

## The 'insult' of Dhaka clubs and the reality of Bangladesh cricket

ASHFAQ UL ALAM

The Marylebone Cricket Club's (MCC) status as the most famous and influential cricket club in the world is one of the few undisputed facts in the game's storied history.

Founded in 1787, this London-based club dictated cricket in England and played a pivotal role in the game's expansion across the Commonwealth nations. But as the game got bigger, even the mighty MCC had to step back on its authority on the game in England and the globe.

Although the MCC remains the custodian of the laws of the game, it has no formal position in the ICC. And in England, MCC is now just one of the 41 members of the England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB).

The crux of the matter is this: currently 76 out of 171 councillors in the BCB, who get to elect directors in the BCB

While the MCC swallowed its pride and accepted the changes wrought on by time, the local cricket clubs in Dhaka are seemingly too proud to accept the reality judging by their collective outrage at the rumoured changes in the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) constitution that are yet to be proposed.

"The contribution of our clubs in the Dhaka League, the clubs' contribution to cricket development and producing players since the time of independence till now, has been insulted in this proposed constitution.... This is unacceptable," Rafiqul Islam Babu, veteran cricket organiser from Dhaka, told reporters last week.

elections, and 12 out of 25 board directors come from Dhaka-based clubs.

After the ouster of the Awami League government which led to Nazmul Hassan Papon stepping down and Faruque Ahmed taking up the role of the BCB president, a five-member constitution reform committee led by BCB director Najmul Abedeen Fahim was formed.

It has been rumoured in the media that the committee will propose to reduce the number of councillors from Dhaka to 30 and the number of directors to four. It is also rumoured that it would propose increasing the number of directors from other divisions and districts from 10 to 13 and also reducing the total number of directors to 21.

It has also been rumoured that it would propose to abolish the Cricket Committee of Dhaka Metropolis (CCDM).

The purpose behind these propositions is quite evident. For decades, Dhaka has dictated how the country's cricket would run as the current system does not allow outsiders to rise through the ranks in the board.

By reducing the influence of Dhaka-based clubs, the board in theory could begin the process of decentralising cricket, which has long remained a pipe dream.

However, the Dhaka-based clubs, which range from Premier Division clubs to the Third Division teams, don't see it that way. Some irate organisers have called it an insult and some have even

called it a conspiracy against them.

They are so enraged that they have begun protesting the proposed changes before those even have been submitted for discussion.

They have declared they won't take part in any cricket and have done exactly that by not partaking in the Dhaka First Division Cricket League, which was supposed to begin yesterday.

The club representatives have already presented a three point demand to the BCB president, which are: the immediate cancellation of the proposed amendments, the dissolution of the committee and the resignation of the committee convenor Fahim.

The ferocity of their response is centred on the purported belief that these Dhaka clubs have built the foundation of Bangladesh cricket and for that reason deserve their privileged status.

But no other club has done more for cricket in the world than MCC. If they could take a step back, asking the same from these Dhaka clubs is not a sacrilegious ask like some organisers are purporting it to be.

In reality, hiding behind their righteous rage is the fear of losing their iron grip on Bangladesh cricket.

If accepted, these propositions, which at the moment are rumours as the committee has yet to submit anything to the BCB, could balance the scales which have been unfairly tilted to favour certain groups and create an opportunity for more checks and balances.

The Dhaka clubs most likely won't stand down easily, starting off a standoff that could continue for a while.

But the current cricket board led by Faruque Ahmed, who himself has been at the helm due to post-August 5 reforms, would do well if it withstood the pressure from the Dhaka clubs and implement these much-needed reforms before time runs out.

### SHORT CORNER

#### Direct WC qualification becomes tougher for Tigresses

Bangladesh women's cricket team suffered a nine-wicket drubbing against West Indies in the first ODI of the three-match series at the Warner Park in St Kitts on Sunday. Home captain Hayley Matthews stole the show as she claimed 2-41 with the ball before smashing an unbeaten 104 off 93 balls in a dominant chase. Chasing 199, West Indies made light work of the target, cruising to 202-1 in just 31.4 overs. Earlier, Matthews and her bowlers laid the groundwork for the victory by restricting Bangladesh to 198-9. In a bid to secure a direct spot in this year's ICC Women's World Cup in India, Bangladesh need to win remaining two matches to leapfrog New Zealand and qualify.

#### Bangladesh U19s suffer heartbreak against Australia

Bangladesh women's Under-19 team nearly pulled off a victory over Australia but eventually succumbed to a narrow two-wicket defeat in their Group D match of the ICC Women's U-19 T20 World Cup at the YSD-UKM Cricket Oval in Bangi, Malaysia today. Sent to bat, Afia Ashima Era top scored with 29 off 34 balls and opener Sumaiya Akter Suborna made a run-a-ball 13 as Bangladesh hobbled to 91-9 in their 20 overs after being asked to bat first. In reply, Australia had cruised to 50-1 inside eight overs before Jannatul Maoua initiated a comeback for Bangladesh. Jannatul picked up three wickets in three successive overs as Australia lost five wickets for 17 runs which reduced them to 67-6 in 13.1 overs. Anisa Akter Soba and Habiba Islam Pinky scalped once each to reduce Australia to 86-8 inside 18 overs. But Ella Briscoe and Tegan held their nerves, and remained unbeaten on 11 and three respectively to take Australia over the line.

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