

# Star SPORT

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## Ceni plays his 1000th match

Sao Paulo's Rogério Ceni -- the goalkeeper who has scored more than any other in the history of the game with more than 100 goals -- played his 1,000th match for the club on Wednesday, 18 years after making his first team debut. Sao Paulo marked the occasion by beating Atletico MG 2-1. After the match, fans attempted to bury Ceni in confetti but Ceni, being the indomitable force that he is powered through the onslaught of streamers. He then beat the source of all that confetti into a jelly.



## Under-16 booters off to Iraq

SPORTS REPORTER

The Bangladesh Under-16 football team leave here for Iraq tonight to take part in the AFC Under-16 Championship.

Bangladesh U-16, who finished fourth in the SAFF U-16 tournament in Nepal last month, were placed in Group A along with hosts Iraq, Iran, Qatar and Palestine. The top two teams from the group will advance to the next round.

Group A matches will get underway from September 12.

Coach Nurul Haque Manik believes qualifying for the second round will be a hard task due to the presence of strong teams like Iran, Qatar and Iraq but he promised to put up better show in the tournament.



Deposed Bangladesh captain and vice-captain Shakhil Al Hasan (L) and Tamim Iqbal are back in the rank and file when the Tigers started training for the West Indies series at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium yesterday.

PHOTO: BANGLARCHOKH.COM

## Law surprised

Finds the players disciplined

Cricket

SPORTS REPORTER

Stuart Law, much like anyone who would be associated to Bangladesh cricket for less than two months, was left surprised to see Shakhil Al Hasan losing his job as Bangladesh captain.

But the Tigers' coach realised that it wasn't just the series loss to Zimbabwe that contributed to the change of guard at the top but a string of events that led to this situation.

"It was a surprise. It is very difficult to see my own reaction but inside I knew I was very surprised with the news. The cricket board have made a decision, we have got to run with it," he said yesterday, after the national side completed their first fitness session since the end of the Zimbabwe tour, ahead of the West Indies series next month.

Law said that there was a "hypothetical" mention of what might happen if Shakhil isn't the captain during the Zimbabwe tour but he didn't find any clear indication that the all-rounder

would be sacked from his post.

"You have so many talks and so many discussions. [I am] new to the job, seeing how things work so it was never really mentioned this is what needs to be done.

"There were a lot of hypotheticals, if Shakhil wasn't captain who would be



STUART LAW

captain, that sort of thing regarding injuries. Those were some of the discussions we've had. But this is a total surprise," said Law.

But the former Australian cricketer confirmed that he wasn't consulted before Bangladesh Cricket Board took the quick

call during Monday's meeting. It is often that the coach is asked for his opinion before such a big decision is made.

"I wasn't [consulted] but I was on leave. So I was uncontactable at the time. The board has made a decision not just on events in Zimbabwe but from what I understand from some other ongoing situations," he said.

Law however was adamant that he had talked about the chief of delegations and selector sitting inside the dressing room during the Zimbabwe tour with the other players, but they didn't force him into taking any action. Rather, Law claims, he was surprised to see the two sitting within the confines of the players' refuge.

"It's not so much that I had a problem with it. I saw the players' reaction when things were being said.

"I'm different but it's the first time I've ever seen head of delegations and selectors in the dressing room for every part of the game and every minute of the day. I think the players need their sanctuary and it's the dressing room.

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## What good will Messi do?

Football

QUAZI ZULQUARNAIN ISLAM

As Lionel Messi and his Argentina team amble back into the daily drudgery of club football they leave behind in their wake an adoring crowd of Bangladeshi supporters hopeful for another visit of football's most famous star. If Messi had even had half an ear open during most of the game on Tuesday, he would definitely have been rewarded with screams of endearment that greeted his every touch. The Argentine's popularity is so at its peak here that it overwhelms the support for other superstars

such as Gonzalo Higuain and Angel di Maria.

As such, Bangladesh can prove a comfortable destination for many such future internationals of Argentina; in truth the supporter base here is as strong as it is anywhere else in the world.

But the real question which arises with Messi's departure is this; do games of this magnitude have any real impact or value for football in Bangladesh?

When the game was initially announced this question was repeatedly raised to the Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF), because in reality, looking only at face value, there really is very little tangible impact for Bangladesh football per se from a game of this magnitude.

BFF president Kazi Salahuddin's response in those circumstances was quite admirable. He felt, and rightly so, that organizing games of such calibre could only serve to increase the visibility of Bangladeshi football to youths playing the game here, while at the same time establish Bangladesh as a popular and able destination for friendly internationals of this magnitude.

But with the departure of the Argentines the feeling is that while the first output might have been achieved, the second was one that the BFF and its partner Beximco completely missed the boat in.

But first the positives.

The interest generated from this game was massive, even if the hype was not prop-

erly channelled by the BFF. There is no doubt that seeing the kind of superstars that you do line-up on TV every week, playing in front of you, will get at least a few youngsters to take up football as their primary sport.

Also, people will be talking about this Messi game for a long time and through this football finally garnered the much sought after front page coverage. However, the fear is that once Messi has left things will go back to their usual state, i.e. little or no coverage of Bangladesh football or the Bangladesh League.

And it is easy to see why. Over the years it has been tough to attract the audience for football in Bangladesh, as had been almost the wont in the 1980s. Young kids can recite

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## Mamatha takes charge

Cricket

SPORTS REPORTER

The Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) has appointed Mamatha Maben as coach of the Bangladesh women's cricket team yesterday.

The former India women's cricket team captain, who arrived in Dhaka yesterday on a three-month assignment, became the first foreign coach for the Bangladesh women's cricket team.

"Initially we made a three-month deal with her (Mamatha Maben) and will review her performance before signing a

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## It's just the beginning?

Football

SPORTS REPORTER

After the successful completion of the Argentina-Nigeria match in Dhaka, Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) has now set its sights on bringing English Premier League champions Manchester United and Diego Maradona's Al Wasl FC of UAE to the city next year.

"If I am elected again in next year's election, then I will try to bring Manchester United and Maradona in July 12 or 15 next year," Salahuddin told reporters at his office in Motijheel yesterday.

BFF member Anwarul Haq Helal, who acted as chairman of the Argentina-Nigeria FIFA international friendly, elaborated further that Maradona's charges Al Wasl FC could play against Manchester United of England.

The tenure of the existing BFF executive committee, led by Kazi Salahuddin, will expire on April 30 next year.

However, the BFF boss has shifted his focus to the national team as Bangladesh will compete in the SAFF Championship to be held in Orissa, India from December 1 to 15.

"Ahead of December's SAFF Championship, the national football team will be given enough time to be prepared, we even will send them abroad for practice matches if needed," said Salahuddin.

Bangladesh were eliminated by eventual champions India from the semifinals of the SAFF Championship held in Bangladesh in late 2009.

Bangladesh are now led by Macedonian coach Nikola Ilievski, who guided the team to the second round of the 2014 World Cup pre-qualifiers after an aggregate 3-0 win over Pakistan in the first round, but his charges were eliminated through an aggregate 4-2 loss against Lebanon despite a 2-0 home win.

"We will discuss the team's preparations with the national coach before finalising the programme and the booters may be given one month or two months to be geared up for the SAFF Championship," added the BFF boss.

The domestic season will get under way through the Federation Cup in the latter part of December after the completion of the SAFF Championship. The players' transfer window will be open from October 1.

"We initially wanted to complete the Federation Cup before the SAFF Championship but a few clubs of the professional football league want to play Federation Cup and Bangladesh League uninterrupted," said Anwarul Haq Helal, member of the Bangladesh League Committee.

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