



Pragmatic de Kruif banking on youth

ANISUR RAHMAN

Bangladesh's Dutch football coach Lodewijk de Kruif is trying something different with his youthful side in an attempt to make an impression in the forthcoming Asian Games, an event where Bangladesh have never crossed the first round barrier.

De Kruif adopted the more conventional ploy of building the game from behind in SAFF Championship. But it did not work in the regional championship where he often found his boys depositing the ball to the opponents with a lot of erratic passes.

However, while working with his charges at the BKSP in Savar, the Dutch coach resorted to a slightly different strategy of quick counter-attack on the break without slowing down the pace of the game. This is certainly a smart approach considering the fact that Bangladesh would be up against the top Asian teams,



who are miles ahead of them in terms of skill and physical fitness.

"We have practised with the ball for just two sessions and it seems to me that this training is different from the SAFF Championship. What I have understood from these sessions is that the coach wants us to move fast with the ball. This is a style Sheikh Jamal Club followed this season," said captain Mamunul Islam while talking to this reporter at BKSP's International Hostel on Wednesday.

Bangladesh are expected to be the

favourite punchbags at the Games, starting in the South Korean city of Incheon from September 19. Last time at Guangzhou four years ago they lost all their three group league games against UAE (3-0), Uzbekistan (3-0) and Hong Kong (4-1).

To reap results of quick counter-attack de Kruif is banking more on his young forwards in the absence of experienced duo of Zahid Hasan Emily and Mithun Chowdhury.

He is trying with Mohammedan's Wahed Ahmed, Team BJMC's Aminur Rahman Sajib, Sheikh Jamal DC's Toklish Ahmed and Brothers Union's Jewel Rana upfront. All four strikers are more or less fast runners but they lack finishing touches and this is the area the Dutch coach is trying to improve on.

De Kruif is also searching for the suitable players to fit into his formation and game plan and to attain that goal he is giving emphasis on the young brigade instead of the senior ones, who have been serving the national team for seven to eight

years already.

This effort extremely excited experienced defender Atiqur Rahman Meshu who believes this young bunch of booters has got bright prospect.

"They [young players] just need international exposure to gather experience and I am sure they are capable of winning the SAFF Championship if they can play 10 to 15 tough international matches before the 2015 SAFF Championship," said Meshu, a reliable right-back of de Kruif.

The players are also optimistic about putting up a better show than last year's regional competition in Nepal. They are enjoying the way this training is going on.

"It is tough to spend time after the gruelling training session in the afternoon. Besides, in Savar you will find hardly any place to visit. A TV set is the only piece of entertainment for us at night. However, we would have loved to have a TV set in each room," said Mamunul, a former BKSP student.

Goetze breaks silence

REUTERS, Berlin



Germany's World Cup hero Mario Goetze said he did not have time to think about what he was doing when he controlled the ball with his chest before sweeping a sweet volley past Argentina's Sergio Romero in the final.

"You don't really think very much when you're in a situation like that," Goetze, 22, said in the Bild newspaper on Wednesday in his first interview since scoring the winning goal.

"I could try to describe what happened to you but only after taking a look at the replay myself. In the match it all happens intuitively," added Goetze whose extra-time strike gave Germany a 1-0 victory.

The Bayern Munich forward dismissed suggestions he had had a mediocre World Cup until coming on before extra-time in the final after staying on the bench for most of the knockout round.

He started Germany's first four matches but was replaced at halftime in the round of 16 match against Algeria.

"Everyone wants to play as much as possible in the World Cup," said Goetze. "I think that I made a contribution to our winning the World Cup. Whenever I got my chances, my performance values were alright. I kept training hard (after being benched) and kept believing in myself."

Goetze said he did not want to give any interviews after the World Cup because he wanted to digest it all himself first.

"To be honest I had to let it all sink in first," he said when asked why he had declined to give any interviews.

"I wanted to savour the moment. I also wanted to avoid saying something in a moment of euphoria that would stick forever. I'd rather stay down to earth. That's why I wanted to get away from it all for a while."

Di Maria too expensive

AFP, Paris

Paris Saint-Germain have pulled out of talks with Real Madrid over the transfer of Angel Di Maria because the Argentine midfielder is too expensive, club president Nasser al-Khelaifi said Thursday.

PSG have to bow this season to Financial Fair Play restrictions imposed by European football's governing body, UEFA.

The Qatari-bankrolled capital club, along with Premier League champions Manchester City, were in May slapped with a fine of 60 million euros (\$82 million, £49 million) for breaching FFP regulations, namely accruing losses in excess of the 45-million-euro limit over the course of the past two seasons.

The French champions, in addition, agreed not to increase the club's wage bill for the next two campaigns and to "significantly limit spending" in the transfer market while curbing losses to no more than 30 million euros next year.

Donovan sinks Bayern

AGENCIES, Portland

Landon Donovan's goal in the 70th minute Wednesday gave the Major League Soccer All-Stars a 2-1 victory over German champions Bayern Munich in a friendly marred by rough tackles.

The Los Angeles Galaxy striker took a high centering pass on the run up the middle of the field, eluded two defenders and netted the deciding goal.

"Any time you can beat Bayern Munich, that's a good beat," Donovan said. "We came out and played them hard and that was an entertaining game for sure."

The Bundesliga side opened the scoring on an eighth-minute strike from Robert Lewandowski, who tucked a right-footed blast just under the crossbar.

English striker Bradley Wright-Phillips of the New York Red Bulls, a former Southampton and Manchester City forward, answered for the MLS squad in the 51st minute, powering a left-footed kick from just outside the penalty area into the net.

Wright-Phillips is the younger brother of England international Shaun Wright-Phillips of England's Queens Park Rangers and the son of former England and Arsenal standout Ian Wright.

But after watching a pair of tackles from behind in the late minutes by MLS players in the heart of their season against Bayern players who were in the first stages of pre-season training, Bayern Munich manager Pep Guardiola decided to wave off a post-match handshake with MLS All-Stars coach

Caleb Porter.

The Spaniard gave Caleb Porter a one-fingered wave-off, apparently angry at some of the tackles by the MLS players.

Guardiola offered the refereeing panel a token handshake and quickly disappeared into the tunnel.

The acrimonious ending overshadowed a brilliant first half goal by Polish striker Robert Lewandowski that gave Bayern the lead.

Lewandowski, who moved to the Bundesliga champions from Borussia Dortmund in the close season, struck a piledriver from just outside the box into the roof of the net that beat MLS keeper Nick Rimando with sheer pace.

Most of the Bayern first-team regulars started on the bench in the team's sixth pre-season game.

In the 79th minute, four of Germany's World Cup-winning team - Bastian Schweinsteiger, Philipp Lamm, Thomas Muller and Mario Gotze - came on simultaneously in a mass substitution, though Schweinsteiger left the game before the end after a challenge that may have prompted Guardiola's subsequent ire.

"I understand he doesn't want his players to get hurt. They're not great tackles but they're not the worst tackles I've ever seen and I hope Schweiny's not hurt," Donovan told ESPN.

"I'm not sure why they're going after the officials."

In the 86th minute, Dutch star Arjen Robben came on as Bayern ended the game with almost a full-strength line-up, but the All-Stars held on to record the win.



Former Italy and Juventus star Alessandro Del Piero kicks a woolen ball after becoming an ambassador for The Woolmark Company in Sydney yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

Japan set Brazil date

AFP, Tokyo

Asian champions Japan will face Brazil in a friendly in Singapore on October 14, in a high-profile test for new coach Javier Aguirre, the Japan Football Association (JFA) said Thursday.

The 55-year-old Mexican, set to arrive in Japan this weekend, has a potentially tricky start with home friendlies against Uruguay on September 5 and Venezuela on September 9.

Japan, whose World Cup flop led to the resignation of Italian coach Alberto Zaccheroni, will also play Jamaica in Niigata on October 10 before flying out to face Brazil, who they have yet to beat in 10 previous meetings.

Aguirre, poised to become Japan's highest-paid coach ever with an estimated annual salary of almost \$2.5 million, led Mexico to the last 16 of the 2002 and 2010 World Cups. The former Espanyol manager recently told Spanish daily Marca he had been unimpressed with Japan's performance in Brazil.

'World Cup trauma over'

AFP, Paris



Brazil defender David Luiz insisted he was over his World Cup heartbreak as he was unveiled as a new Paris Saint-Germain player at a plush hotel in the French capital on Thursday.

"The days immediately after were very difficult. Obviously when you fail to reach an objective you are disappointed, but football is great because it gives you the chance to bounce back quickly," said the 27-year-old centre-back, who joined PSG from Chelsea on a five-year deal in June.

He arrived in Paris at the start of this week after a holiday in the wake of a traumatic World Cup campaign on home soil, which saw Brazil eliminated at the semi-final stage in a record 7-1 defeat to Germany.

The former Benfica player captained the Selecao in that game in the absence of his defensive partner and new PSG team-mate Thiago Silva, who was suspended, and he could not hold back the tears after the defeat in Belo Horizonte.

His performances throughout the competition were the subject of criticism and have led many to question Qatar-bankrolled PSG's wisdom in spending a reported 50 million euros (£39.9m, \$67.1m), a record sum for a defender, to sign him.

we believe our squad is stronger this season than it was."

However, Luiz insisted that his track record, which includes winning the Champions League with the London club in 2012 and the Europa League in 2013, is a measure of his true quality and that Brazilian defenders are better than their World Cup meltdown suggests.

"The qualities of those who were at the World Cup is not up for discussion," he said at the brand-new Peninsula Hotel, close to Paris' emblematic Arc de Triomphe, which was built with Qatari money.

"Before the World Cup we played in lots of games too. In football, we always speak about the last match and the next one and I can't wait to play the next match because I miss being out on the pitch and I try to improve every day.

"Ten or 15 years ago everyone wanted attacking players from Brazil but now there are also lots of defenders playing for big clubs. That shows the quality of Brazilian defenders."

Of Mourinho, he said: "It is normal that he should say what he said. If he had said that he missed me, he would have been contradicting himself. But now I listen to my new coach and what matters is what Laurent Blanc says."

"Mourinho and Chelsea, that is in the past. I was very happy there. But now I am looking at the present, in this great club, with a marvellous project for the future."

Luiz will play no part in the first game of PSG's defence of the Ligue 1 title away to Reims on Friday evening.

Valencia snap up Mustafi

REUTERS, Madrid

Valencia have agreed to sign Germany World Cup defender Shkodran Mustafi from Italian Serie A side Sampdoria on a five-year contract, the La Liga club said on Wednesday.

Mustafi, 22, part of Germany's triumphant squad at the World Cup finals in Brazil, will undergo a medical and be presented to the media on Thursday, Valencia said on their website.

Mustafi, whose parents are Albanian, came through the youth academy at Bundesliga club Hamburg SV and had a stint at English Premier League side Everton before joining Sampdoria in 2012.

He made his debut for Germany in May and has four caps, his last appearance coming in the World Cup last-16 match against Algeria.

Valencia are in the process of being taken over by billionaire Singapore businessman Peter Lim, raising hopes they can mount a serious challenge to wealthy Spanish rivals Real Madrid and Barcelona, the world's richest clubs by income.

Enner blow for West Ham

REUTERS, London



West Ham United's attacking prowess worsened with new signing Enner Valencia set to miss their opening two Premier League fixtures, co-owner David Sullivan said on Thursday.

Valencia joined West Ham from Mexico's Pachuca last month, having scored all three of Ecuador's goals at the World Cup finals in Brazil.

The 24-year-old is not expected to be fit for the season opener at home to Tottenham Hotspur on Aug. 16 and the trip to Crystal Palace a week later.

"The player we've spent the most money on, Enner Valencia, is our big summer signing and he is about two or three weeks away from being able to play, because he was at the World Cup," Sullivan told the club website.

"He's now in full training but I think the earliest he'll play is in the Capital One Cup match, so it'll be exciting for people to see him make his debut in that match."

The club, who also signed Argentine Mauro Zarate, have been rocked by another injury to target man Andy Carroll. He has been ruled out for four months after tearing ankle ligaments, and he missed much of last season with a heel problem.

Sullivan said West Ham had made a number of bids to bring more attacking players to the club, who finished 13th last season.

QPR swoop for Isla

AFP, London

Premier League new-boys QPR signed Chile defender Mauricio Isla on a season-long loan from Juventus on Wednesday.

Isla has received a work permit endorsement from the Football Association and is currently in Italy obtaining his working visa before officially linking up with his new teammates.

"He's a top player and we're delighted to have him here," QPR manager Harry Redknapp told his club's website.

"He showed his quality in the World Cup for Chile and it's a great loan signing for us."

"He's a versatile player, he's full of energy. I'm confident he'll be a really big asset for us this season"

Isla started all four of Chile's matches at this year's World Cup.

"I am very happy to be here - this is the start of an exciting new adventure for me," Isla said.

"Everybody knows that the Premier League is the greatest league in the world and the QPR proposal is very interesting and one I am very excited about."