

SPORT

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Van Gaal dropped his pants: Toni

Juventus' ex-Bayern Munich striker Luca Toni on Thursday revealed how coach Louis van Gaal once proved he had 'the balls' to drop any of Bayern's stars - by dropping his trousers.

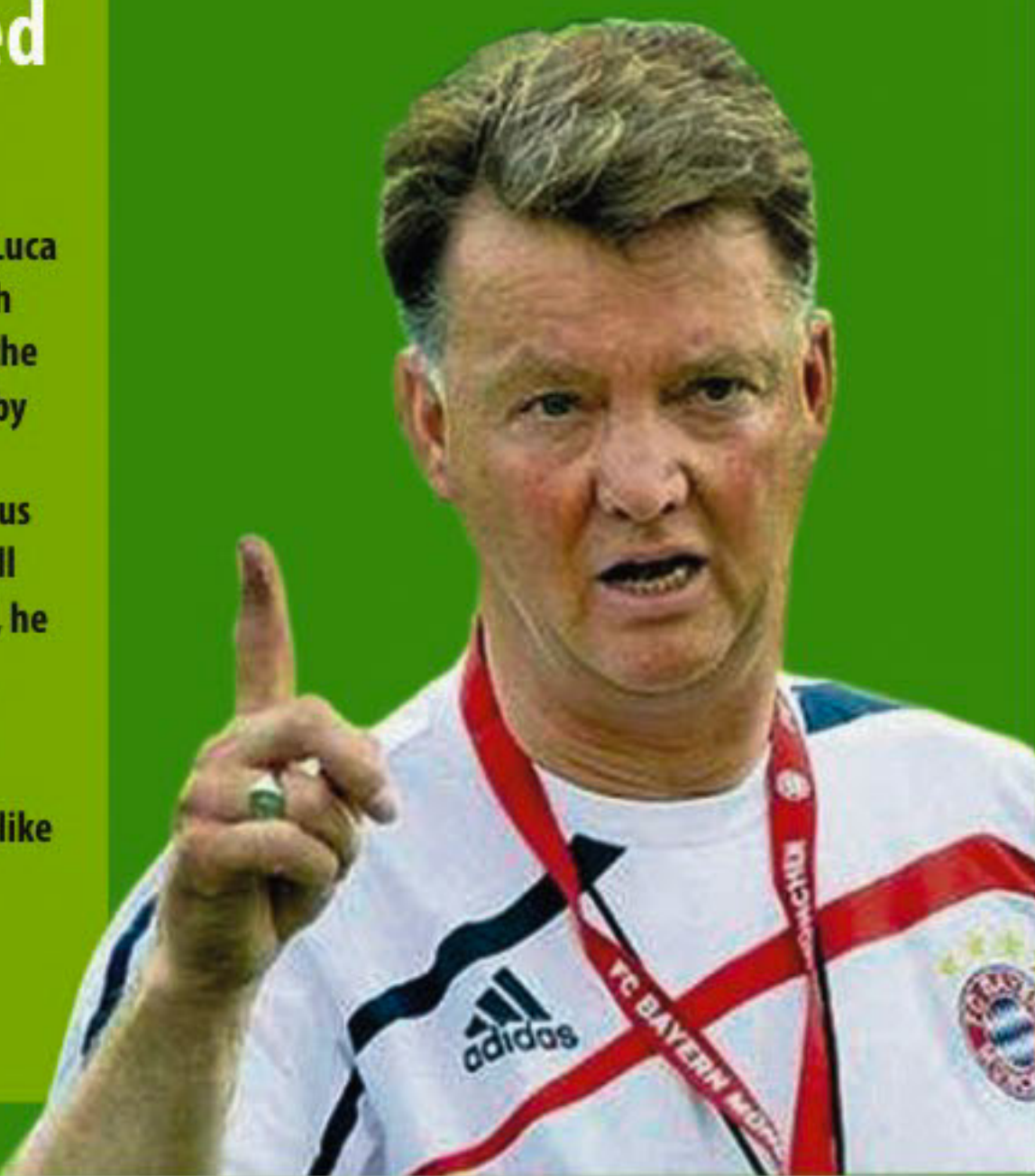
"The coach wanted to make clear to us that he can drop any player, it was all the same to him because, as he said, he had the balls," said Toni.

"He demonstrated this literally (by dropping his trousers).

"I have never experienced anything like it, it was totally crazy.

"Luckily I didn't see a lot, because I wasn't in the front row."

- AFP



BATTLE PLAN

Spin is king

BISHWAJIT ROY

There is little doubt that the effort of the spinners was the key behind the Tigers success in the last two series against New Zealand and Zimbabwe. The slow bowlers took 56 wickets amongst them in the last eight matches; a statistic, which clearly shows how heavily the Bangladesh team are dependant on them. Nobody will hesitate to spot this as the strongest area of the Bangladesh team especially in limited-overs cricket.

One can easily say that it's a comfort zone for Jamie Siddons' charges and that is the reason there are five spinners in the team in Shakib Al Hasan, Abdur Razzak, Sohrwardi Shuvo, Mahmudullah Riyad and Naem Islam. Add to that mix Mohammad Ashraful, who can also turn his arm around for the occasional spell of leg-spin bowling.

Of course the batsmen will have to play their part but Bangladesh's success in the coming World Cup will depend on the slow bowlers because it's expected that they will get the most help from the conditions that prevail in pitches here. In particular, all eyes will be on Shakib Al Hasan and veteran Abdur Razzak, who had a tremendous contribution during the 2007 World Cup in West Indies along with ace left-arm spinner Mohammad Rafique. But Shakib is still the most fancy weapon in Bangladesh's arsenal and his form is critical in a tournament expected to be dominated by batsmen.

Without leading paceman Mashrafe Bin Mortaza, the inexperienced pace attack will definitely face a tough task against teams

like India, South Africa and England and so the onus will be on the spin bowlers. Especially everybody would be looking forward to see how they handle the formidable Indian batting line-up.

Shakib and Razzak are the proven fighters but it would be the biggest test for Riyad and Naem and even Shuvo, if he does get the chance to play in any match. Shakib's main strength is his deathly accuracy no matter what the conditions and the left-arter can read any batsman very quickly while Razzak has become a much better bowler after changing his action.

"It's better not to say anything about Shakib because he already proved his ability in any condition. But it is amazing the way Razzak has improved his bowling. Razzak is now a much better bowler after changing his action because he can control the ball much better," said coach Mohammad Salahuddin, who has been working hard with Razzak ever since the bowler was suspended for an illegal action.

He also said that Razzak developed more options in his bowling and he can now dip the ball perfectly. With his changed action, Razzak claimed 18 scalps in eight games in the later part of last year whereas initially he had only 11 wickets in 14 matches.

"And just mind it, Razzak bowled most of the occasions in the Powerplay in his career which has given a great relief to Shakib. And his effectiveness with the new ball is also amazing. He is mentally very tough and he has proved time and again not only in the field but also off the field whenever he was suspended," added Salahuddin.

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PHOTO: STAR FILE

Left-arm spinner Abdur Razzak has hit a purple patch of late, and he needs to be on top of his game in the World Cup to emulate his tremendous feat from four years ago.

Abahani-MSC clash today

SPORTS REPORTER



It almost feels like déjà vu. Abahani and Mohammedan will play each other in the last round of the Premier Division Cricket Super League tomorrow, just as they did in the same stage last year.

But the only difference this year is that Mohammedan is already out of the championship race as they trail their rivals by three points.

For the Sky Blues, a win today would bring back the title. It is still however tight at the top as Gazi Tank are breathing down their neck, but the upstarts will have to win themselves while hoping that Abahani lose. If this does transpire, Gazi will be the ones celebrating courtesy of their better head-to-head record against Abahani.

On a more interesting sidenote, the Abahani-Mohammedan tie at Fatullah will be given flavour by the return of Mashrafe bin Mortaza.

Mashrafe is expected to be back in the Abahani squad for this vital match and the fast bowler will be looking to prove himself as both fit and ready to play on the big stage.

BCB media committee chairman Jalal Yunus informed that Mashrafe had been given the go ahead by the physios to play.

"He (Mashrafe) will play tomorrow (today). The physio gave him the permission but also asked him to bowl in short spells," confirmed Yunus.

STANDINGS

	M	W	L	T	Pts
Abahani	15	12	3	0	24
Gazi Tank	15	11	4	0	22
Mohammedan	15	10	4	1	21
Old DOHS	15	9	6	0	18
Biman	15	8	7	0	16

MSC snap losing streak

SPORTS REPORTER



Mohammedan SC snapped their losing streak in the Grameenphone Bangladesh League with an authoritative 4-1 win over Arambagh KS at the Birshreshtha Mostafa Kamal Stadium in Kamalapur yesterday.

The Black and Whites, who were on the back of a three match losing streak, dominated right from the word go and took a 3-1 lead in the first half while Arambagh also pulled one back in the half to show signs of an entertaining game, but without their two key defenders were unable to hold their neighbours.

However, it was Arambagh who launched the first attack after 12 minutes and nearly took a lead through Bengamin Cooper, who controlled a high ball with his chest inside before

driving, but Mohammedan's Ghanaian goalkeeper Mohammad Al-Hassan was up to the task.

Mohammedan reorganised and found the back of the net only two minutes later when Rony Islam ran down the right before putting in a well-judged cross for Nigerian striker Emeka Christian who expertly headed in the first goal.

Arambagh hit back instantly to level the margin when Cooper availed a short pass from Ismael and dodged past two defenders and the goalkeeper before placing the ball in.

Mohammedan restored the lead five minutes later when defender Emeka Lucky headed in a cross from Enamul Haq Sharif. The lead was extended by Uwiringiyimana Amani on the half-hour mark.

Mohammedan held possession of the midfield in the second half and took the score to 4-1 in the stoppage time when right-winger

Shariful Islam put a low-cross for substitute striker Anwar Hossain, who just tapped the ball home from inside the six-yard box to ensure a morale boosting victory for the Motijheel outfit.

"The boys availed of the chances they got which made it look like an easy win," said Mohammedan coach Shafiqul Islam Manik.

Arambagh coach Zahidul Islam Milon declined to talk to reporters but their suspended captain Deen Mohammad said they were victim of conspiracy as himself and defender Mostafa Kaba were handed suspensions by the football federation on the eve of the game.

He felt that the suspension to two defenders forced them to play midfielders as defenders. Mohammedan are now in third position with 12 points while Arambagh stay at joint eighth position with six points from as many matches.



PHOTO: BANGLARCHOKH

Mohammedan's Nigerian striker Emeka Christian (L) leads the celebration lap after scoring the opening goal in a 4-1 win over Arambagh in the Bangladesh League at the Birshreshtha Mostafa Kamal Stadium yesterday.

Siddikur extends lead

SPORTS REPORTER

Siddikur Rahman maintained his solo lead in the Grameenphone Bangladesh Masters when he played a superb seven-under-par in the second round at the Kurmitola Golf Club yesterday.

Siddikur played a flawless second round for a two-round aggregate of 13-under-par (131) to tighten his grip on the 75,000 US dollar Asian Development Tour event.

Siddikur's compatriot Motin scored one-under-par to stay at second on five-under-par (139) while Japan's Hiroto Naito, Bangladesh's Liton Howlader and Zamal Hossain Mollah shared third place with aggregate scores of six-under-par (140).

Siddikur, the first Bangladeshi to win on the

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IPL window shuts on Ganguly

CRICINFO

The IPL governing council has denied franchises permission to sign the three unsold Indian players from the auction after some of the teams objected to the proposal, putting an end to any chances former India captain, Sourav Ganguly, had of playing in IPL 4.

The governing council has also allowed Manish Pandey to sign with the Sahara Pune Warriors, but banned him for four matches for breaching the IPL's rules governing the signing of uncapped players.

The Kochi franchise was reported to have shown interest in Ganguly, and had

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Where have all the beggars gone?

ANISUR RAHMAN



For the past 20 years, Alam Khan has been selling a variety of accessories like holy perfume, Tasbi (prayer beads), Tupi (prayer hat), Jainamaz (prayer mat) behind the national mosque, Baitul Mokkaram. The 60-year old hawker earns between Tk 350 to 400 each day, through which he bears the expenditure of his eight-member family. But Khan was recently evicted from the illegal footpath market adjacent to the Bangabandhu National Stadium, which will host the gala opening ceremony of the ICC Cricket World

Cup on February 17. "The police and Army told me to pack up and go and not to come back until the World Cup is over," said Khan on the day of eviction on January 31.

The eviction has left him seething but he was seen trying to set up his shop inside the arena of the national mosque even though there is a fear of further eviction by the mosque authority. But Khan has no choice, as he has to send Tk 5000 to 6,000 per month to his family who resides in the southern district of Patuakhali.

"Now I don't know how will I run the family and all depends on Allah," said the

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Together we pray

The prayer for the National Cricket Team will continue



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