

SPORTS

What to WATCH

T SPORTS
 Pakistan vs England
 First Test, Day 3
 Live from 11:00 am
 India vs Bangladesh
 Second T20I
 Live from 7:30 pm

NAGORIK TV AND STAR SPORTS 1
 Women's T20 World Cup
 South Africa vs Scotland
 Live from 4:00 pm
 India vs Sri Lanka
 Live from 8:00 pm


'NO REGRETS' as last of big five bids adieu to T20Is

MAHMUDULLAH IN T20 WORLD CUPS

Appearances	8
Matches	37
Runs	458
Average	17.62
Strike-rate	106.76
50s	1

ABDULLAH AL MEHDI from Delhi

Since the beginning of Bangladesh's three-match T20I series against hosts India, there have been speculations regarding Mahmudullah Riyad's retirement from the shortest format. Even Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) sources had revealed early on Tuesday that there was an announcement coming from Mahmudullah.

So, when the 38-year-old appeared for the pre-match press conference ahead of the Tigers' second T20I in Delhi yesterday, there was a certainty regarding the matter. But he still needed to clarify.

"Can you clear the air about the speculations going around regarding your T20I retirement?" he was asked.

Mahmudullah, for the most part of his career, had to adjust and adapt to situations that were not favourable or ideal. He had to do the same thing yesterday as well. With a wry smile on his face, Mahmudullah had to wait to answer the query as the mic was not working.

When the mic situation was finally fixed after a few minutes, he finally declared: "I'm retiring from the T20I cricket after the last game of this series."

"Actually, I was pretty decided before coming here [in India]. I talked with my family, captain, and coach. I also talked with the selector and the board president, mentioning that I'm retiring from this format. I think it's the right time to move on from this format and try to focus on the ODIs that's coming ahead."

● **139** -- Mahmudullah has played the most number of T20Is for Bangladesh.

● **2395** -- He is the second-highest run-getter in the format for the Tigers after Shakib Al Hasan who amassed 2551 runs.

● With **16 wins** from 43 T20I matches, Mahmudullah shares the record for the most victories as Bangladesh's T20I captain alongside Shakib Al Hasan.

● In September 2021, he became the first Bangladesh cricketer to reach **100 T20I appearances**.

● Under his captaincy, Bangladesh scored **200 runs for the first time** when they chased down 214 to win the game against

Sri Lanka in the Nidahas Trophy in 2018. The **215-5** still stands as the Tigers' highest-ever total in the format.

● The 38-year-old, who made his T20I debut in 2007, batted in six different positions in his career, ranging from three to eight. He has batted at **five and six** the most number of times with 51 and 47 appearances in those positions, respectively. He has scored the most runs -- **951** -- at six.

● He held the national record for the most economical bowling in a T20I innings for over a decade, since 2014, when he conceded **eight runs in four overs** against Afghanistan.

Mahmudullah's retirement would bring the curtain down on not only his 17 years of experience at the top level but also on the era of Bangladesh's 'big five' in T20Is.

Mashrafe Bin Mortaza retired in 2017 while Tamim Iqbal and Mushfiqur Rahim stepped away in 2022.

After Shakib Al Hasan announced his retirement plans in Kanpur during this series -- stating that he had already played his final T20I -- Mahmudullah was the last one remaining from the Tigers' 'big five' in the format.

Mahmudullah was asked whether senior stars could not plan retirement

properly, especially since T20 World Cups could serve as a better platform for such announcements from senior stars.

"I don't think that way. It depends on the individual. If I think I will retire from Bangladesh, probably it will be too late. Probably it won't be a good idea. I think this is the right time to take the decision and I think I took the right decision," he said.

Asked whether it was a disappointment for the 'big five' of Bangladesh cricket to end without a major trophy, Mahmudullah admitted that it was disappointing but mentioned that this is not how he would gauge achievements on the field.

"Yes, it is a bit sad but I won't accept that we don't have any achievement. If winning trophies is the benchmark, then a lot of legendary cricketers may not be called legends. So that's my thought."

Mahmudullah also reflected on the challenges he had to face while playing the role of a finisher -- a task that was made even harder in a team with consistent top-order failures.

"If I think about the finisher role, batting at number six or seven is probably the hardest job in T20I cricket as there remains a chance of failing in three of the five innings that you get to bat.

"Maybe you will help the team win in one innings while in another, you may do averagely. You have to be backed by the team and the team management no matter what the outside noise and no matter what the media says. More importantly, the team need to assure you," Mahmudullah said, hinting that perhaps he has not always received that support.

Just like his role as a finisher, there were hit and miss moments throughout his career -- like the time he helped Bangladesh win the game against Sri Lanka in the Nidahas Trophy in 2018 with an outrageous six, or the time he disappointed with a questionable safe approach in the Super Eight game against Afghanistan in the T20 World Cup this year.

However, for Mahmudullah, there remain "no regrets".

Football season deferred till late November

SPORTS REPORTER

The start of the 2024-25 football season has been deferred to late November owing to the unprepared grounds for the Bangladesh Premier League.

The decision was taken at an emergency meeting of Professional League Management Committee yesterday.

"The proposed venues of the upcoming season have not been prepared yet, which is why we have deferred the season which was supposed to start on October 11. The season will start in late November following requests from clubs as well as considering the overall situation," PLMC chairman and BFF vice-president Imrun Hasan in a video message following the virtual meeting.

The deferral of the season, which will comprise of Challenge Cup, Federation Cup and Bangladesh Premier League, will start after the much-hyped BFF elections on October 26.

The upcoming season was supposed to get underway with the one-off Challenge Cup match between league champions Bashundhara Kings and runners-up Mohammedan, while the Federation Cup and Bangladesh Premier League were supposed to get underway on October 15 and October 18 respectively.

The clubs had previously demanded at least eight weeks for the pre-season preparation but the PLMC had decided to start the season on October 11, deferring the first scheduled date of season's start by a week.

"We are hoping to make all venues playable in this timeframe to start the season in late November," Hasan added.



Pakistan batter Salman Agha celebrates his century against England during the second day of the first Test in Multan yesterday. Salman's unbeaten 106, together with tons from Shan Masood and Abdullah Shafique, helped the hosts to 556 in the first innings. England were 96 for one at stumps. PHOTO: REUTERS

Sports bodies reeling from the changeover

ANISUR RAHMAN

While the July Uprising has ushered in a new era in Bangladesh, leading to promising reforms in different sectors, the immediate impact of the changeover on the sporting landscape has not been positive.

With high-ups of 45 national sports federations either in hiding or removed by the interim government, most federations are struggling to continue daily activities, let alone hold tournaments or send athletes abroad.

In order to carry out reforms, the Ministry of Youth and Sports formed a five-member Search Committee in late August and asked it to submit its recommendations to reform the country's sports within two months. However, the committee is yet to make any visible headway in reforms or provide guidelines to federations, which have been orphaned as a consequence of the post-Uprising turmoil.

Apart from Bangladesh Cricket Board, which had an amicable changeup of key personnel, and Bangladesh Football Federation, which has largely been kept out of the government's interference, other sports federations have been dilapidated due to the change of power, and are left looking towards the Search Committee for decisions and guidelines.

Office bearers of some major federations have pointed out two factors creating roadblocks in carrying out their scheduled events: financial issues arising from the absence of signatories and a lack of decisions from authorised committees.

Athletics stopped in its tracks

With general secretary Abdur Rokib Montu, a former assistant attorney general of the Awami League government and a central committee member of the Awami Jubo League, resigning from his post in the third week of August, and the removal of president Tofazzal Hossain Miah -- also a principal secretary of the Awami League government -- on September 10, the Bangladesh Athletics Federation (BAF) is struggling to perform daily activities due to a lack of funds and the absence of signatories.

"We had been running a national camp at BKSP since June but were forced to stop it on August 21 due to the shortage of money. We also postponed October's scheduled Summer Athletics meet," said executive committee member Farukul Islam, who previously served as the federation's general secretary for two terms.

The BAF official also mentioned that a proposed junior camp has been postponed, and they are struggling to pay staff salaries due to the absence of bank signatories, adding that he suggested the Search Committee form an ad-hoc committee in athletics.

Swimming navigating troubled waters

The activities of Bangladesh Swimming Federation (BSF) were halted briefly due to the absence of its general secretary MB Saif, also secretary of Gopalganj Jubo League, following the government change. The federation had stopped its BKSP national swimming camp for December's World Championships in Hungary for three weeks but resumed on October 1 after getting financial assurance from the executive committee on September 17.

Vice-president Abdul Hamid said things have returned to normalcy, with the joint secretary now acting as general secretary, further informing that they are going to organise the national swimming championships from October 9 to 11.

An eternal mess, hockey sees little hope
 Bangladesh Hockey Federation's (BHF) activities hit a snag after most of the top brass, including general secretary AKM Mominul Haque Sayeed, a former ward councillor of the Awami League, went into hiding after August 5.

The BHF was supposed to send 20 players to Europe to play in different leagues under technical adviser Gerhard Peter Rach, a move rescinded by the federation later due to the inclusion of a former Jubo League leader.

BHF's joint secretary Ariful Haque Prince, also a deputy sports secretary of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party, said he renewed efforts to send the players



to Europe, but that was stopped, adding that the representative of the federation president is currently looking after the federation's affairs.

However, players are training in BKSP ahead of November's Men's and Women's Youth Hockey Championships.

Shooting way off target

Bangladesh Shooting Sports Federation (BSSF) general secretary Intekhabul Hamid Apu, the younger brother of former state minister for energy Nasrul Hamid, left the country before August 5 and has not returned since. The discipline has failed to produce good athletes and results in international meets during Apu's 12-year reign.

With the president also removed, the federation is struggling to continue its camp due to lack of finances, informed Joint Secretary Mustaque Waise, adding that around 14 players have been training under local coaches.

Chess a welcome exception

Though the Bangladesh Chess Federation (BCF) president and former IGP Benzir Ahmed quietly left the country months before the government's ouster, the federation did not face much problem in continuing its activities. The BCF recently sent teams to the 45th Chess Olympiad in Hungary, while rating chess tournaments are being held regularly at home.

Volleyball's flicker disappears

Former Dhaka North City Corporation mayor Atiqul Islam had helped make a buzz by organising international tournaments and sending the national team abroad since becoming president in 2015, but his absence and subsequent removal have completely stopped all volleyball-related activities.

The scheduled Asian Senior Men's Central Zone International Volleyball Championship has been postponed, while the national team's training camp has been stopped.

Long-serving general secretary Ashiqur Rahman Miku informed that they don't have a shortage of money, but there are some restrictions from the National Sports Council in using funds at the moment.

Kabaddi back in doldrums

DMP Commissioner Habibur Rahman, a long-serving general secretary of the Bangladesh Kabaddi Federation (BKF), was removed on September 1, three days before BKF president and former IGP Abdullah Al Mamun was removed.

During Habibur's tenure, many domestic and international events were held, but now the federation's activities have stalled.

Joint secretary Shah Newaj Shohag informed that they have been struggling to withdraw money from banks due to the absence of signatures. On top of that, an army camp at the kabaddi stadium premises has stopped training from taking place.

The BKF official also informed that they have postponed the national kabaddi championship after the completion of upazila level, cancelled the proposed women's franchise league, while participation in the World Beach Kabaddi in Iran did not get the ministry's approval.

Archery still aiming for the bullseye

Bangladesh Archery Federation's general secretary Kazi Razibuddin Ahmed Chapal said that his office is being run as normal, despite the removal of the president, thanks to "a system built over the years". Chapal added that they have sent the youth archery team to the Junior Asian Cup in Chinese Taipei and will host the national youth championships from October 17 to 19.

While there are exceptions like archery and chess, which have been some of the few professionally managed sporting federations in the country, most sports bodies are still reeling from the uncertainty and hierarchical void left in the aftermath of the July Uprising. These federations hope that the sporting authorities in general, and the Search Committee in particular, get their hands on deck to restore vibrancy to the country's sporting landscape.