

29
DAYS TO GO

WORLD CUP SPECIAL

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DHAKA THURSDAY MAY 11, 2006

'Kahn will quit'

"He (Kahn) will give up with the national team after the World Cup to concentrate fully on Bayern Munich. After Klinsmann made him number two, we were all very worried. But he reacted in the best possible manner and will do everything to win something amazing."

— Karl-Heinz Rummenigge

INTERNET, undated

Whatmore sees bright future
Rues long gap from Test

SPORTS REPORTER

Coach Dav Whatmore echoed the sentiment of captain Habibur Bashar relating that the long layoff from Test cricket was a real concern for Bangladesh.

The 51-year-old Bangladesh coach gave his views in his column in TigerCricket.com, the official website of Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB), titled 'Where we are'.

"We have just finished the series against Australia and it is common knowledge that Bangladesh hasn't got any more Test matches for at least 12 months which is a bit of a pity really because we are making strides in the longer game. But that's the way it is," he observed.

He also rubbished the claim from certain quarters that Bangladesh doesn't deserve to be in the elite club of the game.

"It annoys me when I read from journalists and other sections of local and international media and public that Bangladesh doesn't deserve to be in Test cricket. That's absolute rubbish because the potential that lies in this country is enormous and given a sufficient amount of time we'll be able to be very consistent against any team. With a little slice of luck in a given era, Bangladesh could be the leading team in the Asian region. That's how deep I think the potential lies in Bangladesh," he said.

"So in reviewing where we are from the time that I came in 2003, which is almost three years, there's no question that the team has performed gradually better and better," he added.

Whatmore also heaped praise on the under-19s players and said that it is an exciting period for Bangladesh cricket.

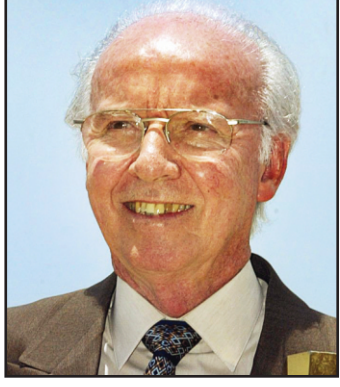
"We are blessed at the moment with a fairly good group of under 19s who have just completed the World Cup. I feel there will be one or two there that will impress the

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Did U Know?

The first World Cup football was designed in 1880 and was made of leather lashed together with long straps. It was brown and had pronounced stitching.



Mario Zagallo
(Brazilian legendary football coach)
"Everyone is afraid to play Brazil, that's the reality and I'm sure of it. I certainly wouldn't want to be on the other side."

What to WATCH

ESPN
England v Sri Lanka
1st Test, Day One
Live at 3:30 pm

DAY'S EVENT

Asian Games Hockey Qualifier
Oman v Singapore (10:00 am)
Bangladesh v Chinese Taipei (4:00 pm)
Venue: Maulana Bhasani National Hockey Stadium



THEY CAUGHT THE FLIGHT: Surprise selections in the Australia squad Mark Milligan (L) and Michael Beauchamp head the ball around at the Sydney Airport on Wednesday in front of a Qantas airplane bearing the Soccerroos logo.

PHOTO: AFP

French look to consolidate



AP, Paris

France coach Raymond Domenech believes playing with style is more important than winning matches at the World Cup.

That attitude does little to inspire public confidence after France flopped so dismally four years ago.

Following its exit from the 2004 European Championship quarterfinals, France barely scraped through qualifying for the World Cup, earning its place in the last match after Zinedine Zidane answered Domenech's call and came back for the last four games.

Unlike 2002, when France was favored to defend its title, the aging Zidane will lead a team of firm underdogs next month. Perhaps that suits France best.

In 1998, the team was not considered among the favorites, despite home advantage, and went on to win the title. But it may take an even bigger effort to win in Germany, where the team plays in Group G against Switzerland, South Korea and Togo.

Zidane and Lilian Thuram -- French heroes in '98 -- are at the end

of their careers, and doubts persist whether Domenech has the total backing of the team as Aime Jacquet did eight years ago.

A former soldier in the French-Algerian war, Jacquet was a forthright leader of men. Domenech, a lover of astrology who dabbled in theater and film before becoming France coach, is a far more ambiguous character.

Heavily criticized after several 0-0 draws, he retorted that scoring goals was "not important" and said qualifying was more important than showing flair.

In a bizarre turnaround, he said the total opposite in a television interview on April 30.

"What I dream about is that at the end of each match, the fans lead the stadium with a smile," Domenech said. "Not necessarily because we're going to win, but because they have felt something."

"Sometimes you can go all the way, without giving any pleasure," he added. "You ask yourself, 'Is it not better to have one or two matches which last in the memory?'"

Since Domenech took charge in July 2004, France has lost only one of 18 matches -- 2-1 against visiting Slovakia in March -- but struggles to score goals and questions remain unanswered.

-- Who is No. 1 goalkeeper?
-- Which strikers supplement

Thierry Henry and David Trezeguet in attack?

-- Who plays in defence, and where?

-- Is there a list of unflavoured players?

Rare certainties appear to be that Zidane, Patrick Vieira and Claude Makelele all play in midfield, and Domenech keeps faith in the Henry-Trezeguet partnership in attack.

Other areas of the field appear far more uncertain.

Domenech has yet to choose between Lyon's Gregory Coupet and Marseille's Fabien Barthez as first-choice 'keeper -- much to the annoyance of both after he previously said he'd choose prior to the Slovakia match, then changed his mind.

"France is lucky enough to have two world class goalkeepers," Domenech said.

That debate is one of several unsettling problems within a squad that excludes players like Arsenal's Robert Pires and Johan Micoud of Werder Bremen -- hinting at a Domenech black list.

Chelsea defender William Gallas wants to play at center-half, but Domenech prefers him at left back -- where Eric Abidal has been

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Cahill selection sparks row

REUTERS, Sydney

Australia included injured Everton midfielder Tim Cahill in their World Cup squad on Wednesday, heightening the threat of another club versus country row.

Cahill injured his knee in a match against Birmingham last month and Everton manager David Moyes said the club wanted the final say on whether he could go to the World Cup.

"That will be decided by Everton," Moyes was quoted as saying on the English club's Web site. "He won't go to the World Cup until we think he's fit."

But Australia's selectors included Cahill in the squad, despite Moyes's reservations, saying they expected him to be fit in time for Australia's opening match against Japan on June 12.

"The Timmy thing is going to be fine, he's working very hard and all the signs are positive," Australia's assistant coach Graham Arnold told reporters at the squad announcement on Wednesday.

"David Moyes hasn't been too friendly to us in the past but if he was to deny one of his players the chance to go to the World Cup then I'd say he'd have a very unhappy player."

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Rafique and Shahadat in Asia Eleven

SPORTS REPORTER

Ace left-arm spinner Mohammad Rafique and fast bowler Shahadat Hossain will represent a Rest of Asia team that play two friendly matches against Pakistan at Jeddah on May 18 and 19.

Shahadat replaces fellow fast bowler Mashrafe Bin Mortuza, who pulled out of the matches after being advised to take rest following a spate of injuries in recent times.

VVS Laxman, Anil Kumble, Gautam Gambhir and Ajay Jadeja are the Indian members along with Sri Lankans Sanath Jayasuriya, Romesh Kaluwitharana and Kumar Dharmasena.

Pakistan captain Inzamamul Haq will lead a virtually full-strength team in these two friendlies.

The two Bangladeshi players leave for the Saudi Arabian port city on May 16.

BFF announces primary squad

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) announced a 27-member preliminary squad to prepare for the 10th South Asian Games to be held in Colombo in August.

Argentine coach Diego Cruciani called up eleven fresh faces, most of them Under-17 and Under-20 players, to the fold for the Under-23 regional competition.

The residential camp will start at BKSP from May 15 and the selected players have been asked to report at 10am on the same day at the Motijheel's BFF Bhaban.

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Hockey time in Dhaka

SPORTS REPORTER

The Jamuna Bank Asian Games Hockey qualifying meet commences at the revamped Maulana Bhasani National Stadium today with a changed format following the late withdrawal of Indonesia.

Hosts Bangladesh, one of top bets to win the meet, will take on Chinese Taipei on the opening day of the now seven-team event. The match will start at 4pm. The event will however kick off at 10am with Oman taking on Singapore.

The late withdrawal of Indonesia has not only put organisers Bangladesh Hockey Federation (BHF) in a spot of bother but also forced them to change the fixture and format. The event, which was initially planned for two groups with eight teams, has turned into a single league to comply with the rules of the game's governing body. The FIH allows groups only if there are at least eight teams.

"Indonesia's absence has forced us to change the format. Since we are now left with seven teams the competition will be played on a single league basis and there will be no semifinals and final. The top four teams will qualify for the 15th Asian Games," said BHF general secretary Shamsul Bari.

Chinese Taipei, Iran, Oman and

Singapore have already arrived in the capital while Hong Kong was expected to reach the city last night. Sri Lanka, on the other hand, will reach Dhaka today.

Four top finishers in the tournament will join India, Pakistan, South Korea, Malaysia, China and Japan, all automatic qualifiers, for the 10-team 15th Asian Games to be held in Doha in November.

Terming Hong Kong and Singapore as tough opponents Bangladesh captain Shahidullah Titoo said that their target is to become champions in the meet.

"For the first time we are going to meet Chinese Taipei and definitely we want to make a winning start in the competition. Our target is just not only to qualify for the main event but to finish top in the meet," said Titoo at a press conference yesterday.

Coach Jamal Haider was also optimistic about his side, especially he pinned his hope on his young charges.

"We want to put impressive performance and believe that the home fans will enjoy it. I confident about my team which is a combination of young and experienced players," said Haider.

Haider also considered the meet as a launching pad to revive a declining Bangladesh hockey.

Bangladesh have been forced to go through the qualifying phase for the first time after their stunning defeat against Hong Kong in the 2003 Asia Cup in Kuala Lumpur.

LGRD Minister Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan will inaugurate the nine-day meet. A 35-minute opening ceremony would be held in the afternoon with schoolboys and girls and the Air Force band taking part in displays.

The rate of gallery ticket has been fixed at Tk 10 while that of VIP at Tk 200. All sorts of tickets will be available at the stadium counter before the start of the matches.

Meanwhile, Channel 1, a private satellite TV channel, will telecast all the six matches of Bangladesh.

Sirajganj school qualify for final

SPORTS REPORTER

Gaberpara Senior Madrasa of Sirajganj moved into the final round of the banglalink tiger trophy National School Football Championship as they became zonal champions beating Rashidpur Ijlatunessa High School

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Party tricks beckon for C'Ron



AP, Lisbon

Cristiano Ronaldo shot to international soccer stardom after his transfer from Sporting Lisbon to Manchester United three years ago, when he was still a teenager.

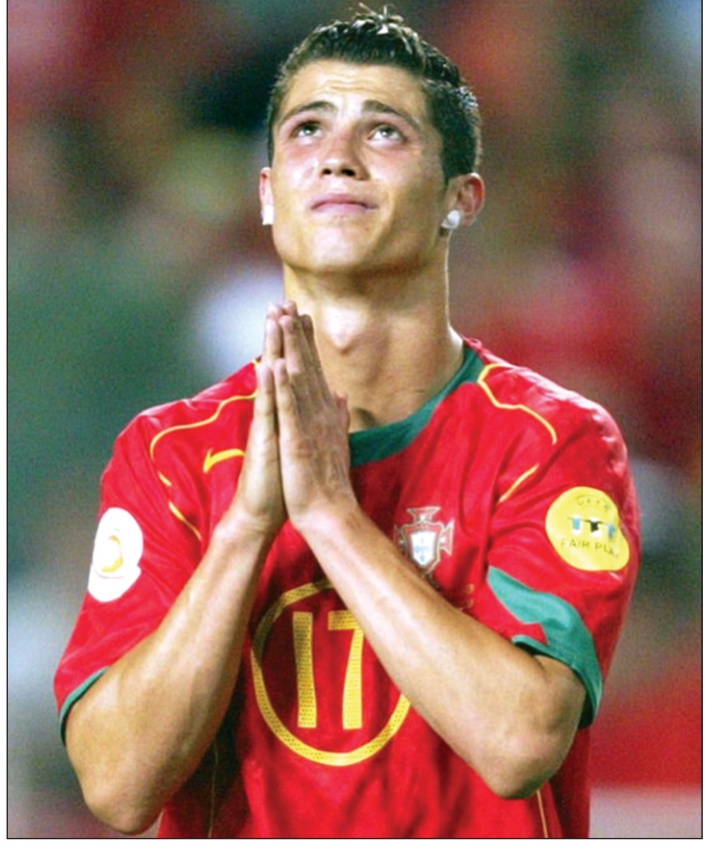
The 2006 World Cup could be the next step in the making of a world-class player.

"We reckon that Cristiano could soon become a strong candidate for best player in the world," said Manchester United's assistant manager Carlos Queiroz.

Ronaldo has a natural gift of balance, speed and ball control. But the teenage prodigy has blossomed into a more tactically shrewd and team-oriented player under his mentors at the club and country levels: Manchester United manager Alex Ferguson and Portugal's Brazilian coach Luiz Felipe Scolari.

"He's very young and has a long road ahead of him. He still needs to mature a bit more," Scolari said. "I treat him a bit differently from the other players because he's younger than my eldest son."

Ferguson broke what was then the world record transfer fee for a teenager, paying more than \$21.5 million for 18-year-old Ronaldo in August 2003. The Scot, whose managerial career covers more than 30 years, said Ronaldo was one of the most exciting young players he'd ever seen, then handed him departed David Beckham's No. 7 jersey.



CRISTIANO RONALDO

Sachin back to batting

Cricket

AFP, Mumbai

India's star batsman Sachin Tendulkar resumed training on Wednesday following shoulder surgery, but officials are unsure if he will be fit for the Test series in the West Indies in June.

The 33-year-old faced a cricket ball for 25 minutes at the nets on Wednesday after a tennis-ball session on Tuesday in front of national coach Greg Chappell and other team officials.

Tendulkar batted for five minutes, took a break and then had a cricket ball thrown to him for 20 minutes at the Bandra-Kurla complex ground of the Mumbai Cricket Association, the Indian cricket board said in a statement.

Cricket Board secretary Niranjan Shah said "both Sachin and (team physiotherapist) John Gloster were happy with the outcome of his first outing".

"The return to batting is a graded process to allow for adaptation to the new loads involved, and his tolerance to all new demands placed on him physically to this point have been satisfactory," Shah said.

Tendulkar, who underwent shoulder surgery in March, missed the seven one-dayers at home against England and also opted out of the five matches against the West Indies starting next week.

He will undergo a fitness test in Mumbai on May 20, three days before the selectors meet to pick the squad for the four Test matches that begin on June 2.

Tendulkar is one of the most prolific batsmen in contemporary

cricket with a world record 35 Test and 39 one-day centuries.

India leave for the West Indies on Friday hoping to win their first Test series there in 34 years besides testing the Caribbean waters ahead of the World Cup.



PHOTO: AFP

Indian star Sachin Tendulkar tosses a ball during a training session in Mumbai on Wednesday. Tendulkar returned to training after shoulder surgery last month in London.