

## BCB plots power-hitting boost before Asia Cup

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) is planning a comprehensive training camp next month, including a plan to boost the players' power-hitting ahead of the upcoming Asia Cup T20, likely to be held in the UAE in September.

With the scheduled home white-ball series against India in August postponed and pushed to next year, the Tigers have received a rare break from their packed international calendar.

Since April, Bangladesh have been engaged in continuous cricket. They hosted Zimbabwe for a two-match Test series, then toured the UAE and Pakistan for separate white-ball series. In June, they toured Sri Lanka for two Tests, three ODIs, and three T20s, and recently hosted Pakistan for three T20s.

BCB's cricket operations chairman, Nazmul Abedeen Fahim, said they are still trying to arrange a series before the Asia Cup. However, regardless of the outcome, a training camp will be held, featuring a power-hitting coach and a psychologist.

"Our players don't often get the chance for a proper camp. Getting a

### BCB is considering to bring in Julian Wood as a power-hitting coach ahead of the Asia Cup.

break and then preparing through a camp -- I don't think national team players got such an opportunity for a long time," Fahim told The Daily Star yesterday.

He said the players would get a 10-day break followed by a three-week camp. Part of the camp will be held in Dhaka, while the rest may take place in Sylhet or Chattogram.

"We're discussing a potential series with other boards. If that doesn't happen, we'll play some internal matches," Fahim added, confirming they're in talks with power-hitting coach Julian Wood and sports psychologist David Scott.

Julian, who was head coach of Chattogram Challengers in the Bangladesh Premier League 2023, is set to work in a 10-day programme with Sri Lanka Cricket later this month. Scott has previously worked with the BCB in different programmes, with the latest as a part of the BCB's High Performance Unit and the U-19 team.

"We've been in discussions with him [Julian]. If finalised, we'll bring him in. He [Scott] has already worked with us. He'll be given a new contract and work regularly with the team," said Fahim.

Meanwhile, Fahim did not rule out the possibility of some national players participating in next month's Top End T20 Series in Darwin, Australia. Bangladesh 'A' team will take part in the 11-team event from August 14 to 24.

## Tigers redefining themselves in T20s, one six at a time

ASHEAQ-UL-ALAM

After the first T20I against Pakistan on July 20, opener Parvez Hossain Emon had claimed that even the No.11 batter of the current Bangladesh team can clear the ropes.

And on Thursday, in the third and final T20I in Mirpur, Shoriful Islam, Bangladesh's last batter, justified his statement by depositing Hussain Talat for a six over long on in the 16th over.

That six had no impact in the fate of the match, as the Tigers lost by 74 runs, but it was significant nonetheless as with it, Bangladesh became the only Test-playing team to hit 100 sixes across formats in the current calendar year.

Bangladesh are also leading the six-hitting list in T20Is this year among Test-playing nations, with 91 sixes in just 12 games.

Bangladesh have won five T20Is out of 12 they have played this year, and four out of those five wins have come in a row this month in two bilateral assignments -- an away series against Sri Lanka followed by the just concluded home series against Pakistan -- both of which they won 2-1.

In Sri Lanka, Bangladesh bounced back from a defeat in the series opener with back-to-back victories. They carried that momentum into the Pakistan series, winning the first two matches before a defeat in the third ended their winning streak at four games.

Bangladesh winning four T20Is or more in a row is rare, as it has happened only four times before. But diving deeper into the team's batting performances in those four victories, an unprecedented pattern emerged.



In all those games, at least one Bangladeshi batter hit five sixes or more, which has never happened four times in a row for the Tigers in T20Is.

First, it was captain Litton Das, who deposited five maximums in Dambulla, opener Tanzid Hasan Tamim then followed it up with six sixes in Colombo, his opening partner Emon cleared the ropes five times in Mirpur and then Jaker Ali made it four in a row by smashing five sixes in the following game.

Four different batters going on a six-hitting spree in four games is testament to the fact that the current T20I side has some depth when it comes to hitting big shots.

And the fact that in all four innings, the batters hit more sixes than fours signals a psychological shift, as batters now have the belief that they can clear the ropes, which even a few years ago was missing.

In July of 2022, after getting outpowered by West Indies and losing a T20I series 2-0

in the Caribbean, Litton had said, "They [West Indies batters] can clear big grounds at will. We are not capable of it. We always think about hitting fours. They hit more sixes. This is the difference that always exists... We really can't play powerful cricket."

In a little over three years, Litton is now leading a Bangladesh team that is actively attempting to hit more sixes than fours, clearing the ropes more often than most teams and are not afraid to play "powerful cricket".

Even though consistency remains a big issue and big-hitting alone is not sufficient to win matches, the bravery and the clear mindset shown by the batters is heartening. With the Asia Cup coming up in September and the ICC T20 World Cup next year, the challenge now would be to go strength-to-strength from here, not letting the team abandon their positive approach and once again take shelter in a cocoon of mediocrity.

## Pak strengthen T20 squad after Bangladesh loss

AGENCIES

Following the T20I series loss against Bangladesh, Pakistan have strengthened their bowling line-up by going back to the experience of Shaheen Afridi, Haris Rauf and Hasan Ali for the upcoming tour of the West Indies, featuring three T20Is and as many ODIs, starting on July 31.

Shaheen returns to the T20I squad for the first time since March, when he struggled during the tour of New Zealand -- claiming just two wickets in four matches at an average of 66.50 and an economy rate of 10.23. The 25-year-old was left out of both T20I series against Bangladesh that followed.

The T20I matches will be played at the Central Broward Park & Broward County Stadium in Lauderhill, Florida, on Wednesday, July 31; Friday, August 2; and Saturday, August 3. Salman Ali Agha will continue to captain the side in the shortest format.

Faheem Ashraf retains his place in the squad after an impressive showing against Bangladesh, while pacers Salman Mirza, Ahmed Daniyal, and Abbas Afridi have been left out.

For the ODI series, which begins on Thursday, August 8, Pakistan have named a full-strength squad. The matches will take place at the Brian Lara Cricket Academy in Trinidad and Tobago on August 8, 10, and 12. Mohammad Rizwan will lead the side, with Babar Azam also returning to the 50 over format.

Uncapped batter Hasan Nawaz has been included in the 16-member ODI squad for the first time, offering a fresh option in an otherwise experienced lineup.

### SHORT CORNER

#### World Cup winner Xavi applied for India coaching job

Spanish football star Xavi Hernandez wanted to coach India's national team, the country's football federation (AIFF) has confirmed. According to Times of India, the former Barcelona player and coach submitted an incomplete application via his personal email, missing key details like a contact number. However, a board member admitted they couldn't seriously consider him due to budget limitations.

#### Difficult to control feelings when you are unfairly offended: Neymar

Striker Neymar said it was hard to control his feelings when he was being insulted, commenting on a heated exchange he had with a fan after his late goal was ruled out and his club Santos suffered a 2-1 defeat that left them in the Brazilian Serie A relegation zone. "In the heat of the moment, it is difficult to control your feelings when you are unfairly offended," Neymar posted on Instagram late on Thursday.

#### Barca's Asia tour back on track

Barcelona's pre-season friendly against Japanese side Vissel Kobe is back on after the Spanish club and the promoter for the match resolved the contractual issues that earlier caused the game to be suspended, the LaLiga side said on Friday. The Spanish champions were on their way to Japan for Sunday's clash that will kick off an Asia tour.

Read full stories on The Daily Star's website.

#### ROOT CLOSES IN ON TEST SUMMIT

Joe Root has moved to second spot in overall Test runs, surpassing Rahul Dravid (13288), Jacques Kallis (13289) and Ricky Ponting (13387) with a century against India at Old Trafford on Friday. He had come to bat on Friday with 13259 runs. He was batting on 121 at Tea. Only Sachin Tendulkar is now ahead of him with 15921 runs.

Joe Root now has nine Test centuries against India at home -- the most by a batter against an opponent in home Tests, surpassing Don Bradman's eight against England.

#### \* MOST TEST HUNDREDS

- >> 51 - Sachin Tendulkar
- >> 45 - Jacques Kallis
- >> 41 - Ricky Ponting
- >> 38 - Joe Root\*\*
- >> 38 - Kumar Sangakkara

#### \* MOST 50-PLUS SCORES IN TEST CRICKET

- >> 119 - Sachin Tendulkar
- >> 104 - Joe Root
- >> 103 - Ricky Ponting
- >> 103 - Jacques Kallis
- >> 99 - Rahul Dravid

## Bangladesh likely to play in hockey's Asia Cup

SPORTS REPORTER

Despite not qualifying through the AHF Cup in April, the Bangladesh national hockey team are likely to get an opportunity to participate in the upcoming Asia Cup, replacing Pakistan, who may withdraw due to security concerns.

The eight-team Asia Cup is scheduled to take place from August 29 to September 7 in Bihar, India. The tournament was originally supposed to feature the top two finishers from April's AHF Cup -- Oman and Chinese Taipei -- alongside six automatic qualifiers: India, Pakistan, Japan, South Korea, Malaysia, and China.

However, recent international media reports suggested that Pakistan government unwilling to send teams to India in either of the tournaments to be held this year in that country -- the Asia Cup and the FIH Junior World Cup.

Bangladesh finished third in the AHF Cup after losing to Oman in the semifinals, marking the first time in 43 years that the four-time champions failed to secure an Asia Cup berth.



Col (ret'd) Riazul Hasan told The Daily Star yesterday, "We replied that we want to play if AHF permits us. We have also requested the AHF to confirm its decision soon so that we can start our preparation. We hope to receive a reply

by Monday," added Hasan.

Meanwhile, a 12-day fitness and conditioning camp for national players concluded on Friday, with around 30 of the 38 invited players participating. The camp was conducted by former national defender and BKSP coach Moshir Rahman Biplob at the Maulana Bhasani Hockey Stadium.

Coach Biplob informed that 38 players including all 35 who were in the camp for the AHF Cup were called for the fitness drills, but only 30 players turned up. Eight of the players skipped, owing to either exams or sickness or due to their training in services teams.

"After the AHF Cup in April, the players except the ones from the service teams have not been in action, so the fitness and conditioning training was arranged to bring them into shape," Biplob said.

"We went through two endurance tests and there have been some improvement in fitness, but we need to work more on that aspect," opined Biplob, who also conducted a match among the players on the last day of the camp in presence of selectors.



Former Bangladesh skipper Sabina Khatun, alongside Ritu Porna Chakma, Monika Chakma, and Matsushima Sumya, enjoy a 'picnic day', as stated by Sabina in her Facebook post on Friday. All four footballers, who are currently playing in the Bhutan National Women's League for Paro FC, were in a joyous mood during an outing arranged by their club.

PHOTO: FACEBOOK