

SPORT



Bangladesh winger Ritu Porna Chakma celebrates with her teammates after silencing the crowd with the winning goal in the 81st minute of the SAFF Women's Championship final at the Dasharath Stadium in Kathmandu yesterday. Ritu Porna's wonderful goal helped Bangladesh beat the hosts 2-1 and retain their crown.

PHOTO: SAFF

Best Player: Ritu Porna Chakma (Bangladesh)

Top Scorer: Deki Lhazom (Bhutan)

Best goalkeeper: Rupna Chakma (Bangladesh)

Fair play award: Bhutan

I'm feeling so good. This is the first time I've received this award. I can't believe it, this feels like a dream. I want to thank my family. They have supported me so much. I want to thank the people of Bangladesh who have supported us and prayed for us.

BANGLADESH WINGER RITU PORNA CHAKMA

SIMILAR HELPLESSNESS both on and off the field

SAMSUL AREFIN KHAN from Chattogram

Like Bangladesh batters failed to keep their shape on Day 2 of their second Test against South Africa in Chattogram yesterday, the Tigers' spin-bowling coach Mushtaq Ahmed also was unable to maintain his neutral narrative when he attended the press conference following the day's play.

Yet another top-order meltdown saw Bangladesh get reduced to 38 for four in just nine overs yesterday on the same batting-friendly surface of the Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium where South Africa had piled up 575 for six (declared) in their first innings -- Proteas' third-highest Test total in the sub-continent.

Hence, it was inevitable that Mushtaq was bombarded with questions as to why the likes of Mahmudul Hasan Joy (10 off 21), Shadman Islam (0 off 6), and Zakir Hasan (2 off 8) -- all of whom have played a significant number of first-class games -- were unable to put up any resistance under same conditions to which Proteas' batters adapted with ease.

Mushtaq tried to play it safe at first, pointing at the 'inexperience' of the 'young players', but eventually had to blurt out the harsh truth.

"I don't think there's a lack of confidence. Maybe there is a lack of Test cricket process. It is about game awareness -- knowing when to leave the ball and when to play tightly. It is about the mindset that I need to see off these five overs. They just have to understand the situation," Mushtaq admitted.

It is clear that the South Africa batters had that understanding of the game situation that Mushtaq talked about. After Tony de Zorzi, Tristan Stubbs had notched maiden Test tons on Day 1, Wiaan Mulder (105* off 150) got his first-ever Test century yesterday. There were two fifties from



South Africa pacer Kagiso Rabada celebrates after taking a wicket during the last session on Day 2 of the second Test against Bangladesh at the Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium in Chattogram yesterday. Rabada, who climbed to the top of the ICC Test Bowlers' Rankings, picked up two wickets late in the day to slump the hosts to four down for 38 after the Proteas declared their innings on 575 for six. Meanwhile, Bangladesh's Zakir Hasan, one of Rabada's scalps, walks back after being dismissed.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

the Proteas as well.

Even though the day's play had to be called off early due to bad light, Bangladesh's struggles with the bat were still apparent in that brief period as 13 of the 38 managed by the Tigers were courtesy of extras -- including a five-run penalty levied on Senuran Muthusamy for damaging the wicket by running directly over it.

Mushtaq, however, was adamant that Bangladesh batters' skill was not an issue.

"I disagree with you saying lack of skill. Maybe patience level can be better. Test cricket is all about playing according to the situation. It is about surviving that period of 40 minutes.

"Don't forget the Pakistan series. They won from 26/6 [in the second Test in Rawalpindi]. I am sorry to be repeating these things, but those are the evidence we have as coaches to tell them," Mushtaq added.

Mushtaq's apparent helplessness is understandable as coaches of Bangladesh usually have very little to draw inspirations from. And now that the Tigers are trailing by 537 runs with the prospect of a humiliating innings defeat looming large, perhaps, that's all that the team management can hope for -- a stunning turnaround, even though how unlikely it may seem.

Fans' frustrations mirror Tigers' struggles

SAMSUL AREFIN KHAN from Chattogram

Bangladesh's struggle in Tests, compounded by poor fan engagement and stadium conditions, raises questions about Bangladesh Cricket Board's (BCB) commitment to fostering a strong cricket culture.

Bangladesh fans, often unwavering in their support, faced their latest disappointment both on and off the field during the second and final Test between Bangladesh and South Africa at Chattogram's Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium (ZACS) on Wednesday.

The Tigers' struggle on the pitch -- ending the second day four down for 38 after the visitors declared on a mammoth 575 for six -- was painfully mirrored by fans' frustrations in the galleries, where mismanagement added to an already disheartening



experience.

Among the 500 fans who braved the heat, Helal Uddin, who travelled from Noakhali for the match, was quick to voice his dissatisfaction with conditions at ZACS.

"Actually, it is extremely hot weather, and the Bangladesh team isn't doing well either. That's why the crowd is mostly silent during the South Africa

SCORES IN BRIEF

BANGLADESH V SOUTH AFRICA

2nd Test, Day 2

South Africa 1st innings: 575-6 dec in 144.2 overs (de Zorzi 177, Stubbs 106, Bedingham 59, Mulder 105 not out, Muthusamy 68 not out; Tajjul 5-198, Rana 1-83)

Bangladesh 1st innings: 38-4 in 9 overs (Shadman 0, Joy 10, Zakir 2, Mominul 6 not out, Hasan 3, Shanto 4 not out; Rabada 2-8, Paterson 1-15, Maharaj 1-4)

innings," he said, before reserving harsh criticism for the venue's organisers.

"There is no shade in most parts of the galleries. In such extreme hot weather, it has become difficult for the crowd to stay longer here under the direct scorching heat. Apart from that, there is a lack of food items here to select from, and the price is also high. The toilets aren't up to the mark either."

BCB's seemingly limited focus on creating a comfortable experience for fans at Test venues was reflected by the stadium's food vendors, who offered only two items despite a list of 23 options. A chicken burger was priced at 160 tk, while the only other item, Khichuri, selling at 120 tk, was not even on the approved list of vendors authorised by BCB's marketing and commercial department.

"Actually, most of our food remains unsold every day. That's why we came up with limited items," one vendor said, pointing to the lack of planning to attract and accommodate Test spectators.

With a lacklustre Test culture in Bangladesh, devoid of signs of progress, with galleries often empty and fan morale low, the board must realise that the consequences of this trend jeopardise the national team's success in the long run.

LEADERSHIP GAPS hamper BCB operations

ABDULLAH AL MEHDI

Faruque Ahmed was officially announced as the president of Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) on 21 August. Yet, just two months in, governance issues are already surfacing within the board. While former president Nazmul Hassan Papon ran operations like a one-man show, Faruque appears to be centralising operations similarly, as seen in skipper Najmul Hossain Shanto's captaincy situation. Despite three board meetings and an emergency session under Faruque's tenure, no standing committees have been formed, leaving 12 directors inactive and raising concerns about BCB's effectiveness. The National Sports Council (NSC) has also questioned the absence of certain board directors, who reportedly fled after the fall of the Awami League government, urging BCB to clarify its position on forming a committee to amend its constitution.

Faruque attended a press conference yesterday and discussed agendas related to the NSC and other matters,

but addressing the media ahead of the board meeting resulted in no significant decisions being discussed.

"Yes, there are agendas [to be discussed in the board meeting], but the way you are asking, it's as if five-six months have gone by. We went through three board meetings in 10 days, and it's the fourth meeting today," Faruque said, adding that the board is undertaking the task of forming the committee to amend the constitution.

Increasingly, it appears the functions of particular departments are not running as they should. Many BCB officials remain unsure of decisions they need to make until consultation with the BCB president. BCB sources inform that even meeting agendas and minutes are not being provided before or after meetings. Faruque informed there are seven to eight directors now working and admitted they could not form the committees, and he himself is heading many departments' func-

tions "on an ad-hoc basis".

"These standing committees, we will try to give them some form in one week. Maybe I will be acting head of four departments, and with me, I will have a member secretary, as per rules from councillors, and try to form committees, those that are important," he informed.

It is true that the BPL scheduling and shaping the tournament had taken a lot of attention.

How-

ever, as there is too much on the board president's plate, the failure to delegate matters has also been felt.

Jalal Yunus resigned, and so did Khaled Mahmud Sujon. One was the cricket operations chairman and the other the vice-president. While office functions did not stagnate, decisions have. The case of Bangladesh captain Shanto, informing board officials that he does not want to continue as captain, highlights the ineffectiveness around BCB.

Players are required to report any issues to the cricket operations department. Many times in the past, former president Papon faced criticism for handling these matters personally, often bypassing proper channels of communication.

"I can't understand anything unless I sit with him [Shanto]. You can't make decisions based on reading newspapers," he said, underlining that a key department, such as cricket operations, regarding this important matter, also stagnated because the BCB president had too much on his plate.

What to WATCH

T SPORTS AND GTV

Bangladesh vs South Africa

Second Test, Day 3

Live from 10:00 am

Jamal excluded from squad due to 'personal reasons'

SPORTS REPORTER



Bangladesh head coach Javier Cabrera yesterday announced a 16-member preliminary squad for two upcoming FIFA friendlies against Maldives in November, excluding captain Jamal Bhuiyan.

Jamal, however, explained the reasons why he was dropped from the squad through a Facebook post yesterday.

"Hey guys due to personal important family matters I won't be available for the next two matches for the National Team in November. The management and the coach already know about this matter," Jamal's post read.

It was learned that Jamal is going to be a father and that he wished to stay with his wife and the newborn in November.

Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) media manager Sadman Sakib also confirmed that Spanish coach Cabrera was well aware of Jamal's situation and that's the reason he kept him out of the squad.

The two matches against Maldives will take place in Dhaka on November 13 and 16.

The squad will begin training from November 1 before the full squad is announced following Bashundhara Kings' AFC Challenge League campaign. A number of Kings' players are expected to join the national squad on November 4.

This was the first time that the 34-year-old captain was dropped from the squad since not being included for a World Cup Qualifier against Oman in 2021. He was also dropped from the squad for the Asian Cup Qualifiers Round 1 against Bhutan in 2016 and a friendly against Nepal in 2015.

Jamal, meanwhile, has been out of training at the club level as he did not get a club in the upcoming Bangladesh Premier League. He, however, trained with Brothers Union for a few days before the league was deferred by a few weeks.

Papon's BCB directorship cancelled

SPORTS REPORTER

The directorship of former Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) president Nazmul Hassan Papon, along with 10 others, has been cancelled following a board meeting at the BCB headquarters in Mirpur yesterday.

Papon remained as a BCB director even after resigning as president.

Manzur Kader, A.J.M. Nasir Uddin, Sk. Sohel, Advocate Anwarul Islam, Shafiul Alam Chowdhury Nadel, Muhammed Ismail Haider Mallick, Tanvir Ahmed, Obeid Rashid Nizam, Gazi Golam Murtoza, and Nazib Ahmed are the others who had their directorship cancelled in accordance with the BCB Constitution due to their absence from three or more consecutive meetings, according to a BCB press release.

The schedule for the upcoming Bangladesh Premier League (BPL) was also announced following the board meeting. The eleventh edition of BPL will begin on December 30 with the final scheduled for February 7, 2025.

