

SPORT

Epyllion revives U-15 championship

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The National Under-15 Football Championship returns after a three-year hiatus as Epyllion Group, one of the top readymade garments manufacturers of the country, came forward to sponsor the event. All the 64 district teams, split into eight zones, will play in the first round of matches, starting from June 25.

The youth teams will be formed under direct observation of the BFF development committee and through scouring from the upazila level. The BFF-appointed coaches will scrutinise the talented players and the age of the budding booters.

The game's governing body had earlier organised the youth championship six times with financial assistance from Japan Football Federation (JFA), but the JFA stopped sanctioning the yearly 25,000 dollars after 2011 as the BFF had used the money in development purpose.

Epyllion Group is expected to provide Tk 75 lakh for the championship and a memorandum of understanding in this regard was signed by BFF vice president Badal Roy and Epyllion Group's MD Reazuddin Al Mamun yesterday.

India bring the challenge

SPORTS REPORTER



India's national cricket team will touch down at the Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport in Dhaka at 9 am today and officially begin their journey in a tour which sporting pundits around the country have already termed as Bangladesh's biggest challenge this year.

The Tigers are scheduled



to face bigwigs South Africa and Australia later this year, however, the challenge of facing the mighty Indians in familiar sub-continental conditions makes this series a lot more demanding.

By announcing their strongest possible squad for this series, the Indian cricket board quashed rumours regarding the possible arrival of a second-stringed line-up. Apart from a strong batting order, the current line-up not only includes experienced spinners but also has pacers who can break the 150 kmph mark.

It will be slightly difficult for the hosts to choose their mode of attack in this series. Relying solely on spinners won't do as India's top-order batsmen are good players of spin.

The last time India were in

just 58 runs.

So, while the strategy for the lone Test in Fatullah seems to be set -- the teams are likely to play on a flat deck with the Tigers aiming for a draw -- a cautious plan for the ODIs is required. Whatever be the strategy, the Tigers will know that a positive result in this series would have plenty of benefits.

After all, Bangladesh just need to win one ODI to overtake the West Indies in the rankings and occupy the seventh spot. Also, if they do manage to battle neck-and-neck, it will be a great confidence-booster for the rest of the year.

The events that took place when the two teams met last time, in the quarterfinals of the World Cup, are bound to make this series a lot more exciting. There were a couple of controversial decisions in that knock-out game at the Melbourne Cricket Ground which went against the Bangladesh's fans

and ensured that they were high-lighted.

As a result the over-derogatory placards in the stadium.

After their landing, Virat Kohli and company are scheduled to travel to the Khan Shaheb Osman Ali Stadium in Fatullah, where the Test will begin on June 10, for their first training session in Dhaka. Bangladesh too are scheduled to have a training session in Fatullah today.

The teams have played seven Tests against each other with India winning six of them. Bangladesh managed to draw the other game, back in 2007 at Mirpur, by dint of rain playing the spoilsport.

In the ODIs Bangladesh have won three out of the 29 meetings, while India have won 25.

Dhaka to play a bilateral series was in June 2014. Bangladesh's team management had decided to spice up the wickets at Mirpur with bounce and pace. Initially, it seemed as though the plan had worked as the hosts bundled India out for a meagre 105. However, the plan backfired when Bangladesh came on to bat as the hosts succumbed for

'Then it'll be a dream start'

SPORTS REPORTER



From scoring his maiden List A century last December to making his way into the big league, the Bangladesh national team, Litton Das has travelled quite the distance in the last few months. He could well be celebrating his career's biggest achievement later this week in Fatullah where Bangladesh will take on India in a one-off Test.

Litton, who kept wicket during training at Fatullah yesterday, is likely to don the gloves in the Test in place of Mushfiqur Rahim, who has yet to recover from his finger injury.

Of the 45 Tests Mushfiqur has played so far, he was the designated wicketkeeper in 43 of them. It will be a rare sight to witness someone taking the perennially fit cricketer's place. This time around though, the odds seem to be against him.

For Litton, the equation is simple. It's only because of Mushfiqur's injury that he has a chance to make his international debut this Wednesday. Despite the rareness of the circumstances, Litton appeared composed while speaking to media at Fatullah yesterday.

"If this happens, it will be very good for me. I will be really happy to make my debut against such a big team. This is a big opportunity for me. If I can perform against them then it will be a dream start to my career," said Litton.

An opener, who hammered more than 1,000 runs in the last Dhaka Premier League, Litton, if given an opportunity, will not be able to play in his natural position for the Tigers. With Tamim Iqbal and Imrul Kayes dominating the top two slots, there isn't likely to be any change there.

He could however, take the place of Mahmudullah Riyad, who bats at four. Litton though wasn't worried about where to bat.

"When I started my career I used to bat lower down the order. In the last 3 years I have been playing as an opener. Whichever position I am assigned to, I'll give my 100 per cent. I can play both spin and pace, I hope it won't be an issue for me," said Litton.

JUNE 11 & 16 QUALIFIERS

Kick-offs shifted to 5:00pm

SPORTS REPORTER

The Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) has rescheduled the kick-off times for the first two matches of the Asian Cup and the World Cup Qualifiers against Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan to 5:00pm from the initially proposed kick-off time of 3:00pm.

The game's governing body had initially fixed the kick-off times at 3:00pm with an aim of cashing in on the hot and humid conditions which was thought to cause trouble for the two teams from Central Asia. But it is believed that after watching the home team's lacklustre performance and the players' struggle in the two recent friendlies against Singapore and Afghanistan, with both matches being kicked off at 4:00pm, the BFF decided to appeal to the FIFA and AFC for a change in timing. And the appeal was granted yesterday which means both the matches will be kicked off at the Bangabandhu National Stadium at 5:00pm.

Kyrgyzstan, who will play the first qualifier against Bangladesh on June 11, are scheduled to arrive here tomorrow while Tajikistan, who will take on Bangladesh in the second match on June 16, are expected to come here on June 14.

Time to execute: Kohli

PTI, Kolkata



Not quite convinced about the idea of counting the positives after a lost match, India's new Test captain Virat Kohli Sunday said the days of learning are long over and his cricket team would be solely focussed on delivering results.

Addressing a pre-departure press conference here Sunday ahead of the tour of Bangladesh, which starts with a one-off Test from June 10, Kohli said his focus is on results.

"We have learnt a lot, I don't think we need to play with a mindset of playing to learn. Obviously, we learn about the game all the time, even when we are watching it on TV. But we have played long enough now, we know what we want to achieve as a unit. So, we really want to achieve rather than go out of a match thinking what we have learnt from it," Kohli said when asked about his expectations from the team.

Insisting that the team is in good shape for the Bangladesh tour, which will also have three ODIs, Kohli said fitness is a prime concern to ensure that his side keeps a steady look.

"The team is looking in good shape. We conducted a fitness test yesterday because we feel that fitness is one area where we need to strengthen," he said.

"Everyone is really excited for a fresh beginning. I am certainly excited about leading the team," he added.

On his own expectations from the short tour, Kohli said he is looking forward to strategise for the gruelling Test format.

"I have captained teams before. At a certain level, you learn while doing the job. Tests are a difficult ball game compared to ODIs or T20s because you have to strategise for a whole day in one go," he said.

India will be without a coach in the Bangladesh series but team director Ravi Shastri said the team does not require "more coaches" than what it already has right now.

"We have got three coaches, we don't need another coach. I will double up as head coach if need be, so there is no issue whatsoever," said Shastri when asked whether the side would miss not having a national coach after Duncan Fletcher's tenure came to an end earlier this year.

Asked whether the team is confident of a good show against the lower-ranked Bangladesh, Shastri said, "We respect every opponent and Bangladesh is another opponent."

A talking point ahead of the tour has been the Test comeback of veteran off-spinner Harbhajan Singh and asked whether he would be leading the Indian attack, Shastri said it would be a combined effort.

"We welcome Harbhajan back in the side, he is a good operator and will bring plenty to the plate. (But) it's going to be an India bowling outfit, not anyone in particular leading the pack," he said.

Meanwhile, Harbhajan on Sunday said that his role in the Indian team is still "same as it used to be 5-7 years back" when he was the spearhead of the bowling attack.

"My role is same in the team as it was 5-7 years back. We need to work as a unit. All the four or bowlers need to back each other. When it comes to goal, it was same when I was playing alongside Anil Kumble and Amit Mishra. It is to help each other in winning games," Harbhajan told media persons at the open session on the eve of team's departure to Dhaka.

He has made a comeback after two years but when questioned about the difference from Harbhajan of the old, he quickly countered, "Can you see any difference? There is no difference."

Siddikur flies off to India today

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh's premier golfer Siddikur Rahman will fly off to India at the early hours of this morning to take part in the fourth edition of the Louis Philippe Cup, a franchise golf league, to be held in Bangalore. The two-time Asian Tour winner, who has been a part of this league since its inception in 2012, will lead the three-man Dev Ellora Pune team owned by India's legendary cricketer Kapil Dev.

The seven teams will compete from June 11 to 13 at the Karnataka Golf Association (KGA) course in a 54-hole tournament with a prize purse of 1.2 crore rupees. The other members of Siddikur's team are: Om Prakash Chouhan and Sanjay Kumar of India.

Mascarenhas in for Bond

REUTERS, Wellington

Former England all-rounder Dimitri Mascarenhas has been appointed New Zealand's bowling coach full-time in the wake of the team's encouraging Test series in England.

Appointed in an interim role following the departure of Shane Bond in April, Mascarenhas had been retained on a two-year contract after New Zealand's bowlers impressed during the drawn 1-1 series.

"Dimitri has impressed in the short time he's been with the Blackcaps and we're delighted he's accepted the offer to continue working with the side," New Zealand Cricket's head of cricket Lindsay Crocker said in a statement on Sunday.

"Both coach Mike Hesson and captain Brendon McCullum have been pleased with his contribution on the tour and have watched him develop excellent working relationships with the bowling group."

IN A NUTSHELL

Commentary ban on PCB employees

The Pakistan Cricket Board has banned all its employees, including its former international and first-class cricketers, from undertaking commentary duties on television from now onwards. The decision to do so comes after the intense criticism they faced for allowing selectors Haroon Rasheed and Azhar Khan to do commentary during the national Super Eight's T20 tournament in Faisalabad.

They had also allowed bowling coach of the National Cricket Academy, Mohammad Akram, to commentate on the recently concluded historic series between Pakistan and Zimbabwe. "The Board has realised it was a mistake to allow Haroon or even Akram to sit as commentators and this will not happen again," a senior PCB official said.

The job Dravid always craved

All excited about shaping the next generation of cricketers, newly-appointed India A and under-19 coach Rahul Dravid said he has landed the job he was always interested in and would now look to give his best to it.

"I think it is really exciting because it has been an area I have always been interested in. I feel it is a very important stage of development of a lot of cricketers, having been through myself," Dravid told ESPNcricinfo. "I am just hoping that having experienced being on A tours and being with an Indian Under-19 team, I will probably be able to help some of these young cricketers on their journey," he added.

Liu breaks 20km walk world record

China's Liu Hong broke the women's 20km walk world record by clocking one hour 24.38 minutes at the IAAF Race Walking Challenge in La Coruna on Saturday.

Liu's time was nearly half a minute inside the



1:25:02 set by Russian Yelena Lashmanova at the 2012 London Olympics.

It was also inside the 1:24:50 and 1:24:54 posted by Russians Olimpiada Ivanova and Olga Kaniskina that have not been recognised due to not enough official judges being present.

De Villiers wants to be a Kallis

South Africa captain AB de Villiers has said in a recent media interaction that he wants to help his younger teammates in a similar way legend Jacques Kallis helped him early in his career.

All-rounder Kallis represented South Africa in 166 Tests before retiring in 2013. De Villiers acknowledged that he helped him a lot in shaping his career in early stages.

"It's the sort of influence I'd like to now have on the guys around me."

Compiled By Star Sport Desk

Clarke about to touch Bradman

SMH, Roseau



He has performed Bradmanesque feats with the bat before with the spree of double-centuries and a triple a few years back and now that Michael Clarke is back in the Test team, he is on the brink of reaching another of the marks of the sport's greatest batsman.

It was almost forgotten in the mix of Adam Voges's debut and the hype around a potential first cap for Fawad Ahmed that Clarke was playing his first Test for six months.

It was in Adelaide, the site of the rescheduled first Test against India, in which he made an emotional century compiled less than two weeks after the death of friend Phillip Hughes and after tearing his hamstring in the field.

That was his 28th ton, leaving him one short of Don Bradman's haul of 29. It is a milestone the Australian captain could very well reach by the end of his brief Caribbean tour or if not by the time he arrives home from



India captain Virat Kohli (R) interacts with the media while team director Ravi Shastri looks on in Kolkata yesterday ahead of their Bangladesh tour.

PHOTO: INTERNET