

SPORT

Jubair in focus

Preliminary squad due tomorrow

SPORTS REPORTER



Bangladesh Cricket Board's (BCB) selection committee has formed a 31-member preliminary squad for the Zimbabwe series. The squad, which includes a mix of youngsters and a number of players returning to the national front, is expected to be revealed this week.

"We have selected a big preliminary squad because we plan to make two teams from here: the national team for the Zimbabwe series and an A team for a week-long tour of India," informed chief selector Faruque Ahmed.

Amongst the youngsters in the fray, 19-year-old leg spinner Jubair Hossain is likely to be included in the preliminary squad. With Shohag Gazi banned from bowling due to an illegal action and Abdur Razzak out of form, there is a chance for Jubair to make his debut in the upcoming series against Zimbabwe later this month.

The dearth of leg spinners in Bangladesh's domestic circuit meant that the selectors always had a special focus on the youngster. Having played two first-class matches and three List A games, there is no doubt that the bowler still has plenty to

learn. However, with a depleted spin attack at the national front and the player's commendable performance against Zimbabwe A recently, the selectors might just be tempted to play him.

Also expected to get a shot at the preliminary stage is Naem Islam, who captained Bangladesh A during the four-day series against their Zimbabwean counterparts.

With Bangladesh's top-level domestic season yet to begin this year, the 31-member squad will also be an opportunity for the management to keep their players fit.

"The series against Zimbabwe is a long one. There will be three Tests and five ODIs. We want to keep a keen eye on the players' fitness levels. We have to ensure that there is enough back-up in case any one gets injured," said Faruque.

"And also because the World Cup is just a few months away, we have to keep these players in good condition so that we are ready when the time comes," he added.

The camp for the Zimbabwe series will begin on October 14.

Zimbabwe arrive in Dhaka on October 17. The first Test will begin on October 25 in Dhaka. The teams will then shift to Khulna to play one Test before the third and final Test in Chittagong on November 12, which will be followed by the ODI series.



Australia pacer Mitchell Johnson (4th from left) is mobbed by teammates after he removed Shahid Afridi during the second ODI against Pakistan in Dubai yesterday.

PHOTO: INTERNET

Bangabandhu Gold Cup confirmed

Six-nation tourney likely by end of December

SPORTS REPORTER



The long wait for the proposed Bangabandhu Gold Cup is set to be over as the Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) is gearing up to hold a six-nation tournament by the end of this year. The BFF president Kazi Salahuddin, who returned from Paris on Thursday after attending a global football summit, yesterday informed that five teams have verbally agreed to participate in the tournament.

"We have invited five teams -- Malaysia, Bahrain, Laos, Malaysia, Singapore and Thailand for the Bangabandhu Gold Cup and they have given us verbal assurance. We would ideally like to start the tournament in the last week of December and end it by the first week of January, 2015," said Salahuddin while talking to reporters at his BFF office.

The tournament had been in the offing for a long time. Not being able to host an international tournament in his first four-year stint at the helm of Bangladesh football's governing body, Salahuddin tabled the idea of hosting it as soon as he was re-elected in May,

2013. However, complications regarding the availability of the teams as well as the lack of sponsorship had kept things confined to the planning stage. Now it is believed that a positive response from sponsors has encouraged the BFF boss to finally chalk up the details of the tournament.

"We could have brought two more teams, but that would have extended the time-span as well as increased the budget of the tournament. Hence, we decided to keep the tournament to within six teams spanning around ten days.

"The six teams, divided into two groups, will play in a league format held in two separate venues -- most likely in Dhaka and Sylhet. The two semifinals will also be held in the two venues before the grand final in Dhaka," said Salahuddin, laying out plans regarding the format and probable venues of the tournament.

The BFF boss also informed that the Japan Football Association have agreed to send its Olympic (U-23) team to Bangladesh for two exhibition matches. December 10 has been revealed as the preferred date of arrival of the Japanese team.

With the Bangabandhu Gold Cup and Japanese fixtures slated for December, the national team joined

the camp at Bangladesh Krira Shikkha Protishtan in Savar yesterday for the two FIFA Friendly fixtures against Sri Lanka later this month. The two matches against Sri Lanka will take place in Jessore and Rajshahi on October 24 and 27 respectively.

26 out of 28 players called for the camp -- barring Denmark-based Jamal Bhuiyan and skipper Mamunul Islam who is with Atletico de Kolkata -- reported to team manager Amirul Islam Babu at the BFF house in the afternoon. However, nine Sheikh Jamal DC players did not travel to BKSP to continue their training at the club's camp.

"The nine Sheikh Jamal players did report but did not immediately join the camp. The club management have requested us to allow their players to join the camp a few days later as they are currently in a preparation camp for next month's King's Cup in Bhutan, and we have considered their request," said BFF general secretary Abu Nayeem Shohag.

The national team's camp gets underway today under the guidance of assistant coach Saiful Bari Titu as head coach Lodewijk de Kruif and his deputy Rene Koster are not likely to arrive from Netherlands before October 14.

Australia seal series

AFP, Dubai



Australia continued their dominance over Pakistan with a hard fought five-wicket win in the second day-night international, taking an unbeatable 2-0 lead in the

three-match series.

Pakistan blew an opening stand of 126 through openers Sarfraz Ahmed (65) and Ahmed Shahzad (61) and were bowled out for 215 in 49.3 overs with paceman Mitchell Johnson taking 3-40.

Glenn Maxwell then punished sloppy Pakistan fielding with an 81-ball 76 as Australia reached the target in 43.2 overs for their fourth consecutive one-day series win over Pakistan.

Maxwell added an invaluable 85 for the fourth wicket with skipper George Bailey (28) steadying the chase after Pakistan dismissed Aaron Finch (14), David Warner (29) and Steven Smith (12) to leave Australia wobbling at 72-3.

But Pakistan spurned a good chance of dismissing the dangerous Maxwell on five when Umar Akmal dropped him in slip off debutant Raza Hasan.

Hasan was also unlucky in the early overs when Fawad Alam let off Warner on ten, making Pakistan's defence of a modest target tough.

Maxwell took advantage of the let off, reaching his eighth half-century off 56 deliveries.

Novak, Roger in last four

AFP, Shanghai

World number one Novak Djokovic and 17-times Grand Slam winner Roger Federer will battle for a place in the Shanghai Masters final after they powered through their quarterfinal matches Friday.

Gilles Simon of France and Spaniard Feliciano Lopez will also meet in Saturday's semifinals as the tournament reaches its dramatic climax.

Federer won his evening match against Julien Benneteau of France, taking the first set at the tie-break, before demolishing his opponent in the second to finish with a 7-6 (7/4), 6-0 scoreline.

Djokovic marched into the semifinals by overcoming David Ferrer 6-4, 6-2 as he vies for his third successive title.

Meanwhile, Simon continued his great run in Shanghai, overwhelming Tomas Berdych in a scintillating final set to claim his second top-10 scalp in three days. The world number 29 won 7-6 (7/4), 4-6, 6-0 to enter his second successive semifinal, after also making the last four in Tokyo last week where he lost to Milos Raonic.

The 29-year-old will fancy his chances against Lopez of Spain in the semifinals.

The world number 21 beat Mikhail Youzhny of Russia 5-7, 6-4, 6-4 in a thrilling match between two thirty-something players.

KP's career 'potentially over'

AFP, London



Kevin Pietersen conceded Friday he may "potentially" have played his last match for England as the controversy surrounding his autobiography continues.

During an intensive publicity campaign, South Africa-born batsman Pietersen -- England's all-time leading run-scorer -- has indicated a wish to resume an international career abruptly cut short in February following the team's return from their 5-0 Ashes thrashing in Australia.

That has long appeared a slim hope while England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) chairman Giles Clarke and managing director Paul Downton remain in post, with Pietersen admitting as much Thursday when he said "Clarke would have to go" if he was to play for England again.

Allegations in his book of a "bullying" culture led by senior England bowlers such as James Anderson, assisted by wicketkeeper Matt Prior and severe criticism of the methods of former coach Andy Flower are one thing, but given Pietersen did not play County Championship cricket for Surrey last season, there is no way of him returning to the England set-up on form grounds any time soon.

However, in an interview with BBC television chat show host Graham Norton, to be broadcast later Friday, Pietersen asked how likely it was he would play for England again, said: "Potentially not, no. I've got to accept that."

The former England captain added: "What I've been lucky to achieve, I've got to be grateful for and happy with. "There's more to life now, and I just get on and do what I need to do." Meanwhile Pietersen insisted even he had been surprised by the scale of the media storm generated by a book which only went on sale on Thursday but which was widely publicised beforehand, saying "it's gone mad".

One area in which Pietersen, often

Women's team warm up in style

SPORTS REPORTER

Striker Sabina Khatun scored a hatrick as Bangladesh national women's team trounced U-16 women's team by 4-1 goals in a practice match at the Birshreshtha Mostafa Kamal Stadium in Kamalapur yesterday.

Sabina scored in the 18th, 28th and 42nd minutes of the match to complete her hatrick while fellow striker Aumra Ching Marma scored in the 32nd minute as the national team went for the breather with a 4-0 lead. Bipasha Mali of the U-16 team scored one in the 68th minute to reduce the margin of defeat.

The match was keenly watched by Norio Tsukitate, the newly-appointed coach of the national women's team. The Japanese coach will guide the national team in the SAFF Women's Championship scheduled to be held in Pakistan next month.

The 54-year-old coach will also work as an advisor to the U-16 team, who will participate in the AFC U-16 Women's Championship Qualifiers in Dhaka this month. The qualifiers, involving Jordan, India, Iran, United Arab Emirates and hosts Bangladesh, is scheduled to be held at the Bangabandhu National Stadium from October 15 to 23.

Pearson crowned

AFP, Melbourne

Olympic hurdles champion Sally Pearson has been crowned Australia's most inspirational athlete of the past 12 months.

Pearson, 28, claimed her second "The Don" award at a function in Melbourne late Thursday, a prize named in honour of the Australia Hall of Fame's inaugural inductee and cricket immortal Don Bradman.

She beat a shortlist of stars that included Formula One driver Daniel Ricciardo, tennis teenager Nick Kyrgios and Test fast bowler Mitchell Johnson.



(From R to L) Mithun Chowdhury, Zahid Hasan Emily, Zahid Hossain, Atiqur Rahman Meshu and Aminur Rahman chat while reporting to the national team's camp at the BFF house yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

India want to draw level

Second ODI against West Indies today

PTI, New Delhi



Still licking their wounds after a sound thrashing in the opener, India will have to regroup quickly and plug the holes when they take on a determined West Indies in the second one-dayer in New Delhi on Saturday.

Starting the series as overwhelming favourites, India's inept batting in the first match led to a crushing 124-run defeat against a side which had

threatened to pull-out of the series due to a payment dispute with their parent body.

The Caribbean players did a commendable job, leaving behind those distractions and the disappointment of not having their top two players - Chris Gayle and Sunil Narine - in the side.

India will hope to draw level at Feroz Shah Kotla, where pitches have improved of late and a keen contest is on the cards.

The biggest concern is Virat Kohli's prolonged lean patch. Even

former skipper Sunil Gavaskar has spoken openly about Kohli's flaws but opined that he should be dropped down the order to get him back to his run-scoring ways. India's fortunes in this series and their title defence in the upcoming 50-over World Cup depend on Kohli's form.

Bowling is also a big worry for India as the hosts conceded 321 runs, however Ishant Sharma's return will bolster the bowling attack, though it remains to be seen whether Dhoni inducts the lanky pacer into the XI.