



If you are positive, sponsors come, government supports, then things happen. If that doesn't happen in three weeks or one month, it's gone. You have the momentum now in Bangladesh, so you should not let it go.

Bangladesh U-21 hockey head coach Siegfried Aikman



Joyous members of the Bangladesh U-21 hockey team pose with their Challenger Trophy at Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport yesterday, having arrived from India after participating in their maiden FIH Hockey Junior World Cup campaign. Bangladesh put up some scintillating performances against a number of superior opponents to finish 17th in the competition -- top among the bottom eight -- for which they were awarded the Challenger Trophy, introduced for the first time in the tournament. PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

BCB tightens integrity rules ahead of BPL 12

SPORTS REPORTER

In its bid to ensure a corruption-free 12th edition of the Bangladesh Premier League (BPL), the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) has adopted a "prevention is better than cure" approach, said Alex Marshall, chairman of the newly formed BCB Integrity Unit, while speaking to reporters yesterday.

As part of this approach, Marshall said the BCB has revised the payment structure for Integrity Unit officials -- formerly Anti-Corruption Unit (ACU) officials -- who were previously paid by the franchisees they were assigned to.

"There will be no relationship, financial or otherwise, between individual franchises and anybody working for the ACU," Marshall said, adding that the Integrity Unit has been keeping tabs on suspected officials.

The BPL governing council recently excluded nine players from last month's auction -- the first in 12 years -- based on Marshall's review of a 900-page report detailing irregularities and fixing allegations from previous editions.

The Integrity Unit stated yesterday that they "have evidence" supporting the exclusions. Asked whether the evidence was concrete, BCB lawyer Barrister Mahin M Rahman, who also serves as



general counsel to the Integrity Unit, said: "The 900-page report is not an essay. There is evidence there and interviews along with reports."

Questions have arisen over why the excluded players were allowed to compete in other tournaments, such as the recently concluded National Cricket League. The Integrity Unit said that because it is a "live investigation" and involves a "long legal process," the BPL exclusions are being implemented as a "safety measure".

Marshall also noted allegations of franchise officials breaching the anti-corruption code, identifying the Players and Match Officials Area (PMOA) and team hotels as hotspots for corrupt approaches.

"I can already see from my live investigations that PMOA regulations were breached last year and in previous years. There was communication from inside the PMOA to people outside, which facilitates breaches of the anti-corruption code and could lead to inside information being leaked to people who would use it for nefarious purposes.

"The hotel environment is very interesting because some breaches of the anti-corruption code are generated through casual conversations and informal meetings," he added.

Marshall said he will hold discussions with franchise owners, and that the ICC is assisting the Integrity Unit in keeping suspect officials away. BCB officials also said they are pursuing "specialised laws" and are in talks with the government to make corruption in cricket a criminal offence.

'I see myself as a genuine all-rounder'

Known primarily for his bowling, Mymensingh Division's Abu Hider Rony produced a sensational batting display in this year's National Cricket League (NCL), amassing 421 runs in just seven innings at an average of 105.25. The 29-year-old smashed 32 sixes, struck two centuries, and maintained a staggering strike rate of 116.94 alongside taking 12 wickets. In an interview with The Daily Star's Samsul Arefin Khan, Rony spoke about his journey to rebuilding himself as a pace-bowling all-rounder, and his plans ahead. The excerpts are as follows:

The Daily Star (DS): Your performance with the bat was outstanding in this year's NCL. How did it come about?

Abu Hider Rony (AHR): Over the last three or four years in red-ball cricket, especially in NCL and BCL [Bangladesh Cricket League], things have been going well for me with the bat. I didn't start the season thinking I would score two centuries, but I did plan to get big runs this year. I was even telling my teammates before the tournament began that a century would come this year.

DS: You bat quite low in the order and often without recognised batters around you. Did that push you into playing more attacking cricket?

AHR: I batted at No.8 this time, which means I usually walk in with only the bowlers left. What often happened was that when I reached 30 or 40 and started settling in, the main batter at the other end would get out. Then I had to score the remaining runs with the tail. That made me think differently. In previous years, I had a few fifties but never converted

them into hundreds. So, this year I planned to face as many balls as possible if there is no recognised batter with me at the crease. My approach was simple: if the ball is in my zone, I will hit it, whether it's the



first ball or the last.

DS: You've been part of many understudy teams but have been out of the Bangladesh team for around eight years. Why is that?

AHR: Selection is entirely up to the management. My job is to keep trying. Of course, everyone has shortcomings. My batting is good now, but sometimes my bowling fluctuates. If you assess me purely as a pacer, I would need to perform

really well as I'm competing with the current national team pacers, who have performed extremely well in the last few years. But I see myself as an all-rounder, and I'm trying to perform in that role.

DS: So, you're trying to establish yourself as an all-rounder to return to the national team?

AHR: Absolutely. After I was dropped from the national team in 2018, many pacers have come through and have done brilliantly. That made me realise that if I wanted to survive at the top level, I had to improve my batting. I had never seriously thought about elevating myself as a batter before, but circumstances pushed me to do it. Now I'm much more mature and confident. Today, I can genuinely call myself a pace-bowling all-rounder.

DS: At 29, how confident are you about making a national comeback?

AHR: Many from my batch are representing the national team. Definitely, the plan is to make a comeback. Things are going well, and I'll continue pushing myself.



Nico O'Reilly's maiden Champions League goal and a penalty earned and converted by Erling Haaland in the first half saw visitors Manchester City come from behind to beat Real Madrid 2-1 on Wednesday. Without injured superstar Kylian Mbappe, Real took the lead through Rodrygo, who broke his goal-scoring duck after 32 games across competitions. The victory pushed Pep Guardiola's side up to fourth in the Champions League standings with 13 points from six games, while Real Madrid dropped to seventh with 12 points after suffering their second straight defeat in all competitions, mounting pressure on coach Xabi Alonso.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Can MSC halt Kings' winning streak?

SPORTS REPORTER

League leaders Bashundhara Kings will host defending champions Mohammedan Sporting Club at the Bashundhara Kings Arena in a Bangladesh Football League (BFL) clash today that could define the early dynamics of the season.

For the popular Black and Whites, the match is more than just three points -- it is an opportunity to turn the tables on the dominant Kings and close the six-point gap separating them from the summit.

Mohammedan, last season's surprise champions under Alfaz Ahmed, have struggled for consistency in this campaign. Two losses, two wins, and a draw leave them eager to reclaim the momentum that once saw them conquer Kings twice in last season.

Despite a squad depleted from last season, Alfaz remains confident, though he was slightly disturbed by the silence from the authorities regarding permission to hold their last training session at the match venue.

Kings, however, have been relentless. After a sluggish start with a draw, Mario Gomez's charges have stormed to four consecutive wins, scoring 16 goals in the last five matches alone.

Dorienteon Gomes and Faisal Ahmed Fahim lead the charge, combining for 11 of those goals. The absence of last season's nemesis Soleymane Diabate removes one obstacle, yet, Mohammedan's newest weapon, Ghanaian forward Samuel Boateng, has been lethal -- four goals in five matches -- making him the player Kings will watch most closely.

Historically, Mohammedan has been the only outfit to consistently trouble Kings, with four wins in 13 league encounters, and today they seek to build on that legacy.

The crucial sixth round will also see two more matches -- Rahmatganj MFS vs Fortis FC in Munshiganj and Arambagh KS vs Brothers Union in Manikganj -- on the same day.



SHORT CORNER

Jahanara submits written statement to inquiry committee

Former Bangladesh women's team captain Jahanara Alam has submitted her written statement to the Bangladesh Cricket Board's (BCB) inquiry committee, marking the latest development in her sexual harassment allegations against former team officials.

Women's team slip eight places in FIFA rankings

Bangladesh women's football team have slipped eight places in the latest FIFA rankings, falling to 112th among 198 nations after suffering four straight defeats in recent international friendlies. The women in red and green made a remarkable 24-place jump in August, climbing to 104th following their historic maiden qualification for the upcoming AFC Women's Asian Cup but they lost all four encounters in a recently concluded tri-nation tournament, resulting in their drop in Thursday's updated FIFA rankings.

'Feels amazing'

Bangladesh leg-spinner Rishad Hossain took to social media to express his excitement about his Big Bash League participation. Rishad posed for a photo wearing the Hobart Hurricanes jersey and, posting the photo on Facebook, he wrote: "Finally wearing the Hobart Hurricanes kit -- feels amazing to have it on! Eyes on the game."

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Captains of the eight participating teams, including Bangladesh skipper Azizul Hakim Tamim, pose for a picture with the trophy on Thursday, on the eve of the 12th edition of the ACC Under-19 Asia Cup. Hosted by the Afghanistan Cricket Board (ACB) for the first time, the tournament will be played across two venues in Dubai, and the opening day will feature Group A fixtures, with India taking on the UAE and Pakistan facing Malaysia. Vying for a hat-trick of titles, Bangladesh, placed in Group B, will begin their campaign against Afghanistan at the ICC Academy Ground tomorrow. Sri Lanka and Nepal are the two other teams in Group B. The final is scheduled for December 21 at the ICC Academy Ground.

PHOTO: ACC