

Same story, different day: Tigers' T20 woes re-exposed



ASHEFAQ-UL-ALAM

In the last six years, Bangladesh T20I team have seen captains come and go, players swapped and changed, multiple coaches having a crack, while buzzwords like 'Bangladeshi brand of T20' and 'impact cricket' thrown around.

Hearing Najmul Hossain Shanto say, "I don't believe we are this bad as a team," in reply to the very first question at Sunday's post-match press conference in Gwalior, it seemed like he was stuck in denial. Skipper Shanto then jumped to the final stage of grief -- acceptance -- when he admitted that an inexperienced India side outclassed them in both "skill" and "mentality".

Hopefully, this acceptance will lead the team management to come up with plans on improving the skill and mentality of the players in T20Is.

Read full story on The Daily Star's website.



Pakistan captain Shan Masood and opener Abdullah Shafique both cracked centuries as the hosts scored an impressive 328-4 on the opening day of the first Test against England in Multan on Monday. Masood's brilliant 151 was his first hundred for four years, while Shafique also returned to form with 102 as the pair put on a solid 253-run stand for the second wicket.

PHOTO:AFP

Dutch legend Neeskens no more

AFP, THE HAGUE

Johan Neeskens, part of the Ajax and Netherlands teams that created "total football" in the 1970s and a key teammate of Johan Cruyff, has died aged 73, the Dutch football federation said Monday.

"With Johan Neeskens, the Dutch and international football world loses a legend," the KNVB federation said in a statement, adding that the midfielder had died on Sunday from an unspecified illness.

Neeskens was part of the Ajax team that won three straight European Cups in the early 1970s and was also a member of the 'Clockwork Oranje' Dutch team that reached consecutive World Cup finals in 1974 and 1978.

He won 49 caps for the Netherlands.

"With his characteristic tackles, sublime insight and iconic penalties, (he) will forever remain one of the leading players that Dutch football has ever produced," said the KNVB.

After his playing career, Neeskens took part in coaching programmes around the world.

Known on the pitch for his uncompromising tackling, he also had a softer side, the KNVB said in its statement. He was "a world citizen and a gentle family man who was proud of his children and grandchildren and who, until the very end, knew how to touch others with his love for football."



Red-ball cricket creates the base for quality in India

ABDULLAH AL MEHDI FROM GWALIOR

T20 cricket is big in India and IPL, India's T20 franchise league, is the most-successful around the world. Yet, India are a scary good Test team just because of its pool of players and because the seriousness around Test cricket has been ingrained. Even the IPL, the biggest of brands, is used to filter money through to states to develop Test cricket.

In Gwalior, there are state association academies that are all integrated to the entire cricket structure of Madhya Pradesh.

Madhya Pradesh has 52 divisions which are divided among 10 revenue boards. The Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) ensures that cricket is played to the maximum and all revenue boards have their own grounds, with at least two dressing rooms being the bare minimum available.

The Madhya Pradesh Cricket Association (MPCA) runs from Indore and even during the first T20I between Bangladesh and India in Gwalior, members from Indore -- one of MP's revenue boards -- were present to oversee proceedings.

BCCI tournaments run through September till March and MPCA begins its tournament from November onwards, in line with BCCI. The MPCA calendar itself has nine tournaments such as M.Y. Memorial Trophy, Madhavrao Scidia Trophy or J.N Bhaya Trophy, which is played in T20 format. There is no secret recipe here for creating talents.

Kuldeep Sen, who made his name in the 2022 IPL or the likes of Avesh Khan

and Rajat Patidar and Venkatesh Iyer are players who have come through the MPCA grind. There is a central academy in Indore and the academies in revenue boards directly report to the central academy.

India's cricket structure was not always so organised. What changed in the last decade?



"We are giving enough opportunities at grassroots level. BCCI is conducting U-16, U-19, U-22 and senior tournaments. So we go through our own tournaments on the same lines. Camps are regularly held in academies so players get chance to improve. The coaching staff move across the revenue boards to seek talent," Sanjiv Rao, secretary at MPCA, told The Daily Star.

"Camps are held at revenue boards for district players and also players from the headquarters [Indore]. In each age-category, we have 30-40 probables who are sent to central academy for camps. From the basis of camps and tournaments throughout the year, the

final 20 are selected in age category for the state team, in this case the MPCA," he added.

There is huge competition for places. One BCCI official informed that some 30,000 players filter through the system in MPCA alone. Even players who have crossed U-22 level remain in focus if they have not made state team as they get to play in inter-divisional tournaments.

But for the BCCI, red ball cricket takes precedence. IPL generates huge interest in the country for youngsters and the BCCI steers them first through red-ball doctrine.

"Red-ball requires hard work and patience. Youngsters are more inclined towards white-ball cricket. But we have a rule here. Until U-19 levels, we do not allow them to play T20 cricket. We want to create that base of technically correct red ball players. So in U-19, we have fifty-over tournament but not T20s," Sanjiv said.

So the next time one looks at a perfectly-aligned head position in congruence with fluent bat speed from an Indian star in a T20I game, it is being developed through red-ball hurdle.

BCCI officials informed that even money from IPL, such as 40,000 crore INR in broadcast rights, filter through to state associations to develop the base. Building infrastructure has not been a problem as BCCI provides associations with at least 50 crore INR per year for maintenance and new infrastructure. Thus selectors, coaches and a huge pool of players make India a huge machinery for producing top-notch cricketers.

Refurbished BNS to host charity football match

SPORTS REPORTER

The refurbished Bangabandhu National Stadium is expected to open to public on October 18 through a charity football match between singers and actors after the National Sports Council gave green signal to Noor Creation to hold the match to raise funds for the martyrs of anti-discrimination student movement.

The professional footballers will, however, have to wait for a few more months before the NSC hands over the stadium to Bangladesh Football Federation in December following the completion of renovation work, which started in September 2021.

"As per demand from the Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF), we have already upgraded the ground by installing pop-up sprinkler system to make the ground wet. The ground is ready to host the football match," NSC's sports director and project director Shamsul Alam said yesterday.

Murad Noor, the owner of event-management firm Noor Creation, said, "Yesterday we received approval from NSC to host the match among the celebrities on October 18 but it may be deferred by a bit. Our initial thinking was to help the flood-affected people but later we thought about raising funds for July Foundation."

Since the start of the renovation work, BFF has been struggling to hold matches of Bangladesh Premier League, being forced to host most



matches outside of Dhaka.

"Everything is going on the right direction to end the renovation works within December even though it will take two to three months more to install the LED floodlight and we will seek two to three months' extension for only floodlight," said Alam, adding that chairs on the gallery under the new sheds and on the VIP gallery are also going on.

"I've had contact with Shakib [Al Hasan]. He has a good chance of retiring from the field in Bangladesh. I can't speak about the legal aspects. I am a small human being with limited power. Shakib's issue has to be dealt by the government. There is government, law enforcement agencies, advisers -- they will take a decision over his issue. We can only take responsibility for his training and playing inside the stadium and at the indoor facilities."



BCB president Faruque Ahmed told reporters following a board meeting in Mirpur yesterday.

NUMBER OF MATCHES TEAMS COULD PLAY IN 2024-25 SEASON ACROSS ALL COMPETITIONS

Real Madrid 65
Barcelona 65
Manchester City 63
Liverpool 63
Bayern Munich 55
Inter Milan 58
PSG 56

**Assuming these sides reach the final of every competition (excluding FIFA Club World Cup).



Sometimes nobody asks the players what they think about adding more games. Maybe our opinion doesn't matter, but everybody knows what we think about having more games. Everybody's tired of that.

Alisson Becker
Liverpool goalkeeper

SHABAB CHOWDHURY

A tipping point has seemingly been reached in world football's increasingly hectic schedule, as evidenced by the several high-profile injuries in recent weeks leading up to the latest FIFA window.

In a cruel twist of fate, Manchester City midfielder Rodri, who cautioned the players about going on strike due to intense workloads in mid-September, was sidelined for the rest of the 2024-25 season following an ACL injury a week later.

"I think we are close to that [striking]," Rodri said when asked if it is possible players will strike. "If you ask any player, they will say the same. It's the general opinion of the players.

"If it keeps going this way, there will be a moment where we have no other option, but let's see. It's something that worries us because we are the ones who suffer," said the Spaniard.

City went deep into most of the competitions they played last season, with a few of their players recording over 70 appearances.



English midfielder Phil Foden was included in 77 matchday squads, making 72 appearances, while City's former Argentinian striker Julian Alvarez was included in 83 matchday squads, leading to 75 appearances, owing to the European Championships and Copa America duties, respectively.

Real Madrid's Dani Carvajal was the latest key figure who suffered a season-ending ACL injury. Carvajal, who was named in 55 matchday squads, played in 49 matches last season for club and country.

"It's impossible to be at full capacity with 72 plus games. I think the appropriate bodies should

analyse this because it's practically impossible. The quality of the game drops, and we suffer, along with our families," the 32-year-old said.

This season some players could play as many as 80 games due to the expanded Champions League and FIFA Club World Cup formats, alongside enlarged national team competitions.

The USA will host the first edition of FIFA's new 32-team Club World Cup from June 15 to July 13 next year after the end of the club football season.

"Nobody wants to play in it, nobody is excited about it," former England international Jaime Carragher told CBS recently. "The best players in the world are being treated like cattle," he added.

The call for safeguarding players is nothing new, particularly in the English Premier League where there is no winter break; rather, the players are faced with a packed festive season.

The effects of packed fixtures are, however, becoming far more prevalent, as evidenced by all these season-ending injuries.

Most clubs do not have the

luxury of having a star-studded squad, laced with top-quality squad players -- a delight for coaches who could rotate without having to compromise much with on-field quality. This makes it even more difficult for clubs with budget constraints, as it places them under pressure to avoid rotation and play the same group of players week in and week out, putting them at greater risk of injury.

Such workloads also come at a great risk for the younger players.

For instance, Barcelona's Spanish midfielder Pedri made 75 appearances for club and country in 2020-21 and struggled with muscular injuries in the subsequent seasons. His clubmate and Spain's latest young sensation, Lamine Yamal, played in 64 matches for club and country last season, followed by his side's triumphant run in the Euros.

As things stand, the pressures of increased workloads have certainly been building up among the players, and it seems to be a matter of time before calls for consideration turn into a full-on strike.