

BCB LACKING CLARITY in decision-making

SHABAB CHOWDHURY

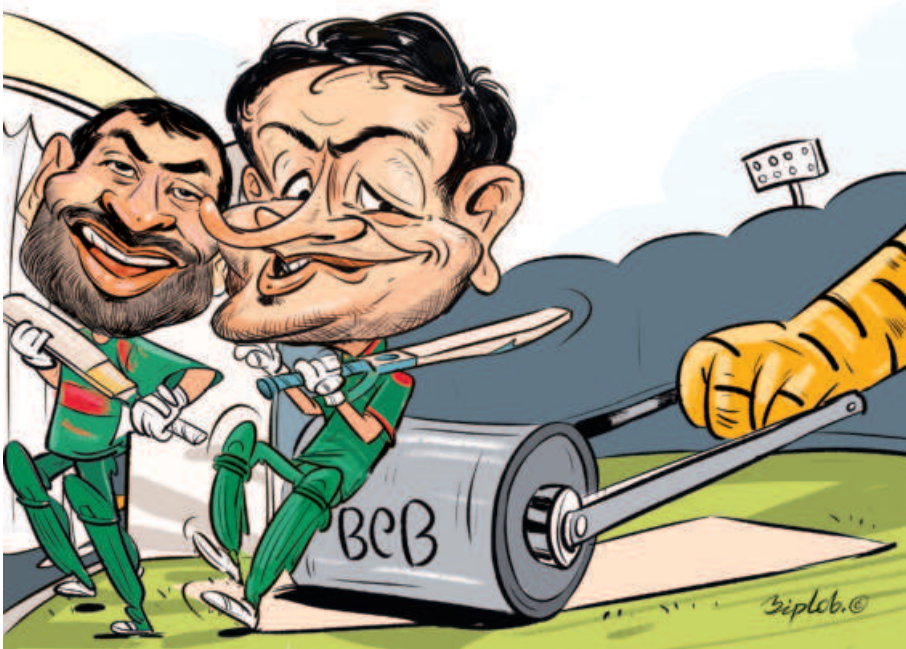
One can never fall to boredom when following what transpires in Bangladesh cricket.

The decision-making process, in particular, as well as the outcomes, often relating to simple issues, are commonly shrouded in mystery, most of it done unnecessarily.

Say for example, Tamim Iqbal's retire-
unretire conundrum that has yet to come to a long-awaited resolution.

It almost seems that the former ODI skipper has been playing hard to get with the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) after his retirement quandary as no one from the board can say for certain what the left-hander plans to do regarding his future in the national team.

Tamim himself did not speak about his future previously but on Friday the southpaw was caught on camera affirming that he was indeed done with the national team.



During a conversation with Chittagong Kings mentor Shahid Afridi that took place in a hotel room in Dhaka, Afridi causally asked, "Tamim, you've completely retired, finished?" to which Tamim answered, "Yes, from the national team."

The 35-year-old has not played for Bangladesh since September 2023 and has not retired from ODIs and Tests. And

now it seems that everyone apart from the BCB knows that Tamim won't be making a comeback to the national team but it can be expected that he would not be conveying this message to the BCB anytime soon. With the Champions Trophy coming up next month, it can be assumed that the possibility of Tamim's inclusion into the side could continue to cause further stirs.

On the other hand, ace all rounder Shakib Al Hasan has had to see the other side of the coin. He has kept himself available and shown willingness to play but faces an uncertain and tricky situation in assignments at home due to security concerns for his involvement with the ousted Awami League government. Shakib's involvement in the Champions Trophy is still up in the air as he has not played an ODI since the 2023 World Cup in India.

"Since the Champions Trophy is not at home, we will decide about it [Shakib's involvement] at some point during the BPL," BCB president Faruque Ahmed told reporters on Friday.

"Shakib still has not retired. Nothing of that sort has happened to him. He often talks about his issues with the ministry and it is up to them to solve his issues. (If those issues are solved), there is his fitness, mental state, and the selection committee (to consider)," Faruque added, keeping more grey areas than required regarding the Shakib issue.

There is little clarity from the BCB in what it is looking to do with Shakib and Tamim, keeping the Champions Trophy in mind. A hiatus the duo has had in the format should definitely have prompted any other board to make clear cut decisions but the BCB works in its own pace and has its own mysterious ways of doing things that often lack clarity.

Liverpool primed to heap more misery on Man Utd

REUTERS

When Liverpool won 3-0 at Old Trafford in September, Manchester United fell to 14th and that is where they still find themselves more than four months later but 23 points behind the Premier League leaders ahead of Sunday's game at Anfield.

Such has been United's downfall that they are no longer looking up at European spots but looking over their shoulder at teams below them steadily improving and dragging Ruben Amorim's side into a potential relegation scrap.

On his part, Amorim is well aware of the reality facing England's most successful club that has not won the league since 2013 while their fans look forlornly at rivals Liverpool, who are well on course to equal their record tally of 20 titles.

With a game in hand, Arne Slot's Liverpool are six points clear of second-placed Arsenal while they have more than double United's tally with 45 points.

While Amorim is struggling to bring in the changes in United after the departure of Erik ten Hag, one manager who does not need to change things much is Slot as his team looks to extend their unbeaten run to 24 games in all competitions.

Liverpool have lost only one game this year and

- ⚽ No player has scored more goals (12) and provided more assists (six) against Manchester United in Premier League history than Liverpool's Mohamed Salah.
- ⚽ Arne Slot could also become the first Liverpool boss in 88 years to accomplish the league double over United in his debut season.

their form against United, who have beaten their rivals only once in the last 13 league games, makes them outright favourites on Sunday.

Off the pitch, however, the contract situations of the league's top scorer Mohamed Salah, captain Virgil van Dijk and Real Madrid-linked Trent Alexander-Arnold have routinely been distractions.

But Slot has batted away any question thrown at him without batting an eyelid while Salah, who has 17 goals and 13 assists this season, continues to set new milestones as he looks ahead to playing his favourite opponent.



Ryan Rickelton became only the third South African batter to smash a Test double ton at home on Saturday, scoring 259 off 343 deliveries to help the Proteas pile up 615 first-innings score on Day 2 of their second Test against Pakistan in Cape Town. The two other South Africans to score 250-plus scores at home were Gary Kirsten (275 vs England in Durban in 1999) and Graeme Pollock (274 vs Australia in Durban 1970).

PHOTO: AFP

Tiger batters yet to find their feet in high-scoring BPL

SAMSUL AREFIN KHAN

Although local batters flourished in the high-scoring opening phase of the ongoing 11th edition of the Bangladesh Premier League (BPL) in Dhaka, which concluded on Friday, most batters of the national T20I team struggled to get going, something they would be hoping to change in the upcoming Sylhet phase.

In the Dhaka phase, which had eight matches, batters like Anamul Haque Bijoy, Yasir Ali, Mahidul Islam Ankon and Saif Hassan stepped up and made an impact for their respective franchises, more than the overseas batters in some cases.

But other than Shamim Hossain, who hit a 38-ball 78 for Chittagong Kings against Khulna Tigers, the other national team batters could not score big on the good batting surfaces at the Sher-e-Bangla National Cricket Stadium in Mirpur.

Dhaka Capitals opener Liton Das, who recently led Bangladesh to a 3-0 series sweep over the West Indies in the Caribbean, is still searching for form, amassing just 33 runs in three innings, which has not helped his side's cause either, who are winless after three

matches and are currently at the bottom of the points table.

Meanwhile, Najmul Hossain Shanto, who returned to competitive cricket through last month's National Cricket League T20 after a month-long rehab for his groin injury, is yet to find his feet as he made only nine runs in two games for the star-studded Fortune Barishal.

Barishal have chosen to sit out marquee English batter Dawin Malan to make way for Shanto to open the innings alongside skipper Tamim Iqbal. But if Shanto fails to get going, he could be demoted in the line-up or even lose his place to Malan.

Shanto's Barishal teammate Towhid Hridoy (36 runs in two games) and Dhaka's Tanzid Hasan Tamim (58 runs in three matches) failed to shine in the

Dhaka phase while Sylhet Strikers' Jaker Ali made a 33-ball 24 against Rangpur Riders in his only innings so far.

For Habibur Bashar, current head of the Bangladesh Cricket Board's (BCB's) women's wing and a former national selector, Tiger batters failing to make their mark was the only blemish in an otherwise promising opening phase.

"I can't say I'm fully satisfied. I really expected our front-line cricketers like Liton, Tanzid Tamim, Towhid Hridoy and Shanto to do well and dominate during this BPL. There can't be any excuses because this year the wickets are really good," Bashar told The Daily Star yesterday.

Bashar hoped that in the Sylhet phase, which is set to begin on Monday, and in the Chattogram phase, which will begin



Six-star Boateng fuels Rahmatganj resurgence

SPORTS REPORTER

Ghanaian forward Samuel Boateng struck a whopping six goals in Rahmatganj MFS's 6-1 victory over Dhaka Wanderers Club in a Bangladesh Premier League (BPL) fixture in Munshiganj yesterday, as the underdogs from Old Dhaka continue to defy expectations.

A fifth win in six matches left Rahmatganj just three points behind leaders Mohammedan, who thumped Chittagong Abahani 5-1 in Mymensingh yesterday.

"The boys have really been toiling hard in practice sessions and transforming their hard work into results on the pitch. This is just the outcome of their hard work as they are truly hungry for victory," Rahmatganj head coach Kamal Ahmed Babu told The Daily Star after the match.

"A spirit of doing better in every match is driving all the players, from the local to the foreign recruits, and they are determined not to give up until the final whistle. That's why we are seeing results," said Babu, who once guided Rahmatganj to finish top of the first-phase table of the BPL in 2016.

Babu also heaped praise on Boateng, who is now the league's top scorer with 10 goals from six matches. Boateng's remarkable feat made him only the second player in the league's history

to score six goals in a single match. He matched the record set by Nigerian forward Nwachukwu Paul Macjames, who achieved the milestone in 2007, guiding Mohammedan SC to a 7-1 win over Rahmatganj during the league's inaugural season.

"Boateng once played for a top club in Ghana. He came to Bangladesh to prove himself in a bid to join a better team in the future.

"He is a talented forward who possesses both speed and power, allowing him to race past opposing defenders and beat goalkeepers with his powerful shots," said Babu.

At the Rofique Uddin Bhuiyan Stadium, title contenders Mohammedan initially faced a challenge against winless Chittagong Abahani after being reduced to ten men in the 20th minute, as defender Shakil Ahmed Topu saw a red for fouling Anik Ghosh.

Following an evenly balanced first half, the Black and Whites came back strongly in the second. Defender Mounzir Couliadiati from Burkina Faso opened the floodgates with a header in the 47th minute before Emmanuel Sunday doubled the lead, and Sourov Dewan netting home twice.

Adding to their misery, Chittagong Abahani's defender Salim Reza struck an own goal before substitute Imtiaz Sultan Jitu converted a stoppage-time penalty to break Mohammedan's clean sheet.

- Rishabh Pant's explosive knock helped India to a 145-run lead with four wickets left on Saturday. At the close in Sydney, India were 141-6 in the second innings with Ravindra Jadeja on eight and Washington Sundar six after they dismissed Australia for 181 in reply to their first-innings 185.
- It was only the second time in the last 70 years at SCG that both teams were bowled out under 200 in their first innings. The other instance happened in the Test between England (123) & Australia (145) in 1979/80.
- Pant's 29-ball fifty is the second-fastest Test fifty by an Indian, only behind his own record of a 28-ball fifty against Sri Lanka in Bengaluru in 2022.
- It is also the fastest half-century by a visiting batter on Australian soil, bettering the 33-ball efforts by England's John Brown (Melbourne 1895) and West Indies' Roy Fredericks (Perth 1975).
- Australia pacer Scott Boland had Virat Kohli caught at second slip yesterday, claiming the wicket of the India great for the fourth time in five innings in this series.
- India's stand-in skipper Jasprit Bumrah, who was taken for scans midway through Australia's first innings due to a back spasm, took his 32nd wicket in this series -- most by an Indian in a series in Australia, surpassing Bishan Bedi's 31 wickets in a series in 1977/78.



Rishabh Pant plays a shot on way to a blistering knock, reaching fifty off just 29 deliveries on Day 2 of their fifth and final Test against Australia at the Sydney Cricket Ground yesterday. Pant smashed six boundaries and four maximums during an exhilarating 33-ball 61-run knock.

PHOTO: AFP