

Booters confident about win against Maldives

SPORTS REPORTER

Inspired by the success of women's team, Bangladesh men's football team are looking to pull off a good result against visiting Maldives in the first of two FIFA Friendly matches at the Bashundhara Kings Arena today.

The match is scheduled to kick off at 6:00pm.

Nearly two weeks after Bangladesh defended their SAFF Women's Championship title, the women footballers are still the talk of the country's football fans. The fans will now expect a similar performance from the men's team against Maldives.

Coach Javier Cabrera and stand-in captain Topu Barman don't want to disappoint the countrymen while facing a strong Maldives side, who are 22 places ahead of Bangladesh in FIFA ranking.

"First, I want to thank the women's team for their achievement. Now it is our job, it is our opportunity at our home ground. We will definitely have to produce a good result and all the players have belief in brining good results. We have to win both matches



against Maldives," Topu said at the pre-match press conference yesterday.

"The preparation has been good and we have had good practice matches against Fortis FC to prepare the boys for the Maldives matches. We are excited and everyone is looking forward and eager to play for our fans. We are very confident but we also have responsibility to deliver good performance and give

our best performance in tomorrow's game. We are convinced about giving our best and win the match," said Cabrera, under whom Bangladesh beat Maldives twice, drew once and lost once.

In September, Bangladesh played two friendly matches against Bhutan in Thimphu in a bid to improving their FIFA ranking but their performances were not up to the mark as Cabrera's

charges won the first match and suffered a defeat in the second.

Topu and Co will definitely face more challenge against Maldives but they will have the advantage of playing in front of their own crowd and in familiar environment where stronger teams like Australia and Palestine also struggled.

"These two matches are very important for us and the players have to prove themselves on the pitch. If we can apply our game plan correctly, we will win the match," hoped the centre-back.

Maldives head coach Ali Suzain said that they are confident about winning the match despite not having proper preparation since there has been no competitive tournament in Maldives for the last one year.

"Definitely Bangladesh are strong on this ground, which our players are also familiar with because majority of Maziya players have played here four to five times. It is a good pitch for passing and moving (the ball) and it will be advantageous to our players," said Suzain.



Professor Muhammad Yunus, Chief Adviser of Bangladesh's interim government, met with FIFA President Gianni Infantino on the sidelines of COP29 in Azerbaijan's capital Baku yesterday. Infantino accepted an invitation extended by the CA to attend a youth festival, a proposed nationwide sporting festival across Bangladesh centring Bangladesh Premier League T20 tournament, in January next year. Yunus also sought support from the FIFA President to bring reputed women's football teams to Bangladesh.

PHOTO: CHIEF ADVISER'S OFFICE

BPL yet to find solid ground: Faruque

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Cricket Board president Faruque Ahmed admitted yesterday that the Bangladesh Premier League (BPL), the country's premier franchise T20 tournament, is yet to find solid ground after 10 seasons.

With that in mind, Faruque addressed the limitations of the BPL that put the tournament's overall standard into question and said he would aim to make improvements in the upcoming edition, starting on December 30, and broaden the scope of the BPL in future editions.

"Ten BPLs have passed but we haven't been able to find a solid platform for the tournament," Faruque said in a video message on BCB's official Facebook page on Tuesday.

BCB also revealed the fixture of the upcoming BPL yesterday.



SCAN THE QR CODE TO VIEW BPL FIXTURE



Bangladesh's batting evolution stuck in limbo

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh were mulling a change of approach in white-ball batting before the 2023 ODI World Cup. However, the very topic now appears so outdated that it begs the question of whether any lasting progress has actually been made.

Against South Africa in March 2022, when Shakib Al Hasan started his hitting early -- just after the 30-over mark -- he successfully disrupted the Proteas' tactic of saving Kagiso Rabada's overs for the death. Usually, Bangladesh build until the 40th over and, depending on wickets in hand, go for late blows, but Shakib was going against the grain of what is considered the norm for the Tigers, who snatched the ODI series 2-1.

Bangladesh's batting was once again in the limelight due to the approach taken by the whole unit in the just-concluded series against Afghanistan. The Tigers were missing a few key players in one match or another during the three-match ODI series, but overall it provided a chance to refresh the approach.

Soumya Sarkar and Tanzid Hasan Tamim became the latest opening batters, the 14th different opening pair within a period of two years. Soumya showed promise in getting runs, but, just like the opening pair -- which perhaps changed to accommodate Liton Das' injury -- there has been no continuity of ideas in terms of approach.

The openers started the third ODI on the front foot, both looking in form, but once they departed, the innings quickly lost momentum. Neither Zakir Hasan nor



Towhid Hridoy appeared to play to their potential.

Bangladesh appeared a few runs short despite Mahmudullah Riyad and Mehedi Hasan Miraz's heroics, simply because team management had believed the wicket would behave differently, favouring the bowlers under lights. When that did not happen, the result became a forgone conclusion as there were simply not enough runs to make Afghanistan

take more risks.

The three ODIs in Sharjah almost appeared to be from a different era, not what is usually the norm in ODIs played today. There were no 300-plus scores from teams batting first. Generally, that favours the Tigers, especially as seen over the years when they played in Mirpur, where 240 has been a challenging score.

Before last year's ODI World Cup in India, where venues in Mumbai, Hyderabad, and others had scores over 360, there was talk about a more attacking approach under Chandika Hathurusingha. Mushfiqur Rahim had been demoted to number six, Hridoy had been promoted, and Shakib appeared to be setting a tone during that South Africa series. There was talk of focusing on acceleration in the middle overs.

Yet, when push came to shove, without some of their more recognised profiles in Mushfiqur or Shakib present, and also without skipper Najmul Hossain Shanto in the third ODI, their approach reverted back to familiar territory -- targeting 250 scores. Meanwhile, no players have seized opportunities when regular batters in the ODI setup have been absent.

In terms of continuity, they have not carried forward the gusto from 2023 with which they wanted to take on an attacking approach. Also, despite much talk of improving practice and match wickets to 'boost batters' confidence, little has changed under the new board president. If this approach is to change, it starts with getting into the flow of how modern white-ball cricket is played. However, the Tigers still look well off the mark.

Farhad signs off as Rangpur climb to 2nd spot in NCL

SPORTS REPORTER

Rangpur Division beat Rajshahi Division by 101 runs in the fourth-round match of the ongoing National Cricket League (NCL) at the Shaheed Kamruzzaman Stadium in Rajshahi yesterday in the final first-class game of Rajshahi batter Farhad Hossain.

Rangpur bowlers took less than a session on the final day as they took the remaining four wickets for 99 runs to bowl out Rajshahi for 161 in their second innings after they resumed on 62-6. The win helped Rangpur climb to the second spot.

Rajshahi batter Farhad, who scored 9065 runs and also took 165 wickets in 161 matches after making his debut in 2005, was accorded a felicitation programme following the game where the 37-year-old cricketer was presented with a Rajshahi Division shirt signed by all the players and a commemorative crest from the Bangladesh Cricket Board.

Meanwhile, at Cox's Bazar Academy Ground, Mohammad Mithun struck an unbeaten 102 off 108 balls -- his 16th first-class ton -- while Imrul Kayed (71), Anamul Haque (54) and Nurul Hasan Sohan (50 not out) all scored fifties as Khulna made 296-3 in their second innings in a stalemate fixture against league leaders Sylhet Division.

Meanwhile, the Sylhet Academy Ground witnessed a late drama in the game between Dhaka Metro and Dhaka Division. The match seemed to be headed for a dull draw after Dhaka Metro set a target of 259 runs and Dhaka reached 93-2 in the final session of the game. However, brilliant bowling performances from Dhaka Metro bowlers Rakibul Hasan (4-38) and Abu Hider Rony (3-45) reduced their opponents to 147-8 in 41.5 overs.

However, due to bad light, the umpires had to call it off just after 1.1 overs as the game ended in a draw.

Politics vs cricket leaves Champions Trophy up in the air

AGENCIES

The fate of the upcoming Champions Trophy still hangs in the balance as India refused to travel to Pakistan for the tournament, with the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) on Tuesday asking the International Cricket Council (ICC) for clarification regarding Board of Control for Cricket in India's (BCCI) refusal in sending its team across the border.

"The PCB has responded to last week's ICC letter seeking clarifications for the Indian board's decision not to travel to Pakistan for next year's Champions Trophy," Sami-Ul-Hasan told AFP.

It marks another instance of politics between these two nuclear-armed nations interfering with cricket. India and Pakistan have not played a bilateral series for over a decade -- squaring off only in ICC multi-nation events. India last visited Pakistan in 2008, for the Asia Cup.

The neighbouring countries have fought three wars since being carved out of the subcontinent's partition in 1947 and that rivalry is often reflected on the cricket field.

Pakistani media reported on Tuesday that the PCB would be unwilling to accept security reasons for India's refusal to visit.

New Zealand have toured Pakistan three times in the past two years, with England visiting twice and Australia once in the same period.

Pakistan also visited India for last year's ODI World Cup and the PCB had expected the gesture to be reciprocated for the Champions Trophy.



Last year's Asia Cup in Pakistan took place under a hybrid model with India playing their matches -- including the final -- in Sri Lanka.

The Champions Trophy is slated to be played across three venues -- Lahore, Rawalpindi and Karachi -- from February 19 to March 9 next year.

But a final schedule due to be announced this week has been postponed over the stand-off -- which PCB chairman Mohsin

Naqvi termed disappointing.

"Almost every country wants the tournament to be played in Pakistan and it will be disappointing if they don't come," Naqvi said last week.

Naqvi previously ruled out the possibility of a hybrid event that would see India play its matches at neutral venues, for example in the United Arab Emirates.

Meanwhile, with BCCI, which holds great sway in the ICC, unwilling to tour Pakistan, the cricket's governing body will likely have to find a solution to satisfy both parties, especially since the involvement of these two arch-rivals provides the most lucrative broadcast deal.

However, without a permanent solution for the issue, avoiding such chaos ahead of major events is inevitable as Naqvi already mentioned that Pakistan would consider pulling out of future events in India as response to BCCI's current stance.

"Pakistan has shown great gestures to India in the past, and we'd like to say clearly India shouldn't expect such friendly gestures from us every time".

India is due to host the women's ODI World Cup and Asia Cup next year and will co-host the Twenty20 World Cup with Sri Lanka in 2026.



Bangladesh Navy swimmers Samiul Islam Rafi and Juthi Akter show off their medals and crests after becoming the best male and female swimmer, respectively, in the Max Group 33rd National Swimming, Diving and Water Polo Championship at the Syed Nazrul Islam Swimming Complex in Mirpur yesterday. Rafi won five gold and a bronze medal, setting three new records, while Juthi made two records on way to winning four gold and a silver medal. Navy, meanwhile, finished top of the medals tally with 32 gold, 26 silver and 12 bronze medals. Bangladesh Army finished second with 10 gold, 15 silver and 23 bronze medals.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED