

Storm lays bare football’s plight

ANISUR RAHMAN *from Mymensingh*

A sudden thunderstorm, heavy downpour, and bad light led to the abandonment of the Federation Cup final between Abahani and Bashundhara Kings in Mymensingh yesterday, but the chaos did more than just cut short a game -- it laid bare the cracks in the infrastructural failures haunting the country’s football.

An energetic crowd witnessed a gripping first half with both teams locked at 1-1 at the Rofique Uddin Bhuiyan Stadium. Yet their anticipation turned to frustration as the game, after enduring an hour-long rain delay, was called off following 105 minutes due to bad light.

What should have been a showpiece final turned into another sorry chapter in domestic football’s decline.

While Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) scrambles to rearrange the remainder of the final -- set to resume from the minute and scoreline where play stopped -- the incident raises far more pressing questions. Chief among them: Why was such a crucial match staged at a venue with no floodlights, and with limited protection against the predictable fury of pre-monsoon storms?

For all its focus on recruiting expatriate talent to bolster the national team, BFF has done little to improve the conditions at home. For all its promises of reform,



PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

Bangladesh captain Najmul Hossain Shanto and former skipper Mominul Haque exchange a look during their 65-run partnership on the third day of the first Test against Zimbabwe at Sylhet International Cricket Stadium yesterday. Shanto remained unbeaten on 60, while Mominul contributed 47 runs as the home team -- resuming on 57 for one -- reached 194 for four in their second innings, leading by 112 runs. [Inset] The pitch under covers earlier in the day after rain delayed start of play, before bad light brought an early end to day’s action.

Realisations aplenty, execution zero

SAMSUL AREFIN KHAN *from Sylhet*

Experience seems to have made Bangladesh batter Mominul Haque wiser, but only with his words, not with his execution on the field.

Mominul, playing his 70th Test, was once again dismissed after getting set at the crease during the ‘Tigers’ rain-interrupted third day’s play in their first Test against Zimbabwe in Sylhet yesterday.

Mominul nicked one back to wicketkeeper Nyasha Mayavo off a Victor Nyauchi delivery to be dismissed after an 84-ball 47. To Bangladesh’s woes, Mominul’s dismissal came at a time when the Tigers were finally looking to get ascendancy in the game, reaching 138 for two after beginning their second innings with an 82-run deficit.

“You can blame many people [for the team’s plight]. But those who got set and then got dismissed like me and [Mahmudul Hasan] Joy, I think we should have played with more responsibility,” Mominul dropped in some wisdom after Bangladesh finished the third day’s play at 194 for four in their second innings.

Earlier on the day, Joy too got dismissed after being set as he edged back a Blessing Muzarabani delivery following a 65-ball 33 a few overs into the third day’s play, which saw a delayed start due to morning rain.

However, it seems as if realising where they went wrong is not the

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Ideally, [we would want their lead to be] under 200 runs. However, we shouldn’t think about the runs. We should think about taking wickets. There’s more time left in the game. We have the belief that we are ahead.

Zimbabwe pacer
BLESSING MUZARABANI

problem for Bangladesh batters; they only struggle to transform their realisation into reality.

Mominul also failed to convert his fifts into something meaningful in the first innings as well -- the southpaw threw his wicket away with a silly shot after making 56 off 105 deliveries.

“If anyone gets out before reaching 10 or gets dismissed early in the morning, there is nothing we can do. So, in that sense, Joy and I must take the blame.

“When I play a Test match, I don’t think of scoring a hundred. I think

of batting for four to five sessions. As a senior batter, I got out after getting set at the crease and probably have batted for a maximum of one session. I think it is not a desired thing by a senior player. I think if I could have batted for three sessions at least, we could have been in a better position,” Mominul added.

Former Bangladesh player and current domestic coach Rajin Saleh also had his say on the matter.

“As a coach, you always say that it’s not a crime to get dismissed early. But if you get set and then get out, you are a criminal. It’s not ODI or T20I matches where you lose your wicket while trying to play shots. In longer-format, patience is very important, and it’s also important to score runs,” Rajin told The Daily Star yesterday.

On day one, alongside Mominul, skipper Najmul Hossain Shanto was also dismissed on 40 while playing a loose shot. However, Shanto, who was dropped on 26, is looking sharp and en route to making amends as he finished the third day’s play unbeaten on 60, helping Bangladesh to a 112-run lead.

Shanto might take his score to three digits today, and the Tigers might even fight back to win the Test against a lower-ranked Zimbabwe. However, if Bangladesh are to alter their Test fortunes in the long run, the Tigers must realise that execution is more important than anything in cricket.

AHF CUP Bangladesh edge past Thailand

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh emerged Pool B champions in the AHF Cup following a hard-fought 2-1 victory against Thailand in Jakarta, Indonesia yesterday.

The win helped the four-time defending champions stay on top of Pool B with nine points from three matches and they will finish the group stage against Sri Lanka today.

However, Mamunur Rashid’s charges will be a little bit concerned about having to fight a lot to get these victories against these opponents in the second-tier hockey competition of Asia.

Having started the campaign with a 5-1 win against Kazakhstan, Bangladesh scraped past hosts Indonesia 3-2 in their second match with a winning goal coming 20 seconds before the final whistle.

In the game against Thailand, the men in red and green had to wait till the 23rd minute to get their first goal, with Ashrafur Islam converting a penalty corner.

Kraiwich Thawichat’s field goal, however, brought parity six minutes later. But Arshad Hossain’s powerful reverse hit five minutes later ensured all three points for Bangladesh, who endured some nervy moments towards the end.



Nahida breaks into top 10 in WODI bowling rankings

AGENCIES

Bangladesh’s Nahida Akter has broken into the top 10 of the ICC Women’s ODI Bowling Rankings for the first time following an impressive showing at the recently concluded ICC Women’s World Cup Qualifier in Pakistan.

The 24-year-old left-arm spinner played a vital role in helping the Tigresses clinch one of the two World Cup spots, taking six wickets across the six-team tournament.

Her standout performance came in a high-stakes clash against Scotland in Lahore, where she struck four times -- twice in two overs early on, before returning to claim two more wickets at the death -- sealing a 34-run victory for Bangladesh.

With 69 wickets in just 54 matches, Nahida remains a cornerstone of Bangladesh’s bowling attack. She had already made history in November 2023 as the first Bangladeshi woman to win the ICC Player of the Month award and was also named in the ICC Women’s ODI Team of the Year.

Top 10 ICC women’s ODI bowlers:

1. Sophie Ecclestone (ENG), 2. Ash Gardner (AUS), 3. Megan Schutt (AUS), 4. Deepti Sharma (IND), 5. Marizanne Kapp (SA), 6. Kim Garth (AUS), 7. Alana King (AUS), 8. Kate Cross (ENG), 9. Hayley Matthews (WI), 10. Nahida Akter (BAN).

MSC backtracks on Hridoy’s reduced suspension

SPORTS REPORTER

Mohammedan Sporting Club have backtracked from the idea that Towhid Hridoy’s suspension was reduced, with a club official claiming that the sentence has been postponed and the batter will have to serve another match suspension at some point this season or next season.

The Mohammedan captain was initially handed a one-match suspension and four demerit points for his first offence in altercation with on-field umpires. Later, his criticism of umpiring led to another sentence of three demerit points, which should equate to seven demerit points and two match suspensions.

However, the umpires’ committee sent a memo to Cricket Committee of Dhaka Metropolitan (CCDM) where the sanction table had been changed so that seven demerit points equated to just a one-match suspension.

“We sent a letter and after one match [suspension], a decision was given that he has seven demerit points and, going forward, at some point this season or next season he



will be suspended for one match,” Mohammedan’s cricket organiser Tariqul Islam Titu said in a media briefing yesterday.

“It’s not only applicable for Mohammedan and this opportunity will be there for everyone, that the letter we have with us. Under special consideration, since he wrote to the umpires’ committee or BCB [Bangladesh Cricket Board], he was given this. It’s not a postponed sentence but something like that.”

However, CCDM claim no letter

had been sent in relation to this. Reports surfaced of a certain club coercing CCDM to make sanction changes. When this newspaper reached out to CCDM chairman Mohammad Salahuddin on whether such a letter -- as claimed by Tariqul -- was sent from CCDM to Mohammedan, he denied it.

“No. Actually, we have now gotten a letter signed for an 80,000 taka fine. He [Hridoy] accepted his first offence, which is why there was one-match suspension which we executed. The demerit point was another matter and his suspension will take place going forward,” he said.

Asked if the technical committee’s convener Enamul Haque Moni’s resignation had delayed the decision on the second sentence, CCDM chairman agreed that was the case.

“The sentence has been delayed but when it arrives, we will execute. I don’t think Mohammedan’s perception is right. If the demerit points are coming into effect, automatically the suspension would be executed and, if it happens now, it will take place and there is nothing regarding postponing the decision,” he added.

Ancelotti ‘very happy’ at Real Madrid

REUTERS

Real Madrid manager Carlo Ancelotti dismissed suggestions on Tuesday he is under mounting pressure at the club as they sit second in the LaLiga standings and were knocked out of the Champions League last week.

Ancelotti’s future has been questioned following their Champions League quarterfinal loss to Arsenal, with multiple reports suggesting he could leave Real at the end of the season to take over the Brazil national team.

Bayer Leverkusen coach Xabi Alonso and former Liverpool manager Jurgen Klopp are among the names that have been linked with the top job at Real in recent weeks.

Asked if he was feeling the pressure, the Italian manager told reporters: “The club is aware that it has been a more complicated year than last year.

“Together we manage the difficulties. The honeymoon continues. I’m very happy, very happy, with a lot of pressure, but that’s how it always is.

“You see success very close and it’s normal for stress to increase, but stress is fuel for me, it doesn’t

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bother me, it gives me more energy to think about more things. As long as I continue to get up in the morning, everything is fine.”

Real are still chasing success on multiple fronts and sit second in the league standings with 69 points from 32 matches, four behind rivals Barcelona.

They face Barca in the Copa del Rey final this weekend, but before that they will travel to 12th-placed Getafe for a league meeting on Wednesday, where they will be without Kylian Mbappe and Ferland Mendy.

Forward Mbappe suffered an

ankle injury in Real’s 2-1 quarterfinal second leg loss to Arsenal last week, while defender Mendy is recovering from a hamstring injury.

“(Mbappe and Mendy) are not ready for tomorrow, but they will train these days and I think they will both be available for Saturday’s game [against Barcelona in Copa del Rey final],” Ancelotti said.

“Tomorrow’s eleven will be decided taking into account the wear and tear of Sunday night (1-0 win over Athletic Bilbao) and that alone. Some are still a bit tired, but that’s quite normal. We’ll see tomorrow.”