

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 failings haunting the country's football.

An energetic crowd witnessed a gripping first half with both teams locked at 1-1 at the Rofige 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,



BFF's inability to ensure even basic facilities for marquee events is damning.

The scenes were farcical. A makeshift press box collapsed under the storm's pressure, leaving travelling journalists from Dhaka exposed and scrambling to do their jobs. Dugouts were blown away, forcing substitute players to sit in the open, vulnerable not just to the elements but to potential confrontations from rival supporters.

Yes, nature cannot be controlled. But it can be anticipated. Scheduling a knockout final -- with the likelihood of extra time and penalties -- in the late afternoon, during the peak of Kal Boishakhi season, and at a venue unequipped for evening play, reflects a stunning lack of foresight.

Moreover, that the stadium was chosen through a venue lottery, as claimed by BFF executive committee member Zakir Hossain Chowdhury -- also the deputy chairman of professional league committee -- only indicates the amateurish decision-making at play.

Alternative venues like the well-equipped Bashundhara Kings Arena were available, but concerns over partisan hostility -- including Mohammedan Sporting Club's repeated refusal to play there and a FIFA fine for fan misconduct -- have turned it into a diplomatic minefield, deepening football's identity crisis.

The heart of the problem is BFF's longstanding failure to develop the stadiums it uses. Meanwhile, National Sports Council-owned district grounds remain underdeveloped, despite being used extensively over the last four years due to renovations at National Stadium.

In the end, the unfinished Federation Cup final might find its way to a result. But the bigger game -- rebuilding credibility, earning fans' trust, and giving players a professional environment -- remains very much abandoned.

The entire episode raises questions about the overall state of the game across the country if even the top-tier competition is handled this poorly. And unless those at the helm acknowledge this and act, no resumption whistle will save the future of domestic football.

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 altercating 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 Salauddin 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.

However, CCDM claim no letter

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.

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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 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."

What to WATCH

BTV
Bangladesh vs Zimbabwe
1st Test, Day 4
Live from 10:00 am

T Sports

DPL

Abahani vs Gazi Group

PSL

Cricketers
Live from 9:00 am

IPL

Hyderabad vs Mumbai

Live from 8:00 pm

Nagorik TV

Live from 1:00 am

Multan vs Islamabad
Live from 9:00 pm

Star Sports Select HD1

Premier League

Arsenal vs Crystal Palace

Live from 1:00 am

(Thursday)

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, Mamanur 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 Ashraful 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. Deepa 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)