

Star SPORT

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'Cancer fight not over yet'

Barcelona coach Tito Vilanova admitted on Sunday that his cancer battle is not over and that he may be forced to once again step away from guiding the team's thrilling pursuit of La Liga title. The 44-year-old underwent surgery for a second time on a tumour on a saliva gland on December 20. "This is not over yet and there will be days that I can take training and others I can't but I want the media to realise that this illness is mine and it



Dutch duo is here

Football

SPORTS REPORTER

Dutch coach Lodewijk de Kruif announced his intention of introducing Dutch style of play in Bangladesh football as the 43-year-old, along with his compatriot and assistant coach Rene Koster, arrived here yesterday evening to have a look of the sport in the country and sign agreement to become the national team coach.

Explaining his football philosophy, de Kruif said, "I like attacking football, building the game from behind. I like good football up to the striking zone and putting pressure as well as getting the ball early. You know Dutch football has always had three strikers which is very attractive and that is what we want to do here.

"But we don't know what we will see and find over here. First we have to look at the quality of players and their mentality and we will work from there," said Kruif, while talking to reporters at the Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport, after arriving nearly two hours later than scheduled time.

In the six-day visit to Bangladesh, de Kruif will see the structure of Bangladesh football, watch a couple of matches of the professional football league and present his plans to the executive body of Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) before putting pen to paper for a two-year deal.

If everything goes according to plan, de Kruif will become the sixteenth foreign coach for Bangladesh national football team, succeeding Macedonian Nikola Ilievski, who left the job in December 2011 following the national team's poor performance in the SAFF Championship. The position of a permanent national coach has remained vacant since.

De Kruif said he has done some homework on Bangladesh team before coming here and might also take a clue from three Nigerian players, now playing in the ongoing Grameenphone Bangladesh Premier League, who once played under his guidance in Nigerian outfit Heartland.

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PHOTO: STAR

THE CHOSEN ONE! Will this Dutchman, Lodewijk de Kruif, be the one to take Bangladesh football to a higher level?

Anyone's game in 3rd round

SPORTS REPORTER

It's all to play to for in the third round of the newly-formed Bangladesh Cricket League (BCL), which begins today, as all franchises have a chance of qualifying for the finals of the competition.

As per the current standings, Walton Central Zone top the table with ten points, Prime Bank South Zone are second with nine points, BCB North Zone are third with six points, and Islami Bank East Zone are fourth with five points.

The Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium will witness North Zone battle it out with South Zone for a place in the finals while leaders Central Zone will take on East Zone at the Shaheed Chandu Stadium in Bogra.

Central though will be without their captain Mahmudullah Riyad, who is out with a hamstring injury. For North Zone, Shuvashish Roy and Tanvir Hyder will replace the injured Shafiul Islam and Liton Kumar Das respectively.

The finals of the league will be a day-night affair scheduled to take place in February after the end of the Bangladesh Premier League T20.

Zaka gives no confirmation

Cricket

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) president Nazmul Hassan Papon did not get any confirmation from his Pakistan counterpart Zaka Ashraf regarding the participation of Pakistani players in the second edition of the Bangladesh Premier League (BPL) T20.

"Our president (Nazmul Hassan Papon) requested the PCB (Pakistan Cricket Board) chairman to release all available players if it is not possible to send the PCB-contracted players to the BPL. PCB chairman (Zaka Ashraf) noted it down. Nobody made any commitments during their meeting. But we are hopeful that the Pakistan player will play the BPL," said BCB's media committee chairman Jalal Yunus.

BCB president Nazmul Hassan Papon met PCB chairman Zaka Ashraf in New Delhi on Sunday during the third One-Day International between India and Pakistan.

"They talked about bilateral cricket issues and among other things the Bangladesh team's tour to Pakistan and participation of Pakistani players in the 2nd edition of the Bangladesh Premier League T20 were discussed," Yunus was quoted as saying in the board's official statement regarding the meeting.

"The BCB president assured Mr. Ashraf that he will have detailed discussions on the Pakistan tour with the board's ad-hoc executive committee on his return to Bangladesh after attending the Asian Cricket Council meeting in Kuala Lumpur," he continued.

"The two boards also decided to work closely to identify an appropriate time to tour Pakistan," he added.

Meanwhile, the participation of the Pakistani players became a cause for concern after BCB postponed the Tigers' proposed short trip to Pakistan a little more than a week ago.

BCB hopeful that Pakistan players will participate in BPL

Yunus says BCB and PCB have decided to work

BPL schedule announced

SPORTS REPORTER

Defending champions Dhaka Gladiators will take on Khulna Royal Bengals at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur on January 18 in the first game of the second edition of the Bangladesh Premier League (BPL) T20. Apart from Mirpur, matches will also take place at the Sheikh Abu Naser Stadium in Khulna and the MA Aziz Stadium in Chittagong.

The teams will move to Khulna on January 21. After eight matches in Khulna the teams will shift to Chittagong for a week before returning to Dhaka. The finals will take place in Dhaka on February 19.

Div I cricket

SPORTS REPORTER

Mehedi Hasan hit 106 and Sohel Rana made 82 as Magnum Cricketers registered a six-wicket victory over Agrani Bank Cricket Club in the First Division Cricket League at the Dhanmondi Cricket Stadium yesterday.

At the City Club ground, Raihan Uddin claimed six wickets for 44 runs to guide Tasin Hasin Cricket Academy, securing a 20-run victory against Kathalbagan Green Crescent Club.

In the day's other matches, Partex Sporting Club posted an eight-wicket victory against Biman at the Jahangirnagar University

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Mashrafe in charge again

SPORTS REPORTER

Mashrafe Bin Mortaza will lead the Dhaka Gladiators for the second time as he was officially declared the captain of the side for the second edition of the Bangladesh Premier League (BPL) T20 at a press conference in a city hotel yesterday.

The Gladiators, who won the inaugural edition of the competition, look a much stronger side on paper this year with the inclusion of all-rounder Shakib Al Hasan, hard-hitting opener Tillakaratne Dilshan and T20 specialist Owais Shah.

"Our team is more balanced this year and I hope we continue the good

run," said Mortaza. "The newly-formed Bangladesh Cricket League and the BPL will create a good base for the youngsters to perform in both the longer and shorter formats of the game," he added.

Shakib, who was fetched the highest price at the auction this year, echoed Mortaza's sentiments and

claimed that the team would want to 'hold on to the momentum'. The all-rounder, who had a successful stint with the Kolkata Knight Riders in the Indian Premier League last year, was confident of putting up a better performance for the Gladiators. He was also of the opinion that the T20 league would further help improve Bangladesh's cricketing standards.

"This is the first time I am playing outside Khulna, but I really don't think that should be a problem. Everybody in the team speaks the same language after all," said Shakib.

"There is obviously a lot of difference when you're playing T20 cricket for your country and when you're

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FIXTURES

(First six matches)

- Jan 17: Opening ceremony
- Jan 18: Dhaka Gladiators v Khulna Royal Bengals
- Barisal Burners v Sylhet Royals
- Jan 19: Chittagong Kings v Duront Rajshahi
- Dhaka Gladiators v Rangpur Riders
- Jan 20: Barisal Burners v Khulna Royal Bengals



Feni SC goalkeeper Masud Ahmed Ujjal (C) foils an attack from Sheikh Jamal DC striker Kester Akon during their Grameenphone Bangladesh Premier League match at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

Jamal leave it late

SPORTS REPORTER



Sheikh Jamal Dhanmondi Club regained solo lead in the Grameenphone Bangladesh Premier League when they beat Feni Soccer Club by the odd goal in three at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

Nigerian striker Mike Otorjeri put the new leviathans ahead in the 78th minute before his compatriot Victory Antoni levelled the margin for Feni in the 86th minute. However, national winger Shakil Ahmed struck two minutes from time to ensure the League leaders' fifth win in six matches. The win took Sheikh Jamal to 16 points, one ahead of Sheikh Russel KC and three clear of holders Abahani while Feni remained at seventh position with three points from six outings.

Visitors Feni came close to taking an early lead in the very third minute as their goal-scorer Victory danced past Sheikh Jamal goalkeeper Muksudur Rahman before slotting the ball into an empty net from an acute angle. However, to his dismay, the Nigerian hitman saw the ball cleared off the line by Feni defender Yeamin Munna.

Munna then went on the attack and

almost gave Sheikh Jamal the lead in the 14th minute when he found Feni goalkeeper Masud Ahmed Ujjal in a one-on-one situation, but the Feni keeper came out of his line to clear the danger.

Sheikh Jamal once again went close four minutes later when Otorjeri back-headed to Sunday, who dodged past advancing goalkeeper Ujjal and was about to shoot home but was apparently bought down inside the danger zone by goalkeeper Ujjal from behind. The referee Bhuban Mohan Tarafder however overlooked the incident.

Sheikh Jamal kept pressing and Otorjeri saw his curling effort go narrowly wide of the far post from the left-hand side before the Nigerian put his side ahead in the 78th minute when Sunday put a low cross for him.

Feni Soccer hit back in the eight minutes later when unmarked Victory availed a weak clearance from Munna in front of goal before side-volleying it to level the margin.

As the match seemed headed for a draw, Shakil struck gold for Sheikh Jamal. Being set up by an Alamgir Rana chip, the winger fired home a left-footer from inside the box to ensure three priceless points.



PHOTO: STAR

Dhaka Gladiators' Shakib Al Hasan (2nd from L), Mashrafe Bin Mortaza (C) and Mohammad Ashraf (2nd from R) pose with the team mascot during the team unveiling at a city hotel yesterday.