipu felt that only players were not to be blamed as political parties need to reconsider taking cricketers aboard for political gains.

Salahuddin 'not resigning', will seek fifth term

SPORTS REPORTER

Incumbent president of Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF), Kazi Salahuddin, vowed yesterday not to resign despite pressure from a football fan group and confirmed he will contest the upcoming BFF elections for the fifth time.

The Bangladesh Football Ultras, a fan group, recently launched a campaign demanding the resignation of Salahuddin, executive member Mahfuza Akter Kiran, and senior vice president Abdus Salam Murshedy, who has already stepped down. This follows the resignation of former Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina due to massive student-led protests.

On Sunday, some members of the Ultras had gathered at the BFF House, chanting slogans calling for Salahuddin and Kiran's resignation, criticising their organisational performance.

In response to the protest, Salahuddin told The Daily Star: "First of all, what stake do they (BFF) have in football? I have announced the BFF elections will be held on October 26. Who are they to tell me I should not contest? Who gave them the



right to threaten and vandalise if I run again?"

"I am not resigning; instead, I will contest the election again because I will not leave football in the face of any threats," Salahuddin continued to defend his stance.

"I am not an ordinary person. I have a long football background, having represented and captained the national team. I am also a freedom fighter and have received national sports awards, the independence award, the liberation award, and the Sheikh Kamal Lifetime Achievement Award during the regimes of Ziaur Rahman, HM Ershad, Khaleda Zia, and the Awami League. I will leave football on my terms, not due to threats."

Salahuddin also alleged that the Ultras are employees of the now-defunct Saif Sporting Club's Taralder Ruhul Amin, suggesting their demands are motivated by vested interest.

"If they are so popular, they should run in the elections themselves. Why are they so concerned about me? If I were a failure, the councillors would not vote for me. I was first elected BFF president against Awami League organisers," he claimed.

Taralder, meanwhile, has denied involvement in the protests involving the BFF boss.

"I think he [Salahuddin] has made a baseless claim without analysing anything. I have a clean record to account for and have never hatched any conspiracy against anyone. We were successful organisers but left the sports scene where there was no success.

"I have no idea about this movement. I have no relation with the Ultras; even I don't know about them.

"It is entirely Salahuddin bhai's decision whether to resign or run for election; it is his democratic right," said Taralder, who withdrew his Saif SC from Bangladesh Premier League two seasons ago.

France bids adieu to 'seine-sational' Games

AFP, Paris

France bid a reluctant farewell yesterday to an "enchanted" fortnight of Olympic sport as athletes headed home from Paris praising a dazzling edition of the Games that has breathed new life into the biggest show on earth.

Hollywood star Tom Cruise delivered stardust at the closing ceremony on Sunday evening -- and a link with the next Games in Los Angeles -- by abseiling into the national stadium.

The "Mission Impossible" star descended on a wire in front of 71,500 spectators, grabbed the Olympic flag and jumped onto a motorbike, to the delight of thousands of dancing athletes and awe-struck fans.

The final act of the Paris Olympics brought relief that an event foreshadowed by worries about terror attacks, strikes or protests had passed off with barely a hitch.

But there was also sadness that two weeks of high-spirited celebration had

come to an end.

"Keep the flame alive," urged the front-page headline of France's biggest sports newspaper, L'Equipe, which urged French people to maintain the spirit "of this enchanted fortnight".

During the closing ceremony, which stressed the Olympics' core message of peace and cooperation, International Olympic Committee (IOC) president Thomas Bach had praised the Paris Games for being "sport at its best".

"These were sensational Olympic Games from start to finish," Bach said. "Or dare I say: Seine-sational Games," the IOC chief quipped in a pun about the river flowing through Paris which was a sometimes fickle star of the event.

Observers had seen Paris 2024 as essential for the Olympics brand as a whole, coming after a Covid-affected edition in Tokyo and a corruption-tainted version in Rio de Janeiro in 2016.

Much of the media commentary has focused on the uplifting impact

of the Games on the generally morose national mood.

"For 17 days the stereotype of the indifferent, grumpy Frenchman went missing," wrote sports writer Owen Slot in The Times newspaper, adding that Paris had "made the Olympic Games look more beautiful than ever before."

The closing spectacle, marking the beginning of the four-year countdown to the LA Games, followed 17 days of drama-filled sporting action lit up by American gymnast Simone Biles, sprinter Noah Lyles, Pakistan's javelin king Arshad Nadeem and casual Turkish shooter Yusuf Dikec, who has become an Internet sensation.

They also featured a damaging gender row about two female boxers, Imane Khelif of Algeria and Taiwan's Lin Yu-ting, who both went on to win gold.

The last day of sporting action saw the United States pip China for top spot in the battle for medals after the US women's basketball team squeezed past France 67-66 to clinch the last gold of the Games.

While France will take away fond sporting memories as the torch passes to Los Angeles, the world is reminded to keep the Olympic flame alive, burning brightly for the years to come.



(From R) Bangladesh national women's football team members Monika Chakma, Maria Manda, Ritu Porna Chakma and Sabina Khatun pose for a photograph at the Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport yesterday morning, prior to their departure for Bhutan where they will join the Royal Thimphu College team to play in the inaugural AFC Women's Champions League, set to begin on August 25.

PHOTO: FACEBOOK