

Bashar full of beans
Tigers set off for Colombo today

Cricket

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh captain Habibul Bashar said that his side is determined not to play the role of a B team anymore at the Asia Cup next month.

The 32-year-old also said it was time not to be the whipping boys as in the past six editions of the regional cricket carnivals, but rather throw a few punches of their own.

"It will not be easy for any team to beat us like the past because gone are the days when we have just played and hoped for the best afterwards," said a confident Bashar on Tuesday, a day before the 15-member team flies to Colombo.

Growing in confidence after the series in West Indies early this month, Bashar however showed total respect to the big three -- defending champions Pakistan, India and hosts Sri Lanka -- in the meet.

"May be they are world beaters but we also want to gain some respect from them. I also feel that in this part of the world it is essential to have 300 runs in the bank if you want to win matches," said the top batsman of the country.

Although the task ahead for Dav Whatmore's men is tough to say the least but Bashar believes on a given day his fast improving side can turn dream into reality provided that every member plays to his potential.

The Bangladesh captain was banking on two young members of the team Mohammad Ashraful and out-of-form Alok Kapali to fire in the competition.

SQUAD

Javed Omar, Mohammed Ashraful, Habibul Bashar (captain), Rajin Saleh (vice-captain), Alok Kapali, Faisal Hossain, Mushfiquur Rahman, Khaled Mahmud, Khaled Mashud, Mohammed Rafique, Manjarul Islam Rana, Tapash Baisya, Tareq Aziz Khan and Abdur Razzak.

"Kapali may have been starving for runs for too long. But there is no doubt about his talent and I believe that he has the potential to become a world class batsman. If he succeeds in Sri Lanka runs will start to flow again," said Bashar.

He was also eager to see Ashraful make the most of the first 15 overs to give the team a perfect launch pad.

Interestingly both Ashraful and Kapali made their marks on Lankan soil two years ago.

Bashar, whose average in one-day cricket is mediocre (18.40) compared to his healthy Test record (35.54), said that this tournament would be an altogether different approach even for him.

"I'm aware that my one-day performance is not good but I can assure you that you will be writing about a different Bashar in the Asia Cup," said the fluent stroke-maker without elaborating.

When Bashar sounded full of beans Kapali knows that it's probably his last chance to prove himself on the big stage.

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SEMIFINAL

PORTUGAL v NETHERLANDS

Let's talk art



REUTERS, Lisbon

Fear of further semi-final failure is all that stands in the way of a classic when slick-passing Portugal meet a fast improving Netherlands side on Wednesday with a place in the Euro 2004 final at stake.

The Dutch have settled on their best team, led by Arjen Robben and Ruud van Nistelrooy in a classy forward partnership, and feel a repeat of their 1988 European Championship win is on the cards.

Portugal, inspired by the artistry of Deco and bolstered by the defensive partnership of Jorge Andrade and Ricardo Carvalho, have quality running through their side and the benefit of passionate home support.

Wednesday's game at the Jose

Alvalade stadium will be as much a test of nerve as a trial of skill, though, as the two beaten semi-finalists from the last European Championship bid to avoid a similar fate.

This will be a fifth semi-final for the Dutch and they have won just one, when they went on to take the title in 1988.

Portugal have lost both their previous semi-finals and they are well aware that the hosts have gone out at the semi-final stage in the

last four championships.

Those factors, coupled with the blazing heat in Lisbon, could lead to an over-cautious approach and there is a distinct air of tension in the Portuguese camp, perhaps primed by the enormous expectations of the country's 10 million people.

"I believe we'll go on to reach the final because I think we are a better side," Deco told reporters.

"It would be a huge disappointment to miss out on the final now,

or to reach the final only to lose it."

The Portuguese do have some history on their side, with the Dutch having won only one of their eight previous meetings.

Pauleta is available again after suspension but Nuno Gomes is likely to continue up front in an unchanged team.

Deco, Carvalho and defensive midfielder Costinha are just a yellow card away from missing the final.

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Did U Know?

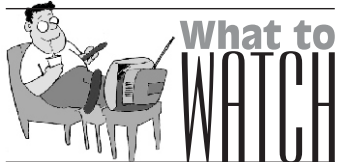
Milan Baros has scored in all four matches at Euro 2004, one match short of Michel Platini's record for scoring in most consecutive European Championship finals matches.



Florentino Perez

(Real Madrid president)
"We understand your concerns, David. We agree with you that training was not up to it. But who did not train at all during the Christmas break? Who keeps flying back to England when asked to rest?"

Hitting back at David Beckham's claims that Real's training programme left him short of fitness for Euro 2004.



BTV
Portugal vs Netherlands
Euro Semifinal
Live at 12:40 am (Thursday)

ESPN
Sportscentre
Sport News
Live at 8:30 pm
Euro Preview
Live at 12:00 am (Thursday)
Portugal vs Netherlands
Semifinal
Live at 12:40 am (Thursday)
Australia vs Sri Lanka
First Test, Day One
Live at 5:55 am (Thursday)

STAR Sports
Wimbledon Championships
Singles Quarterfinals
Live at 5:00 pm

Sharapova in semis

REUTERS/AFP, London

Teenager Maria Sharapova scurried into her first Grand Slam semifinal at Wimbledon on Tuesday, outwitting Japan's Ai Sugiyama 5-7, 7-5, 6-1 with a dazzling performance on Centre Court.

The 13th-seed became the first Russian since Anna Kournikova in 1997 to advance to the Wimbledon semis, where she will face 1999 champion and fifth seed Lindsay Davenport.

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Fabulous Franklin

Cricket

REUTERS, London

New Zealand left arm James Franklin took five wickets to help dismiss a sorry-looking England for 101 in a triangular NatWest Series one-day international at Chester-le-Street on Tuesday.

Franklin recorded one-day career-best figures of five for 42, taking advantage of slightly overcast conditions to swing the ball both ways.

England, who were all out for 147 in the seven-wicket defeat to West Indies on Sunday, played some thoughtless shots against some good New Zealand bowling and crumbled to their sixth lowest one-day total in just 32.5 overs.

Captain Michael Vaughan (12) was Franklin's first scalp, off a swinging delivery that hit off stump.

Paul Collingwood (2) on his home ground, chased a wide Franklin ball and edged to debutant wicketkeeper Gareth Hopkins.

SCOREBOARD
Scoreboard of the England innings against New Zealand in the triangular NatWest Series one-day international at Chester-le-Street on Tuesday.

ENGLAND					
Trescothick	b	Oram		14	
Vaughan	b	Franklin		12	
Jones	b	Oram		5	
Strauss	c	Oram	b	Franklin	8
Collingwood	c	Hopkins	b	Franklin	2
McGrath	c	Hopkins	b	Oram	12
Blackwell	lbw	b	Franklin	5	
Giles	c	Hopkins	b	Franklin	0
Gough	c	Fleming	b	Cairns	7
Harmison	not out			13	
Anderson	b	Vettori		11	
Extras	(lb-4, w-2, nb-6)			12	
Total	(All out in 32.5 overs)			101	
Fall of wickets:	1-24, 2-30, 3-37, 4-44, 5-51, 6-65, 7-65, 8-76, 9-78				
Bowler	O	M	R	W	
Oram	10	0	23	3	
Franklin	10	1	42	5	
Cairns	10	2	27	1	
Styris	2	1	4	0	
Vettori	0.5	0	1	1	
NEW ZEALAND					
Styris	b	Franklin		11	
Hopkins	b	Franklin		11	
Vettori	b	Franklin		11	
Toss:	New Zealand.				

Police arrest Army

SPORTS REPORTER



National Football Championship runners-up Bangladesh Army crashed out of the fourth Nitol-Tata National Football League when they lost to Bangladesh Police in tie-breaker yesterday.

Police, who eliminated Bangladesh Rifles in the first round, kept their cool against their mighty opponents in the nerve-wrecking shootout to win 3-1 after the services zone qualifying match was locked at 1-1 in the regulation time at the Kamalapur Stadium.

This was the first time that the soldiers failed to qualify for the final rounds after playing in all three previous editions of the competition. They were in for a surprise when Police went ahead in the 25th minute through Wasim.

The match entered the shootout phase after Ashish Banwary pulled off the equaliser for the army men in the 67th minute.

Police will take on Bangladesh Air Force in tomorrow's zonal final at the same venue for a place in the 12-team finals, which kick off on July 10 in Mymensingh.

The tournament organising committee earlier wanted to start the finals at Chittagong but they had to change the decision. The Chittagong League is scheduled to end on July 7 and the MA Aziz Stadium ground will need some time for repair works.

Elsewhere, hosts Jhenidah Mohammedan Sporting Club blanked Zia Smriti Sangsad of Magura 3-0 to reach the zonal final. Bashir scored twice, his fourth goal in two outings, and Obaid added the other for the winners at the Jhenidah Stadium.

Another local side Najirpara Krira Chakra moved into the zonal final with a 4-3 tiebreaker-win over Noakhali's Rising Star after the regulation 90 minutes ended goalless at Chandpur Stadium.

At Bagerhat, Nozu's 51st minute strike was enough for home side Unmochon Club to book a place in the zonal final with a 1-0 victory against Prattyasha Club of Jessore.

In the Narshingdi zone, Kacharipara Football Club of

Jamalpur recorded a comfortable 3-1 win over Shuktara Juba Sangha of Narayanganj to set a zonal final clash against hosts Kararchar Krira Chakra.

Jalaluddin, who found the net twice in his side's previous match, scored two goals again while Robin netted the other for the winners. Mohammad slotted the consolation goal for the Narayanganj outfit.

A brace of goals either side of the break by Nayan helped Naogaon Prabaha Sangha advance to the zonal semifinal when they blanked Alinagar Janakalyan Sangha of Chapainawabganj 2-0 at the Natore Stadium.

Today's matches: Cox's Bazar Brothers Union v Rampur Boys Club, Feni at Chandpur; Panchagarh Brothers Union v Kheladhula Sangha Kurigram at Natore; Khulna Mohammedan v Uttar Alekanda Boys, Barisal at Bagerhat; Chua-danga Mohammedan v Pabna Brothers Union at Jhenidah.

Moon landing awaits



AFP, Alcochete

Portuguese coach Luiz Felipe Scolari, bidding to become the only man in the history of the game to coach teams to World Cup and European Championship glory, Tuesday warned his side to beware counterpart Dick Advocaat's dastardly Dutch in their Euro semifinal.

With the level of expectation among the home fans having reached boiling point following an enthralling penalty shootout win over England both Scolari and skipper Luis Figo called for calm, while the former said his charges had to be aware the Dutch have a few tricks up their sleeves.

"The statistics show we are similar teams," said Scolari, who led Brazil to the 2002 World Cup before taking the reins of that country's former colonial power with a clear brief.

To deliver Portugal's first silverware at senior level.

Scolari acknowledged striker Ruud van Nistelrooy as the Netherlands' chief threat following his four goals in four games.

But the Brazilian also noted the Oranje's skill in the realms of gamesmanship.

"Van Nistelrooy is a very good striker and laps up chances which

fall to him. But sometimes he starts from offside positions at freekicks," Scolari opined.

"And we will have to be careful with Michael Reiziger throw-ins. He can put his foot up and the referee must get wise to this," Scolari noted.

The Portuguese have a good recent record against the Dutch, European champions in 1988, having knocked them out of the 2002 World Cup in the qualifiers.

Scolari's interpreter, in explaining the coach's thoughts on Manchester United hitman van Nistelrooy, made a Freudian slip in referring to the forward as 'van Basten' after peerless former AC Milan star Marco Van Basten, whose stunning goal in the 1988 final helped to see off the then Soviet Union.

But Scolari, while entirely focused on the task ahead, insisted he would not linger long over his opponents' evident qualities and demanded the Portuguese camp do not think that with the crowd behind them the job is half done.

"I don't know their team particularly. I am with Portugal and I know my team.

"But Holland is a very strong team which plays well on the wings and is very attack-minded.

"The Portuguese must not think we have reached our objective. As yet we have won nothing. We have a good opportunity to go further, but we have to think about Holland

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Oranje sans skipper

AFP, Albufeira

Dutch captain Frank de Boer will almost certainly play no further part in the Netherlands' bid to win Euro 2004.

The former Rangers defender was told the worst after an x-ray on his damaged right ankle at a Faro hospital on Monday.

"He's damaged a ligament and will almost certainly not take any further part in these championships," the Dutch team's medical department reported.

The 34-year-old, who limped off in the second half of Saturday's penalty shoot-out quarter-final win over Sweden, sat out training here late Monday.

The setback could not have come at a more unkind time for de Boer who had fought his way back into the team against strong competition from Wilfred Bouma, 26.

De Boer, who holds a special place in the Dutch team, boasting a record 112 caps for his country, has left Rangers and is eyeing a lucrative curtain call to his career in the gas-rich Gulf state of Qatar where his brother Ronald is already based.

He sat on the sidelines while the rest of the squad trained here late Monday.

The Oranje, champions in 1988, must overcome hosts Portugal in Lisbon on Wednesday to seal a place in Sunday's final.

Championship surprise package Greece face favourites the Czech Republic in the other semi in Oporto on Thursday.

Surviving by winning



AFP, Albufeira

Dutch coach Dick Advocaat had a lot on his mind 48 hours before the Netherlands' Euro 2004 semi-final against Portugal - not least just what does he need to do to win over the critics back home.

Advocaat by all accounts has been subjected to a barrage of at times fairly personal criticism from the Dutch media along the lines of what the British tabloids' meted out to Graham Taylor in his days as England manager.

"Criticism is part of a manager's job," Advocaat conceded at the Dutch squad's beachside hideaway near this Algarve resort on Monday.

"But to break somebody is a different story without knowing what will happen next.

"I don't read the newspapers, I don't watch television, but sometimes I hear something, but not a lot."

After navigating the choppy waters of the group phase matches and through Saturday's tense quarter-final penalty shoot-out against Sweden surely he feels he's done enough to silence his detractors.

Apparently not.

"In Holland you have to win everything," said the former

Rangers boss.

"But I'm used to that from my time in Scotland!"

He added: "There's a love-hate relationship between myself and the Dutch press.

"Expectations are high back home, that's the way it is and you have to cope with it."

Asked if he was able to enjoy the championships given all the sniping which came to a head when he substituted Chelsea's new signing Arjen Robben in the match against the Czech Republic Advocaat shrugged cryptically: "I'm very pleased we're still here.

"But it's dangerous, some people don't realise what can happen - they have to think about that as well."

Asked to elaborate he replied: "Think about it."

He said Wednesday's game would be the 1988 champions' first 'away' game since arriving in Portugal.

"Up to now it's like we've been playing only home games because of our fans, they've been incredible."

"Wednesday's game is going to be strange for my team, playing in Portugal's homeland. It'll be strange for the side."

Running his eye over the opposition waiting for them in Lisbon he said: "Portugal have got very talented players, they show their quality. They didn't start very well, but they've got home advantage and

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(L) A STEP AHEAD ALWAYS: Portugal's Brazilian coach Luiz Felipe Scolari moves away from a group of players during a training session at the Academia Sporting near Lisbon on June 28. (R) A DICK-TATOR? Dutch coach Dick Advocaat (second from R) constantly walks a thin line as he tries to get his highly talented yet egotistical squad (seen here in training on June 28 in Lisbon) to play as a team and more importantly win.



PHOTOS: AFP

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Henry conspired to become king?



AFP, Paris

The fallout from France's disappointing Euro 2004 campaign continued on Tuesday with a report that striker Thierry Henry was plotting along with his fellow French internationals in the Arsenal squad to oust two-time world player of the year Zinedine Zidane.

According to Le Parisien Henry is keen to assume Zidane's role as France's leading player and start preparing for the 2006 World Cup finals qualifiers where they have the tough proposition of seeing off the challenge of the Republic of Ireland.

They cite how Henry - who had a dreadful tournament to add to his appalling World Cup finals in 2002

where his only noteworthy exploit was to be sent off and has scored just two goals in six matches at the last two major finals - and France made light of Zidane's absence at last year's Confederations Cup.

Henry wants the team to be built round him as he believes the way the team was built to suit the talents of Zidane lessened the impact he could make in front of goal.

The paper says that with Zidane's main allies such as the eloquent Bixente Lizarazu fading and likely to retire from the international scene, Henry, Patrick Vieira and Robert Pires are circling to go in for the kill on the player, who almost singlehandedly won them the 1998 World Cup with two headers against Brazil.

The paper cites how the player power of the Arsenal trio forced Jacques Santini to get Zidane to play on the left then the centre and finally on the right, in the 1-0 defeat by Greece, during the tournament



ZINEDINE ZIDANE

so as to please Henry and Pires.

However Zidane, who apart from his two late goals against England looked a jaded shadow of the player he once was, is not taking the plot

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