



National football team's head coach Lodewijk de Kruif (R) briefs his charges as assistant coach Rene Koster (L) looks on after a practice match between the players at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday. (INSET) Bangladesh Football Federation president makes his emotions felt during a briefing of the players at the BFF House.

PHOTOS: STAR

ASIAN GAMES 2014 Preliminary women's squad named

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The Bangladesh Cricket Board yesterday announced a 20-member women's preliminary squad for the 17th Asian Games due to begin in South Korea on September 19. The Bangladesh women's team won silver in the last tournament while the men's side won gold.

Bangladesh and Sri Lanka will be the only two Test nations to send teams for both the men's and women's events. Pakistan will be sending only their women's side.

PRELIMINARY SQUAD Rumana Ahmed, Shaila Sharmin, Lata Mondol, Khadiza Tul Kubra, Fargana Hoque Pinky, Salma Khatun, Panna Ghosh, Lily Rani Biswas, Ritu Moni, Nuzhat Tasia, Jahanara Alam, Ayasha Rahman, Fahima Khatun, Tithy Rani Sarkar, Sanjida Islam, Sharmin Akter Supta, Ayesha Akter, Sohaly Akhter, Shahnaz Parvin, Shamima Sultana.

4TH INDIA TEST Finn in for Plunkett

REUTERS, London

Paceman Steven Finn has been called into England's squad for the fourth Test against India in place of the injured Liam Plunkett, the England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) said on Sunday.

"Liam Plunkett experienced some left ankle discomfort at the end of the 2nd Test and will miss the 4th Test as this continues to settle," the ECB said in a statement.

Plunkett did not play in the third Test, which England won to level the five-match series at 1-1. Finn's last Test was the 14-run victory over Australia in July 2013.

The fourth Test begins in Manchester on Thursday.

India won the second Test at Lord's after the first match ended in a draw at Trent Bridge.

De Kruif takes booters to BKSP

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(BKSP) under the guidance of head coach Lodewijk de Kruif and assistant coach Rene Koster. The camp has been increased from 25 to 29 members after the National Teams Committee decided to draft in four players -- Atiqur Rahman Farhad, Aminul Islam Sajib, Abdul Malek and Mezbah Uddin to the initially announced 25-member squad.

The 23 members of the initial 25 -- barring captain Mamunul Islam who is in Chittagong mourning the unfortunate death of his uncle and Denmark-based Jamal Bhuiyan who is expected to join later -- reported to team manager Amirul Islam Babu at the Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) house yesterday afternoon.

The players had a curtailed practice match among themselves at the Bangabandhu National Stadium in the afternoon and head coach De Kruif expressed his optimism about the team.

"My impression of the players is that they are okay. The league ended about 10-12 days ago and I have good hope

that the players are fit enough. We know the task we will have at the Asian Games is tough because the best teams are playing and we don't know anything about the opponents," said De Kruif.

The Dutch coach, who returned to Bangladesh along with assistant coach Rene Koster after spending four months of imposed vacation in Netherlands, said he asked the BFF high-ups to arrange for a few practice matches abroad as part of their build-up for the Asian Games.

"Our fellow countries around us started their preparation three or four weeks ago, so we are little bit behind. But I'm happy to go to the BKSP and select the boys so that we can work there. I have requested the president and the vice president to let the boys go outside the country, like Doha or Thailand, to play one or two international games. They promised to work on it. It is best when you play at a good level," De Kruif said.

The team, along with the new recruits and the two coaches, went to Savar in the evening where they will train for the next 40 days before leaving for Korea on September 12 with a 20-member side. The football event of the Asian Games will begin on September 16. The groupings have not been decided yet.

Chess teams' excellent start

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Bangladesh chess teams made an excellent start in the 41st Chess Olympiad in Tromso, Norway on Saturday as both the men's and women's teams won their respective opening rounds. The men's team beat Zimbabwe 3-1, with GM Enamul Hossain Razib the only Bangladeshi player to lose his board. GM Niaz Murshed, GM Abdullah Al Rakib and IM Minhazuddin Ahmed won their respective boards against their Zimbabwean opponents.

The women's team beat unrated Ghana 4-0. WIM Shamima Akter Liza, WIM Rani Hamid, WFM Nazrana Khan Eva and WFM Zakia Sultana won their respective boards.

The men's team were scheduled to take on Chile, while the women's team were to play against Armenia in the second round on Sunday night.

N.B. The Daily Star yesterday had reported that the Bangladesh women's team lost their first round match 1-3. This piece of information however, was incorrect. The information was published as per details provided on the official website of the Chess Olympiad. The website has since corrected the score.

SALAHUDDIN'S emotional plea

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Bangladesh Football Federation president Kazi Salahuddin yesterday gave an emotional speech to all concerned during a press conference arranged for a briefing about the selected players for the national team's camp for September's Asian Games. The BFF boss urged the players to play with utmost dedication and integrity so that the government and people of the country take notice of its football, which according to him 'is passing through a difficult period'.

The press conference was held at the BFF house where apart from the players, the coaches of the national team -- Lodewijk de Kruif and Rene Koster and BFF officials were present.

Salahuddin, who had a fruitful discussion with the two coaches over their unpaid wages the previous day, relayed his frustration over the state of affairs of the game; namely the lack of funds to run the federation and development programs of football and the lack of commitment of some of the players in the recent past.

"I don't have any good news for you today," said Salahuddin, addressing the players present there. "Our football is going through a difficult period. The way football is running at the moment, it will be hard to sustain things for long. The federation, in itself, does not have the capability to pay for all the expenditures. The FIFA fund that we get is not enough to even meet the coaches' salaries which is why we need financial support from sponsors and the government," said Salahuddin.

Realising the grim scenario which Bangladesh's football finds itself in -- the

lack of headway in the fund-proposal made to the government (A five-year budget worth Tk 35 crore each year), the inability to clear the wages of coaches in due time and the unflattering performance of the national team in recent times, Salahuddin feels it's up to the players to make their case noticed.

"Only the players can turn the scenario now. I want more responsibility from players and only by doing that can they grab the attention of the government and the people. I'm not asking for anything extraordinary from you, but I want success as per the best of your ability," Salahuddin said.

The BFF boss was also critical of some of the players' commitment as he cited a few examples of their unprofessional attitude, referring especially to captain Mamunul Islam's failure to report to the camp.

"Mamunul Islam didn't report today due to his uncle's death two days ago. I can understand Mamunul's emotions, but reality is that when you are a professional footballer, there is hardly any scope for being emotional. I can say from my experience, when my father died in 1994, I laid him to rest in the afternoon and then went to practice in the evening. I want that sort of dedication from you."

The BFF boss cited a few more examples from the recent past to explain that the players, who failed to live up to their expectations in the past, need to stand up for the cause of the national team and for saving Bangladesh's football.

"I'm asking you to dedicate yourselves for the next ten years and that would change the scenario of our football. You are the ambassadors of the country and only you can save football now," finished Salahuddin.

Jauncey aims for good mental habits

SPORTS REPORTER



Problems of pressure have beset Bangladesh's ODI cricket this year, evident in their winless streak so far in 2014. The post-match press conferences of each of Bangladesh's nine defeats this year had a common theme. A bewildered Mushfiqur Rahim was seen making statements such as 'we are working hard, but just not able to apply', 'we are in a rut and we need to play without pressure'.

The beginning of the year saw the Tigers lose a few close contests against Sri Lanka. They also suffered a jaw-dropping defeat against Pakistan after posting 326, their highest ever ODI total. These were certainly factors that put pressure on Bangladesh. The extent of it was as such that it even broke the ice-cool Shakib Al Hasan, who in an interview claimed that Bangladesh should not play at home for at least two years and blamed the public's expectations for their bad patch.

In order to address these problems ahead of Bangladesh's ODI leg of the Caribbean tour later this month, the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) brought in performance psychologist Phil Jauncey, who began his two-day programme with the national players at Mirpur yesterday.

Jauncey's aim, contrary to popular

notion, does not include any motivational factors.

"What we do is that we make people feel that they can perform. What happens in cricket or any sport is that you need to perform even if you don't feel like it. My teachings state that you don't need to feel good to act good but when you act good you feel good," explained Jauncey.

Stating an example of what he aims to instil in the players the Australian said,

"When we are under pressure our brain tries to con us and that makes it worse. So if I am a batsman, when I feel good I tend to lean towards the bowler, when I feel bad I lean towards the keeper. So in order to counter that, I need to lean towards the bowler even when I feel bad."

The Australian spent around four hours with the players yesterday. He was seen talking to the players individually, explaining to them the different stances that an athlete takes during different situations of the game.

"My job is to ensure that each of these players can give it their best in terms of skills no matter how they feel at that point of time," said Jauncey.

BCB Chief Selector Faruque Ahmed, who was also present at the ground, was hopeful about Jauncey's impact on the team.

"Every sporting team needs a psychologist. Bangladesh had them in 2003 and 2007. It's a positive thing and it's required," said Faruque.

Serena storms into final

AFP, Stanford



Serena Williams stormed into the final of the WTA hardcourt tournament at Stanford on Saturday, with a 7-5, 6-0 victory over Andrea Petkovic.

The world number one and top seed, playing her first tournament since a disappointing Wimbledon campaign in which she was slowed by a virus, will face third-seeded German Angelique Kerber in Sunday's final.

Kerber, ranked eighth in the world, saved a match point on the way to a 4-6, 7-6 (7/4), 6-2 victory over 59th-ranked American Varvara Lepchenko.

Petkovic, 26, who ousted 34 year-old Venus Williams in the quarterfinals on Friday, pushed 32 year-old Serena hard in the opening set as they battled through the first 11 games without a break of serve.

After holding for a 6-5 lead, Williams turned the tide in the 12th game, although she needed a fifth set point against Petkovic's serve to gain the break and the set.

There was no stopping the 17-time Grand Slam champion from there. After a first set lasting 50 minutes Williams polished off the second in 27, breaking Petkovic a fourth time when the German sent a forehand long on match point.

Williams saved the only break point she faced in the match, showing no sign of fatigue despite a quick turnaround from her tough, three-set victory over former world number one Ana Ivanovic on Friday night.



National cricketers observe performance psychologist Phill Jauncey, who has been brought in on a two-day programme by the BCB, at the Sher-e-Bangla National yesterday. The Tigers spent around four hours with the Australian before heading into training.

PHOTO: STAR

Canadians to fight it out

AFP, Washington

Milos Raonic, coming off his first Grand Slam semifinal at Wimbledon, and double-duty winner Vasek Pospisil reached Sunday's final of the ATP's first-ever all-Canadian final at the Washington Open.

Seventh-ranked Raonic fired 15 aces Saturday in downing US left-hander Donald Young 6-4, 7-5 to reach his 11th ATP final, his first since falling to Juan Martin Del Potro last September at Tokyo.

Pospisil rallied to dispatch French sixth seed Richard Gasquet 6-7 (5/7), 6-3, 7-5 for his first win in five ATP semifinal appearances.

Only five hours earlier, Pospisil finished the last set of a 6-7 (4/7), 6-3, 6-4 quarterfinal win over Colombian Santiago Giraldo that was halted Friday by rain.