

Time to promote Miraz up the order?

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In Test cricket, Bangladesh have always blazed their own trail, usually down the wrong path, and followed processes that would beget blank stares and stunned looks in most other teams.

For example, in the ongoing cycle of the World Test Championship (WTC), Bangladesh are the only team whose highest run-scorer comes out to bat at number seven or lower in the batting lineup.

Mehedi Hasan Miraz, Bangladesh's current crisis man in red-ball cricket, has accumulated 554 runs in 16 innings in the ongoing WTC cycle, 76 runs more than second-best Mominul Haque, and he has done so while batting eight times at number eight, six times at number seven and twice at number nine.

The all-rounder has also claimed 34 wickets in this period, most by a Bangladeshi, and is currently the only player with more than 500 runs and over 30 wickets in the 2023-25 WTC cycle.

Despite his growing credentials as a Test batter, Miraz is seemingly still not viewed as a proper all-rounder, a tendency that came to fore in the first Test against South Africa in Mirpur, which the hosts lost by seven wickets on Thursday.

In that match, the management were thrown a curve ball when Shakib Al Hasan was unable to return. The plan was to tangle the Proteas in a spin trap and to do so, having a three-pronged spin attack seemed crucial. Hence off-spinner Nayeem Hasan was brought in.

But the management seemingly could not fully



depend on Miraz's abilities as a batter. So, instead of picking a couple of pacers to form a well-rounded attack, they opted to add another batter in Jaker Ali Anik. This, in hindsight, turned out to be a massive blunder, as in

contrast, both the Proteas pacers relished bowling on the Mirpur surface which had something on offer throughout the match, especially Kagiso Rabada, who picked up nine wickets, most by any bowler from either side.

Miraz once again emerged as Bangladesh's crisis man, hitting a valiant 97 in the second innings, a knock that helped the hosts avoid an innings defeat. He had similarly rescued the team from tough situations in the Pakistan tour in August and hit half-centuries in the home Test series against New Zealand and Sri Lanka last year.

After so many rescue acts, Miraz, who has batted above number seven only thrice in 87 Test innings, deserves a chance higher up the order, feels BCB coach Mizanur Rahman Babul. "In age-level cricket, he was always a proper middle-order batter. The biggest thing about Miraz is he always scores runs in crisis situations. The way he is batting right now, he definitely has a case to bat higher up the order," said Babul, who has worked with Miraz since his Under-17 days.

Army Chief made BOA president

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Army Chief General Waker-Uz Zaman was elected unopposed as president of the Bangladesh Olympic Association (BOA), according to a BOA press release on Friday.

The election commission, formed on the occasion of the BOA President Election 2024, officially declared that General Waker-Uz-Zaman was elected unopposed as multiple nomination papers were not filed against the post and only one nomination paper was valid.

General Shaafiuddin Ahmed, the former Army chief, tendered his resignation as BOA president on October 1.

It has been a custom in Bangladesh that Army Chief takes over as the BOA president, effective since 1981 except for one term.



No Shakib in Rangpur's GSL campaign

SPORTS REPORTER

A Rangpur Riders official informed that they won't get the services of Shakib Al Hasan in the upcoming Global Super League (GSL) in Guyana as the premier all-rounder has prior commitments with Bangla Tigers for the Abu Dhabi T10.

The inaugural edition of GSL, scheduled to be held from November 26 to December 7, will feature five franchise-based teams from different countries, and Rangpur are all set to participate in the tournament.

Although the league is sanctioned by Cricket West Indies (CWI), it is fully supported by the government of Guyana and Rangpur will feature in the tournament after having gotten full clearance from the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB).

"There were some talks regarding Shakib accompanying us but he will play in the Abu Dhabi T10 at that time," Shaniyar Tanem, team director of Rangpur, told The Daily Star yesterday.

"He is both the captain and ambassador of Bangla Tigers in the Abu Dhabi T10... I don't think there is any chance of change in plans now," he added.

The Abu Dhabi T10 league is scheduled to run from November 21 to December 2.

These two tournaments will also clash with Bangladesh's upcoming three-format tour of the West Indies, scheduled to start on November 22 in Antigua.

Shakib earlier informed the first Test against South Africa in Mirpur, which the Tigers lost by seven runs on Thursday, would be his last game in the longest format. However, as it did not happen, it would be interesting to see whether the 37-year-old would be seen in national colours or play the T10 League in the UAE during that time.

Apart from Rangpur, the four other participating teams are Hampshire Hawks (England), Guyana Amazon Warriors (West Indies), Victoria (Australia), and Lahore Qalandars (Pakistan).



New challenge for Kings

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh champions Bashundhara Kings will start a new journey in their Asian adventures when they take on Lebanese league champions Nejmeh in their first match of Group A in the West Region of AFC Challenge League, the new third-tier club competition.

The match will get underway at the Changlimithang Stadium in Thimphu at 9:00pm Bangladesh time after India's East Bengal and Bhutan's Paro FC square off in the first match of the group earlier in the day.

Bashundhara Kings, the five-time Bangladesh Premier League winners, have played in the now-defunct AFC Cup four times but failed to get past the group stage on each occasion.

Speaking at the pre-match press conference, Bashundhara Kings captain Topu Barman said the national team's recent matches in Thimphu will stand them in good stead in this competition.

"We had eight weeks training camp with our new coach (Valeriu Tita). Most of our players are from the national team which played two matches here recently. So we know Bhutan experience and weather," the Bangladesh defender said.

The centre-back also said that their experience of playing in the AFC Champions League playoff and past AFC Cup experience will help them, even though they are wary of controversial decisions going against them in the past.

Coach Tita said every team in the group is tough and that his team would be "100 percent ready tomorrow."

BFF set for lukewarm elections

SPORTS REPORTER

Both president aspirants of Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) elections were in relaxed mood on the eve of today's elections, unlike the previous polls of the country's second-most affluent sports body.

When contacted yesterday, two-time former BFF vice-president Tabith Awal was busy watching Bangladesh's match of AFC U-17 Asian Cup Qualifiers against Macau while footballer-turned-banker AFM Mizanur Rahman Chowdhury was

former players. There used to be revelation of manifestos for attracting voters but this time around, there was hardly any such initiative to draw voters, which could be attributed to a lack of panel.

With long severing incumbent president Kazi Salahuddin's announcement of not competing in the polls a month ago, it became certain that the game's local governing body would get a new president with four individuals buying nominations papers for the top position. Two of them later withdrew their candidature, leaving the fight between

delegates about my desire and ambition of contesting in the BFF president's post through SMS. Everyone inspired and supported me. Let's see what happens tomorrow."

Incumbent vice president Imrul Hasan has already been elected unopposed in the senior vice-president's post following withdrawal of candidature by Tarafder Ruhul Amin.

Some competition, however, is expected in the four vice-president posts to be contested by four new faces -- K-sports owner Fahad Karim, Wahid



BFF ELECTIONS AT A GLANCE

Post	No. of Pos	Candidates	Venue
President	1	2 (Tabith Awal, Mizanur Rahman)	InterContinental, Dhaka
SVP	1	1 (Imrul Hasan)	
VP	4	6 (Fahad Karim, Wahid Uddin Chowdhury, Nasser Shahrear Zahedee, Shafiqul Islam Manik, Sabbir Ahmed, Rumman Wali Sabbir)	
Member	15	37	Time 2:00pm-6:00pm, Oct 26

in his hotel room in the capital, instead of physically making contact with delegates after having arrived in the capital from Dinajpur on Thursday.

The mood of the two president-aspirants is virtually a reflection of lack of enthusiasm regarding the elections, unlike the four previous elections which experienced huge excitement and competition among the candidates.

There always used to be two separate panels contesting in the last four polls with different panels holding number of meetings with delegates, coaches and

experienced campaigner Tabith and unheralded Chowdhury.

Even though Tabith has arranged three meetings with former players, organisers, coaches and delegates, Chowdhury has chosen to interact with the delegates through text messages.

"On Thursday, I arranged a get-together for the delegates and I did not ask anyone to cast their votes for me because I wanted everyone to spend a joyous time with each other and deepen the relation with each other," Tabith told the Daily Star yesterday.

Chowdhury said, "I informed the

Uddin Chowdhury Happy, elder brother of BNP leader Shahid Uddin Anny, Radiant Pharmaceuticals owner Nasser Shahrear Zahedee, former footballers Shafiqul Islam Manik and Rumman Bin Wali Sabbir and Brothers Union's member secretary Sabbir Ahmed Aref.

While many top officials of different sports clubs contest in the Bangladesh Cricket Board elections, hardly any top club official except for Imrul Hasan has showed interest in contesting the BFF polls, paving way for less-familiar names to into the elections.



PHOTO: AFP

New Zealand left-arm spinner Mitchell Santner returned career-best figures of 7-53 to bundle out India for 156 on Day 2 of the second Test in Pune yesterday. Tom Latham's 86 propelled the visitors to 198-5 later in the day, extending their lead to 301 as the Black Caps now sense a historic series win over hosts India. [Inset] Meanwhile, in Rawalpindi, Pakistan's Saud Shakeel scored 223-ball 134 to give his side a 77-run lead before spinners Sajid Khan and Noman Ali reduced England to 24-3 at stumps as the visitors trail by 53 runs on the second day of the third Test.



Real have no fear of rampant Barca

AFP, Madrid

Real Madrid coach Carlo Ancelotti said LaLiga leaders Barcelona's revival is not keeping him up at night ahead of Saturday's Clasico.

Hansi Flick's Barca visit the Santiago Bernabeu sitting three points ahead of the second-place Spanish champions and thrashed German giants Bayern Munich 5-1 in the Champions League on Wednesday.

However, Real Madrid are unbeaten in 42 La Liga matches and can match Barcelona's all-time record of 43 if they avoid defeat.

"The truth is they are doing very well," said Ancelotti at a news conference Friday.

"In a game like the Clasico, a derby, it's hard to pick a favourite. Luckily, nobody is taking any sleep away from me at the moment."

Barcelona struggled last season and Madrid beat them in both Liga Clasicos.

Madrid midfielder Jude Bellingham scored three times in those two games during a fantastic campaign, but this season has not found the net in his first 10 appearances across all competitions.

Ancelotti said he was happy with Bellingham's performances and that the onus was now on superstar Kylian Mbappe to lead the scoring charts for Los Blancos.



A draw or a victory could see Real Madrid equal the longest unbeaten run in LaLiga history (43 matches), set by Ernesto Valverde's Barcelona between 2017 and 2018.

Vinicius Junior has been involved in seven goals in his last four games in El Clasico in all competitions, scoring five goals and laying on two assists.

Barca have so far scored 33 goals in 10 league games under Hansi Flick -- only Real Madrid icon Zinedine Zidane has enjoyed a more prolific start through 10 games as a manager in LaLiga this century (34).

"This year we don't have a problem, because we have a striker that can score 30, 35, 40 goals," Ancelotti said about Mbappe, who arrived from PSG this summer and is preparing for his first Clasico.

"He's [Mbappe] played Barca many times, he knows what he has got to do," Ancelotti added.

Barca coach Flick, also taking part in his first Clasico, hailed his team ahead of their biggest test of the campaign.

The German coach said he would adapt his set-up, including an aggressive high-line defence, but not drastically, for the visit to the capital.

"We have our ideas, and I said also after the match against Bayern that we have to improve a little bit... every match we play, we adapt for the next match, and it's also the same against Real," explained Flick.

"They also have players who are very fast, we know that we play against Real Madrid, a team with world-class players."

"But in the end, I trust (my players), I have a big belief in my team."

Injuries could play a big role in Saturday's clash as Real will miss goalkeeper Thibaut Courtois, centre back David Alaba and captain Dani Carvajal along with forward Rodrygo while Barcelona goalkeeper Marc-Andre ter Stegen and key defender Ronald Araujo will be absent.