

## BCB hopes to host BPL games in Rajshahi

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) hopes to host Bangladesh Premier League (BPL) matches at the Shahid Kamruzzaman Stadium in Rajshahi next year and also launch a premier league in the division.

"We need to enhance the facilities of this ground in order to have more international matches, for which we have already talked with the National Sports Council (NSC) and have also submitted a proposal. I hope that NSC will take over this project and that we will be able to see international matches and BPL games here sometime next year," BCB grounds committee chairman Mahub Anam told the media at the stadium in Rajshahi yesterday. The visit by top BCB officials was part of the celebrations marking the 25th anniversary of Bangladesh's attainment of Test status.

Meanwhile, BCB president Aminul Islam Bulbul mentioned starting a new league in Rajshahi.

"We will start a premier league in Rajshahi division, increasing cricketing activities here and also turn the age-group tournaments here into two-day formats," Bulbul said. Rajshahi's Shahid Kamruzzaman Stadium has recently seen a three-match series between Bangladesh and South Africa Emerging sides.

## Bijoy gets Bashar backing amid team's Miraz boost

SPORTS REPORTER

Mehidy Hasan Miraz could return to Bangladesh's Test eleven after recovering from the fever that kept him out of the series opener in Galle, where the game ended in a draw.

Selector Abdur Razzak confirmed that the all-rounder will be available for the second Test, beginning June 25 at the SSC Cricket Ground in Colombo.

His potential return comes amidst criticism of Bangladesh's conservative approach with the bat in the second innings of the first Test. There are both combination and form dilemmas the Tigers would have to address going into the series finale.

Despite gaining some control on the fifth day by picking up four Sri Lankan wickets, the visitors ran out of time to force a result.

Former captain and selector Habibur Bashar, currently working in game development, feels that declaring earlier would not have made an impact, defending the cautious approach of centurions Najmul Hossain Shanto and Mushfiqur Rahim.

"During that time [day five] there were overs left in the day and if Shanto and Mushfiqur got out, we will be under pressure," Bashar said during a talk with the media in Mirpur yesterday.

"Maybe the question is arising that



we could have taken the opportunity, but having looked at the wicket in the morning, it didn't seem like the wicket broke a lot, which is usually the case on the fifth day of a Test match. I don't think declaring earlier would have had an effect."

With Miraz available for selection, Bashar feels that Bangladesh have the option of picking five bowlers.

"In this [first] Test we played with four bowlers and in SSC and after the first day, the wicket becomes flat. Sri Lanka do not play with three pacers at SSC so I don't know what the wicket will be like because such decisions will be dependent on the wicket."

"But if Miraz returns we can play five bowlers. In that case a batter will have to

sit but it will not be a problem because Miraz is capable as a full-time batter," he said.

That raises the question of who makes way. Bangladesh have just two openers in the squad and Anamul Haque Bijoy's form has particularly come under fire. Bashir was in favour of playing the opener in the second Test instead of unsettling in form Shanto. With patience running thin, it could be Bijoy's last opportunity.

"His [Bijoy] domestic form was not translated to Tests. But when he has been taken, he should be given one more chance since we have taken only two openers. There were talks about Shanto opening the innings, which I had strongly opposed," he concluded.



India pace spearhead Jasprit Bumrah celebrates with teammates after casting the stumps of England's Chris Woakes on the third day of their first Test at Headingley in Leeds yesterday. Bumrah cleaned up the tail to clinch his 14th five-wicket haul in Tests. Bumrah's five for 83 in 24.4 overs saw India bundle out England for 465 in the first innings, helping the visitors to a slender six-run lead at Tea.

PHOTO: AFP

## Trailblazer Lawrence passes away

REUTERS

Former England fast bowler David "Syd" Lawrence has died at the age of 61 after a year-long battle with motor neurone disease (MND), his family said on Sunday.

Lawrence, the first British-born Black cricketer to represent England, was diagnosed last year with MND, a degenerative condition that causes muscle wastage and affects the brain and nerves.

Lawrence, who earned five Test caps for England, made 280 appearances for Gloucestershire and took 625 wickets for the county.

His Test debut came at Lord's against Sri Lanka in 1988, with his career highlight being a five-wicket haul against the West Indies at the Oval in 1991.

In 2022, Lawrence became Gloucestershire County Cricket Club's first Black president and he was named one of the inaugural Honorary Life Vice-Presidents of the England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) earlier this year.



Inter Milan's Argentine forward Lautaro Martinez celebrates his equalising goal against Urawa Red Diamonds in their FIFA Club World Cup Group E fixture at Lumen Field in Seattle on Saturday. His compatriot, Valentin Carboni, later scored a stoppage-time goal as the Italian giants snatched a 2-1 win, bolstering their chances of a Round of 16 berth.

PHOTO: AFP

## Mathews' farewell a lesson in sportsmanship

ASHFAQ UL ALAM

Even in his final outing for Sri Lanka in Test cricket, Angelo Mathews had no chance to relax as, alongside Dinesh Chandimal, he was battling to see out the Bangladesh spinners in the final session on the fifth day, trying to save his side from a defeat in Galle on Saturday.

Although he couldn't stay in the middle till the end, he fended off 45 deliveries for his eight runs and helped the hosts earn a hard-fought draw.

Throughout the match, the Bangladesh players were extra cordial towards the Sri Lankan legend who was playing his farewell Test, giving him a guard of honour when he came out to bat in the first innings and going up to him to congratulate him on a wonderful career after he was dismissed for the last time in Test cricket.

Mathews had addressed the Bangladesh players as his friends before the Test and his statement rang true throughout the match and especially during one incident in the final session.

Bangladesh had just reviewed a not-out decision against Mathews for an LBW, and while the TV umpire gave his judgement, Mathews and Mushfiqur Rahim struck up a conversation.

The smiles on both their faces indicated



that it was a jovial chat, which ended with Mathews playfully stroking Mushfiqur's beard.

After the match, Mathews revealed that Mushfiqur was actually playfully egging him on to hit a big shot, and he responded by saying, "No, Mushfiq, I've played with you since Under-19s and I know you very well - and this is not the time for me to go for big shots; obviously, we want to draw this game."

Seeing two veterans of the game

engaging in playful banter was heartening, and at least in that moment, it seemed that the two players are great buddies.

But that certainly did not seem to be the case on March 18, 2024, when Mushfiqur was re-enacting Mathews' timed out dismissal while Bangladesh celebrated a 2-1 ODI series win over the Lankans at home.

Thanks to Bangladesh, Mathews will always have a place in cricketing trivia as the first batter and so far the only one in international cricket to get timed out. And the fact that this happened during a World Cup match in 2023 and the Tigers went on to win that game to effectively replace Sri Lanka in following year's ICC Champions Trophy just added salt to the wound.

Considering what had happened before, Mathews had enough reasons to hold onto resentment against Bangladesh, and especially Mushfiqur.

But the 38-year-old Sri Lankan evidently rose above it, displayed sportsman's spirit, left the past in the past and moved on.

Mathews showed incredible maturity in the entire ordeal, and because of that, earned the respect of his peers and opponents.

In the past as well, Mathews was heavily

criticised for his lack of fitness by Lankan head coach Chandika Hathurusingha, but rather than engaging in a war of words, he scored a Test century in Wellington in 2018 and did 10 push-ups while looking at Hathurusingha at the dressing room.

Mathews has been dropped from the team multiple times and lost his captaincy to younger guys. But at the end of the day, he was able to keep his ego aside, deal with everything with dignity and receive a grand farewell from the Test arena.

The same, sadly, can't be said for many of Bangladesh's stalwarts.

Senior players drifting away without officially retiring is part of Bangladesh's cricketing culture. Here, cricketers hold onto every incident and in their eyes are often the victim of gross mistreatment. Here, ego often wins at the expense of cricket's betterment.

Mushfiqur himself, for instance, announced his retirement from both T20Is and ODIs through social media posts following criticism over his form. The same applies to other stalwarts such as Tamim Iqbal and Mahmudullah Riyad.

So, Bangladeshi cricketers should not just applaud at Mathews' career, but actually learn from it. Only then will the fans get to see their stars walk into the sunset with their heads held high.

## 'No official talks with anyone'

### BFF to appoint eight technical personnel

SPORTS REPORTER

The Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) will soon invite applications for eight key technical positions, president Tabith Awal confirmed to The Daily Star, refuting media reports that former national team coach Lodewijk de Kruij has been chosen to helm the federation's technical director's post.

A report on T Sports TV channel on Saturday claimed that the Dutchman has been appointed as the TD while his former deputy, Rene Koster, will be given charge of youth development.

The position of BFF's technical director, currently held by Saiful Bari Titu, will be vacant after this month. According to media reports, Titu will likely be given a different role within the federation.

When contacted, Tabith Awal refuted the T Sports report, claiming that they have not had "official talks" with anyone regarding any of the positions.

"There is no info and BFF has not had any official talks with anyone," Tabith, currently in the USA, told The Daily Star through text message on Saturday night.

With a number of assignments for the senior team this year apart from three for youth teams - U-23 Asian Cup Qualifiers in September, U-17 SAFF Championship in October and U-17 Asian Cup Qualifiers in November - BFF is looking for coaches that can guide the teams through these assignments.

BFF's technical committee chairman Kamrul Hasan Hilton told The Daily Star that they have prepared a note for vetting at the

executive committee to appoint key technical personnel including technical director, goalkeeping coach, assistant coach, etc for both the national team and the youth teams.

The positions of most of these coaches are usually made on piece-meal basis, ahead of international assignments. Apart from the national team's head coach Javier Cabrera,



whose tenure ends in April 2026, the positions of assistant coach, filled in by Hasan Al Mamun and David Gomez, goalkeeping coach, filled in by Miguel Angel Iglesias - are on temporary basis.

Hilton, however, also confirmed that there has been no "official approach" made to de Kruij or anyone else regarding these positions

even though he did not rule out the possibility of unofficial communication.

It may be noted that De Kruij, currently 55, had two stints with the Bangladesh national team as head coach from 2013 to 2015, with mixed results. While he was credited with giving the team an identity by introducing possession-based pressing football, the results under him were barely impressive.

While in charge of talented players like Mamunul Islam, Zahid Hossain and Zahid Hasan Emily, the Dutchman, with his deputy Koster, could guide Bangladesh to only three wins against seven defeats in 17 matches.

The Dutch duo, however, can be credited with finding a talent like Hemanta Vincent Bishwas, who was later taken to the Netherlands for a trial with a local club.

It may also be noted that De Kruij has not had a coaching job since leaving Bangladesh in 2015. Koster, meanwhile, has been involved with clubs in various places since leaving Bangladesh but he had taken BFF to the FIFA following the unceremonious end to his Bangladesh stint, winning the verdict of 80,000-euro payment.

Tabith, meanwhile, informed that they will take interviews with interested candidates for the eight technical positions before selecting anyone.

"BFF is in the process of releasing ads for eight technical positions. Once the ads are published, we will take CVs of interested individuals, then go for interviews and finally seek budgetary support before assigning anyone or all eight."

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