

U-19 football team return home

Koster satisfied despite elimination

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh U-19 national football team returned home yesterday morning, having been eliminated from the qualifying round of the AFC U-19 Championship in Iraq.

Bangladesh's target was to qualify for the 16-team final round by finishing either as Group C champions or one of the six best runners-up. They finished second behind former champions Iraq in the four-team group, but the runners-up position with four points from three outings was not good enough to earn them a qualification berth.

In fact, Bangladesh's hopes were all but extinguished when they suffered a 6-0 defeat to hosts Iraq in the first match, even though they bounced back by beating Kuwait 1-0 in the next match.

But the youngsters could not overcome the last hurdle as they were held goalless by Pakistan in the last match. The scorer of the Kuwait-match, Rubel Mia failed to beat the Pakistan goalkeeper from a one-on-one situation while winger Abdul Malek rattled the crossbar and Jewel headed narrowly wide of the target twice.

Despite being eliminated from the qualifying round, Dutch coach Rene Koster was satisfied with the way his charges performed in three matches.

"There is nothing to be disappointed about as the boys really put up a good show against all opponents", Koster told reporters yesterday.

Family time for Tigers

SPORTS REPORTER



As soon as the first Test between New Zealand and Bangladesh, at the Zohur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium ended, the road leading to it was opened for its annual cattle market for Eid -- temporarily shifted during the match -- which barely leaves any space for commuters.

As a result spectators had to battle long tailbacks before they could return home. The return of the market in a sense was a statement to the effect that now that the first Test is over, it was time to get down to real business. Let's sell some cows for Eid!

A similar scenario awaits Bangladesh's national players. With Eid on Wednesday, a number of national players -- who are on leave till October 17 -- were making a late rush towards home or heading towards their respective cattle markets to snap up the last buys.

Shohag Gazi, the hat-trick hero in the first Test, was on his way to Patuakhali yesterday afternoon and hoped to be able to spend as much time with his parents for Eid.

"I think on special days such as these the best thing to do is to spend time with people you are close to and for me that's my parents. I don't know if they have organised anything special for me [due to his record in the first Test] but all that matters is that I'll be with them on Eid," he remarked.

Things were slightly easier for Cox's Bazar's Mominul Haque, who dazzled everyone by hitting the third highest Test score by a Bangladeshi. While a majority of the players took a flight back to Dhaka on the night of the 13th, Mominul eased his way to the coastal town.

"Honestly speaking, I don't do much on Eid -- I just like to spend time with mother at home. That itself feels special enough. The day after Eid I go around sometimes, with a couple of my friends," said Mominul, adding that he received a special welcome upon his return to his hometown from his family and friends, courtesy of his innings.

Naeem Islam too was making headway towards Gaibandha yesterday afternoon. His first aim as he puts it, was to reach and buy a cow 'as soon as possible'. "It was something that none of us could do because of the match," he said.

According to coach Shane Jurgensen, the players have been given a break of three days and have been asked to report by Thursday evening. They begin practice on 18th evening.

"Not much actually. They have just been asked to stay safe and fit so that there are no issues before the second Test in Mirpur. The good thing is that they will be getting a fine break after the first Test and return fresh," said Jurgensen when asked if he had imparted any special instructions to the players.

The second Test begins at Mirpur on October 21, after the competition of which the teams will contest three ODIs and a T20I.



South Africa batsman Hashim Amla (R) is being congratulated by teammate JP Duminy after reaching his 50 on the first day of the first Test against Pakistan at the Sheikh Zayed Cricket Stadium in Abu Dhabi yesterday. Amla remained unbeaten on 118 at the end of the day.

PHOTO: AFP

Job not done yet: Novak

AFP, Shanghai

Shanghai Masters champion Novak Djokovic said he still has unfinished business this season after delivering the perfect response to being knocked off the men's top ranking.

The soon-to-be-married Serb ceded the world number one spot to Rafael Nadal, but his reaction has been emphatic with an unbeaten run in China adding two titles to his collection.

Immediately after Nadal returned to number one by reaching the China Open final, Djokovic proved he was not about to go away by defending his title from the Spaniard in straight sets.

He then swept all before him in Shanghai to retain a trophy for the second time in two weeks, outlasting Juan Martin del Potro in Sunday's thrilling final to win his 20th consecutive match in China.

Djokovic said he had not yet contemplated next year's Grand Slams and was still focused on 2013, with the Paris Masters, World Tour Finals and Davis Cup final still to come.

"Well, I'm still in this year. It hasn't finished," said the world number two, after his 6-1, 3-6, 7-6 (7/3) win over del Potro on Sunday.

"I really will try to do my best till the end of the season, then I'm going to start thinking about what my goals are for next year."

Nadal has unquestionably been the stand-out player this season after making a phenomenal return from injury to claim 10 titles including the French Open and the US Open.

Hesson pondering changes

SPORTS REPORTER



New Zealand coach Mike Hesson has said that frontline pacer Tim Southee, who is injured and missed the first Test, is unlikely to play the second Test which begins at Mirpur next week. Hesson however stated that the team management would wait on him before finalising the squad.

Speaking to reporters at a press conference at a city hotel yesterday he said, "We'll make an assessment closer to the time, but he [Southee] is probably unlikely for the second Test. Within our squad we have got options, but we will wait for Tim, he is invaluable."

Hesson believed that the result of the first Test was a clear reflection of the game based on the conditions on the field, but was unhappy with



the wicket at the Zohur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium.

"I think it needs just a bit more in it, whether it is pace or bounce -- it

would have created more opportunities. The new ball on most wickets plays a big part but once the ball gets soft, there were some decent bowlers that couldn't get a lot out of it. I think spectators on both sides would've liked a bit more pace or bounce," he said.

The Kiwis, who played an extra spinner in the first Test, might go on to change their strategy in the second and according to the coach might play an extra seamer.

"We haven't seen the wicket yet. Within our squad we've got options. We've got other seamers that are fresh and if the wicket deserves that to be considered, then we'll consider it. We could play an extra seamer, we could go with an extra batter. We have lots of options, which is one of the best strengths of our side," he said.

Hesson also praised Bangladesh's two stand-out performers -- Mominul Haque and

Shohag Gazi -- in the first Test.

With regards to Mominul he said, "We didn't have a lot of footage on him, but we had enough. We knew we had to bowl straight to him. We started a bit wide and bowled a few full ones. And he had a bit of luck; he sliced a few through the gaps. But he played extremely well. 180 in a Test match is a fine effort."

"He [Gazi] bowled a lot of overs and for him to still be creating opportunities on the fifth day shows that he can sustain pressure. I think he got better as the Test went on. At the start he was a little bit flat and gave us some scoring opportunities," he added.

With Eid coming ahead, the visitors are planning on taking a break and playing some golf on Thursday. They will also be hitting the gym. They are scheduled to report for their first training session on Friday.

Amla holds SA together

REUTERS, Abu Dhabi



Hashim Amla notched his 20th Test century but three wickets for 34-year-old debutant Zulfiqar Babar allowed Pakistan to restrict South Africa to 245 for eight on the opening day of the first Test here on Monday.

Amla, ranked the world's best batsman, provided another innovative display to hit 118 not out while most of his teammates showed some ring rustiness after 10 months without Test cricket.

Spinner Zulfiqar, who became the second oldest debutant for Pakistan, took three wickets in the final session to turn the match back his side's way after Amla had led a South African fightback at the Sheikh Zayed Stadium.

The seamers took three wickets in the opening session but Pakistan lost the initiative between lunch and tea with a bizarre run-out of AB de Villiers their only success.

Then, as the pitch began to turn, Zulfiqar ended a 95-run partnership for the fifth wicket by dismissing JP Duminy.

The spinner also saw Asad Shafiq take a

sharp catch at second slip to dismiss Faf du Plessis for one and bowled Robin Peterson for five to finish with three for 89 off 27 overs.

Amla, who struck 13 fours, offered an early chance for a run out while risking a single but after that he proved the backbone of the innings.

Duminy made a good return after an 11-month injury absence from Tests by compiling 57 before skying a top edge to Shafiq.

Earlier, Mohammad Irfan had openers Alviro Petersen (3) and captain Graeme Smith (15) caught before Junaid Khan dismissed Jacques Kallis for five.

De Villiers (19) was removed after lunch when he played an inside edge off Zulfiqar that trickled to Younus Khan at first slip.

Younis threw the ball to wicketkeeper Adnan Akmal to take off the bails while De Villiers, seemingly deep in thought in an uncharacteristic lapse of concentration, was still in an exaggerated forward pose with his back foot not behind the crease.

He was Pakistan's only victim of the second session but the spinners came alive after tea with Saeed Ajmal also claiming a wicket.



Bangladesh shooters (L to R) Asif Hossain Khan, Sadia Sultana and Abdullah Hel Baki lead the Queen's Baton Relay for next year's 20th Commonwealth Games. The rally started at Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport and ended at Aftabnagar yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

Queen's Baton Relay held

SPORTS REPORTER

In a bid to aware the people of about the 20th Commonwealth to be hosted in Scotland next year, the Queen's Baton Relay was held in the capital yesterday with enthusiasm among the athletes, organisers and general people.

Muhammad Faruk Khan, minister of civil aviation and tourism, received the baton from a three-member baton relay team headed by Louis Martin in the afternoon at the Shahjalal International Airport and later the minister handed it to Commonwealth Games gold medallist shooter Asif Hossain Khan and shooters Abdullah Hel Baki and Sadia Sultana. They led the rally which consisted of athletes of other disciplines as well as sports organisers and general people. The rally ended in Aftabnagar and the Queen's Baton was taken to the British High Commission in Dhaka to honour the Queen's Relay team. The Baton will leave for Pakistan today.

TRAINING FOR C'WEALTH, ASIAN GAMES

Top athletes left out

SPORTS REPORTER

The Bangladesh Olympic Association (BOA) has drafted a 65-member list of athletes for preparation for next year's Commonwealth Games and Asian Games, leaving out some of the top athletes in shooting, athletics, badminton, table tennis and weightlifting.

The athletes who have not been included in list for long-term training are Commonwealth Shooting and SA Games gold medallist Sharmin Akter Ratna, country's fastest man and woman Mezbah Ahmed and Nazmun Nahar Beauty, SA Games gold medallist Hamidul Islam, number one male shuttle Enam and number one female shuttle Shapla Akter, defending champion in men's table tennis Manosh and defending champion in women's table tennis Soma.

The BOA even drafted some athletes, who are not well recognised, even if there is hardly seven to eight months to prepare them for the Commonwealth Games and Asian Games.

"We have not prepared the athletes' list which has been provided by different federations. We will check the list and ask the respective federations why the top performers have been left out," said Ashiqur Rahman Miku, BOA training and development committee chairman yesterday.

SCOREBOARD

SOUTH AFRICA: First innings				
A Petersen c Masood b Irfan	3			
Smith c Akmal b Irfan	15			
Amla not out	118			
Kallis c Akmal b Junaid	5			
De Villiers run out	19			
Duminy c Shafiq b Babar	57			
Du Plessis c Shafiq b Babar	1			
R Petersen b Babar	5			
Philander lbw b Ajmal	3			
Steyn not out	13			
Extras: (b-1, lb-4, nb-1)	6			
Total: (For 8 wickets in 90 overs)	245			
Tobat: Morkel				
Fall of wickets: 1-6, 2-19, 3-43, 4-104, 5-199, 6-205, 7-217, 8-222				
Bowler	O	M	R	W
Irfan	16.2	3	42	2
Junaid	18.4	2	52	1
Babar	27	3	89	3
Ajmal	28	6	57	1
PAKISTAN: Khurram Manzoor, Azhar Ali, Younis Khan, Misbahul Haq (capt), Adnan Akmal, Saeed Ajmal, Zulfiqar Babar, Junaid Khan, Mohammad Irfan, Asad Shafiq, Shan Masood				
Toss: South Africa.				
Umpires: Paul Reiffel and Rod Rucker.				