



PHOTO: STAR
Bangladesh's Dutch coach Lodewijk de Kruif (L) speaks to the media while national skipper Mamunul Islam looks on at the BFF House yesterday, ahead of the team's departure for Thailand today to play two friendlies.

U-16s booters thumped by Nepal

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh U-16 national football team were eliminated from the Under-16 SAFF Football Championship as they were ruthlessly beaten 5-1 by hosts Nepal at the Dasharath Stadium yesterday.

The Bangladesh youngsters, who beat Sri Lanka 3-1 in their opening group match before being beaten by India 2-0, were on the back foot from the beginning as they conceded the first goal in the eighth minute. Bangladesh conceded two more goals in the first half before conceding two more in the first fifteen minutes of the second half, one of those being an own goal. The young Tigers however pulled one back in the 65th minute, thanks to a strike from striker Sifat.

Bangladesh will play the third position deciding match on July 30 against the losing side of the second semifinal between India and Afghanistan.

Jimmy's SMS threat traced

SPORTS REPORTER

The threatening message sent to star national hockey forward Russel Mahmud Jimmy was traced by the law enforcement agencies yesterday. The mobile phone from which the SMS was sent on July 18, which threatened that Jimmy will be apprehended by Rapid Action Battalion if he did not take part in the inter-club transfers, was said to be registered at a local shop in Keraniganj under the name of Kamal with an address of Banglabazar in Old Dhaka.

The SIM was used till July 18 when the message was sent, after which it was switched off permanently, informed a source inside the Bangladesh Hockey Federation yesterday. The source, on condition of anonymity, also said that the person using the SIM had a few SMS exchanges with recently-dissolved interim committee member Shahidullah Dolon, who is also a joint-secretary of Abahani's hockey committee. Dolon is known to have a personal vendetta against the general secretary of BHF and wanted to be the general secretary of BHF's interim committee.

Keeping coach from Ajax Academy

SPORTS REPORTER



Bangladesh national football team's coaching staff is going all Dutch as the hunt for a goalkeeping coach is on in earnest. Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) president Kazi Salahuddin informed reporters yesterday that they have contacted one of Ajax Amsterdam Youth Academy's goalkeeping coaches, but did not disclose the name.

"We accepted the demand of our Dutch coach Lodewijk de Kruif to bring an experienced goalkeeper coach. We have contacted Ajax Amsterdam Youth Academy for a coach.

Hopefully he might join us in the coming days. We are not looking for a long-term coach, rather we will be offering the coach a six-month tenure and later may extend the deal according to his performance."

The BFF president could not give a date-line for the coach's arrival, but said it would be good if the coach arrives sooner rather than later, as that would complete the Dutch coaching system.

"I would prefer to see him join the squad sometime in the middle of the Thailand tour if possible, or at the latest before the SAFF Championship. If we have him, we will have a complete Dutch coaching system at work," said Salahuddin.

Pietersen or Taylor?

AFP, London



England's selectors were paying particular interest to Australia's tour match against Sussex ahead of naming their squad on Sunday for next week's third Test at Old Trafford.

England may be on the brink of retaining the Ashes after a crushing 347-run win in the second Test at Lord's left them 2-0 up in the series with three to play but that match saw Kevin Pietersen suffer a calf injury that has left him doubtful for the Manchester clash.

England chiefs made it clear who they have in mind to replace Pietersen if the South Africa-born shotmaker is unfit by requesting Nottinghamshire's James Taylor 'guest' for Sussex this week against the tourists.

Taylor played two Tests against South Africa last year but didn't make the England squad for

the tours of India and New Zealand.

However, the diminutive batsman has been in good first-class form this season, scoring 824 runs in 15 County Championship appearances, including an unbeaten double century against Sussex in June.

With Australia batting first Friday in the three-day game at Hove, Taylor will hope he gets a chance to prove himself against international opposition on Saturday.

But the dangers of putting too much emphasis on one match as a selection guide were obvious Friday when Australia reserve wicketkeeper Matthew Wade, trying to force his way into the Test side as a batsman only, was out for a duck.

The 23-year-old Taylor has been keen not to get ahead of himself, telling reporters earlier this week: "I'm hopeful that KP [Pietersen] will be fit to play and, as it stands, I'm preparing to play in the three-day game for Sussex and nothing more."

India aim to seal series today

PTI, Harare



A dominant India will look to plug their bowling loopholes as they go into the third one-day international against minnows Zimbabwe here on Sunday with the aim of sealing the five-match series with another emphatic triumph.

India have taken a 2-0 lead on the back of an impressive show by their young batsmen and now need just one more win to take an unassailable 3-0 lead.

Zimbabwe to their credit have scored 200 plus scores in the previous two matches, which meant that both Indian batsmen and bowlers had some work to do though the matches were quite lop-sided affairs.

But it is the bowling which has been a cause of concern for the Indians with the pacers being a trifle inconsistent in both the matches.

Anik seeks improvement

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh swimmer Anik Islam takes to the pool today in the 50m butterfly event of the World Swimming Championships in Barcelona in Spain, with the target of improving his own record. The Navy swimmer, who won gold in the Bangladesh Games, has a best timing of 26.01 seconds.

There will be two more Bangladesh swimmers in the meet. Navy's Mahfizur Rahman Sagar, who represented Bangladesh in the London Olympics, will compete in the 50m freestyle on August 2.

The third participant, Mahfuza Akter Shila will compete in her favourite 50m breast-stroke event on August 3. The three are being accompanied by Bangladesh Swimming Federation's general secretary and joint secretary, although they have no coach with them.

Thailand-bound with development in mind

SPORTS REPORTER



A 31-member Bangladesh national football team will fly for Thailand today morning for an eight-day trip where they will have an isolated training camp, apart from playing two matches against the Thai national team. The contingent includes 24 players, coaching staff and officials. The schedule and venue of the matches will be finalised after the two team's coaches sit for a meeting later today, informed National Teams Committee members and head coach during a press conference at the BFF House yesterday.

Another thing which is uncertain is whether the Thai team, which beat Bangladesh 5-0 in a friendly match in November last year in Bangkok, will field its main side or a second-string side. But for coach Lodewijk de Kruif, the most important thing is to have a few days of good isolated camp and a couple of matches to test his charges' improvement.

"We will play two matches over there in Thailand. It's a big opportunity to train well in an isolated camp and focus on what will come in the future," said de Kruif adding that his side's ultimate target is the SAFF Championship in Nepal.

"This period is to build up the energy level and physique of the players and cover every angle of football which is our main focus. I cannot deny that everybody wants to win but it is not the most important thing at the moment, the most important thing is the development and being ready to face the challenge in September."

The Bangladesh team that will leave for Thailand with a 24-member squad will include Germany-based midfielder Reasat Khaton, as the coach feels that the player has not yet been fully tested.

The coach refused to discuss the tactics that he would employ during the Thailand tour or the SAFF Championship as he feels it might give an advantage to the opposition. The coach had a closed door mock practice match between the ranks at the

Bangabandhu National Stadium in the afternoon, where fit-again striker Shakhawat Rony bagged a hat-trick while Zahid Hasan Emily scored the other goal in the match.

National captain and midfielder Mamunul Islam, who was stand-in captain during the AFC Challenge Cup Qualifiers in Nepal earlier this year, said he was looking forward to a better performance from the team compared to the friendly match they played against Thailand last year.

"We will play good football over there [Thailand] because we have been in the game throughout the season without break. We have had a three-week preparation camp with the Dutch coaches and this tour is also a part of the preparation for the SAFF Championship where we want to win the silverware," said Mamunul.

The Bangladesh team will return on August 5 before hosting Pakistan for a practice match on August 13. Pakistan will play another practice match against BFF XI on August 16 as a part of their SAFF preparation.

4th SL-SA ODI today

ANI, Johannesburg

South Africa captain AB de Villiers said that he cannot express how proud he is of his team, which ended their four-match ODI winless streak by beating Sri Lanka by 56 runs in the third ODI on Friday.

However, the loss did not go down well with Sri Lankans with all-rounder Thisara Perera saying that they needed to get back their game in the fourth ODI in Pallekele today.

Even though the hosts were defeated in the third ODI, they have a 2-1 lead in the series.

ACSU report in mid-August

SPORTS REPORTER



Bangladesh Cricket Board president Nazmul Hassan Papon has said that he expects the much awaited anti-corruption report on suspected fixing in the Bangladesh Premier League to reach the BCB after Eid.

Speaking to reporters at the BCB's National Cricket Academy Papon said, "The report will be completed by August 5. The ICC's Anti-Corruption and Security Unit (ACSU) unit wanted to arrive here two days after that, but I prefer receiving it after Eid. We might get it around August 12 or 13."

The president didn't eliminate the chances of more names cropping up in the report alongside Mohammad Ashraf.

"I am confident that no other player as famous as Ashraf will be named in the report. It however, may include names of other players whose names have already been published by the country's media," he said.

PCB's acting boss accused of fraud

ANI, Islamabad

A former coach of the army's cricket team in Pakistan has accused acting Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) chief Najam Sethi of partisanship and having a biased role in the auction of broadcasting rights.

According to the Express Tribune, Nadeem Suddle accused Sethi of plotting to transfer billions of rupees worth of broadcast rights to a channel of his choice.

Suddle said that he was also dreaming of becoming its permanent chief.

Positive U-19s leave for England



PHOTO: STAR
BCB president Nazmul Hassan Papon meets with the Bangladesh under-19 team members on the eve of their departure for England at the BCB headquarters in Mirpur yesterday.

SPORTS REPORTER



The joy of watching a young cricketer creating waves upon his entry into the international arena is an emotion universally celebrated by spectators. With a number of junior cricketers donning the national jersey in recent years, expectations from Bangladesh's current under 19 team -- which leaves for England today morning to participate in a tri-nation series including Pakistan -- remain high.

"We played some very competitive cricket in our last outing against Sri Lanka three months ago. We also had some intense training which gave us the opportunity to work on specific areas and our weaknesses. So we are all feeling very confident going into this tour," said Mehidy Hassan, a right-handed batsman and the captain of the side.

Cricketers underwent special training sessions in a bid to adjust to the foreign conditions. "We have tried to simulate the practice sessions keeping the foreign conditions in mind. Everyone knows about the Bangladeshi spinners but I think we have a formidable pace line-up as well," remarked Hassan.

A rare feature of the team is the inclusion of a leg spinner, Jubair Hossain, who had a good run against Sri Lanka at home in the last series. "They say that English conditions support pacers but the spinners got plenty of wickets during the Champions trophy and that's a good sign for me. I'll get my wickets if I bowl in the right areas," said a confident Jubair.

Being away for a long period of time is another challenge that the team will have to overcome as a majority of the cricketers are leaving the country for the first time. "I live in Satkhira and the farthest that I have travelled from home is Dhaka, where I travel to for camps. Although I might

face a few problems abroad, I am excited because I have my friends with me. I hope to do something good for my country," said Mostafizur Rahman, a left-arm medium pacer.

Echoing Rahman's sentiments, captain Hassan said, "Although we are going there to play and that's our main aim, England is a beautiful country and I am looking forward to visiting the palaces and museums in London."

The side includes only a couple of players who represented Bangladesh U-19 in the world cup last year; a majority of the other cricketers were drafted in after the competition. Despite the relative inexperience, Hassan believes that the team can win the tri-nation series. "Our first aim is to win the series. We also want to make use of this opportunity and learn as much as we can from this experience," he said.

The tri-nation tournament begins on August 5, with Bangladesh taking on Pakistan.