

SPORT

BANGABANDHU
GOLD CUP

BFF set for 6cr sponsorship deal

SPORTS REPORTER

The long-awaited Bangabandhu Gold Cup international football tournament is finally taking shape as the Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) is all set to sign a sponsorship deal with a private channel in the coming days.

"Channel 9 will be the prime sponsor of the international tournament and they will also possess the TV rights to the tournament in return of Tk 6 crore per tournament. We are going to sign a five-year deal with them by Saturday," said Mursedy.

If the contract is signed for the specified amount, then it would be a welcome boost to the BFF, who are going through a financial crisis, which was one of the reasons behind the delay of the Gold Cup. Another welcome monetary boost will come in the form of gate receipts, which the BFF will have to right to pocket.

The BFF high ups have reiterated the names of the six participating nations -- Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand, Bahrain, Laos and hosts Bangladesh -- though they are yet to get the official confirmation from those countries.

Salam Mursedy said that the BFF expects to get their final nods from the participants by November 10 as an emergency executive meeting at the BFF house yesterday took the decision to hold the Bangabandhu Gold Cup in third week of January next year.

The BFF has also planned to stage the international tournament in two cities which will consist of Dhaka and another venue outside of the capital, which is yet to be confirmed.



Ace Bangladesh all-rounder Shakib Al Hasan leaves the Pan Pacific Sonargaon hotel yesterday as the Tigers enjoyed an unscheduled day's break after a three-day finish of the first Test against Zimbabwe on Monday.



'ROME WAS NOT BUILT IN A DAY'
This was Zimbabwe coach Stephen Mangongo's response to the media when asked if his batsmen would be able to improve their approach against spin bowling before the next Test, which begins in Khulna on November 3. "They [Bangladesh] have a deadly spin combination. We are still

'Win brings forgotten feeling back'

SPORTS REPORTER



Chief selector Faruque Ahmed reckons that Bangladesh's win on Monday would help players recapture their 'winning mentality'. He also hinted that opener Anamul Haque, who replaced Al-Amin Hossain the squad for the second Test, might bat at number seven if selected to play in the second Test against Zimbabwe in Khulna next month.

Shuvagata Hom batted at seven in the last Test but failed to impress.

"We felt that our skipper Mushfiqur [Rahim] is our best batsman and is running out of partners. So we are thinking of getting him stronger support at seven or eight," said Faruque yesterday.

"We included him as a middle order batsman rather than an opener," added Faruque.

Bangladesh's intense three-wicket win on Monday was the first Test win under Faruque's watch, who was appointed chief selector in December last year. He expects the win to be a game changer for the Tigers.

This win is very significant as we wanted to win desperately. It was a close game. We should have won it convincingly. But there is nothing better than a win to help a team unite and play as a unit.

"When you lose lots of matches at a stretch, including some close games, the confidence level goes down substantially. At that time achieving a win seems very distant. Unless and until you manage it you won't get back the feeling that you can actually win," reckoned the chief selector.

On a wicket that had both turn and bounce, batsmen from both sides faltered. Openers Tamim Iqbal and Shamsur Rahman scored the least amount of runs amongst Bangladesh's batters in the Test. Faruque however, was confident that both the batsmen would fight back in the next Test.

Tamim got out to two bouncers in both the innings. Shamsur, on the other hand, got out while playing two short drives.

"I know opening is a difficult job and honestly speaking they are not in the best of forms. Tamim was unlucky in the first innings, but made a mistake in the second, which I am sure will rectify.

"Shamsur is also trying. I am sure he will understand his role in the next match. If the openers can see off the shine it will be helpful, as Zimbabwe's spin attack does not look dangerous," said Faruque.

The former national captain however, was pleased with the way his young spinners performed.

"We had a chance to send Jubair to the West Indies, but we decided against that due to his lack of first-class experience. The way he bowled was really impressive, despite him getting only two wickets. He never looked out of sorts. Taijul is a classical left-arm bowler and I hope he serves the national team for a long time," said Faruque.

'A deadly combination'

SPORTS REPORTER

Zimbabwe coach Stephen Mangongo has described Bangladesh's three-man spin attack as a 'deadly combination' against which the visitors need to adapt quickly.

"It's a deadly combination. It can get wickets against any team in the world. It used to be just Shakib [Al Hasan], but now those two other guys, they are serious operators. We endeavour to improve and get better," said Mangongo.

"We have got young spinners and we are going to be very patient with them. For spinners, it takes a long time to reach the top. Unless you are naturally gifted, which the Bangladesh bowlers appear to be," he added.

When asked if the visitors have a chance to come back in the series

Mangongo said, "It is going to be very difficult. The truth of the matter is that the Tigers at home can beat anyone if they play good cricket and we saw that in the first Test where their bowlers bowled very well and they won. We are still learning how to play in Bangladesh."

The visitors will have a special focus on spin bowling during training in the next few days.

"The boys were disappointed, the coaches were disappointed. We didn't bat very well. We are a professional team. It is our job to improve and get better. Today, in the training, it showed that we are determined to improve. That's why we have come to training to rectify the mistakes,"

"The issue is that you need to have the skill as a batsman on how to play a turning ball. Right now, we are in the indoor school where the machine can be switched to the turning mode. Then

you practice, until you get it right. Then in the ground, you simulate what you have learnt and cope with the spin," said Mangongo.

The only positive for Zimbabwe in the first Test was the fine display put up by their pacers. Tinashe Panyangara scalped his first five-for in the first innings while Elton Chigumbura's four-wicket haul wrecked the hosts in the fourth innings.

"Our fast bowlers, I was very pleased with them. They bowled very well and I hope they continue their good work. But the fast bowlers are not going to win the game by themselves. They need the spinners to be able to come in," said Mangongo.

But is such a major change possible in the next five days? Mangongo remained positive.

"Rome was not built in a day," he quipped. "We will continue to learn and we will get better."

ODI RANKINGS SA on top

REUTERS, Dubai

South Africa have moved to the top of the International Cricket Council (ICC) one-day rankings for the first time in five years, the Proteas climbing above Australia following their 2-0 series win in New Zealand.

The last time they headed the ODI rankings was in Sept 2009 but they slipped down the standings after their first round elimination from the ICC Champions Trophy.

Team	Matches	Pts	Rating
South Africa	45	5163	115
Australia	43	4902	114
India	62	7035	113
Sri Lanka	65	7245	111
England	45	4804	107
Pakistan	53	5184	98
New Zealand	33	3158	96
West Indies	46	4395	96
Bangladesh	28	1940	69
Zimbabwe	31	1784	58

Losers also happy

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh's thrilling three-wicket win in the first Test against Zimbabwe gave many a reason to smile. The victory also came as a relief for the Bangladesh Cricket Board because it added a few ranking points. Some however described this victory, Bangladesh's first this year, against a Test side, a mediocre performance from a mediocre team.

A lot were emotionally drained after watching a horror show especially when Bangladesh made heavy weather of the simplest of chases.

But it did not cost anybody because there were no reports of any fan being admitted to any hospital complaining of

high blood pressure.

The three-day finish to a five-day match though definitely cost broadcasters Gazi Television in terms of revenue, as it made logistical arrangements for five days. Although the TV channel did not divulge its projected revenue loss for the lost two days, it is understood that Gazi TV took a bit of a hit on its \$20.02 million investment to acquire a six-year worldwide TV rights deal with the BCB.

GTV's managing director Aman Faiz however decided to look at the bright side.

"We are extremely happy that Bangladesh won. Yes, we won't get the returns from the last two days, but the win can definitely give us a much boost, which in turn can help us to recover in days to come," he quipped.

'WI will be at World Cup'

AFP, Sydney

Cricket World Cup chief executive John Harnden said Tuesday he was confident the West Indies would play in next year's tournament, despite their shock withdrawal from a tour of India.

The West Indies cut short their India tour this month over an internal pay dispute, despite a fifth and final one-day international, a Twenty20 match and three Tests still to be played.

The situation has raised doubts as to whether the Caribbean side will be able to fulfil its upcoming international engagements, including a tour of South Africa followed by the World Cup.

Harnden said he was confident the issues would be resolved and the West Indies would play in the World Cup being jointly hosted by Australia and New Zealand from mid-February.

"We see that everyone's very focused on resolving the situation as quickly as possible," Harnden said.

"We've got 108 days until the World Cup and from our point of view I've no doubt the West Indies will be here and entertaining the crowd as only they know how."

The World Cup 2015 will begin on February 14, with New Zealand taking on Sri Lanka in Christchurch and England facing Australia at the Melbourne Cricket Ground.

Oz promise to fight back

AFP, Abu Dhabi

After failing another Asian spin test, Australia will strive to bounce back in the second and final Test against Pakistan starting in Abu Dhabi today.

The world number two team were all at sea against an inexperienced but effective Pakistani spin attack and suffered a crushing 221-run defeat in the first Test in Dubai.

It was their fifth consecutive flop against spinners in Asia after being routed 4-0 in India last year.

Left-arm spinner Zulfiqar Babar, playing only his third Test, finished

with seven wickets in the match as did debutant leggie Yasir Shah.

Pakistan's batsmen also had a field day. Veteran Younis Khan scored a century in each innings while Sarfraz Ahmed and Ahmed Shehzad chipped in with hundreds.

Pakistan will maintain that spin pressure as they look to win their first Test series against Australia since beating them at home in 1994.

Australian captain Michael Clarke promised a fight back.

"Any time we lose a game it breeds fire in your belly. We don't like losing, Australians in general don't like losing," he said after Sunday's defeat.

"We got outplayed and Pakistan

deserve a lot of credit for the way they played over the whole five days. We know we can play a lot better and look forward to showing that in the second Test match."

Australia's top order of David Warner, who hit a hundred in the first Test, and Chris Rogers were steady. But the middle order, especially Clarke and Alex Doolan, failed in both innings.

Clarke was confident runs would come in the second Test.

"I do have that confidence. We do have to find a way though," said the Australian skipper, who was the highest run-scorer in Tests in 2013 with 1,093.

Good news for banned players

AFP, Dubai

The International Cricket Council (ICC) Monday said it is likely to allow banned players to feature in domestic matches a few months before their punishment expires.

The provision in the players' code of conduct will come up for approval in next month's board meeting in Dubai and may specifically benefit Pakistan's pace-man Mohammad Aamer whose five year ban expires in August next year.

ICC chief executive David Richardson confirmed that rules on banned players are likely to be relaxed.

"The revised code is being discussed in the meetings and hopefully we could bring it to you in finality in the November meeting," Richardson told reporters at

the ICC headquarters in Dubai.

"There is a provision now in the revised code which will allow a player who has been banned internationally to play domestic cricket a certain period up from his ban coming to an end."

Under the process, if the provision is approved, a banned player will have to apply with the ICC to get permission to feature in the domestic cricket.

The ICC will seek recommendations from its Anti-Corruption and Security Unit as well as from the home board and the ICC Board before clearing the player to feature in domestic matches.

Aamer was one of three Pakistani players, besides Salman Butt and Mohammad Asif, who were banned for five years for their role in a spot-fixing scandal on the Pakistan tour of England in 2010.

With figures of 2 for 32 in seven overs, Naeem Islam was the key performer with the ball for BCB XI.

Karnataka beat BCB XI

SPORTS REPORTER

Imrul Kayes's century went in vain as BCB XI went down to Karnataka XI by five wickets in the Acharya Memorial Challenger Trophy played at the Jadavpur University's campus yesterday.

Kayes' 104-ball 100 witnessed nine fours and three sixes. BCB XI, after being put into bat, finished on 260 for 9. In reply, Karnataka XI rode on Shishir Bhavane's 112 to overcome the target in 46.3 overs.

This was BCB XI's second defeat in the tournament following the loss to Mumbai on Monday.

Apart from Imrul, Nasir Hossain scored an unbeaten 56 for the Bangladeshi contingent. Kamrul Islam Rabbi, who came in at number 10, added a 19-ball 20.

With figures of 2 for 32 in seven overs, Naeem Islam was the key performer with the ball for BCB XI.

BCB XI will play their next game against Bengal tomorrow.



PHOTO: COURTESY

Bangladesh booters train at the BFF artificial turf yesterday as part of their preparation for the SAFF Women's Championship to be held in Islamabad next month.