

New ODI skipper Miraz vows 'fearless cricket'

SPORTS REPORTER

The Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) yesterday appointed all-rounder Mehidy Hasan Miraz as captain of the men's ODI team for the next 12 months.

The 27-year-old will take over from Najmul Hossain Shanto and begin his captaincy tenure with the upcoming three-match ODI series in Sri Lanka next month. He has previously led the national side in four ODIs in Shanto's absence last year.

With Miraz at the helm in ODIs, Bangladesh now has three different full-time captains in three different formats, something that last happened in June 2022, when Shakib Al Hasan, Tamim Iqbal and Mahmudullah were skippers in Tests, ODIs and T20Is respectively.

Miraz, who has captained in an ICC Under-19 World Cup and also led Bangladesh in two Tests, expressed gratitude towards the board and vowed to play fearless cricket.

"It is a huge honour for me to be entrusted with this responsibility by the Board. Leading the country is a dream for any cricketer and I am grateful for the confidence the Board has shown in me," Miraz was quoted



Bangladesh Test skipper Najmul Hossain Shanto and other players like pacer Khaled Ahmed took part in the final day of a two-day practice game at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday. Meanwhile, one of the Tigers' Test contingent, including pacer Nahid Rana, reached Colombo, Sri Lanka, for their upcoming two-Test series. The first Test is scheduled to start in Galle on June 17, followed by the second Test in Colombo from June 25.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED/SLC



in a BCB press release.

"I have every faith in this team. We have the talent and the belief to play fearless cricket. I want us to perform with confidence, play without inhibition and continue giving our best for the country," he concluded.

In the same press release, BCB's cricket operations chairman Nazmul Abedeen Fahim said Miraz was the 'ideal candidate' to lead in ODIs, saying, "The Board felt that Miraz's consistent performances with the bat and ball, his ability to fight and inspire the team and his energetic presence on and off the field make him an ideal candidate to lead the ODI side during a transitional time."

In February last year, the BCB handed Shanto captaincy in all three formats. Later, he expressed desire to quit T20 captaincy but showed interest to continue in Test and ODI.

Fahim thanked Shanto for his service, saying, "He remains very much a part of the leadership group and we know how important his batting is to the team."

Miraz is currently fourth in the ICC ODI all-rounders rankings. He has 1617 runs and 110 wickets in 105 ODIs and is the fourth Bangladeshi after Mohammad Rafique, Mashrafe Bin Mortaza and Shakib Al Hasan to have 1000 runs and 100 wickets in ODIs.

Long-term planning or short-term thinking?

ABDULLAH AL MEHDI

Ahead of their all-format tour of Sri Lanka, part of the Bangladesh contingent have already departed, with the rest of the Test squad -- led by Najmul Hossain Shanto -- scheduled to leave on Friday. While it is confirmed that Shanto will captain the Test side and Litton Das will lead in T20Is, the ODI captaincy remained undecided even as the team prepared to leave.

That such uncertainty remains, especially with players already on their way, raises serious concerns. Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) officials had previously informed the media that captaincy will be handed on a long-term basis in both Tests and ODIs. During the announcement of the Test squad, Shanto was named captain for another year.

Shanto, who led the 50-over side during the recent Champions Trophy qualifiers, was naturally asked about his status at yesterday's pre-departure press conference.

"They haven't informed me [about ODI captaincy]. They will let me know," Shanto said simply.

Around an hour after the press conference ended, whispers had already begun that Mehidy Hasan Miraz was set to be named ODI captain. Shanto was in the dark regarding ODI captaincy yesterday and it leaves room for doubts and toxic mismanagement that can lead to an environment destabilising for the players and the management concerned.

A BCB official, with detailed knowledge of the developments, informed The Daily



We have some good memories in Sri Lanka. We won our 100th Test there [in Colombo, 2017]. We know the conditions will be challenging, but we see it as an opportunity to do something special.

Test skipper Shanto recalled Bangladesh's only victory in 26 Tests against Sri Lanka, which also led to their only drawn series out of 12 so far.

Star that Shanto had asked to be the Test captain for two years. But he has been appointed for a year.

However, the WTC cycle continues over a two-year period; not one. So captaincy in Tests has not been handed over for the whole cycle yet.

If long-term planning was in BCB's thoughts, the decision falls into the category of indecisiveness -- and does not breed trust or security in the captain.

The cricket operations committee, currently led by Nazmul Abedeen Fahim since the tenure of former president Faruque Ahmed, is responsible for such decisions.

Previously, Fahim loved to shed light on the importance of planning and efficiency, but under his watch the handling of the captaincy scenario suggests otherwise.

If the captaincy was indeed a long-term concern, there was ample time to resolve it well before the team entered the

final stages of preparation. The Daily Star attempted to reach Fahim for a comment on the matter, but he was unavailable.

At the press conference, Shanto himself explained why clarity and commitment is pivotal when it comes to long-term planning.

"A longer term is always helpful for the captain. I had it previously and now I got the captaincy for another year. Planning becomes easy if a captain is appointed with a World Cup or a WTC cycle in mind," Shanto stated.

Shanto's point is clear: stability strengthens leadership. But by evening, the board had indeed handed the ODI reins to Miraz. But in forming long-term plans, it has shown indecisiveness around WTC cycle plans.

Is BCB building a team for the future, or simply reacting to the present? As it appears, coherent planning is left for daydreams.

Trent boosts Real's Club World Cup bid

AGENCIES

After Real Madrid's hopes of major silverware this season faded, the Club World Cup took on far greater importance for them and it will provide an insight into new coach Xabi Alonso's strategy.

The 43-year-old Spaniard, who replaced Carlo Ancelotti at the helm, along with new arrivals Trent Alexander-Arnold and Dean Huijsen add a fresh look to a team that emerged battered and bruised from a domestic season dominated by bitter rivals Barcelona.

Alexander-Arnold, unveiled yesterday as a Rael player in Madrid, spoke about the club's appeal: "A big reason why I joined is to be a part of that amazing history. To be a part of the success going forward, joining an exciting, young team with a lot of potential."

Alonso may deploy his favoured 3-4-3 formation which would give the England international an important role on the right flank.

Alexander-Arnold's supreme



Real's participation ends which they hope is after they have been crowned champions.

Their title ambition is why they paid a reported £10 million (\$13.5 million) to sign Alexander-Arnold early, his Liverpool contract was due to end on June 30.

In Group H Real Madrid's campaign begins against Saudi Arabian side Al-Hilal on June 18 in Miami, before facing Mexican outfit Pachuca in Charlotte on June 22.

Alonso's team then face Austria's RB Salzburg in Philadelphia on June 26 in their final group game.

After Barcelona reclaimed La Liga on the way to wrapping up a domestic treble, beating Real four times in the process, Los Blancos would also welcome some sporting success to raise morale and increase belief before the new campaign.

Some of the same problems that Ancelotti could not solve -- a lack of balance and cohesion in attack -- are in Alonso's in-tray and the Club World Cup is the first chance for him to answer them.



Australia skipper Pat Cummins celebrates after having South Africa all-rounder Marco Jansen caught off his own bowling on Day 2 of the World Test Championship final at Lord's yesterday. Cummins finished with figures of 6-28, completing his 14th five-wicket haul and first at Lord's, as he ripped through the lower order to have South Africa bundled out for 138 in reply to Australia's first-innings total of 212. Cummins also claimed his 300th Test scalp when he removed Kagiso Rabada to wrap up the Proteas' innings.

PHOTO: AFP

'Climbing five spots in rankings a big achievement'

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh made a significant stride in the latest FIFA Women's World Ranking by climbing five spots to 128th place -- a timely morale boost ahead of the AFC Women's Asian Cup Qualifiers, scheduled for June 29 to July 5 in Myanmar.

Climbing up the ladder was possible due to two creditable draws against higher-ranked sides -- Jordan and Indonesia -- in the recent FIFA friendlies in Jordan, where Bangladesh held 94th-ranked Indonesia to a goalless draw before coming from behind twice in a 2-2 draw against Jordan.

FIFA yesterday disclosed the latest women's FIFA ranking, and it came as big news for the charges of Peter Butler, as the women in red and green crossed the 130-mark ranking for the first time in six years.

"It is a big achievement for us because we have come to this stage after working hard over the last six years, and climbing five places is very important for us because it will have a positive impact on the team ahead of the AFC Women's Asian Cup Qualifiers," said captain Afeda Khandokar.

Afeda and Co. resumed preparations for the



Asian Cup Qualifiers on Monday following a two-day Eid ul-Adha break, as only a few girls traveled to their respective homes while the majority of the players in the camp stayed at the BFF dormitory after returning from Jordan on June 5.

Butler has been conducting training with nearly 45 players, as four senior players -- Monika Chakma, Maria Manda, Ritu Porna Chakma, and Shamsunnahar Jr -- flew out from Dhaka to Bhutan on Eid Day to join their respective clubs in the ongoing Bhutan Women's National League. However, goalkeeper Rupna Chakma stayed back home as she had no fixtures in the Bhutan league in the coming days.

All four players are expected to rejoin the camp on June 16, as the national women's football team is scheduled to leave for Myanmar on June 27, two days before the start of Group C matches featuring hosts Myanmar, Bahrain, Bangladesh, and Turkmenistan.

"We believe we can do something better in the Asian Cup Qualifiers on the back of our preparation. We are hoping to produce good results against Bahrain and Turkmenistan and trying our level best against Myanmar, who are much ahead of us," said Afeda.

Though Bangladesh progressed five spots, other South Asian nations either fell or remained in their previous positions.

India fell one spot to 70th following two defeats against Uzbekistan. Nepal followed suit, slipping one place to 100th after a loss to Thailand, and Sri Lanka also dropped one place to 159th after losing a match to Saudi Arabia.

Bhutan, despite two successive draws against Hong Kong, remained in 171st position, while Pakistan and the Maldives, who did not play a single match, also retained their previous positions of 159 and 163, respectively. The top three places in the FIFA Women's World Ranking remained unchanged, with the USA leading the table, followed by Spain and Germany.