

Siddons coach until WC

Mashrafe, Shakib stay put for Zimbabwe's tour

Cricket

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) kept faith in the current set up of the national team as they extended the tenures of captain, vice-captain, head coach and the three-member selection committee.

Mashrafe Bin Mortaza has been retained as captain while Shakib Al Hasan as his deputy, but the big decision in Wednesday's board of directors' meeting came when they agreed in principle to extend the tenure of head coach Jamie Siddons until the end of the ICC World Cup in 2011.

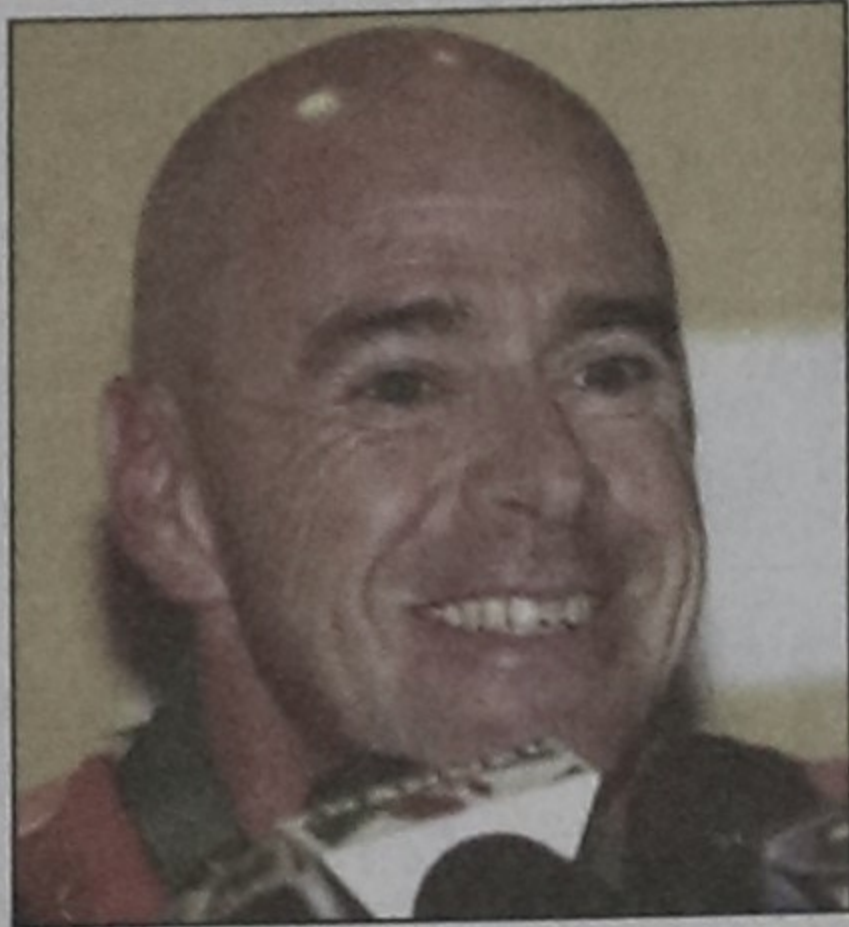
The two-year tenure of the Australian will expire at the end of November and what the board high-ups believed that it would be unwise to bring someone new in the job ahead of the cricket showpiece event where Bangladesh is co-host.

"It was a big decision to retain Jamie (Siddons) as coach. What we believe is that he (Jamie) already has adjusted with our players well and he understands the young players. When he showed his interest to continue his job with this team, we thought it would be unwise to bring someone new at this point of time," BCB's media committee chairman Jalal Yunus

explained the board's sentiment.

"Jamie, who has skin cancer, also confirmed us that his sickness was not a major problem and it would not make any obstacle to his work," he said adding that a three-member committee would be formed within two-three days to settle the terms and conditions of the new contract with the coach.

The board has also decided that Mashrafe will continue as captain and Shakib as the vice-captain until



JAMIE SIDDONS

Zimbabwe's tour to Bangladesh in October-November this year. Zimbabwe will arrive in Dhaka on October 21 to play five-match one-day series against the Tigers.

Mashrafe took over the job from Mohammad Ashraful to lead the team in West Indies and Zimbabwe, but unfortunately he missed both the tours due to knee injury and in his absence Shakib successfully led the team to historic Test and one-day series victories in the Caribbean which was followed by a 4-1 win in Zimbabwe.

But BCB found no reason to bring about any change and they hoped both would be fit before the series against Zimbabwe. Mashrafe recently had operation on his knees while Shakib is currently in Adelaide for treatment of his groin injury.

"As suggested by the experts, we hope that both will be fit before the series. There was no point to make changes. True that Shakib did excellent job but Mashrafe has not been tested," said Yunus.

As per the recommendation of the evaluation committee the board also extended the tenure of the national selection committee of chief selector Rafiqul Alam and members Naimur Rahman and Akram Khan until June 30 next year.

The directors also discussed on the

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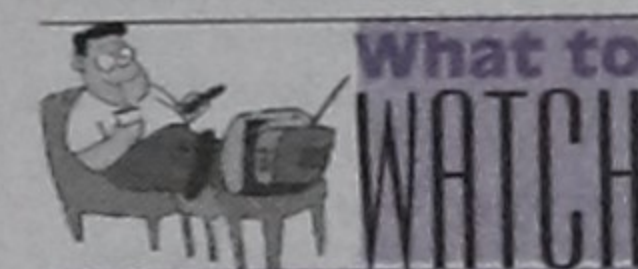
PHOTO: STAR

Mohammedan players train at their club ground in Motijheel yesterday ahead of the start of the Federation Cup.



Fernando Torres

(Liverpool's Spanish striker)
"A World Cup without Argentina, France or Portugal would not be the same. I would like them all to take part."



TEN Sports

US Open Tennis
Men's Quarterfinals
Live from 10:00pm

ESPN

Sportscenter India
Sports News
Live at 9:30pm

Serena up against Kim

AFP, New York

Defending champion Serena Williams will play comeback queen Kim Clijsters for a place in the US Open final after both scored straight sets wins in their quarterfinals on Tuesday.

Williams, seeded second despite being widely regarded as the best player in the world, defeated Italy's Flavia Pennetta 6-4, 6-3.

Clijsters, bidding to become just the third mother to win a Grand Slam title in the modern era, saw off the challenge of China's Li Na 6-2, 6-4. The Belgian had defeated Serena's sister Venus in the fourth round.

The win over Pennetta was a fifth consecutive straight-sets win for Williams, who has been in imperious form as she seeks a fourth US Open crown and a 12th Grand Slam title overall.

The 27-year-old Italian, who has belatedly stepped out of the shadows this year to become the first woman from her country to break into the world top 10, gave as good as she got in the early exchanges against Williams.

She got to 4-4 before Williams started to turn on the power as and when she needed, holding serve easily and then break Pennetta's serve to love.

The Italian did have two break points in the opening game of the second set but

both times under pressure she netted a forehand.

The 10th seed, playing in just her second Grand Slam quarterfinal, once again stood

her ground valiantly until the sixth game when again Williams stepped on the turbo to force a break point on which

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PHOTO: AFP

Reigning champion Serena Williams of the USA lets go off her racket after beating Flavia Pennetta of Italy in the quarterfinals of the US Open at Flushing Meadows on Tuesday. Williams won 6-4, 6-3.

Dhaka to host SAFF tourney

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh will host the 6th SAFF Championship scheduled for December 1-15 this year, SAFF announced today. All the eight South Asian countries will take part in the meet.

The Championship was supposed to be held in New Delhi, India. But India later informed of their inability to host the meet, specially reluctant to host Pakistan at the aftermath of the terrorist attacks in Mumbai last year.

Then Bangladesh and Nepal jointly expressed their interest to host the meet and considering interest of the two counties, the SAFF policymakers sent their representatives to Nepal and Bangladesh to assess the venues and other facilities. Dhaka was finally chosen as the venue for the meet.

Soon after the announcement, Bangladesh Football Federation president Kazi Salahuddin expressed his

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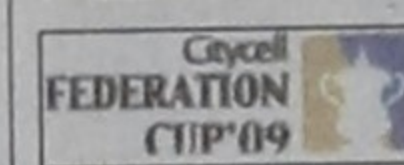


Federation Cup Football
MSC Dhaka v Feni Soccer Club (4:00pm)
Venue: Bangabandhu National Stadium
BKSP v Brothers Union (4:00pm)
Venue: Army Stadium

Newbies scent chance

Fed Cup kicks off today

ANISUR RAHMAN



After a season of hope that saw enthusiasm among fans reborn, country's domestic football gets underway with fresh vigour when the traditional curtain-riser Citycell Federation Cup kicks off at the Bangabandhu National Stadium and the Army Stadium today.

Although the fight for glory will understandably be a two-way battle between defending champions Mohammedan Sporting Club and their bitter rivals Abahani, the novelty of this year's contest would be how Bangladesh's Brazilian coach Edson Dido Silva's new faces fare for their respective clubs.

Mohammedan will begin their title defence against newcomers Feni Soccer Club at the Bangabandhu National Stadium while a depleted Brothers Union, once regarded as a third force, take on the youthful side of Bangladesh Krira Shikkha Protisthan at the Army Stadium.

Mohammedan will certainly look for their star striker Zahid Hasan Emily to fire in the opening match after roping him from Abahani with the highest transfer fee.

Most of the clubs got little time to be prepared for the tournament, considered as a warm-up for the coveted B. League. But they can take heart from the fact that the 31 national players, who were fine tuned in a two-and-a-half month training under Dido, would be ready to showcase their skill right from the word go.

"I'm excited to see how the national team players perform in the domestic front. It will however depend on how the club coaches handle the players and what type of roles they want from them," said Dido when asked whether his boys were going to dominate the show in the season's curtain-raising tournament.

The Brazilian send shockwaves among the football pundits when he picked up as many as 10 fresh players in the national camp overlooking some established veterans in a quest of giving a new shape of the future Bangladesh football team.

He was bitterly criticised for picking up some players with little or no previous experience of playing in the top fight of domestic football. The unknown players are Abahani's midfielder Shahedul Islam Shahed, Mohammedan's defender Alamgir Kabir Rana, Sheikh Russel's playmaker Emon Mahmud Babu, right-winger Mobarrak Hossain, Farashganj's midfielder Mezbabul Haque Manik, left-winger Imtiaz Sultan Zitu and stopper Rezaul Karim Reza, Rahmatganj's striker Sabbir Mahmud Pritam.

Dido believes most of new faces he had earlier picked have potential but doubt the Federation Cup will be an ideal platform for those players to convince their clubs that they are just not filling up the numbers but making their debut in the top fight by their own rights.

The coach has also warned them to perform.

"I am going to see them closely in the Federation Cup and a recall in the national camp will only be guaranteed depending on their performance," said Dido.

There are also some established players Dido would like to keep close eyes on especially after a revolt against his gruelling training schedule at the BKSP in Savar. His tough nut to crack attitude might auger well for the clubs as Mohammedan's star striker Zahid Hasan Emily, defender Wali Faisal, playmaker Arman Aziz, winger Zahid Hossain, defenders Ariful Islam and Mofazzal Hossain Saikat and Abahani's defender Rajani Kanta Barman and midfielder Zahed Parvez Chowdhury, who walked out of the BKSP camp, would come out firing all their cylinders.

Playground or trade ground?

TAWFIQUE ALI

Dhanmondi Club has once again rented out Dhanmondi playground to hold a month-long fair depriving the local children and youths of the scanty sports facility in violation of a High Court direction and government instruction.

Interestingly, the club has itself been illegally occupying the ground beside road number 8 since 1962 with Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) continually playing a dubious role.

The club has rented out the ground to an organisation Monipuri Mahila Unnyan Sangstha to hold the month-long handicraft fair in sheer defiance of an HC direction asking not to use the playground for other purposes than sports.

The organiser has installed scores of makeshift shops with tin fencing and bamboo poles digging holes and cracks, spoiling the evenness of the play field.

Though DCC is the official custodian of the playground, it has always been playing a dubious role in this regard.

Following a writ petition jointly filed by an environmental group Bangladesh Paribesh Andolon (Bapa) and Institute of Architects Bangladesh (IAB), the High Court on April 24, 2004 directed

the DCC not to use Dhanmondi playground for any purposes other than sports.

The court further asked DCC to report what actions it (DCC) takes for removal of unauthorised structures thereon and to maintain and preserve it.

The National Sports Council in a letter during the immediate past caretaker government instructed the authorities concerned including the DCC in particular not to use playgrounds for any other purposes than sports and games.

The DCC mayor Sadeq Hossain Khoka expressed his ignorance of the matter by saying, "Is there any such court direction on us?"

But in any case, he said, the club has no authority to rent out the playground.

"I will look into it," said Khoka, "We will try to carry an eviction drive if the fair is not permitted by DCC."

Meanwhile, Bapa wrote a letter to Dhanmondi Club September 5 asking to know how and why it has rented out the playground for business purpose, said its president Prof. Muzaffer Ahmad.

"In case they fail to come up with a satisfactory answer, we will go for charge of contempt of court," said Prof. Ahmad, who is an old Dhanmondi resident.

The IAB president Mubasshar Hussain said, "This is a sheer defiance not only to the HC direction but also to the existing law and government instruction."

The Public Works

Department (PWD), at the time it handed over the playground to DCC for maintenance during Ershad regime, clearly mentioned that the presence of Dhanmondi club at the playground was unauthorised, said

Hussain, who is also a Dhanmondi resident.

The wetland, playgrounds and open spaces protection act of 2000 prohibits such abuse of a playground.

Dhanmondi Club general

secretary (in-charge) Iliasur Rahman Babul said that they rent out the playground for monetary gain of the club.

"We have no formal permission from any authority to occupy the ground," said

Babul, "But in our country, owner of a playground is whoever is mighty."

Babul declined to say how much money the club exacted as rent.

However, the club realized



PHOTO: STAR

An aerial view of the Dhanmondi Club ground on road number eight shows stalls erected to host a month-long handicrafts fair. The fair is being held with permission from the club authorities defying an existing High Court order preventing the ground to be used for any other purpose other than sports.

Tk 2 lakhs in 2004, Tk 2 lakhs in 2005 and Tk 3.23 lakhs in 2007 from National Forum of Organisations Working with the Disabled (NFOWD) for holding a fair at the Dhanmondi playground.

In the face of public criticism, the social welfare ministry at the last minute retracted the NFOWD fair of handicrafts scheduled on December 3, 2007 at the ground.

The club has been using the playground in exclusive manner and making money out of it though the ground is a designated common public property meant for the residents of the neighbourhood.

Dhanmondi Club rented out the playground to Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) in March 2006 to hold a two-day council on April 3, in defiance of the HC directive.

According to Prof. Ahmad, DCC has consistently been apathetic to conservation of parks, playgrounds and open spaces in the capital.

According to Prof. Serajul Islam Choudhury, an eminent social analyst and head of a high-level advisory committee on DCC's park development and beautification, absence of wholesome sporting facilities is considerably responsible for artificiality, frustration and addiction in today's social life.