

## Try not to expect too much: de Kruif

SPORTS REPORTER

Head coach Lodewijk de Kruif has urged on fans to keep their expectations in check yet vowed for a good show from the Bangladesh under-23 team during the AFC U-23 Championship (Group E) Qualifiers, which kicks off at the Bangabandhu National Stadium on Friday. The Dutchman said that despite having injury concerns, his team has prepared different combinations and ideas over the last two weeks so that the team can compete and fight for a place in the 16-team final round, where ten group champions and five best runners up teams will join the host nation Qatar.

"Please try not to have expectations too high on these boys because they are young and facing fantastic opponents like Syria and Uzbekistan, who are much ahead of us," said de Kruif during an official press briefing at the BFF house yesterday. "We will fight for qualification but I can't promise anything because it is very difficult. We have been preparing and we have very good organisation. We will have opportunities there to come out with good results."

The Bangladesh national team has raised the bar of expectations with a commendable performance in the Bangabandhu Gold Cup in January. But the question is whether the U-23 team, which includes nine players from the senior team, can replicate the

performance of the senior team. "Players like Mamunul (Islam), Jamal (Bhuiyan), Nasir (Chowdhury) are very important in the national team and the absence of those senior players may be a problem this time but I have full confidence in this group of guys. They are very talented and willing and I am very happy that they are getting experience of playing against strong opponents. Whether we are weak or strong, I won't know until the end of the tournament. The important thing is to let the U-23 team play for the nation," opined de Kruif.

The 45-year old coach believes countries like Uzbekistan and Syria have different level of standard compared to Bangladesh and that his expectation is to have good team organisation, especially in defence against those opponents.

The hosts are considering a counter-attack based strategy against Syria and Uzbekistan and adopt their usual attacking style against India.

Skipper Raihan Hasan is also optimistic with the preparation even though his key midfielder Hemanta Vincent Biswas would not be able to play the first match against Syria due to a one-match suspension he received while playing for the Bangladesh under-19 team.

"We will be trying to put our best in a bid to keep stay the race for qualification," said Raihan, who will be leading the national team for the first time at any level.



Raihan Hasan (L) is being congratulated by teammates Sohail Rana (C), Hemanta Vincent Biswas (R) and Wahed Ahmed on being named the captain of the Bangladesh under-23 national team, during a press briefing at the Bangladesh Football Federation House yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR



Barcelona striker Luis Suarez is ecstatic after scoring the second goal against Real Madrid during their Primera Liga Clasico tie at the Nou Camp on Sunday.

PHOTO: AFP

## Djoker defends Indian Wells crown

AFP, Indian Wells

Novak Djokovic defeated Roger Federer 6-3, 6-7 (5/7), 6-2 to successfully defend his Indian Wells crown and claim his 50th career ATP title on Sunday.

The 27-year-old world number one from Serbia also captured his fourth Indian Wells crown and is now tied with world number two Federer for the most men's titles in the California desert.

Djokovic also raised the trophy in 2008 and 2011 at the Tennis Garden stadium. It was another epic struggle in a long list of hardcourt battles between the two top players in the world who have met 38 times with Swiss great Federer still holding a slight 20-18 edge.

Djokovic had lost his last two matches to Federer in straight sets after beating him in last year's Wimbledon final. Djokovic also needed three sets to beat Federer in the 2014 Indian Wells title match.

## Suarez bites Real

AFP, Barcelona

Barcelona moved four points clear at the top of La Liga as Luis Suarez's brilliant individual effort handed them a 2-1 win over Real Madrid on Sunday.

Jeremy Mathieu headed Barca in front early on from Lionel Messi's free-kick, but Cristiano Ronaldo hit back at his critics in recent weeks with a deserved equaliser before the break.

Suarez was to have the final say, though, as he registered his first goal in El Clasico by controlling Dani Alves's long ball before turning to strike into the far corner.

A third defeat in four games for Madrid will see coach Carlo Ancelotti come under increasing pressure to hold onto his job, but it was Madrid who posed the greater danger early on.

Karim Benzema pulled a shot wide of the far post before his teasing cross was volleyed onto the bar at the back post by Ronaldo.

However, it was Barca who went in front on 18 minutes when Mathieu headed

RESULTS	
Deportivo la Coruna	0 Espanyol 0
Villarreal	0 Sevilla 2 (Coke 50, Vitolo 65)
Real Sociedad 3	(Agirretxe 34, Castro 75, Finnbogason 90+2) Cordoba 1 (Andone 12)
Barcelona 2	(Mathieu 18, Suarez 56) Real Madrid 1 (Ronaldo 31)

MATCH STATS		
<b>Barcelona</b>		<b>Real Madrid</b>
52	Possession	48
17(5)	Shots(on Goal)	13(4)
3	Offsides	1
7	Corners	10
9	Fouls	14
3	Saves	3
5	Yellow cards	6

home Messi's in-swinging free-kick from the left for his first league goal for the club.

Neymar should have doubled the hosts' advantage on the half hour when he fired straight at Iker Casillas with the goal gaping after a mishit Suarez shot rolled across goal.

Seconds later Real were level thanks to a lovely move as Benzema backheeled Luka Modric's pass into Ronaldo's path and he poked the ball past Claudio Bravo on the stretch.

The visitors then went on to end the half stronger as Gareth Bale had a goal ruled out for offside, whilst Bravo tipped a piledriver from Ronaldo over and Bale stabbed inches wide from the resulting corner.

Madrid also had the first opportunity of the second-half as lovely link-up play between Benzema and Ronaldo this time put the Frenchman through on goal, but Bravo did just enough to parry his shot to safety.

## BFF Lottery 2014 Imposter lands in jail

SPORTS REPORTER

An imposter, using the name King Khan, was handed over to Motijheel Police Station yesterday after being found to have falsified the first-prize (Tk 30 lakh) winning ticket of the Bangladesh Football Federation Lottery 2014.

The claimant, allegedly from Chikandi of Shariatpur district, produced a lottery ticket of the first prize bearing the number: Uma 0406393. But the scrutiny committee of BFF, comprising representatives of the federation, Bangladesh Bank, Finance Ministry, Publishers, Motijheel Police Station and journalists, found quite a few of incongruities from the original lottery ticket. The committee decided that the Khan was bearing a fake ticket and handed him over to police.

Meanwhile, the real owner's identity was disclosed as Mohammad Abdul Hanna, general secretary of the Comilla Club of Comilla.

BFF general secretary Abu Nayeem Shohag informed that they would hand over the first prize through a program on April 10.

## Sabina's 16 for Maldives Police

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh's prolific female footballer Sabina Khatun slammed a staggering 16 goals in a futsal match for her club, Police Club of Maldives, in Male yesterday. The Bangladesh international started with three goals within two minutes and by the time she was done scoring, in the 35th minute, she had 16 goals to her name. Thanks to Sabina's exploits, the Police Club smothered PG Office 25-0 in the match of the Milo 18/30 WFF 2015.

Sabina had earlier scored four goals against the Ministry of Environment and Energy in her debut match.

## Juve in comfort zone

AFP, Milan



Juventus will head into the international break on a high and with a 14-point lead on closest challengers Roma, who ended a five-game winless run in Italy's Serie A with

a 1-0 victory at Cesena on Sunday. Carlos Tevez took his Serie A goals tally to 16 as Juventus maintained their 14-point lead on Roma thanks to a hard-fought 1-0 win over Genoa.

Genoa travelled to Turin with faint hopes of taking a share of the spoils from the league leaders having handed Juve their only defeat of the season last October.

However Genoa goalkeeper Mattia Perin could do little to stop Tevez's 25th minute strike from inside the area and despite stand-in keeper Eugenio Lamanna later stopping Tevez's spot-kick, the hosts held on to record their 20th win of the campaign.

Tevez now leads fellow Argentinian Mauro Icardi of Inter Milan and AC Milan's French winger Jeremy Menez -- both of whom have 15 goals -- in the race for Serie A's capocannoniere (top scorer) award.

While Juve have one hand on the title, Roma were celebrating ending a five-game

RESULTS	
Empoli 3	(Saponara 46, 60, Mchedlidze 60) Sassuolo 1 (Rugani 49-og)
Juventus 1	(Tevez 25) Genoa 0
Cesena 0	Roma 1 (De Rossi 41)
Lazio 2	(Anderson 4, Candreva 45+2) Verona 0
Napoli 1	(Zapata 89) Atalanta 1 (Pinilla 72)
Parma 0	Torino 2 (Lopez 18, Basha 73)
Sampdoria 1	(Eder 65) Inter 0

winless run with a cagey 1-0 victory over struggling Cesena.

It ended a remarkably poor series of results for Garcia's former title challengers, who saw Daniele De Rossi pounce on a cross early in the second half.

Roma's third win in 12 successive games mainly served to keep city rivals Lazio at bay, but for how long remains to be seen.

Stefano Pioli's men were impervious throughout a 2-0 home win over Verona, with Brazilian sensation Felipe Anderson breaking the deadlock on four minutes after rising to head Dusan Basta's powerful cross past Francesco Buscetti.

A well-struck free kick from Samp striker Eder secured a 1-0 home win over Inter Milan to move the Genoa side up to fourth.



Juventus striker Carlos Tevez (R) celebrates his all-important goal with teammates during their Serie A clash against Genoa in Turin on Sunday.

PHOTO: AFP

## 'Bayern must keep fighting'

AFP, Berlin



Pep Guardiola insists Bayern Munich's shock 2-0 defeat at home to Borussia Moenchengladbach on Sunday only proves the reigning Bundesliga champions must keep fighting to defend their title.

Bayern suffered only their third defeat of the season in all competitions and their first home defeat as Gladbach's Brazilian striker Raffael scored both of Borussia's goals.

Guardiola's side still command a 10-point lead at the top of the table with eight games left.

The win lifted Lucien Favre's Gladbach back to third in the table and it was only their third win in Munich in 47 league games, having last won at the Allianz Arena four years ago.

## 'Most important goal'

AFP, Barcelona



Luis Suarez lauded his El Clasico winner as his biggest goal since moving to Barcelona, as the Catalan giants moved four points clear of Real Madrid with a 2-1 win on Sunday.

Suarez controlled Dani Alves's ball over the top and fired past Iker Casillas just before the hour mark to hand Barca a huge win.

"It is my most important goal for Barca so far, it has an extra meaning given the opponents that it was against," said Suarez.

The former Liverpool star's strike came at a crucial juncture in the game as Madrid

looked the more likely to go ahead after Cristiano Ronaldo had cancelled out Jeremy Mathieu's early opener for Barca.

"I tried to take advantage of the space between the defenders as quickly as possible to not give them time to react. Luckily it went in," added Suarez.

Barca boss Luis Enrique lauded the Uruguayan's quality and said that is why the club splashed out a club record fee for the 28-year-old despite his chequered past.

"It is clear the goal is something very few players can do. That is why we signed him. We valued him because he is a player that makes the difference," said Enrique.

"Ever since he arrived we have been very happy with his performances, his commitment and everything he does for the team."

## 'India hold...

FROM PAGE S2 we can't discard the Indian pacers. They have got 70 wickets, they've bowled out every single team headed by Shami. [Umesh] Yadav and Mohit [Sharma] are also bowling well. I think the Indian attack is very well balanced and I agree with Ian that the match is very well-balanced," said Lara.

Lara opined that spin advantage notwithstanding, the Indian team will be under the pump against a side that outplayed them in all the matches in the tri-series before the World Cup.

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