

SPORT

Argentine coach in hockey?

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Hockey Federation is in talks with an Argentine coach for the national hockey team ahead of their assignment in the Hockey World League (HWL) Rd-2, which will be held in Singapore next January.

A source inside the BHF confirmed that the federation high-ups are interested in the Argentine coach and talks regarding his recruitment have reached an advanced stage.

"We have found an Argentine coach whose coaching credentials are good. We would like to get him in time to prepare the team for the HWL (Rd-2). We are negotiating things such as the salary and other terms of the contract," said the source on condition of anonymity.

The reported salary for the new coach, who is expected to be hired for a short term initially, is being negotiated at around 3,500 dollars per month, a little less than what previous coach Naveed Alam used to get.

Naveed's 15-month stint as coach came to an end on September 30, and was not extended in the wake of Bangladesh's dismal performance in the Asian Games. Under Naveed, Bangladesh became champions in the Asian Games qualifiers and WHL (Rd-1), held at home, but finished a disappointing 8th in the Asian Games. Despite winning two events at home against lower-ranked sides, Naveed's charges failed to impress when it mattered.

Utseya banned

CRICINFO, Dubai

Zimbabwe off-spinner Prosper Utseya has been banned from bowling in international cricket after his action was found to exceed the ICC's 15-degree limit. Utseya was tested at an accredited facility in Cardiff and all of his deliveries were deemed illegal.

Utseya must now undergo remedial work on his action and apply for retesting. A Zimbabwe Cricket release said they were looking for "relevant technical expertise to work with Utseya to modify his action in the shortest possible time, after which an application will be made to the ICC for his re-assessment."

'No threat to WI series'

PTI, New Delhi

The Indian cricket board made it clear on Thursday that there is absolutely "no threat" to India's ongoing home series against West Indies despite an acrimonious pay dispute between the visiting cricketers and its parent body which is yet to be resolved.

"I want to clarify that there is no threat to the India versus West Indies series. The matches will go on as per schedule. In fact, I have spoken to a few officials from the WICB and have got assurance that there will be no disruption", secretary of the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) Sanjay Patel told PTI.

"I got an e-mail from WICB chairman Dave Cameron, who thanked BCCI for playing a proactive role," he said.

Patel said that the BCCI will be happy to help the WICB as a "mediator" once the series ends.

ICC crackdown a 'wake-up call'

SPORTS REPORTER

With a home series against Zimbabwe knocking on the door and the World Cup drawing closer, the suspension on off-spinner Shohag Gazi came as a big blow to the Bangladesh team, but chief selector Faruque Ahmed said that it is also a wake-up call for the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB).

Former national skipper Faruque raised questions about the International Cricket Council's (ICC's) sudden crackdown on the bowlers with suspect action and, like West Indies great Viv Richards, said that the 'clean-up' did not come at the correct time.

"Without any doubt it [Shohag's suspension] is a blow to the team. It's not easy to replace a player who is a regular on the team, especially considering that we don't have many off-spinners in our country. But I have serious questions about ICC's sudden move on illegal bowling action, especially with the World Cup approaching," said Faruque, hoping that Shohag would make his comeback by correcting his action.

"A bowler bowled for a long period of time without any questions and all of a sudden, and in one fine morning he is informed that his action is illegal... I don't know whether it's fair or not. ICC was serious about this matter, I think, seven to eight years back. I represented BCB in the ICC's cricket committee regarding illegal bowling action and our board did a good job with Richard McInnes at that time, but suddenly



FARUQUE AHMED

ICC stopped pressing the issue for long period of time and we shelved our actions," continued the chief selector.

There is no secret that illegal bowling actions are a big problem in Bangladesh cricket and the authorities' 'feel free' approach sometimes encourages young cricketers to bowl wrongly in the domestic circuit. Faruque said that the board should take immediate decision in regards to correcting actions from a young age.

"We give a lot of efforts to prepare a bowler for the national team, so all of a sudden you cannot lose his services. These things become more difficult for a team like Bangladesh

because we have very limited resources. So the board has to chalk out a plan so we can work on correcting illegal actions from a very early stage of a player's career because it's not easy to correct the action of a matured player. I think ICC's current crackdown is a wake-up call for us," opined Faruque.

Shohag Gazi is out of the series, but Faruque said that Al-Amin Hossain would be available for selection for the series against Zimbabwe as the pacer's bowling actions will be examined on October 20 in Chennai, before the first Test between Bangladesh and Zimbabwe which will begin from October 25.

Cricket operations committee chairman Akram Khan however said that they will do everything so Gazi can comeback to international cricket.

"We had experienced coaches working with Abdur Razzak when he had similar problems in 2008-09. So we are hoping to do the same for Gazi. We will try to ask the coaches [Mohammad Salahuddin and Ruwan Kalpage] who worked with Razzak to help Gazi. If needed, we will get more experienced people on board. It is very difficult to say how long it will take for him to come back, but we will try our best. We have an opportunity to use the facilities in Chennai," said Akram.

"We have to take this matter very seriously. We will only send him for a final test when we are confirmed that he is clear. We cannot risk Gazi. There's no time-frame," he added.

Akram also said that there will be a review committee so that this kind of incident can be dealt with at the domestic level.

Pakistan need a win today

AFP, Dubai



Pakistan captain Misbahul Haq said his team will look for a confidence-boosting win over Australia in the second day-night one-day international in Dubai on Friday.

Pakistan lost by 93 runs in the opening match of three in Sharjah on Tuesday and looked well short on confidence.

Steven Smith hit a maiden hundred to bolster Australia to 255-8 before paceman Mitchell Johnson and spinner Nathan Lyon shared five wickets to bowl out Pakistan for a low 162 in 36.3 overs.

Misbah said his batsmen needed one good innings to get them going.

"At the moment our confidence is shaky," said Misbah on Thursday.

"When your confidence is bad even a straight ball becomes difficult for you, all these players have performed well before but at the moment they need one good innings to restore that confidence."

Misbah said levelling the series was important.

"Yes, it is very important to level the series, for the sake of saving the series, for the sake of the team and the management."

"Winning is always very important and it is more important with the World Cup coming up," said Misbah of the global event to be jointly hosted by Australia and New Zealand in February-March next year.

"A win puts all the things in the right place. It is very important that you keep working hard and don't lose hope," said Misbah, who is also under pressure to perform after flopping on the last tour of Sri Lanka in August.

He managed just 67 runs in the two Tests and as many runs (67) in the three-match one-day series in Sri Lanka when Pakistan lost both.

He was dismissed for a first-ball duck in Sharjah.

Left-arm spinner Raza Hasan has recovered from a shoulder injury and is likely to replace all-rounder Anwar Ali.

Australia too have brought in left-arm spinner Xavier Doherty for Mitchell Marsh (ruled out of the tour with a hamstring injury) and may replace him with a fast bowler.

Australia won the only Twenty20 in Dubai by six wickets on Sunday. The third and final game will be played in Abu Dhabi on Sunday.

Novak survives Roger thru', Andy falls

AFP, Shanghai



Reigning Shanghai Masters champion Novak Djokovic survived a scare as he overcame his 85th-ranked opponent to make the quarterfinals Thursday, while Britain's Andy Murray crashed out.

Meanwhile, third seed Roger Federer eased through, beating Spaniard Roberto Bautista Agut 6-4, 6-2.

Djokovic, the top seed in Shanghai, arrived at the tournament in the form of his life, but was forced into a third set by Mikhail Kukushkin as he claimed a hard-fought 6-3, 4-6, 6-4 victory.

The world number one began in predictable style, breaking his opponent on his final service game in the opening set as he looked to be heading for a routine win.

But in the second set, the Kazakhstani proved to be no pushover against an opponent who was seeking his 27th successive victory on Chinese soil.

The 26-year-old broke the Serb on his opening service game, and then staged his first attempt to take the set as he earned a break-point with the scores at 5-3.

Djokovic danced jubilantly when he saved set-point, and moments later appeared to have snuffed out the unexpected challenge when he broke back.

But Kukushkin refused to submit to the 7-times Grand Slam winner and stole Djokovic's serve again to set up a decider.

Djokovic battled hard in the third set, losing his trademark coolness as he shouted and pumped his fist at almost every point won.

He made a breakthrough in the fifth game, taking Kukushkin's serve to march to a 4-2 lead, which ended any further heroics from his opponent.

Djokovic will face David Ferrer in the quarter-finals Friday after the Spaniard overcame 11th seed Murray 2-6, 6-1, 6-2.



Serbia's Novak Djokovic pumps his fist in celebration after beating Mikhail Kukushkin of Kazakhstan in the Shanghai Masters third round yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

KPGENIUS TWEETS Alec discloses what he knows

AFP, London



Former England captain Alec Stewart said Wednesday Kevin Pietersen had been right to complain of England players' Stuart Broad, Graeme Swann and Tim Bresnan's access to a parody Twitter account mocking the star batsman.

Pietersen has written of a "bullying" culture during his time within the England dressing room.

In particular, he did not take kindly to the 'KPGenius' Twitter account owned by Richard Bailey, a friend of England paceman Stuart Broad.

Pietersen's book states Bailey told Stewart he had insider help with the account.

However, Bailey has persistently denied this and on Wednesday he again insisted no England players had been involved, saying "They 100 per cent did not tweet it."

But Stewart, South Africa-born Pietersen's coach at county side Surrey, contradicted Bailey's denial.

"The reason I am prepared to talk about is that he [Bailey] has said he didn't say anything to me and therefore is doubting my integrity and I won't have that," Stewart explained.

"What happened, back in 2012 at The Oval, this gentleman [Bailey] came up and said to me: 'three players have access to the account, they have the password' and he told me the names were Bresnan, Broad and Swann and it didn't sit comfortably with me," added Stewart, England's most-capped player.

'Camera' earns 18-month ban

REUTERS, Tokyo

Japanese swimmer Naoya Tomita has been suspended for 18 months by the country's swimming federation and fired from his job after stealing a camera at the Asian Games in South Korea.

Tomita was expelled from the September 19 to October 4 Games in Incheon and told he had to pay his own way home after admitting to stealing a camera valued at 7,600 dollars from a journalist working for a South Korean news agency.

He was initially told he had to stay in South Korea until the case was resolved but was cleared to leave after being issued with a summary indictment and paying a fine of 950 dollars.

He was caught on closed circuit television stealing the camera after the journalist reported his gear missing.

'If Clarke quits, I could be playing'

AFP, London



England exile Kevin Pietersen said he could yet return to international duty if England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) chairman Giles Clarke quits his post.

Thursday saw Pietersen's controversial autobiography finally go on general sale after days of pre-publicity in which the South Africa-born batsman, England's all-time leading run-scorer, highlighted a "bullying" culture within the England dressing room and was severely critical of the management methods of former England coach Andy Flower.

It is hard to imagine the circumstances in which Pietersen might make an international return -- not least because he did not play County Championship cricket for Surrey last season.

But the 34-year-old has not given up hope and having previously focused much of his ire on Flower and several former teammates, Thursday saw him turn his attention to Clarke.

"What would have to happen for me to be recalled by England?" Pietersen

asked in an interview with the London Evening Standard. "Clearly, the boss would have to go."

"Clarke would have to go, and I've been hearing that could happen in the next few months. That's all hearsay, you never know. If there is a change at the top, there is potential, but we will wait and see."

It was Clarke who oversaw an uncomfortable press conference alongside Pietersen in Colombo in 2012 where he star batsman was formally reintegrated into the England team.

That followed a three-month banishment after Pietersen sent text messages critical of then England captain Andrew Strauss to opposition South Africa players during a home series with the Proteas.

"Giles pulls a lot of strings. In terms of cricket, I believe Andy Flower pulls a lot of strings too," Pietersen told the Standard.

"He has Giles Clarke in his pocket."

The ECB have steadfastly declined to respond to Pietersen's autobiography and they had no comment to make regarding his comments about Clarke.

But England great Geoffrey Boycott said he could understand why Kevin Pietersen felt angered by the way his England career was brought to an abrupt halt without a specific explanation.

Former captain Pietersen, having been a key figure in one of the most successful of all England cricket sides, was effectively sacked by the ECB following the team's 5-0 Ashes series loss in Australia concluded in January.

"I'd be miffed if my career had been finished for no reasons given," said Boycott.

"It's actually a pretty big thing when you've got a very talented player ... [and] a country says, 'Fine, we want to move on without you'," Boycott told the Cricinfo website.

Boycott added the root cause of the bitterness was in 2009 when Pietersen was sacked as England captain after voicing his concerns about Peter Moores's suitability as a coach.

Moores lost his job within the England set-up and was replaced by his former assistant Flower, with whom Pietersen had also clashed.

Foolowing this year's Ashes debacle, Flower stood down and was replaced by Moores.