

Selection row casts shadow over Tigers' T20I opener

SPORTS REPORTER

As Bangladesh take on Ireland in the first of three T20Is in Chattogram today -- their final international assignment before next year's ICC T20 World Cup -- a dispute between skipper Litton Das and chief selector Gazi Ashraf Hossain Lipu over the omission of Shamim Hossain has overshadowed the game and taken centre-stage.

The series against the Irish is the Tiger's last opportunity to address issues with the T20I side before the global event, set to place in India and Sri Lanka in February-March. After this, the players will only feature in the 12th edition of the Bangladesh Premier League (BPL), beginning on December 19.

When Bangladesh take the field on Thursday, it will mark their 28th T20I of 2025 -- their busiest year ever in the format. In contrast, Ireland have played only six T20Is this year. Bangladesh's results have been evenly split, with 13 wins, 13 losses, and one no-result, while

Ireland have endured a tougher run with four losses and two no-results. For Bangladesh, this series carries added importance. With the 2026 T20 World Cup approaching, they will be eager to finish the year on a strong note in their final T20I series before the global event.



But on the eve of the series, the discussions mostly centred around some of the comments made by Litton in the pre-series press conference. The skipper expressed dissatisfaction over Shamim's exclusion from the squad for the first two T20Is and said he was disappointed by the lack of communication from the selectors.

"It would've been good if he was in the team. This is not my call -- it's totally the selectors' call. I don't know why the selectors removed Shamim from the team without giving me any notice. I always thought that at least the captain should always know which players are coming in and going out," Litton told reporters.

Hours after Litton's comments, chief selector Lipu responded with a video statement.

Lipu said he knew of the skipper's desire to keep Shamim in the squad, who had managed just two runs across two matches in the recent West Indies series, but after a discussion with fellow selector Hasibul Hossain Shanto, it was decided to drop the all-rounder.

"Before announcing the T20 squad for the Ireland series, we held a very brief meeting with the coach and the captain. When we asked the captain if he was satisfied with Shamim, Litton said 'yes', and he clearly stated he wanted to see Shamim in the team," Lipu said.

"Immediately after the team announcement, I received a phone call from the captain. Upon not seeing Shamim in the squad, he was not happy... I told him this is our decision."

"The selection committee does not always have to be in alignment with the captain and coach regarding a particular player. We are accountable to the board."

Considering the significance of these matches ahead of the World Cup, the players and the management should have ideally be completely focused on on-field matters and come up with plans on how to end the year strong.

But the happenings of Wednesday displayed a rift between the think tank, which has almost become a recurrent theme for the Tigers ahead of World Cups. Only time will tell how this episode affects the team moving forward.



A WAKE-UP CALL?

Bangladesh suffered a 1-0 defeat against Malaysia in the opening match of Infinix Tri-National Football Tournament at the National Stadium in Dhaka on Wednesday. Bangladesh's precarious high-line defence and lackluster attacking moves will raise question marks over a team who have now lost three matches on the trot, with only three months left for the start of the AFC Women's Asian Cup. Peter Butler's charges had lost both their matches in their tour of Thailand by big margin last month -- results which did not please the coach at all. In yesterday's game against Mayasia, ranked 12 places above Bangladesh, the signs of a team lacking sharpness and cohesion was once again evident. The home team will play their second and last match of the tournament against Azerbaijan next Tuesday after a Mayasia vs Azerbaijan showdown next Saturday.



PHOTO: AFP

Proteas end 25-year wait in style

A collective effort, boosted by several individual moments of brilliance, saw South Africa hand India a record defeat in the second Test to complete a series sweep on Day 5 in Guwahati yesterday.

The 408-run defeat is India's heaviest loss in Test cricket and South Africa's second-biggest victory by runs.

The win secured South Africa's first Test series triumph in India in 25 years -- and only their second ever, after a 2-0 victory in 2000.

As captain, Temba Bavuma has now won 11 of his 12 Tests in charge -- the most by any skipper after 12 matches, with the other game ending in a rain-affected draw.

Simon Harmer, who claimed six wickets in the final innings, finished the series with 17 wickets -- the most by any South African bowler in a Test series in India, surpassing Dole Steyn's 15 in 2008.

GC It's massive. These are the type of things that we're working towards and dreaming of. It's not every day where you get to think that you can come to India and walk away with a two-nil series win. I think what makes it sweeter for some of us within the group is the fact that we've been on the other side of the result.

South Africa captain TEMBA BAVUMA



Estevao sprinkles Brazilian stardust

The eagerly-awaited teenage battle at Stamford Bridge was won in emphatic style by Chelsea's Brazilian sensation Estevao Willian on Tuesday as he capped a lively display with a fabulous goal in a 3-0 win, as Barcelona's Lamine Yamal was as anonymous as most of his teammates. The 18-year-old surged past two defenders before slamming an unstoppable shot with his weaker right foot into the roof of the net from a tight angle to put Chelsea 2-0 up in the 55th minute of their Champions League tie after an early Barca own goal, with Liam Delap adding a deserved third. Barca have won at Stamford Bridge only once in nine European visits, losing six times, with their last victory at the ground coming back in 2006.

PHOTO: X

Same old BPL, new 'firefighting' acts

ABDULLAH AL MEHDI

The Bangladesh Premier League (BPL) governing council promised a unique 12th edition, and that promise appears to be upheld -- but only because all the wrong elements are present.

Historically, the tournament has rarely begun smoothly, and while that has not changed, this year's "uniqueness" lies in how the rules and processes have been set so far.

Initially featuring five teams, the tournament -- scheduled to begin on December 19 and end tentatively on January 16 -- has now expanded to six with Noakhali Express the latest to enter the fray. However, no clear explanation has been provided regarding the payment guidelines being followed by the franchises.

BPL member secretary Iftekhar Rahman Mithu said they "saw an opportunity at the last minute" to include a sixth team, following a request from the Cricketers Welfare Association of Bangladesh (CWAB) to ensure the participation of "15-16 more local players."

Mithu emphasised that they want this edition to be "very clean in terms of payment and integrity," even warning that the council may "take over teams" that fail to comply with financial and integrity guidelines.

Interestingly, the BPL governing council has already extended the deadline for franchises to submit bank guarantees multiple times. Yet,

Mithu informed that two teams had still not made the required payments, while four teams had apparently "covered" their part of the agreement through financial instruments provided by the BCB.

With so many inconsistencies emerging ahead of the 12th edition, Mithu was asked whether he was effectively stepping into a fire with this BPL.

"Definitely, it's a tough job. If we had gotten 7-8 months, we could have organised everything properly. Right now, we are firefighting," he said.

Of the 11 entities that originally submitted EOIs (Expression of Interest), five were cleared for participation before Noakhali Express (Desh Travels) "responded by submitting the financial instruments and thus was included." The other five franchises are: Chattogram Royals (Triangle Services), Dhaka Capitals (Champion Sports Limited), Rajshahi Warriors (Nabil Group), Rangpur Riders (Toggi Sports), and Sylhet Titans (JM Sports and Entertainment).

Meanwhile, Trans Production Technologies (TPT) has been awarded production service rights. Previously, Real Impact served as the production provider, but this time the BCB opted for TPT, considering their experience.

Overall, it appears that the same old process is being followed for yet another BPL edition: grand promises that have little reflection in how things are actually being managed so far.

