

BOA finalises contingent for SA Games

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Olympic Association (BOA) yesterday finalised a 218-member contingent and six officials for next month's SA (South Asian) Games to be held in Colombo.

BOA president and Chief of Army Staff Lt Gen Moin U Ahmed shortlisted the squad from a 226-member list proposed earlier this week by the coaching and training committee of BOA.

Bangladesh will take part in 17 out of 20 disciplines in the August 18-28 Games in the Sri Lankan capital. The 17 teams will be made up of 36 officials including team managers, coaches and officials. The number of athletes stand at 172.

The nation will not compete in ush, squash and rowing.

The teams (athletes+officials): Football (20+4), hockey (18+3), volleyball (14+1), athletics (13+2), shooting (8+3), swimming (15+3), table tennis (4+1), badminton (5+1), weightlifting (8+3), judo (9+2), cycling (4+1), taekwondo (6+2), karate (14+1), wrestling (6+2), kabaddi (men's and women's 24+4), boxing (6+1) and archery (8+2).



Chief cricket selector Faruque Ahmed addresses a press conference at the National Sports Council on Thursday.

Signs are good for Mashrafee

Cricket

TIGERCRICKET, Harare

Pace ace Mashrafee Bin Mortaza took rest from Thursday's practice session as the Bangladesh team settled for another intense yet joyful session at the Harare Sports Club.

The tearaway took five for 29 in the practice match against the Zimbabwe Board at the Alexandra Sports Club on Wednesday.

"The more I bowled the better it got physically and there is natural movement available if you pitch the ball up," said Mortaza after the match. All five of his victims were either bowled or lbw.

"There is no point bowling flat out on such a slow surface as the ball just loops up. Later on I was getting reverse swing and the length got even fuller," added the fast bowler called the "Narail Express".

Wicketkeeper Khaled Mashud, who is recovering well from a minor chest infection, joined practice for the first time on the tour and mainly concentrated on batting.

He was one of three players to have missed out on the practice match. The others to sit out were batsman Rajin Saleh and rookie all-rounder Forhad Reza.

In the afternoon the team was scheduled to return to the Harare Sports Club ground for Zimbabwe Cricket's cocktail reception.

Bangladesh are likely to name their squad for Saturday's first ODI on Friday, while the major players of the host nation returned to Harare from their short preparatory trip to South Africa and England where captain Terrence Duffin, Edward

Rainsford and Anthony Ireland had been playing club cricket.

Meanwhile, Mike Procter has been appointed as the match referee

while his countryman Ian Howell will stand as the umpire in all five of the matches along with locals Kevan Barbour and Russell Tiffin.



Bangladesh fast bowler Mashrafee Bin Mortaza receives a massage from physio Paul Champan after his five for 29 against Zimbabwe Board XI on Wednesday.

Selectors on a sticky wicket

Cricket

SPORTS REPORTER

"It's the selectors' word against that of the media" was how the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) CEO Mahmudur Rahman described the impromptu press briefing that eventually turned into a fiasco at the National Sports Council Conference Room on Thursday.

But unfortunately under-fire chief selector Faruque Ahmed, who turned up at the briefing along with his selection party, could hardly read out one third of his three-page statement that he prepared in defence of the selectors following media reports that the selectors have influenced various endorsements of national cricketers.

Rahman, who along with three selectors Faruque, Athar Ali Khan and GM Nowsher Prince attended the briefing, said that the board deemed it necessary to clear their stand on the issue that has been recently raised against the mem-

bers of the selection committee.

It was reported that former cricketer-turned-selector Athar Ali negotiated a deal between sportswear company Reebok and national captain Habibul Bashar and batsman Mohammad Ashraful.

Allegations were also levelled on Faruque regarding his sports shop's involvement in business with the cricket board and also that he had a role in negotiating Mohammad Ashraful's stint at Rainhill Cricket Club recently.

"I deny all charges that are brought against me. The allegations are baseless but the degree of it is serious," said a visibly anxious Faruque.

"My performance and track record as a player and selector should have been reflected in the reports that were written recently," he claimed.

"I should not have been marked out like this given the fact that this is the first time I have had to face up to such matters. I refrained from playing fixed matches in my playing days," added Ahmed without dis-

closing the name of the club he played for.

When asked if he would consider being inactive during the whole process of the investigation taking place, Faruque countered and said: "What happens when I am proved innocent in this investigation after I give up my post?"

Asked to explain the reason for the press briefing even before an investigation took place, Rahman said: "We considered it necessary instead of a sending simple rejoinders because a shadow has been cast on the selectors and they have a say on this matter."

"If it is found that the selector took commissions or in any way influenced the deal with the national cricketers, we will take action," he said.

"It was pressed that an investigation must have been undertaken before the selectors were allowed to defend themselves in front of the media.

"The working committee's report is what we will exert on, and once the chairman of the cricket committee is back from abroad, the investigation

will gather pace," he said.

He also cited that the two players involved Ashraful and Bashar will be under enquiry as well as ruling out any chance of an independent inquest into this matter.

Athar also denied the charges saying that he was completely unaware of the deal between Reebok and the two players.

"I did not know anything about the deal. Reebok International or Reebok India, from where my company brought goods, did not consult with me about the endorsement deal," he said.

Athar, whose company Trendsetter Limited is the sole distributor of Reebok shoes and sportswear in the country, also termed the accusations as unsubstantiated.

"I am a shareholder of the company and I am only concerned with the distribution of the goods in Bangladesh and not their promotional activities," he added.

But his statement was apparently an aberration of the truth given the fact that Bashar brought

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Relying on breaststroke



SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh will look forward to regain their supremacy in the breaststroke event in the regional swimming scene during the SA Games in Colombo next month.

Bangladesh have not won a breaststroke gold since Karar Mizanur Rahman's triumph at the Madras SAF Games in 1995 and national swimming coach Mohammed Mahbubur Rahman believes that one man has the ability to strike gold in this event after blanks in Kathmandu and Islamabad.

"I have faith in Shahjahan Ali Rony that he can win a gold medal in the 50m breaststroke,"

Mahbubur told The Daily Star. "His current timing at training is better than the South Asian Games record, which earned India a gold in Islamabad. I am hopeful that he will do better at the main competition," he added.

Rony, who has completed his study at BKSP recently, have won two successive national titles in 50m breaststroke and the 19-year-old will also compete in the 100m event apart from the 4x100m medley relay.

Niaz Ali is the other breaststroke contestant and will participate in the 50 and 100 metres apart from 200m medley relay.

Mahbubur, who was appointed coach this April by the new swimming federation executive body, complained that his predecessors

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believe that one man has the ability to strike gold in this event after blanks in Kathmandu and Islamabad.

"I have faith in Shahjahan Ali Rony that he can win a gold medal in the 50m breaststroke,"

SQUAD

Men's: Shahjahan Ali, Jewel Ahmed, Rubel Rana, Niaz Ali, Rezaul Karim, Kamal Hossain, Nazrul Islam, Rafiqul Islam, Atiqur Rahman, Jahangir Alam, Munmun Ahmed; women's: Mahfuzia Khatun, Dolly Akther, Sabura Khatun, Afsana Talukder.



PHOTO: STAR

Shahjahan Ali (R), a prospective gold medalist for Bangladesh in the SA Games, trains with his breaststroke team-mate Niaz Ali at the National Swimming Complex in Mirpur on Wednesday.

Defending champions Usha Krira Chakra and runners-up Abahani came alive on the opening day of the three-day Premiership hockey players' transfer at the Maulana Bhasani National Hockey Stadium yesterday.

Abahani signed highest 14 players including six from the 25-member national pool while Usha confirmed services of ten inclusive of the maximum quota of six pool players.

Big-budgeted Abahani recruited Mariners defender Issa Mia apart from keeping their own striker Russel Mahmud Jimmy, reportedly the highest paid player of the season, Musa Mia, Faruque Ahmed, Mahbub Ehsan Rana and Hedayat Islam Rajib. The sky-blue

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School chess

SPORTS REPORTER

Nine players were sharing lead in the with maximum three points after the third round of the Class VI-X group games in the 8th Standard Chartered School chess tournament yesterday.

The leaders are Sandipan Chatterjee, Satyajit Kundu, Asim Roy, Mosabbir Khan Shibli, Aniruddha Majumder, Kinjal Basu, Sayed Shikder, Sifat Hossain and Abu Saleh Babul.

Four players -- Pallabi Roy, Mohana Sengupta, Shaati Majumder of India and Arifa Khatun Moni of Shahid Anwara School -- were jointly leading the girl's section also with maximum three points. In the KG-Class V group, six players were jointly on top of the table after three rounds.

Landis tests positive!

AFP, Zurich

Tour de France winner Floyd Landis has tested positive for testosterone, with the Phonak team's announcement on Thursday sending shockwaves through cycling.

The Swiss-based team said in a statement that it was notified by the International Cycling Union (UCI) on Wednesday of "an unusual level of Testosterone/Epitestosterone ratio in the test made on Floyd Landis after stage 17 of the Tour de France."

The American will ask for a counter analysis in the coming days, it added.

The team management and the rider were both totally surprised, said a team statement.

"The rider will ask in the upcoming days for the counter analysis (B sample) to prove either that this result has come from a natural process or that this is the result of a mistake."

The 30-year-old Landis will be sacked if the B sample also proves positive.

"In application of the ProTour

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Tiny Fahim makes a move during his match against Sayan Mojumder in the eighth Standard Chartered National School chess competition at the National Sports Council Conference Room on Thursday.

DU first in finals

Football

SPORTS REPORTER

Dhaka University became the first team to qualify for the final round of the Jubok Phone 23rd National Football Championship when they brushed aside Jahangirnagar University 5-1 in the last league match of the Education zone yesterday to emerge zonal champions.

Saifur Rahaman Moni shrugged off his long lay-off due to injury with a hattrick at the Army Stadium as title contenders DU topped the group with maximum nine points.

National striker Moni opened the scoring in the third minute and doubled the lead seven minute later

as the star-studded DU took control.

Kafi and Parvez added one goal each for the winners before Moni completed his treble in the 70th minute. Jahangirnagar, who lost all the three matches, reduced the margin through an own goal.

The other Education zone match between BKSP and Islamic University ended in a goalless draw at the same venue.

Dhaka join automatic qualifiers, hosts Sylhet and holders Narayanganj, in the 12-team finals.

Meanwhile, Chaudanga, Barisal and Comilla reached the zonal finals yesterday.

Chaudanga eliminated Kushtia 5-4 in tiebreakers after their Kapotakhyha zone semifinal ended in a 1-1 draw in regulation time at

the Magura Stadium.

Comilla also won on penalties, breaking the hearts of a 25,000-strong home crowd with a 4-2 victory after a 1-1 draw in 90 minutes at the Habiganj Stadium, to reach the Surma zone final.

The exciting zonal semifinal between Comilla and hosts Habiganj went to the nerve-wrecking shoot-out when Russel scored the equaliser for the home side eight minutes from time after the visitors had taken lead through Kabir's 65-minute strike.

It was a bad day for hosts as Porejepur crashed out of the meet

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